

# J. I. M. Stewart's *The Aylwins*: The Collegiate Story Exemplified

Zbigniew Głowala  
Jagiellonian University in Kraków;  
Podhale State College of Applied Sciences in Nowy Targ

**Abstract:** J. I. M. Stewart's novel *The Aylwins*, the story of an Oxford don deeply troubled by the fact that his son has been expelled from school for cheating, is a fine example of academic fiction or, as its narrator puts it, "a collegiate story". The novel encompasses many instances of academic life: dons customarily dining together in the common room during vacations, the turmoil caused by the Provost's terminal illness, scholars engaged, more or less willingly, in college politics and their cordial, yet somewhat patronising, attitude towards an outsider to academia like the narrator himself who is the protagonist's close friend. The purpose of this paper is to present *The Aylwins* in terms of stereotypes about life in academia as discussed in *The Academic Tribes* by Hazard Adams.

**Keywords:** academic fiction, stereotypes, genre, Oxford University, collegiate story

To categorise a book as an academic novel may appear fairly easy. It seems that the main elements of the novel that should be taken into consideration are its protagonist and its setting. The former is, of course, a scholar while the latter should be a university, a college or a campus. Here is a simple formula for academic fiction. But is it really that simple? Out of numerous definitions of this particular genre, none is really as concise as the one above. Most of them, in fact, focus on a variety of features or plot elements which may appear in one definition but are not necessarily included in the other which makes the overall definition of the campus novel rather fluid. So which one should a confused reader choose? None of them seem truly precise, let alone exhaustive. To find such a definition one should, of course, consult a dictionary and *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* does provide its readers with the following, overly narrow, definition of the campus novel: "A novel which has a university campus

as its setting. The majority have been written by those who were or are academics" (Cuddon 1999, 107). With all its complexities, literary allusions, plot layers and erudition of its authors, the campus novel seems to be best defined in simple terms. It does not mean, however, that it does not deserve more.

Elaine Showalter in her *Faculty Towers* states that the academic novel should "experiment and play with the genre of fiction itself, comment on contemporary issues, satirize professorial stereotypes and educational trends, and convey the pain of intellectuals called upon to measure themselves against each other and against their internalized expectations of brilliance" (Showalter 2005, 4-5). As a satire, it is, according to Showalter, "wildly funny" and yet it should include a dose of "seriousness, even sadness" as "academic life has so much pain, so many lives wasted or destroyed" (Showalter 2005, 3). In the introduction to *The College Novel in America* John O. Lyons also writes that he considers "a novel of academic life one in which higher education is treated with seriousness and the main characters are students or professors" (Lyons 1968, xvii). So not a satire, after all. On the other hand, Kenneth Womack in *Postwar Academic Fiction* stresses the importance of the satirical quality of the academic novel and seems to regret that "critics of academic fiction [...] neglect to address the satiric ethos that undergirds the genre's thematic landscape" and, unfortunately, "the scathing representation of professors and institutions" stays "unexamined in the scholarly monographs devoted to the study of the academic novel" (Womack 2002, 1). In my article entitled "University or Universal? Revaluating the Academic Novel" I offer a definition based on the ones provided by Showalter and Womack (but also by Brian A. Connery who stresses the importance of the town-and-gown theme for the genre's satirical nature in "Inside Jokes: Familiarity and Contempt in Academic Satire" [Connery 1990, 128]): the university novel is "a satire on a professional group (academics) and its struggle not only with university life but also with exigencies of life outside the university" (Głowala 2010, 21).

In his article "Types of Academic Fiction" Merritt Moseley does not propose only one definition. Instead, he distinguishes a few categories into which the campus novel may fall: novels that focus on students (which may either be "redolent of nostalgia for the beauties and ineffable subtleties of undergraduate life" [Moseley 2007, 100] or may present "the real conditions of student life; they are more likely to include eating disorders, suicide, unwanted pregnancy, study, and fear of failure [...] [Moseley 2007, 104]), the ones that

focus on administration (Moseley 2007, 105), and novels revolving around the faculty which the author further divides into subcategories (this part consists mainly of various forms of a satire) (Moseley 2007, 108-113). In *Ancient Cultures of Conceit* Ian Carter dwells on how very little space for creativity has been left for authors of academic fiction (or how little of it the genre, in fact, provides them with) and distinguishes three variations of the university novel: "how an undergraduate at Oxford (usually) or Cambridge came to wisdom; how a don at Oxford (usually) or Cambridge was stabbed in the back physically or professionally, sometimes surviving to rule his college; and how rotten life was as student or teacher outside Oxford and Cambridge" (Carter 1990, 15). Finally, there is Mortimer R. Proctor who observes in *The English University Novel*: "[...] it is not always easy to say what is and what is not a university novel. The reason lies in the tendency of the subject matter to slip entirely out of sight. In novel after novel there comes a point when the author's exhaustion is evident, when he discovers he has done all he can with the university theme and is driven to move on into the more varied world beyond" (Proctor 1977, 2-3).

The purpose of this article is to present a collegiate story in terms of popular stereotypes about academics and academic life that academic fiction might have created or perpetuated but also refuted. To introduce this subgenre of the academic novel, a probably lesser-known example of academic fiction has been chosen, namely *The Aylwins* by J. I. M. Stewart. The stereotypes have been discussed in *The Academic Tribes* by Hazard Adams, a university teacher himself. As Adams claims in the preface, this is a book "about academic life and politics, in which I induce certain principles of tribal behavior on the basis of personal and quite unscientific observation" (Adams 1988, ix). Even though the author's primary focus is not on academic fiction, he does, however, mention some examples of the genre (for instance, *The Groves of Academe* by Mary McCarthy and *Pictures from an Institution* by Randall Jarrell [Adams 1988, 37]) and the stereotypes he examines correspond to the ones produced and reinforced (but also occasionally disproved) by authors of university novels.

Stewart's novel is the story of Arthur Aylwin, an Oxford don, who is believed to be a perfect candidate for a Chair of History. Later, when the Provost is said to be terminally ill, Arthur is expected by some to stand for the post. However, the protagonist learns that his elder son, Robin, has been expelled from school allegedly for cheating and this leads him to a nervous breakdown

as Robin's action reminds him of his own offence. It turns out that Arthur has been tormented by a feeling of guilt over what he did in 1929 when he and Frank Deasy came to Oxford for the first time for their scholarship examinations. Apparently, while waiting for one of his interviews, he managed to read two questions from the upcoming exam which one of the tutors had left carelessly on the table. Arthur spent hours in the library cramming for the exam and he passed it. However, he has been guilt-ridden ever since he won the scholarship, with only some periods of inner peace. Arthur's story is told from the perspective of his old friend, Frank Deasy, the narrator and the fictional author of *The Aylwins* who, even though not a member of the academic society himself, is still perceived by some dons as "one of them". A witness to certain conventions, college practices and procedures, Frank wants to produce what he calls "a collegiate story" (Stewart 1966, 49).

Even though it is not as popular as other examples of academic fiction (for example, works by David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury and, of course, Kingsley Amis), Stewart's *The Aylwins* seems to be almost a classic instance of the genre. What is more, Ian Carter writes quite extensively about Stewart's novels in his *Ancient Cultures of Conceit* where he calls him a novelist who "has written most books about the most popular university". Nevertheless, he claims that readers may be surprised to learn that such a prolific writer has received so little recognition and critical attention (he mentions only one article on Stewart written in German) (Carter 1990, 23).

The first stereotype discussed by Adams is "the good life stereotype" (Adams 1988, 32). To illustrate it the author writes about a film (Adams remembers neither its title nor its plot but it is actually *A Letter to Three Wives* from 1949) in which Kirk Douglas plays a college professor who apparently lives the affluent life. Adams writes how he himself lived together with his wife in two rooms and "a closet converted to a shower" (Adams 1988, 32) and how he "was lucky to have gotten any job that year" (Adams 1988, 33). Nevertheless, he admits: "This was the condition of all of us except the highest-ranking professors and those few who had private means or wives with money" (Adams 1988, 33). In the novel, Arthur Aylwin lives outside Oxford in a big house that, according to Deasy, "pleased" him (Stewart 1966, 13) and Boars Hill, where the house is situated, "was much favoured, a generation or two ago, by such Oxford dons and professors as were not without substantial means quite apart from their academic emoluments" (Stewart 1966, 12). Arthur's wife, Mary, does have "a pri-

vate income (small but useful [...])" (Stewart 1966, 13), the house is spaciouly furnished and yet some parts of it are "untidy and in indifferent repair" (Stewart 1966, 12). Nevertheless, Greyswood (as the house is called) has beautiful views as its windows "look straight down upon the distant colleges and churches of the city" (Stewart 1966, 13). Therefore, this first stereotype in Adams' book has been partly reinforced in *The Aylwins*, but on the other hand Arthur does not appear to be a Kirk Douglas type of professor, wearing a black tie and a tuxedo when he entertains while in the background there is "a silver topped cocktail shaker on the coffee table in front of a pleasant fire" (Adams 1988, 32).

The second stereotype is what Adams calls "the detached life stereotype" (1988, 34). The author says that it is associated with the belief that "the college is the isolated small community" and the stereotype should be traced to "the treatment of professors as absent-minded, pleasantly eccentric, ineffective in public situations, and so forth" (1988, 35). This description may actually apply to the protagonist in *The Aylwins*. Slightly paranoid about his professional life, Arthur Aylwin is believed by Frank to be, in fact, a competent scholar and historian whose "writings are spirited and elegant" and acclaimed by both his readers and his colleagues (Stewart 1966, 15). One of them believes that Arthur's colleagues in the History Department "underestimate Arthur simply because he writes so damned well" (Stewart 1966, 69) whereas another one points out that "one feels that Arthur enjoys himself most when sitting in front of a type-writer" (Stewart 1966, 69). Most of them agree that Arthur should become a Chair of History, and some of them believe that he would make a good Provost since he meets the following fundamental requirements: he is a distinguished scholar and a writer and his wife is, in his colleagues' words, "adequate" (Stewart 1966, 75), "extremely nice" and "not without a private competence" (Stewart 1966, 70). Arthur, on the other hand, frequently jokes, quite modestly it may seem, that it is Frank who is "anima naturaliter Oxoniensis" - a natural born Oxonian, while he himself is just an outsider to the academic community (Stewart 1966, 60). He believes that through his dishonest action back in 1929 he somehow cheated Frank, who was an equally good student, out of his scholarship or, in Frank's words, deprived him of his birthright to become an Oxonian (Stewart 1966, 60). Now when his older son has been expelled from school allegedly for cheating, Arthur is convinced that his sin has been passed on to his son. "You don't understand," he says, "Robin went wrong because I did. There's a pattern in these things" (Stewart 1966, 117). And what he really despises is the continuity of the whole thing:

No cheating, no Scholarship. No Scholarship, no Lectureship. No Lectureship, no Fellowship. I don't collect a penny, I don't own an atom of standing or regard, that doesn't flow directly from that miserable hour. Of course I must resign. [...] I'm going to confess the truth, and give up my job. (Stewart 1966, 117)

Just as in any tribe,<sup>1</sup> also in the academic tribe there is the oldest member of the community, a doyen or an archetypal sage. Interestingly, it is Arthur's former tutor and the man who interviewed him in 1929 and who left the exam on the table thus unwittingly becoming at least partially responsible for the protagonist's sin. His name is George Elford and he is a retired scholar, nearly a hundred years old. Elford fits the category of the Jungian wise old man who, as described in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, represents "knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition on the one hand, and on the other, moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help" (Jung 1990, 222) and who "tests the moral qualities of others and makes his gifts dependent on this test" (Jung 1990, 225). Whether the exam left on the table was a test aimed at testing Arthur's moral qualities or not is, of course, disputable. Nevertheless, Elford is the man whom Arthur wants to meet first before he confesses the truth to the rest of his colleagues as he believes he owes the old man an explanation and he probably hopes for some sort of absolution. Little does he know, however, that Elford has the power to do more than that. He can actually acquit Arthur since he has been keeping all his students' works for all these years and now they can actually look into Arthur's answers. They find out that his feeling of guilt is, in fact, a result of his, as Frank calls it, "wretched neurosis" (Stewart 1966, 183). Therefore, Elford is truly an archetypal wise old man who, according to Jung, "always appears when the hero is in a hopeless and desperate situation from which only profound reflection or a lucky idea [...] can extricate him" (Jung 1990, 217-218).

Ancient, slightly mad, still entertaining his guests in the same old room that is decorated with the same collection of paintings and antiques which Arthur admired when he was interviewed by him in 1929 ("I took one look, and decided I was going to have a room like that myself", admits Arthur after all these

---

1 To use Hazard Adams' terminology who in his book writes, for example, about "a differentiation of tribal (departmental) behavior" (Adams 1988, 63).

years [Stewart 1966, 113]), George Elford seems to be fantastically suspended in time, not only physically but also mentally. He mistakes the past for the present: he sometimes seems to recognise Arthur and a moment later he thinks that Arthur and Frank are some of his students who have visited him to present their essays. As Frank notes, "Elford's mind obviously wanders – and a good deal more in the past than in the present. But he isn't irrational [...]" (Stewart 1966, 178). All this makes their meeting with Elford seem like an almost mystical experience – the feeling that strikes Frank the most. He says: "Certainly we were all three of us in what is now called an archetypal situation: the curtain was about to be twitched, the casket opened, the oracle consulted" (Stewart 1966, 181). Whether a sage or an oracle, Elford appears in the novel right in time to provide the hero with sound advice and save him from his imminent fall. Thus, Aylwin and Elford both appear to be eccentric. The former's neurosis and the latter's modest madness make them both truly detached from life. Nevertheless, as Adams points out, "university faculties [...] value eccentricity, or at least protect it [...]" (1988, 26) which may, in fact, appear to be another stereotype.

One more stereotype that Adams discusses is "the nonlife stereotype" (Adams 1988, 36) or a vision that students conjure up about their teachers:

In this vision the faculty member is a pure presence rather than a being-in-the-world. He has no spouse, no child, no dog, no cat, no home. He may be seen entering a car, but he disappears into nothingness when he leaves the range of the naked eye. He does not sleep or eat. Either he is in his office or his classroom or he is nowhere. (Adams 1988, 36)

Arthur Aylwin has a wife and two sons, and has a teaching room in the college, "large and lofty" with a fireplace and "a long wall clothed in well-tooled eighteenth-century books" (Stewart 1966, 46) in which he sees his students. However, the reader does not know much about his students as in *The Aylwins* they are virtually nonexistent. Therefore, one does not learn anything about how they perceive their tutor which is essential for (dis)proving this stereotype.

It is worth mentioning here what Adams writes about the academic community in general. He posits that for the members of the faculty "the outer world, sometimes referred to peculiarly as the 'real world,' is suspect; possibly it is an enemy; often it seems incapable of understanding academic language and in possession

of quite different customs and values” while the community outside the university “does have an astonishing ignorance of the academic society, even though it is presumably the community that has sanctioned the smaller society’s existence” (Adams 1988, 24-25). “I’ve never felt awkward, for example, in the higher academic circles I shall presently be going on to describe”, states Frank towards the beginning of the novel (Stewart 1966, 8). Deasy is not a don himself but he is capable of fitting in perfectly. He spends some time in Arthur’s college as a Schoolmaster Fellow-Commoner which means that he has been invited by the college to stay and live with the dons for an academic term during which he conducts his own research which he hopes will help him write his first historical novel. As a Fellow-Commoner, Frank, for example, dines with the dons in the common room. Nevertheless, on different occasions he stresses the fact that he is not a member of the academic community. “I’m not an Oxford man”, he says (Stewart 1966, 14) but, it seems, without regret as he appears to be perfectly happy with being a schoolmaster now. And even though Cropley, the Provost, informally accepts him as one of the scholars by saying with confidence: “You are entirely one of us, after all” (Stewart 1966, 124) and one of the dons goes as far as to state: “You have been so much one of us that our anxieties ought to be known to you” (Stewart 1966, 153), Frank suspects that such behavior results merely from the dons’ cordiality. He is not a member of the family (for the faculty may be considered to be one and this might also disprove the “nonlife stereotype”: even though a don does not have a wife and children, the other scholars are, in fact, his true family), not even a distant cousin, but rather a family friend. Yet as such he is still allowed to participate in the family life, observations of which he includes in his book.

The academic society presented in Stewart’s novel is definitely tight-knit and closed, which Frank points out on different occasions. He, for example, notes that “all these people adopted the convention of using each other’s Christian names” (Stewart 1966, 67) which is a remark that only an outsider to a community would make. The expression “all these people” stresses the contrast between academia and the outside world. It is “them” not “us”, as if the dons were some strange species and using other people’s Christian names was particularly donnish. Frank says that “perhaps it is pointless to chronicle such an unimportant matter, but in a closed society shades of usage can be significant” (Stewart 1966, 67). He also observes that academia is a separate community when he wanders around the college and notices the gates that a porter closes behind the scholars. He says:



If I wanted to go and roam the streets of Oxford [...] I should have to ask this man to let me out. And only he could let me in again. It was true that I had been given a key to an unobtrusive entrance elsewhere. But the massive iron-bound gates swinging to were symbolical, I reflected, of how cloistered these places were. Arthur had been thus cloistered for at least thirty-five years. (Stewart 1966, 64)

But perhaps the most revealing about this distinctive and intrinsic character of academia is what the dons say about themselves. When Frank suggests that they may wager money on the candidates for provostship, Jeremy, one of the younger dons whom Deasy has befriended, exclaims: "What a vision of us you're going to carry off with you, Frank!" (Stewart 1966, 73). And when Frank goes to visit Cropley before his departure, the Provost says: "Speak kindly of us, if you can conscientiously do so – and please send us a pupil from time to time" (Stewart 1966, 93). Finally, when one of the dons meets Frank outside Oxford, he asks him almost impolitely: "You liked us, did you? [...] Perhaps [...] you've even caught a touch of Magdalen Tower fever?" (Stewart 1966, 135-136). To say that is rather rude, given the fact that Frank did not win a scholarship and now, after all these years, he appears in the college not as a true scholar, but a Fellow-Commoner, which may be perceived by some as a consolation prize. Frank, of course, may feel slightly hurt and he explains: "It *was* uncivil. For I recognised the expression as having been coined by some college tutor or other as applicable to young men who, without sufficient academic ability to linger in Oxford with profit, are nevertheless sentimentally or lazily disposed to do so" (Stewart 1966, 136). All that proves that scholars perceive themselves as members of a separate community and they, in fact, form a distinctive group.

The penultimate stereotype discussed in Adams' book is called "the absurd life stereotype" (Adams 1988, 37). Here the author writes about the academic novel as again a satire which is "often a symbolic act of revenge against a world that has turned out to be different from what has been advertised" (Adams 1988, 37). In Stewart's novel, however, the absurdities of academic life are few. "To the extent that what I have to tell is an Oxford story – or, at least, is a collegiate story – I'm bound to make an inexpert job of it" (Stewart 1966, 49), states Frank modestly. Nevertheless, being an outsider works to his advantage since as such he is able to make some accurate and shrewd observations

about what is, for example, “donnish” (Stewart 1966, 57). The first one comes very early in the novel and may serve as a witty characterization of the academic community in general:

I’ve come to make, as will appear, a number of friends in Oxford; I’ve been welcomed there; it wouldn’t be becoming in me to speak disparagingly of any of its institutions. Yet it’s perhaps permissible to remark that Oxford dons aren’t on the whole deficient in a due sense of their own distinction. They’re quite pleased with themselves, if the thing may be vulgarly put. This is partly a matter of the structure of their University, which consists of more than a couple of dozen property-owning, self-governing and self-perpetuating corporations. Within each of these colleges there is very little of hierarchy, and as a consequence the whole place is rather like a South American army as popularly conceived. Nearly everybody is a general, and a colonel’s rank is the lowest that can be found. This does a little conduce to corporate self-satisfaction. At the same time, because nobody inside the place feels obliged to be particularly impressed by anybody else, there is generated a certain tendency to regard oneself as impressively circumstanced in relation to the world outside. (Stewart 1966, 17)

During his stay in Oxford Frank also dines with the dons in the senior common room. On occasions like these he is able to form additional opinions about the dons. He, for instance, finds out that dons “are not always the most ready of conversationalists” (Stewart 1966, 50). When forced by the situation, they do talk to each other about the weather but in most cases, as Deasy notes, they stare “fixedly and awkwardly at each other’s toes” (Stewart 1966, 50). Most of them simply wander around the room waiting for the meal to be served with glasses of sherry in their hands. Frank is also surprised to notice that the Provost, who would normally dine with the rest of the dons, is absent and his chair is taken by Pym, the Vice-Provost. This results in a slightly embarrassing situation. When everybody at the table waits for the Vice-Provost to say grace (for they are not allowed to rise from the table before it) and that moment does not come because Pym mistakenly believes there is still one more course to be served, it is one of the dons who feels that it is his duty to preserve, as Frank puts it, “a desirable standard

of behavior" and recites: "Benedicto benedicatur" (Stewart 1966, 56). This whole situation, together with the Vice-Provost holding a spoon and a fork in a way that, as the narrator writes, was "more appropriate to a child in a nursery than to the ripe scholar he was supposed to be" (Stewart 1966, 56), is an example of "mild academic absurdity" (Stewart 1966, 55).

Interestingly, Jeremy notes that there is something rather unusual about the way the dons sit at the table as if some of them subconsciously chose the seats that would be occupied by certain disciples according to the artistic depictions of the Last Supper. "Have you ever noticed", he asks, "that when we sit down at the table Jimmy Chilmead chooses the position which, according to the traditional iconography of the Last Supper, is prescriptively Judas Iscariot's?" (Stewart 1966, 55). Even though this remark is meant to be light-hearted, it may actually suggest that there is something religious, mystical, almost cult-like about this tight-knit community of scholars. Despite the fact that he finds this comment meaningless, Frank must admit that "there was something a little out of the way about this evening" and that the young scholar's words "did touch in the idea of hidden forces at play" (Stewart 1966, 55). Frank has, of course, yet to learn that the Provost is terminally ill (the reason for his absence) and this (or the next) supper may in fact turn out to be his last.

The last stereotype in Adams' book is "the political stereotype" (Adams 1988, 38). The author writes about politics in broader terms mentioning, among others, the opinion that "faculties are politically unbalanced" which has been formed outside academia (Adams 1988, 39). Stewart, however, focuses on the internal politics of the college. That the provost is resigning, Frank learns from Jeremy. It appears that he has decided to resign his post before he dies. This is when *The Aylwins* becomes a novel similar to *The Masters* by C. P. Snow, a book whose plot also revolves around the election of a Master at a Cambridge college. Stewart is, of course, aware of that fact and makes Jeremy suggest that Frank's book should be modelled on Snow's: "You could write a novel on it – as C. P. Snow did about a similar dust-up at Cambridge" (Stewart 1966, 76). This is probably the moment when Frank decides to write his "collegiate story" instead of a historical novel, as he has previously intended. In this case, the dust-up, as Jeremy puts it, is between Jimmy Chilmead, one of Arthur's colleagues, and, surprisingly, Arthur himself, whom everybody believes to be running for a Chair of History. The whole process of election is described by Jeremy in a rather nonchalant way. He claims that the sole fact that the dons elect a new Provost makes it "so frightful" and the whole thing

is a “blight” (Stewart 1966, 74). A perfect candidate, according to Jeremy, is someone who is “just about past useful work, is fearfully eminent or can be represented as fearfully eminent, has an aristocratic wife and a comfortable private fortune” (Stewart 1966, 74). Therefore, a new Provost is “all our own work”, as Jeremy sums it up (Stewart 1966, 74). Interestingly, both Frank and Jeremy refer later to the whole situation as the “war” (Stewart 1966, 188). When Jeremy describes the pre-election period in the college he says: “Well, the war went on for most of the term, although Croypley’s resignation hadn’t actually come in. A kind of cold war, with everybody trying to find out where everybody else stood. It was really very curious. I’d hardly have believed it. Ignorant armies clashing by night” (Stewart 1966, 188).

Some of the stereotypes that Hazard Adams discusses in his book have been illustrated and reinforced by Stewart in his collegiate story which is only one of many of his books that, according to John Dougill, “comprise the most imposing literary monument ever raised to the institution” (Dougill 2001, 210). Dougill actually succeeds in providing his readers with a satisfactory definition of the sub-genre when he discusses Stewart’s works. He observes that “the celebration of college life is central to his concern” and that his “college preoccupations can seem stifling at times” (Dougill 2001, 210) since his characters appear to rarely leave this “closed world of which he writes” (Dougill 2001, 210). Additionally, Dougill posits that “Stewart’s world is dichotomous” for it is based on the inside/outside division (Dougill 2001, 211) and Oxford itself is “discounted” and reduced to the “cluster of ancient and central colleges” (Dougill 2001, 211). Therefore, one may safely assume that a collegiate story may be defined as one in which, as stated by Dougill, “reality resides in college” (Dougill 2001, 211). It does not mean, however, that *The Aylwines*, or any other university novel for that matter, is a truly reliable source of information about the academic community. Academic fiction is actually built upon stereotypes and often erroneous impressions created by the authors who are, after all, academics themselves. “Academic novelists like to put colleagues into their books and answer colleagues in their books”, writes Adams, “But serious treatments are rare” (Adams 1988, 37). Therefore, it is not important how many of the stereotypes have been refuted in the novel. What is more important is that many of them have been actually included in the plot. It seems then that the more stereotypes the author has recreated in his novel, the bigger its satirical quality is and the more academic (or “collegiate”, as is the case with *The Aylwines*) it becomes. After all, as Adams observes, “a serious novel with an academic setting is likely to be treated as satire in spite of itself” (Adams 1988, 37).

**Works Cited:**

- Adams, Hazard. 1988. *The Academic Tribes*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Carter, Ian. 1990. *Ancient Cultures of Conceit. British University Fiction in the Post-War Years*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Connery, Brian A. 1990. "Inside Jokes: Familiarity and Contempt in Academic Satire." In *University Fiction*, edited by David Bevan, 123-137. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Cuddon, J. A. 1999. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin Books.
- Dougill, John. 2001. *Oxford in English Literature. The Making, and Undoing, of "the English Athens."* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Głowala, Zbigniew. 2010. "University or Universal? Revaluating the Academic Novel." *Lubelskie materiały neofilologiczne* 34: 20-34.
- Jung, C. G. 1990. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lyons, John O. 1968. *The College Novel in America*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Moseley, Merritt. 2007. "Types of Academic Fiction." In *The Academic Novel. New and Classic Essays*, edited by Merritt Moseley, 99-113. Chester: Chester Academic Press.
- Proctor, Mortimer R. 1977. *The English University Novel*. New York: Arno Press Inc.
- Showalter, Elaine. 2005. *Faculty Towers. The Academic Novel and Its Discontents*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stewart, J. I. M. 1966. *The Aylwins*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- Womack, Kenneth. 2002. *Postwar Academic Fiction. Satire, Ethics, Community*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.