



**The Comic/ Serious Duality in Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim***

**ثنائية الهزل و الجد في رواية كنجزلي أميس "جيم المحفوظ"**

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## Authorization

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### Thesis Committee Decision

This thesis entitled "The Comic/ Serious Duality in Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*" was successfully defended and approved on May 24/05/2011.

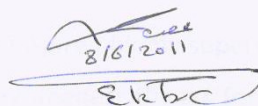
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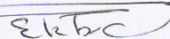
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## Dedication

*I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Father, Mother and Brothers who have never failed to give me moral support.*

## Abstract

The current study examines how Amis's *lucky Jim* provides double modes between comedy and seriousness at the same time. The study deals with criticizing the ground realities of the sociocultural and educational aspects of the British lifestyle in the period after the Second World War. As a result, the study reveals the reflection of the social hierarchies in the British community as a main predicament affecting the lower-middle class people and their simple aspirations and dreams of a decent living. From this angle, *lucky Jim* expresses Amis's anger and dissatisfaction with the world around him. In doing so, the study describes the events of the novel by quoting, and analysing them to encrust the combination between the apparent comedy and the embedded seriousness in *Lucky Jim*. The setting of the novel lies in an unnamed provincial university and its main characters who are introduced as members in this university. The general impression one gets out of this microcosm is that it is a genuine picture of the British academy in the years following the hectic years of the Second World War.



## ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة بشكل أساسي إلى إظهار الثنائية ما بين الهزلية و الجدية في آن واحد في رواية أميس "جيم المحفوظ". فهذه الدراسة تنقد الواقع البريطاني من عدة جوانب, الجانب الاجتماعي و التعليمي . تركز هذه الدراسة على النتائج التي خلفها التغيرات الطبقية في المجتمع البريطاني التي تعتبر بدورها مشكلة تؤثر على أفراد الطبقة الدنيا في تحقيق أحلامهم البسيطة و العيش الكريم. من هذه الزاوية تعبر هذه الرواية بشكل ضمني عن حالة الغضب التي تستحوذ الكاتب و عدم رضاه عن ما يحدث من حوله في الشارع البريطاني. فهذه الدراسة تصف بعض الأحداث في رواية جيم المحفوظ وتحللها لإظهار الثنائية ما بين الهزلية و الجدية. تكمن أحداث هذه الرواية في جامعة في إحدى المحافظات البريطانية و الشخصيات المصوّرة في هذه الرواية هم في الواقع أعضاء في هذه الجامعة. لذلك تعكس هذه الرواية بما فيها من شخصيات من جهة الوضع الأكاديمي البريطاني و من جهة أخرى تعتبر الجامعة كمجتمع مصغّر يعكس صورة مشابهة لما يحدث خارج أسوار الجامعة في الفترة ما بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية.

# Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Chapter one presents a general introduction covering some influential aspects related to the study of Amis's *Lucky Jim*. There are four aspects to be tackled.

### 1.2.1 The Biography of Kingsley Amis

Amis, Kingsley (1922-1995), British novelist, whose works take a humorous turn but with a highly critical look at the British society, especially of the period following the end of World War II in 1945. He was born on April, 16, 1922 in a south London nursing home, the only child of William Robert and Rosa Lucas Amis. His father was a senior clerk for Colman's Mustard. Amis inherited his mother's interest in literature; in *Memoirs* (1991) he writes that she "continued all her life as inveterate a reader as I was in my youth: a book was as much part of her accoutrements

at home as handbag and knitting” (p. 21). This domestic background with its literary and cultural interest will be of a great help for that young writer and his first attempts in writing fiction.

Amis's first novel, *Lucky Jim* (1954), is a satirical story of a young college instructor who won the Somerset Maugham Award. The book influenced a number of British playwrights and novelists, including John Osborne and Alan Sillitoe, who were known as the Angry Young Men because of their rebellious and critical attitude toward postwar British society, (Moseley 1993). In his later novels *That Uncertain Feeling* (1955) and *Take a Girl Like You* (1960) Amis further explored his disillusionment and sense of bitterness. (Moseley,1993).

In the 1970s Amis wrote *The Green Man* (1970), *The Riverside Villas Murder* (1973), *On Drink* (1973), and *Jake's Thing* (1979). Later works include *Stanley and the Women* (1984), *The Old Devils* (1986), a humorous look at middle-class Welsh people, which won the Booker Prize; *The Folks That Live on the Hill* (1990), a satirical portrayal of middle age, retirement, and quirky family life; *The Russian Girl* (1994), a droll comedy of manners;

and *The Biographer's Mustache* (1995). Amis also wrote poetry, criticism, and short stories.

He began his education at the local schools, including Norbury College. In 1934 he embarked on seven years of studies at the City of London School, which his father and two uncles had previously attended. He received an offer to read English literature at Saint John's College, Oxford, where he met Philip Larkin and became a friend of his until his death from cancer in 1985 (Amis, 1991).

He completed his education at Saint John's College at the University of Oxford and then served in the British Army Royal Corps of Signals during World War II. After the war he became a college teacher. During that first year at Oxford, he made friends with Philip Larkin (still his closest friend), John Wain, and Elizabeth Jennings, all, like himself, middle-class, literary, and able students.

Amis served three years in the army (in France, Belgium, and West Germany). The first three stories in Amis's first collection of short stories, *My Enemy's Enemy* (1962), were inspired by his service in the Signal Corps. Late in 1945, at the age of twenty-three, he returned to St. Johns where he

earned a first-class degree in 1947 but failed to win a research degree when his thesis ("Poets and their Public, 1850-1900") was rejected. Within a year thereafter, Amis had written a novel, which remained unpublished, and a collection of poems, published as *Bright November* (1947), married Hilary A. Bardwell in 1948, and took a post as lecturer in English at the University College of Swansea in Wales (Amis, 1991).

In 1949 he received a position in the English Department at the University College of Swansea, Wales, where he remained for the next twelve years. There he became acquainted with John Wain, author of *Hurry on Down* (1953), which-along with John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1957), John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), and his own *Lucky Jim* (1954)--came to be a literary hallmark of a group of young British writers to whom critics referred as "the Angry Young Men".

That Amis has a direct experience in the British academic institutions is a merit which he made use of in his *lucky Jim*. The situations, attitudes and events in this novel draw heavily on his first hand experiences in the academic world. The ironic and exaggerated aspects of this experience do not reduce their actuality and authenticity.

Amis has written hundreds of essays, articles, book reviews, movie reviews, jazz reviews, and letters to the editor in prominent journals on both sides of the Atlantic; in *The Spectator* (1983) alone (Amis's favorite forum in his early years) he published more than 100 such items between 1953 and 1963. Amis the essayist can be seen at his best in his only collection, *What Became of Jane Austen? and Other Questions* (1971) . Eighteen of its thirty-one pieces were written in the 1950s; sixteen first appeared in *the Spectator* (1983).

### **1.2.2 Campus Novel**

One essential question needs to be posed beforehand. It is the definition and the characteristics of the academic novel as seen in the novel of the present study i.e. *Lucky Jim*. According to Proctor (1957) the academic novel concentrates on the academic life in Oxford and Cambridge, and it is relevant to the worlds present in the provincial universities explored by *Lucky Jim*. His definition includes the following:

The English university novels which appeared in such numbers in the Nineteenth century offer a problem not common to better known Victorian fiction. Inasmuch as they deal with Oxford and

Cambridge they are concerned with the peculiarities of life within two exclusive and inbred communities, and they constitute a narrowly specialized body of literature built around codes of behavior and thought which at times appear artificial to the outside world (p, 11).

This definition shows that the English campus novel as a literary fiction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was only concerned with the academic life at the two most important universities :Oxford and Cambridge. But with time passing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many sociopolitical changes occurred during the post-war II eras such as the foundation of the Redbrick University in the countryside in England, which made a significant turn in the British society. This is because such universities make the admission possible for any student, irrespective of class, race or religion.

This new turn had a great influence on the English literature at that time. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century a new campus novel emerged. It is known as the contemporary campus novel which makes connection between fiction and fact. Therefore the university becomes not only an academic environment, but also a small world reflecting harsh realities in the community. It describes the cultural and social situation outside the university walls.

The contemporary campus novel then is a narrative comic story whose world is the academy. Its setting mainly goes in or around a university. The themes that this type of fiction concentrates on are related to criticizing the real world outside and the social and political values. The characters that are portrayed in this kind of fiction are usually professors and lecturers who work in different departments of humanities. They often clash with traditional types of thinking and have views that are incompatible with those of their bosses. This is due to the fact that they have different social backgrounds and perceptions, as will be shown at the due course.

This genre became very popular in the late fifties and early sixties, for the simple reason that the campus novels are distinguished by their satirical humorous style. They are not only concerned with university environment but off the campus as well. They are suitable for solving the social and political problems. Connor (1996) maintains that the campus novel is deeply rooted in its cultural, economic and social context:

Many of the most significant campus novels highlight the problems of survivals and adjustment of the various kinds of displaced person who are their heroes. This is what allows the



campus novel or academic fiction to present miniaturized versions of the condition of England theme (p.71).

The university then is a microcosm representing many interests and conflicts in society. It is rather an image of the real world. Everything that happens inside the university is actually a reflection of the real life of the British society going on at that time. In other words, there is a dialectical relation or mutual effect between what takes place within the university and what is outside it, morally, socially and culturally.

*Amis's lucky Jim* (1954) is considered one of the most pioneering novels of the literary genre "campus novel." This novel is set in three basic places: the first one is in a small university in the English countryside. The second place is the home of Professor Ned Welch who is the head of History Department where Jim Dixon works. The last one is the boarding house of Jim Dixon. The period in which this novel takes place is the year immediately after World War II. The setting here is very important to the plot, because these two factors provide a comprehensive view of the political situation and the social standards of each character. The time was not ordinary. Indeed it is hectic and full of ups and downs and their

ultimate effect on people's norms and conventions. Stevenson (2004) reports that "*Lucky Jim* was nevertheless influential, especially in suggesting the usefulness of campus fiction for social observation" (p.403). Obviously, the serious side of this funny book balks large and deserves attention on the part of the reader.

### **1.2.3 Angry Young Men**

After the Second World War, England witnessed a new generation of men of letters who brought with them new sociocultural orders. They are called "Angry young Men". This term includes some young frustrated writers. This movement represents the sensation of anger and dissatisfaction toward the British society. It also reflects the disgust and rebellion against the establishment and the snobbery of the upper class ideals. All these lead those angry writers to portray the English society as hypocritical and its values as inappropriate to the contemporary conditions.

The angry young movement from the first place is represented by John Osborne in his play *look back in anger* (1956). It addresses a dissatisfied and resentful young generation about the way they struggle to survive in a corrupted community. Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) makes this

angry character say the following, "I've an idea. Why don't we have a little game? Let's pretend that we're human beings and that we're actually alive. Just for a while. What do you say? Let's pretend we're human" (p.15). This quotation is expressive enough of the terrible disillusionment and frustration besetting the lives of the characters in that memorable play.

Jimmy Porter is the main character in *Look Back in Anger* who expresses his disagreement and dislocation with the world he lives in. Porter is a university graduate who runs a sweet stall in the market. All the time, he feels unhappy and irritated for no explicit reason. His rebellion is revealed when he starts psychologically abusing his wife. His wife is from upper class background and her father never accepts Jimmy as her husband. In other words, part of the anger lies in the class differences between Jimmy and his wife. This play in brief is an exploration of the frustration of the young generation estranged from their fathers' working class and unaccepted in the snobbish upper class. John Osborne is certainly not the only name in this movement. There are others such as David Storey, Allan Sillitoe, John Wain and John Braine who have written similar works of protest and anger.

In (1954) Amis was uncomfortable with the socio- political situation in England at that time. Amis published in (1954) his first work of fiction, *lucky Jim*, which received a great deal of attention from the critics, and readers.

The novel is tracing the fortunes of a young provincial university lecturer, Jim Dixon. He struggles against the pretentious upper class professor, Ned Welch and his family. It describes a young scholarship boy as a representative of post-war British society who unveils the political power and class distinction, the burning issue for this scholarship boy.

*Lucky Jim*, as will be shown in the following chapters, combines the protest of the angry generation and the humor of the campus novel. Certainly there is too much to laugh at. However, a great extent of seriousness is presented as well since the black comedy combines the farcical and tragic.

#### **1.2.4 Irony and Satire**

When things seem to be disproportionate, unexpected or out of place, usually philosophers, writers and even ordinary people use irony to comment in order to show contrast of rejecting an attitude or expressing

disbelief hidden between outer words to convey the inner meaning. Irony is a valuable resource for citing the social, moral and political imagination against whatever is given. In the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literature Term* (2001), Chris Baldick defines irony as "subtly humorous perception of inconstancy, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance" (p.130). Irony according to Baldick depends on the contradiction between what is said and what is really meant. So Irony is commonly used to criticize someone or something which is not appropriate or not in line with the expectations of cultural norms.

Moreover irony has certain types to be distinguished. The first one is called 'situational irony' which occurs when the results of a situation are far different from what was expected, (Gibbs and Colston.2007). The second type is related to the 'irony of fate' or 'cosmic irony' which is a sharp difference between our expectation of an outcome and what actually happens by interference of God or chance. The third type of irony is the 'dramatic irony' when the audience knows more than the characters do. Finally, the 'verbal irony' which means to convey a meaning exactly the opposite from its literal meaning.

Irony sometimes is confused with satire. Satire is an exposure of the follies of individuals, groups, ideas or society, usually with a view of reforming them. It mainly deals with fragments of society in which there is no decent family or society available for the main character to reconcile himself to. Even with the difference between irony and satire in that irony deals with the implied thoughts and satire is concerned with criticizing the follies of people, still the main function of both is the same: revealing the righteous truth toward a certain society and debunking the hypocrisy and absurdities of people. (Colebrook.2004).

Irony and satire as literary devices are not used by chance or haphazardly. In fact, authors use them intentionally and consciously, because through these devices they can create witty situations, add emphasis on certain issues and to be humorous. They also use irony to poke fun at the social conviction for the purpose of evoking change and reform.

In fact irony and satire date back to old Roman and Greek times. In ancient Greece, for instance, there was no strong traditional satirical work; actually the word 'parody' was often used instead of what is later called

satire. However the comedy of the Greek playwright Aristophanes, written in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, has its influence as a satirical work in these days. Aristophanes' plays are known for their critical political and social commentary (Colebrook.2004).

In the Roman age satire was a distinctive literary form, starting with Gaius Lucilius's thirty books of verse satires which savagely spoke out on wide variety of subjects. Horace and Juvenile are considered the most influential and prominent ancient Roman satirists. Also the Roman poet Horace was a great satirist whose works served as models for later writers. As a satirist, he preferred to comment on the human follies with a smile, especially in sexual matters, or boorish behavior. The other Roman satirist poet is Juvenal whose satire in his *Sixteen Satires* savagely attacks the Roman society for what he saw as a social and moral widespread of degeneration (Quintero, 2007).

Over the years, in the eighteenth century period irony and satire became a dominant literary form and for that reason that period had been called the golden age of satire. One of the most brilliant social satires was *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) by the dramatist John Gay. A wealth of satire

was produced by the poet Alexander Pope; the essayist and journalist Joseph Addison is a name to be considered in this regard; the novelists Henry Fielding, Tobias George Smollett, Jane Austen, and most notably, the writer Jonathan Swift. All have used satire and parody in their works. Jonathan Swift was one of the greatest prose satirists. His satire is inspired by what seems to be hatred to mankind, although he is known for his kindness and unselfishness in writing for poor people. *A Modest Proposal* is one of the best examples of satire in world literature. This work argues that the problems of poverty in Ireland can be solved by selling children of the poor people to wealthy ones as delicious food. Demarria (2001) cited the following:

I am assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London that a young healthy child, well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food; whether stewed, roasted, baked or boiled, and I make no doubt, that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or ragout (p.426).

Through this manifest thesis, Swift expresses his outrage against the economic and political policies of Irish and English government which has led to starvation and abject poverty.



## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The current study demonstrates the comic /serious duality in Amis's *lucky Jim* (1954). In other words, the study reveals the apparent side of being comic and humorous and the serious side which is hidden and embedded between the lines. Throughout *lucky Jim*, the study attempts to focus on the British society during the Second World War. Some effects of the aftermath of the war are intensively felt in the English educational system when members of the working class got more educational opportunities. The growth of provincial universities and the influence of culturally elite people led to friction between the old and new order. In *lucky Jim*, such cultural changes led to the conflict between upper class and working middle class people; hence the significance of Amis's novel in shedding some illuminating light on this social schism and its social manifestations whether in the academy or outside it.

## **1.3 Questions of the Study**

Through the years immediately following Second World War, everything changed in the British life on many grounds, socially, culturally,

morally, economically and politically. As such, the present study raises the following questions:

1) How did *Lucky Jim* challenge the Establishment's values and embody the new cultural, social, and political attitudes of the postwar era?

2) How did Amis employ the comic and ironic style as a means of criticizing the academic and social life of the British society?

3) If Amis has ever been considered one of the prominent members of the Angry Young Men movement, what was exactly the cause of his anger in his *Lucky Jim*?

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

One of the two objectives that this study deals with is the contrast and irony in the British life and the citizens of Britain in the period during the Second World War and after. The military victory in this war makes them believe or dream of a new breath for a new coming future and a better life. But what happened to them was the opposite.

The second objective is the social concerns in Britain, which is the main point to be explored in the present study. It is a novel concerned with the

ordinary social life of the British people and classes. It is the life of sexuality, love, job security and politics which form the hub of this novel.

## **1.5 Methods and Procedures**

In order to achieve the objectives and answering the questions of the study, this work followed the descriptive and analytical approaches.

The study depends and focuses mainly on Amis's novel *lucky Jim* which is going to be examined in detail to reveal issues related to academic, cultural, and socio- political realities. Some reference to Amis's other novels is given whenever necessary.

The background of this study in the first chapter discusses four main issues related to the novel *lucky Jim* and its author, Kingsley Amis. The first issue is the Campus Novel as a literary genre under which *lucky Jim* is subsumed. The study explores how this genre historically begins, along with its definition and the main purposes of choosing such genre by writers of Kingsley Amis's type.

The second issue in this background has something to do with the literary trend called Angry Young Men. The researcher starts this section by

defining it and its prominent literary figures and the role of Kinsley Amis as one of its influential members.

Thirdly the researcher covers the biography of Kinsley Amis and most of the important details of his life, as a novelist, essayist and journalist. The reason behind this is that there is a substantial link between this biography and *Lucky Jim*.

The final issue deals with the two literary devices, irony and satire, since it is obvious that Amis's *lucky Jim* manipulates these tools as its main and striking features.

The second chapter reviews literature, and provides different opinions regarding Kinsley Amis and his novel *lucky Jim*. Most of these reviews share the same ideas about what purpose Kinsley Amis holds in his novel. Critics and scholars agree that *lucky Jim* reflects the period of the fifties and sixties in Britain where difficult social, financial and political circumstances were prevalent. These factors or variables have been minutely reflected in Amis's *Lucky Jim*.

In the third chapter, the study describes the origin of the novel and its purpose of being written by its author Kingsley Amis. The study also

analyzes and interprets Amis's *Lucky Jim* throughout its characters in order to refer to the core of this study which is the duality between comedy and seriousness in Amis's first novel *Lucky Jim*.

Finally the study ends with a conclusion in summarizing the purpose of this study and how comedy is only a cover for the serious life in Britain after the Second World War.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This research may help fiction readers of fiction of the sixties particularly Amis's *lucky Jim* to gain a better understanding and to give them new perspectives of the academic life at that time. It also contributes to a deeper comprehension of the social and political life in postwar British society for experts and scholars working in the same field.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited to the analysis of sociopolitical values in the British society after the Second World War in the 1950s and 1960s, through

analyzing Amis's *Lucky Jim* only. The study also cannot be applied to all his works, and other writers of his generation.

### 1.8 Definitions of Terms:

- **Angry Young Men:** A group of British writers of the 1950s and 1960s who gave voice to the antiestablishment sentiment felt by the younger British generation after World War II. Those writers worked into the dissatisfaction of the young (Burgess, 1999). The term has been used to describe Kingsley Amis, John Osborne, Colin Wilson, John Wain, Solihitoe and others.
- **Campus Novel:** a novel, usually comic or satirical, in which the action is set within the enclosed world of a university. It is a novel that satirizes university life. The campus novel in the modern sense goes back to the 1950s: Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academe* (1952) and Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954). (Baldick, 2001)
- **Disillusionment:** the act of being free from an illusion and false belief, or the state of being freed therefrom. It means frustration,

bafflement, and the realization that life does not offer the individual what he/she dreams of or deserves.

- **Irony:** a figure of speech in which one's meaning is expressed by language of an opposite or different tendency, especially by the simulated adoption of another's point of view for purpose of ridicule (Eagle, 1970).
- **Satire:** it is a manner of critical writing. It exposes the erroneous aspects of human behavior by using wit and humor that reveal discrepancies between what actually is and what should be (Burgess, 1999).

## Chapter Two

### Review of Literature

Lodge (1966) begins his review referring to the distinction between the contemporary and modern writers, based on Stephen Spender in his book *The Struggle of the Modern* (1963). Spender observes that throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century literature there are two kinds of writers: the contemporary writers in the 1950s period and after who engage directly with the social and political circumstances, and if they want to protest against these circumstances, they do so with some optimism in the possibility of improvement. The second type is the modern writers who distrust their circumstances whether socially or politically. They even despise these circumstances to the extent of abandoning the hope that things may get better.

Amis is known as one of the most important contemporary writers. He employs his works for the sociopolitical circumstances. *Lucky Jim* is the best example in which Amis provides his readers with a new cultural term,



defending the new social order in the period succeeding the Second World War.

The other thing Lodge discusses in his review is Amis's admiration of England's great comic novelist, Henry Fielding, whose comedy is based on the contrast between people's actions and their motives, their appearance and essence.

In line with this admiration, Amis uses the same technique that Fielding has followed, but Amis's contrast is not presented directly by the author himself as Fielding did. In fact it is seen through the main character Jim Dixon who sees the incongruity of appearance and reality and the hypocrisy of people. Jim Dixon actually shows his readers how he himself is a hypocrite who pretends to like history teaching.

The problems of Jim Dixon lie in the incongruity between Jim's outer world and his inner world. He is aware that his inner thoughts toward life and people around him compensate for the unsatisfactory situation of his outer world.

The solution of his obstacle comes when his Merrie Old England's Lecture is destroyed by his drunkenness which leads him to express frankly

his attitudes toward his life. Here as the inner and outer life correspond to each other as Lodge refers, “the issue of the novel can only be resolved when Jim wills his inner life to coincide with his outer life” (p.255).

In this review, Smith (1981) refers to the so called Angry Young Men who occupied the literary British scene of the nineteen- fifties. They do not belong to one coherent and unified school. Rather, they are more a creation of the literary press dealing directly with the human interior life and human values which are explored in the development of their characters.

The angry writers such as Kingsley Amis, John Osborne and John Wain are not working class writers per se. In fact, they belong to middle class families. Therefore the angry writers seek to explore the relation of human consciousness to social mobility. They focus through their works on the inner life of the British people which is considered according to Smith, the main reason for the sociocultural problem during the post –war period. The moral values inside everyone should be the criterion, irrespective of the social background whether upper or lower class. This is why the angry

writers touch on the relation of private lives to public roles and focus on perennial quest for self- knowledge.

The fiction of the angry writers mainly criticizes the sociocultural entanglement in the British society. Smith (1981) believes that those angry writers do not blame quietly the social rules of such society. Instead, they criticize the inner morality in each member in this society. So the literary works of those angry writers belong to moral novelists and dramatists. The problems raised by these are couched in moral terms.

In this review Macleod (1983) points out that Amis's reputation lies in his craftsmanship in writing, and also his linguistic resourcefulness. Amis's concerns from the very beginning lie in making his works readable. So he cares much for the reader's interest in his fiction, focusing on working class readers who are mostly uneducated and uncultured people. Therefore the simplicity of his language and the clarity of his intention toward the sociopolitical values are primarily used in his literary works.

His characters and events are also very recognizable and familiar for those common people. The themes too are written carefully to be clearly stated and easily understood. As such, Amis's fiction is considered realistic

in the way he reflects everyday experience in the contemporary life and embodies all types of reality through his fictional characters.

The following epigraph with which Bradbury (1987) starts his review indicates that Amis disagrees with the Bloomsbury group. His writings are considered anti- Bloomsbury and challenge both literary and social conventions. "While he explained, he pronounced the names to himself. Bayswater, Knightsbridge, Netting Hill Gate Pamlico, Belgravia square, Wapping, Bloomsbury. No, Not Bloomsbury" (p.201).

Bloomsbury is a name that refers to a group of writers, intellectuals, philosophers and artists who hold informal discussions throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The group includes Virginia Woolf and her husband Leonard Woolf as well as very important political figures such as Lytton, Clive Bell, and E.M. Forester.

They are in conscious revolt against the social entanglements and sexual restrictions of the Victorian age. They almost come from the same background, middle and upper classes and intellectual elite.

*Lucky Jim* is considered one of the significant comic books in its time. It is that novel which has mediated the social, political and intellectual life in

Britain and its capacity to manifest humor. As in Bradbury's description, "Brilliant comic effects with a sharp sense of social process and even social protest" (p.205). Amis somehow revives the old tradition comic fiction depending on Henry Fielding who is considered the voice of good humor benevolence with his anti hero Tom Jones.

From Amis's way of writing, one can see how he mocks the past and its styles and manners and speaks straight from the plain ordinary present. He also attacks everything nostalgic and medievalising in the British character and finds his substance in the commonplace, the provincial and the blond lady.

Amis's *Lucky Jim* discusses not only the deep political matters as Bloomsbury does, but also it is concerned more with the social and cultural values of the common people, thronging of conventional intellectuals , behavior academic respectability and social snobbery.

Amis's language is also different. It is not that complicated text which is full of psychological actions, but it is more a workable common voice with simplified text that speaks out against the unnecessary complexity, social appearances and hypocrisy.

Amis is not exactly that intellectual writer. He is an outrageous observer of the real British life, its mores, sociocultural and political practices. His comedy is both spiky and clubbable, aggressive and affable. He writes to outrage and delight his readers at the same time, without controlling their minds, or affecting their judgments and choices.

In his study, Munji (1993) discusses two basic recognitions. First of all, the response of C.P. Snow to the 20<sup>th</sup> century British sequential novels is not limited only to his series of novels which is called *Strangers and Brothers*.

This series, *Strangers and brothers*, consists of eleven novels published between (1940-1970) that traces the career of Lewis Eliot, the main character. It even provides a complete description of his personal life, starting with Eliot's boyhood in a provincial town as a working class character, through the law school and years as a fellow at Cambridge University, to an important government position. This series has studied the political and social changes in English life during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of the novels in this series is called *The Masters* (1951). It is set in Oxford and Cambridge universities which portray the closed politics and power

struggles among the fellows when they have to elect a new master to represent them.

The second recognition is that justice can only be achieved to Snow's fictional series by giving full critical attention to the novel which proceeds and the novel which follows this series, *Strangers and Brothers*.

Munji (1993) through this study finds out that C.P. Snow rejects the discontinuity between the fictional and nonfictional world, because through reading literature, one can learn more about any speedier culture or society. He also finds out that the campus life which C.P. Snow focuses on in his sequence of several novels, reflects the values and ideological orientation of a larger society itself.

The point of view Ritchie (1994) is very enthusiastic to this fine novelist Amis who wrote his debut, *Lucky Jim* when he was thirty one years old. Ritchie sees this novel as a criticism of and judgment about the British society in a very rough and aggressive manner. But the comic and hilarious style that this novel has makes the way of expressing Amis's anger run very smoothly. By the same token, Ritchie considers *Lucky Jim* primarily a brilliant comic novel whose main aim seems to be to make his readers

laugh and get pleasure. However, this novel has other aims to communicate to those readers such as the life of the British society after the Second World War. Apart from these, there is a problem of the class distinction and conflict between working-middle class and upper classes. In fact, this issue provides Kinsley Amis with the reputation of being something as a working class hero.

Amis knows that he likes to annoy people in his writings, as he confesses in the statement, "if you can't annoy somebody, there's a little point in writing". *Lucky Jim* therefore is certainly an annoying and destabilizing novel. It attacks the sociopolitical British values. It also mocks the high social class, praising the working class which is more worthy to live on the one hand, and being totally against the political Establishment, on the other.

Ritchie also sees that the narration of this novel is well-constructed, not a scene or even character trait is wasted. This, in Ritchie's review, makes Amis's novel a masterpiece both in tension and suspense.



Watson (1997) sees Amis as a great novelist for the way he expresses his generation's experiences. We are all Amis, more or less, if born during the Second World War. His works look like the first kind of fiction which speaks in our voice. In fact, there is no pride in admitting that an author is our voice; actually we wish not to be him. But he is there from *Lucky Jim* (1954) onwards. It is the undeniable sound that represents our generation life in the postwar era.

Although *Lucky Jim* is considered a funny novel, it has its share of fear: the fear of inexperienced young man with the social life around him who teaches history course which he hates, but he does that for sake of getting a higher position and dreaming of better future.

Watson expands Amis's attitude toward the British education which appears to be equivocal and even hostile. Therefore his work *lucky Jim* is scornful and aggressive for the false intellectualism that the British people had toward such education.

No matter what background those people come from, whether lower class or middle class, or their concepts and judgments, Jim Dixon thinks of education as a means for improving his personal life on the financial and

social grounds. This runs counter to the upper class people like Ned and his son Bertrand who considers education as an important part to accomplish the final steps of being or approaching the elite in social life.

Brook (2000) emphasizes that culture rather than mass civilization in which culture has the ability to affect everyday life in order to change the values of the British people. This might become the seeds of political change and social reconciliation.

Williams (1990) depends on the definition of culture in his book *Culture and Society* which says: "Any culture in its whole process, is a selection and emphasis, a particular tending. This distinction of a culture made in common is that the selection is freely and commonly made and remade" (p.337). Brook shares Williams's view of culture and sees it as an anthropological reality and as a sphere of wholeness and reconciliation from which to criticize an alienated society.

Brook sees in Amis's *Lucky Jim* the best example that challenges the split between culture and mass civilization. *Lucky Jim* represents, in this review traditional cultural hierarchies as a problem for the individual that can be solved only by the individuals themselves. This is one of the reasons

which makes Jim Dixon alienated and feel lack of freedom, since his taste and habits put him in the wrong side of the cultural divide.

The solution, therefore, should come from the individuals themselves in the way of changing the cultural values inside each individual, and this will lead to free the individual's mind from the seal entanglements around him\her and to start believing in himself as a person that cares less for matters of power and money.

*Lucky Jim* then is not that book which attacks directly the fundamental social structures and British political society. Instead *Lucky Jim* substitutes culture to class, economy and politics, attacking the cultural norms of the British people. This book emphasizes the authenticity of the individual as a solution to break down the social alienation and egotism in the British community.

According to Brown (2008), the text of Amis's *Lucky Jim* as a campus novel has a simple paradigm in which four common conventions are stated. They center on the academic's struggle for survival in provincial university. The first convention is related to the characters in this novel. The main character, for instance, Jim Dixon, is always being satirized and mocked,

“The (usually male) academic protagonist is satirized, and secondary academic figures caricatured, in order to indicate his naiveté” (p.592). The secondary characters are portrayed in such a way as to indicate the naiveté of Jim Dixon. So this protagonist, Jim Dixon, is the only one who is satirized among his friends and colleagues in the same department where he works. The main reason behind this is cultural, the way he has been brought up and educated.

The second convention has something to do with the place and the environment in this novel which turned out to be not only a place for teaching and lecturing, but also a place for a sociopolitical discussion, reflecting the way of life that the British society used to live. Such a place requires cunningness and wit in order to survive which Jim Dixon lacks.

The third convention is concerned with the academic characters whether they choose the life of the mind as in the case of Ned Welch, the antagonist, who loves history and its sublimating effects, or the other type that chooses the life of senses such as Dixon. The latter’s ambition is to seek a better future, having a well paid job to accomplish his materialistic dreams and the love he seeks for.

The final convention is about the end of those academic characters that either win the battle and stay in the academy, or escape and run away from such a place. Amis's comedy stresses on the act of revealing the despicable side behind the great one, the ugly behind the beautiful and the absurd behind the obvious.

Out of this brief account of critical reviews and assessments, it becomes evident that *Lucky Jim* is not simply a farcical work that exposes the absurdities and foolish acts practiced in the post-war British academy. Indeed it is a work that covers all aspects of seriousness related to the moral and social condition of society in historical movements of upheaval and transformation. As such, the task of the present study becomes evident: an attempt to see how the comic and serious are interlocked in Amis's novel, a point to be fully explored in chapter three of this study.

## Chapter Three

### 3.1 The Comic and Serious Elements of *Lucky Jim*

The genesis of this novel dates back to 1948 in the common room in Leicester University, where Kingsley Amis went to visit his best friend Philip Larkin. He sat with him for a cup of coffee looking around a couple of times and realized how careless teachers were about their job. Amis concludes that they can be anything but not teachers. For that reason Amis (1954) tells himself “Christ, somebody ought to do something with this” (p. 56). As a result, he began writing his *Lucky Jim* to reflect to some extent what he noticed in that common room.

*Lucky Jim* was not at that late time in the fifties an isolated literary work. In fact during that time clusters of works followed the same way of Amis’s description for the English life at that time. As in John Wain’s *Hurry on Down* (1953), John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956), John Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1958) and many others, nearby the same situation of the

alienated young man is raised and explored. The same bleak situation of social life was keenly felt and sharply reflected in such works.

*Lucky Jim* can be defined as a sharp comic story reflecting the pretentious academic life. The book is considered one of the funniest novels in the twentieth century. However, this novel goes beyond that sequence of funny actions as some people would expect. In fact, there is a dark irony embedded which reflects the real lifestyle of the British community. In the following section, the study cites several important actions and situations in order to reveal how Amis expresses the humor and farcical sides in *Lucky Jim* as well as the serious implications of those actions.

The foundation of the humor of *Lucky Jim* mainly centers around Jim Dixon, the main character and his follies and blunders. So Amis makes that factor a key ingredient of his comedy. This is so especially when Dixon attempts to cover them up, but ironically he just makes things worse by such desperate attempts.

One of the great skills that Amis has is the sarcastic technique he can create, not in the way of telling a joke for an empty pleasure, but in more

subtle way. This writer encrusts the true personality of his character such as Jim Dixon who reflects the absurdities of the English academia through his comedy. It is a tautology to refer to the great influence on the life outside the academy, since the story is told by an insider and outsider at the same time. As Brown (2008) clarifies in her words, “he [ Jim Dixon] is no longer the cloistered scholar, or a figure in the ivory tower of academia, but is rather a deeply troubled member of a contemporary cultural landscape” (p. 592). Therefore, Amis has the ability to distance himself from characters enough to get an accurate assessment of their follies but never get so distant from them that he loses an appreciation of their humanity.

Jim Dixon is a junior assistant history lecturer in a Redbrick Provincial University in England in the period after the Second World War. He is about to finish his two- year probation to find out whether he is going to be hired or not. He comes from a working class origin which makes him in an inferior position to his arrogant boss, Ned Welch, and his son, Bertrand. Naturally, Dixon dislikes his boss, but he must keep respecting him, because he is the one directly responsible for renewing the contract of Dixon’s job. In other words, the relation between them is that of mutual interests rather than of



affection. Also it is based on affectation and deception rather than genuine and disinterested grounds.

Jim Dixon sees his job as a means of breaking through his miserable life in order to prepare himself for a better future. Bradbury (1987) equally in his important novel, *The History Man* chooses its protagonist from the same class (working class) and make his history as the field of Kirk Howard with all its merits and demerits. The difference, however, lies in the treatment of the academy and its world. In that novel, there is a great deal of hypocrisy and sham behavior life. In contrast, Mr. Ned Welch, the professor, sees history as a perfect way of romanticizing the past and reviving the old British traditions. So both, Dixon and Welch, in this novel use the same tool, i.e. history, in order to refer to completely different aims. From this point, the contrast itself between Jim Dixon and Ned Welch, develops and shows itself through different manifestations and forms.

Those mistakes and unintentional blunders make the reader somehow in a distressing time, but the comedy of these mistakes adds a kind of flavor to make them more palatable and enjoyable for the reader. The comic

sense in Amis's characters, Jim Dixon lightens the severity of his predicaments and makes living with them much easier. In other words, the ostensible humor or even farce hides bitter facts about social and cultural hierarchies and the difficulties of dismantling it

Jim's predicaments lay in his involvement with the snobbish characters around him. For example, his relation with Margaret Peel is shown in the way that Dixon perceives it. In fact he does not have the patience to wait and see how this relationship ends for good. She transforms his simple life into a life full of anxiety and distress, nevertheless, she is not that beautiful lady as Dixon describes her "minimal prettiness" (p.105).

This can be taken as a clue for Dixon's lack of self-confidence. As Dixon confesses, "I'm sticking with Margaret because I haven't got the guts to turn her loose and let her look after herself...Because I'm afraid to" (p.201). That he does not have the guts to break with this woman is evident enough. He is fully aware of being used and manipulated by such women in the way that their friendship turned to be a real romantic relationship. He finds himself competing with Margaret's ex-boyfriend Catchpole, "Then suddenly he'd become the man who was going around with Margaret and

somehow competing with this catchpole" (p.10). This manipulation position is also affirmed by Carol Goldsmith in the Summer Ball who warns him: "Throw her [Margaret] a life belt and she'll pull you under" (p.121).

The fact that Dixon does nothing, not even trying to get himself free out of Margaret's clutches, is extremely frustrating to the readers. The striking thing is that he does not take action although he knows that she plans for all that, "Dixon fought hard to drive away the opinion that, both as actress and script writer, she [Margaret] was doing rather well" (p. 76). This willful ignorance by letting things just carry on makes things just worse. He spends unhappy times with her, he even becomes afraid of meeting her, "averting his attention from the thought that Margaret would be there" (p.204).

Another character, Jim Dixon finds himself trapped with his professor, Ned Welch. Ironically Dixon hates his job for the entire requirement that his job needs, "It was a perfect title, in that it crystallized the article's niggling mindlessness, its funeral parade of yawn-enforcing facts, the pseudo-light it threw on non-problems" (p. 14). What also makes his job more unpleasant is Dixon's boring company with Ned Welch and

here is the core of Jim's predicament. That he needs for sure to attain a job which he hates and, and not to mention his foppish boss Ned Welch, all this aggravates his problem. In the following quotation for example, the authorial description clearly shows the rift between the main character and bullying boss, "All the time he'd thought he was bringing the matter of his probation to a head he'd merely been a wrinkle on the pin of Welch's evasion technique" (p. 86). One can see how Ned Welch elusively refuses to relieve Dixon in giving him a straight answer and stability, whether he is going to be accepted or not in his job at the end of his probationary period. As Gardner (1981) suggests, Ned Welch succeeds in making Dixon feel illusioned about his future and making his life more difficult on him, "infuriatingly vague and evasive" (p. 27). This definitely deepens the rift between these parties on the social ladder.

In the opening page in *Lucky Jim*, the readers can learn how Amis introduces his two main important characters, Dixon and Welch, as well as the main action that will keep the plot in motion. Dixon in this conversation is doing nothing but watching and listening to his professor Mr. Welch. He also seems to be passive and restrained to Mr. Welch, the unpleasant,

forgetful whom Dixon really hates, especially when Dixon confuses the musical instruments, flute and recorder, as Amis (1954) narrates:

After the interval we did a little piece by Dowland,' he went on; 'for recorder and keyboard, you know. I played the recorder, of course, and young Johns... , really. Well, anyway, the reporter chap must have got the story wrong, or not been listening, or something. Anyway, there it was in the Post as large as life: Dowland, yes, they'd got him right; Messrs Welch and Johns, yes; but what do you think they said then?' Dixon shook his head. 'I don't know, Professor,' he said in sober veracity. No other professor in Great Britain, he thought, set such store by being called Professor. 'Flute and piano.' 'Oh?' 'Flute and piano; not recorder and piano.' Welch laughed briefly (p. 7).

This excerpt is indicative of the even-widening gap between Dixon's class and that of his boss. Indeed music becomes the touchstone for the recognizing and estimating one's cultural background and education. From the very beginning Dixon recognizes that he is totally in the wrong place working with wrong people. Such arrogant people are concerned only with the empty and pretentious life. They have no idea about what other people

like Jim Dixon could think or act. But unfortunately Dixon needs to stay in the company of those pompous people in order to get his job at the end.

Obviously, Jim's enemy is the old sociopolitical establishments, not merely the content but with their mode and form as well. The way that the upper class rulers look down at the lower poor and provincial people is unmistakable and keen. As once Mergers puts it in criticizing Dixon of being "shabby little provincial bore"(p.158). They do not want to see those provincial people taking over their positions and living in their fantasy neighborhood. In fact they need to keep the distance between themselves and those poor people. Herein lies the social and economic level of the book. Underneath the farce and jokes there lies a serious criticism of the ruling establishments which allow represent a stumbling-block in the way of social reconciliation.

Dixon needs to hide his own contempt and loath toward the old pretentious establishment represented by the Welches and his colleagues at work. The way Dixon can relieve himself can take the form of the funny faces he keeps making all the time behind people's back so that, no one can see him. Through these faces Dixon expresses his anger, rebellion and

grudge inside which he feels against such people, “Dixon opened his eyes doing everything possible with side of his face away from Welch, everything which might help to relieve his feeling in advance” (p. 13). Another way Dixon expresses his anger is through the inner comical thoughts and commentaries on the people around him as the following example shows:

He pretended to himself that he’d pick up his professor round the waist, squeeze the furry grey-blue waistcoat against him to expel the breath, run heavily with him up the steps, along the corridor to the Staff Cloak-room, and plunge the too-small feet in their capless shoes into a lavatory basin, pulling the plug once, twice, and again, stuffing the mouth with toilet-paper. Thinking of this, he only smiled dreamily (p.9).

Critic Salwak (1992) finds such comical thoughts give Jim Dixon the power to endure the pomposity of Ned Welch and self-respect: He claimed that “In order to maintain self-respect... Jim resorts to a comic fantasy world in which he can express rage or loathing towards...Welch” (p.65).

Another evidence about these comical thoughts is suggested in the situation where Jim is in the company of Margaret. As usual she gives full rein to her fancies and speculations about Jim by saying:

Do you hate me, James?' she said. Dixon wanted to run at her and tip her backwards in the chair, to make a deafening rude noise in her face, to push a bead up her nose. 'How do you mean?' he asked (p.156).

This sharp contradiction between Dixon's humorous and aggressive thoughts of what he really wants to do with Margaret, and the smooth response as nothing happen, "How do you mean?" gives the reader a clear idea about Dixon's inner attitude. It represents contempt and dissatisfaction from one point and his lack of confidence and doubt of the other.

At this stage of analysis, there is a need to explain the implications of Amis's choice of the title for this novel. That he is a lucky person is a glaring matter, given the fact that he survives all types of setbacks and failures, especially in the last two chapters of the novel. This fact holds true to the rest of the novel since his good luck remains the outstanding feature of his



character. Having said that, one has to stress the fact that Jim faces all types of difficulties and hostile reactions. His own faults and blunders aggravate the situation. But at the end he proves to be lucky as his nickname suggests.

The novel begins in a provincial small unnamed university with Ned Welch and Jim Dixon, the main characters, walking together and talking about boring subjects like music, Welch's passion, which makes Dixon, feel disgusted and frustrated. Therefore, Dixon cuts the conversation by asking about Margaret who is in a recovery period in the Welch's house for attempts unsuccessful to commit suicide:

Welch was talking yet again about his concerts. How he became Professor of History, even at a place like this? By published work? No. By extra good teaching?.... shuddering in his efforts to repress a yawn of nervousness. He asked in his flat northern accent: How's Margaret these days? (pp. 8- 9).

Welch replies that she is recovering very well in his house and absent-mindedly he changes the subject to his boring stories while Dixon stifles his frustration once again, "After no more than a minor swerve the misfiring vehicle of his conversation had been hauled back on its usual course" (p.9).

After asking about Margaret, Ned Welch invites Dixon for tea in order to check on Margaret's health. This situation brings him face to face with Margaret in whose meeting Dixon feels very confused and nervous because of Margaret's unstable emotions after the suicide.

In the first two chapters of this novel, Amis provides the readers with the main two predicaments that Dixon would face all along the novel. The first one is his relation with Ned Welch. Actually, Dixon fears to express his true feelings of contempt to this traditional snobbish man. Although at heart, he does show that in his ruminations and speculations, a point of entertainment and fun for the readers. So he has to pretend to like him so that he [Jim] will not lose his job. The second predicament is related to Margaret who tries to make Dixon fall in love with her. But Dixon could not break up with her lest he hurt her feelings and its drastic consequences. He [Dixon] said, "More than ever it was the moment to dart into the street and fail to return. But economic necessity and the call of pity were a strong combination; topped up by fear, as both were, they were invincible" (p.26).

At some point in the novel, Dixon forces himself, in order to protect his job, to attend the arty weekend at the Welch's house which definitely

leaves him unhappy, frustrated and bored. Amis (1954) describes Jim Dixon's situation as follows:

It was much late now for Dixon to explain that he hadn't really meant it when he'd said , half an hour before , that he could read music ' after a fashion' ; much too late to transfer allegiance to the basses. Nothing short of an epileptic fit could get him out of this... Dixon nodded bemusedly, hardly further laughter from Johns....An irregular knocking on the door at the far end of the room (p. 38).

Once again, interest in music can be seen as a means of reflecting the educational and class differences of the two campus people. Obviously, Jim Dixon has nothing to do with the world of music and art. Of course, this is not his fault. He has been brought up in an environment that does not consider music as one of its priorities. Nevertheless, he has to give lip service to this field as an indication of his being on equal footing with the other staff members.

All the time Dixon has been pretending that he can read musical notes and sing just for the reason to impress his professor, Ned Welch. Meanwhile, in this weekend, Dixon thinks that he can fake his way through sing-a-long. Just as Dixon's lack of musical talent is about to be discovered, when his turn comes to begin singing, he is almost trapped and

embarrassed to the extent that Johns starts laughing at him. Ned Welch's son Bertrand knocks the door and disrupts the sing-a-long party. The madrigal group breaks up. Dixon quickly retreats and puts his head down and disappears which causes him to avoid the introductions with Bertrand and his girlfriend Christine Callaghan. For the first time the reader can feel why the novel is called *Lucky Jim*. Dixon has been saved in the nick of time but not for long, because avoiding the introduction with Bertrand makes him later address Bertrand's girlfriend, Christine Callaghan by another woman profession, a ballet dancer called Sonia Loosmore. Bertrand furiously accuses Dixon of provoking him and making fun of his girlfriend.

Look here, Dickinson or whatever your name is Bertrand began, perhaps you think you are being funny, but I'd as soon you cut it out, if you don't mind. Don't want to make a thing of it, do we? (p.42).

Later in the same night, Bertrand starts a sharp discussion by criticizing the British government for taking money from the rich people to help the poor ones. Dixon replies with a comment endorsing the socialistic enterprise. But Bertrand will not let Dixon win this argument. And Dixon refuses to call back. They are about to move the argument to the next level

by physical violence until Ned Welch comes in. Dixon feels so angry that he leaves the house. (Amis, 50- 51).

Jim Dixon waits for any chance just to make his attack against Bertrand, the son of Ned Welch. This is not because Jim Dixon rejects Bertrand as an individual, but the way he behaves or talks. Dixon actually sees Bertrand as the representative of the old cultural, political and social establishments which prevent Dixon from any advancement in his personal life both socially and financially. Here is one description of such pomposity by Bertrand Welch which is one of the most intolerable snobs of British twentieth century fiction, and Dixon's attitude in meeting it:

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. And what work do you do? Always provided, of course, that I have permission to ask....Dixon hesitated; Bertrand's speech, which, except for its peroration, had clearly been delivered before, had annoyed him in more ways than he'd have believed possible (p. 41).

In the next morning after he passes out, he wakes up to realize that he falls asleep with a burning cigarette. It has burnt the bed sheet to reach the rug as well as the table. Then he figures it out by himself by using his own razor in order to cut burnt section in the bed sheet which is absolutely a stupid idea, because he just makes thing worse. Dixon goes downstairs to the breakfast room where Christine is there having her breakfast meal. Dixon forgets his bed sheet problem for a moment and notices how much this blond lady is pretty. But suddenly feels panic and for no explicit reason he explains everything that happens to him upstairs. She decides to help him out to conceal the damage. Dixon feels astonished at her enthusiastic attitude about hiding the damage. He stands behind, watching Christine's beauty in which he believes that this kind of prettiness does not fit his lower position. She is so far out of his league. Deep in his unconscious thinking, he keenly realizes his social alienation: Dixon reports:

That meant ash; ash meant burning; burning must mean cigarettes. Had this cigarette burnt itself out on the blanket? If not, where was it now?.....Carrying a safety-razor blade. He started carefully cutting round the edges of the burnt areas of the bedclothes with the blade. He didn't know why he did this.  
(p. 63)

What makes this situation appear more comic is when Christine gets out to the hallway as a look out whether it clears or not in order to remove the burnt table downstairs to hide it. While holding the table and laughing together, Margaret busts them and asks what is going on here?. Dixon then becomes so confused and tries bashfully and apologetically to explain the situation. Christine could hardly hold her laughter. However, she once again saves Dixon by interrupting the conversation to suggest that they just take care of the table.

Dixon through this event learns more about Christine and about himself. He notices many things in her to make her the perfect woman in his eyes. He sees her irregular teeth and her open appetite. Also he recognizes the way she does not hesitate to help him out and her sense of humor. But again Dixon's misfortune still dogs him. Much to his dismay, she is in love with someone else and also he himself is trapped by another woman, Margaret Peel.

Few days later at the summer Ball in the university, Dixon makes a good move toward Christine by offering her a ride to the Welch's house. But Dixon could not let this go without adding some comedy and

embaressment. When he steps outside the building for the cab he orders, he finds another one waiting for another couple, Mr. and Mrs. Barclay. So he decides to identify himself as Mr. Barclay to fool the taxi driver. But in order to make things go right, Dixon tells the driver to park around down the corner. So in this case Mr. Barclay will not see the taxi he has ordered. Suddenly Mr. Barclay and his wife emerge. Dixon then quickly goes to them and begins talking to them just to distract their sight over the taxi.

He took Christine's arm and walked her round into the side-street, calling good-night. They started to cross over. Does that mean we've lost the taxi? It was ours, was it? Ours after it was theirs. No, I told the driver to drive round the corner and wait for us a hundred yards along the road (p. 132).

The funny situations continue with Jim Dixon, when he writes a fake letter to his fellow lecturer, Johns, in the Music Department, pretending to be a jealous boyfriend of the woman that Johns admires. The next morning Dixon runs quickly to his breakfast in order to be present when Johns receives the letter which Dixon has written. Dixon and his two other friends who know about this letter can hardly hold themselves from laughing at him. Johns immediately knows what Dixon has done and warns him that he will regret his actions: "Dixon wrote to: - Mr. Jobs and the address of the



digs on a cheap envelope not specially bought for the purpose sealed the letter up in it" (p. 153).

The true purpose of this fake letter is not only to create a comic atmosphere, but it has a more serious aim which is the act of revenge. It is a payback time from Johns. He puts Dixon's job on the line for the way he interferes and spies on Dixon's life. The reader would ask what kind of revenge is that by sending a fake letter to someone who is threatening his job. But Kingsley Amis is right about this, because if he made Dixon act differently, this would contradict his comic trait in his personality and feeble situation. In contrast, Bertrand takes his revenge from Dixon, for the simple reason that Dixon tries dating his girlfriend Christine, by starting a fist fight and punching Dixon on the face. "Bertrand chimes, and jabbed at Dixon face. Dixon stepped aside, but his feet slipped and before he could recover Bertrand's fist had landed with some force high up on his right cheekbone" (p.205).

Mr. Ned Welch invites Dixon for dinner. As they get home, Mr. Welch parks his car in such a way as to leave no space for Dixon to get out from his side. Dixon then gets out through the driver's door where his only pants

ripped off. Inside the house, Mr. Welch remembers that they cannot have the dinner, because Mr. Welch and his family have an appointment to attend a show in town.

The bad coincidence continues with Dixon as he remembers that Mrs. Welch will confront him about the burning bed sheet. Dixon admits everything he has done and offers to pay for the damage. Also Bertrand, Christine's boyfriend, starts yelling on him because he takes Christine at the Welch's house in the night of the Summer Ball. Both Mrs. Welch and her son work as a team against Dixon to remind him of his class status as an inferior person:

Casting about for means to leave the car, Dixon rejected the six-inch corridor left to him between the door and the side-wall nearest him, and, after some bad-tempered leg-play with the gear- and brake-levers, slid across the front seat to the other door. As he did this, something seemed to pluck at the seat of his trousers....Before he was out of the room, Mrs. Welch moved up like an actress dead on her cue. Bertrand was at her side. Rather red in the face....I'd like you to explain, if you can, just what happened to the sheet and blankets on your bed when you were our guest here recently (p. 179, 181).

Few days later, Dixon feels very happy by the dates he gets with Christine. After finishing his boring five hours working on his 'Merrie England lecture', he rushes to get ready for this date. The reader can find himself once again is confronted with a very funny situation as in the following:

Dixon said 'Can I have my change, please?... 'Change?' Yes, Change. Can I have it, please?... 'Five shillings you give me'.... Yes. The bill was four shillings. I want a shilling back..... Wasn't that my tip?... It might have been, but it isn't not now. Give it to me.... The Whole shilling?.. Yes all of it. Now. Give it to me. The waiter made no attempt to produce any money. In this half-choked voice he said: Most of people give me a tip.... Dixon replied 'Mast people would have kicked your arse for y by now. ... Later Dixon was on the way out and his shilling in his pocket (p.204).

This event fully expresses the bad financial condition that this man, Jim Dixon faces in his life. He could not give a tip not only a shilling but less than that. But we need to look at the hilarious way that how Amis deals with such situation in order to deliver the idea that Dixon is a very poor man counting shillings to stay alive.

Another funny ridiculous behavior Jim Dixon does is his way of celebration after finishing his very boring article Merrier England. He starts moving all around the room imitating ape gestures:

With a long jabbering belch, Dixon got up from the chair where he'd been writing...and did his ape imitation all round the room. With one arm bent at the elbow so that the fingers brushed the armpit, the other crooked in the air so that the inside of the forearm lay across the top of his head, he wove with bent knees and hunched, rocking shoulders across to the bed, upon which he jumped up and down a few times, gibbering to himself (p. 205).

Then suddenly, Bertrand comes into the room and accuses Jim Dixon of dating his girlfriend, Christine the day before. In this situation, Bertrand picks a fistfight with Dixon in which Dixon wins at the end:

Bertrand chimes, and jabbed at Dixon face. Dixon stepped aside, but his feet slipped and before he could recover Bertrand's fist had landed with some force high up on his right cheekbone. A little shaken, but undismayed, Dixon stood still, and while Bertrand was still off his balance after delivering his blow, hit him very hard indeed on the larger

and more convoluted of his ears, Bertrand fell down. (p. 209).

Amis's purpose behind this scene is to develop Dixon's character that he is not that weak and unconfident man as he is taken to be. In fact he is that man who could stand by himself. This is also an indication that one should depend only on himself to solve his problems. The language in this event used by Bertrand can be described as a very aggressive and offensive, which is only to indicate his pomposity toward Dixon. As Bertrand says, "Your so called mind and you dirty little bar-fly, you nasty little jumped up turd" (pp. 207). Dixon at the end of this fight appears more powerful than Bertrand, because Bertrand does not expect such self-defense by Dixon, for his inferiority and failure to match from different cultural background.

The humor of this novel reaches its climax when Dixon's lecture called the "Old Merrier England" goes horribly wrong. Dixon drinks too much alcohol before the lecture as an attempt to calm his nerves down. Dixon therefore becomes drunk at the moment of his lecture. While he is presenting the Merrie Old England's lecture, he finds himself unconsciously imitating and mocking his professor, Ned Welch, by using his intonation.

The students feel delighted up in the balcony where Dixon realizes that there is something wrong. Dixon then changes his voice just to find himself at this time imitating the principal. As a result for this, Ned Welch fires Jim Dixon at the end of the lecture, leaving him in a very weak position with broken dreams. The authorial description is apt in evoking the main character's psychological position as he is swaying between his conscious and unconscious desires, between despising and fearing the same people:

Then he realized what it was that was so wrong: he'd gone on using Welch's manner of address.... As he went on, he was for the second time conscious of something being very wrong. It was some moments before he realized that he was now imitating the Principal (pp. 223).

This given topic of "Merrie Old England" presented by Jim Dixon in his lecture, actually symbolizes the nature of the conflict between the new England representative [Jim Dixon] and the old one which Ned Welch defends. Ned Welch gives this assignment to Dixon just to see if Dixon has the ability to perpetuate this old myth or not. But Dixon has no clue about perpetuating such a myth. In fact he is trying to succeed with his personal future life, a life that has nothing to do with tradition and the past.

The novel ends with some changes that the reader would not expect. Dixon is offered a new job by Christine's uncle, Gore- Urquhart. It is the job that Dixon all times has been dreaming about in the city of London. Ironically, this job was meant for Bertrand. However Mr. Urquhart prefers Dixon over Bertrand not because he is more qualified than Bertrand, but for Dixon's honesty which Bertrand lacks. So this character, Mr. Urquhart, represents the new kind of the upper class in the British culture. He does not discriminate between people just because of their social background. In fact it is this new culture which focuses on the individual personality before giving any judgment. "It's not that you've got the qualifications, for this job or any other works, but there are plenty who have. You haven't got the disqualifications, though and that's much rare" (p.234). This implication of this interesting episode lies in the fact that there are some people like Jim Dixon who can climb the social ladder irrespective of their qualifications or merits. Moreover, there are still those people or classes that judge disinteresting and keeping in mind the moral honesty as the sole criterion for estimating one's advantage

### **3.2 Serious Themes behind Ostensible Fun**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Britain struggled to recognize itself from the sociopolitical destruction. However, writers struggled to find an appropriate voice to speak out against the circumstances of the post war period. As Malcolm Bradbury rightly suggests, the war “created not only a new political, social and ideological environment, but inevitably a new intellectual and artistic environment as well” (p. 319).

Lodge (1966) believed that John Wain, John Braine, John Osborne Kingsley Amis and many other writers and works appeared to take the English literature into the next level, reflecting the post-modernistic life after the war. Their works run in a different direction from those of the modernistic predecessors, such as Joyce and Woolf and their followers. In fact their fiction is no longer only interested in the limits of expression. It is understandable and more readable by the common people, and that is what makes them distinguished to be called contemporary writers.

The works of those contemporary writers reflect a wider spectrum of real life especially that of the common people. They express similar



concerns about the rebellion, social frustration and anger. They also express the true life of the working- middle class people. Through their works, they showed all sorts of contempt and subversion of the cultural values of the upper class.

From this point, *Lucky Jim* is not only that comic book written for the purpose of pleasure and entertainment, but also it is to be considered a great reference against the British Establishment at the time of 1950s and 1960s. Those Establishments were the main reason to create a disillusioned and frustrated young generation, it is the generation of young men and women who feel that their ordinary dreams of a decent life have been thwarted.

Therefore, Jim Dixon, the main character in *Lucky Jim*, is not that hero or even anti-hero. He is just an ordinary man with ordinary desires and ordinary dreams. He wants to be employed in a decent job, no matter what kind of job. He just wants to be away from his bad lower-class position. Dixon then decides to get along with his colleagues and his boss Ned Welch to secure his new job. He finds himself far away from such pretentious culture. So he discovers that he is definitely not in the appropriate place in

this provincial university where Dixon finds himself impelled to work. Therefore, Jim Dixon is considered according to Keulks (2003) "as an insider who wants out, not an outsider who wants in ... Dixon is supremely displaced in the world of his provincial university "(p.107). It is obvious that Jim's problem is that of environmental and psychological alienation, the failure to acclimatize himself to his environment. He dislikes his pompous professor Welch, and his son Bertrand, the pseudo artist from the moment they meet each other. Despite his great hatred of this place, Dixon decides to stay and keep his job on depending on the strength derived from his wit, adaptability and self awareness. These characteristics make him capable of escaping from the trap of the wrong town and even the wrong woman, Margaret Peel. who all the time tries to pull his leg to make him fall in love with her; she even makes a suicide plan using sleeping pills just to make him feel guilty about her.

In the arty weekend, Jim Dixon reveals that he hates music and art, when he is in the company of Ned Welch and his son. But that is only the surface of things. In fact, his hatred and rejection are not specifically directed to music and art. They are rather directed against the pretentious people who love music as the Welches do. This emblematic rejection is in

one way or another a reaction of an ordinary man who finds, himself stuck by the so-called pomposity of the music lovers of the upper class people.

Dixon is not only a hateful person of the upper class people; he also detests their pretentious culture. Dixon is considered a cultural iconoclast of the high social class people. One of the famous textual evidence for Dixon's anti- culture is when Dixon overhears Ned Welch singing in the lavatory in the morning. He describes Welch's tune as a filthy Mozart "The upsurge of a deep, untrained voice into song. The piece was recognizable to Dixon as some skein of untiring facetiousness by filthy Mozart" (p. 63). Dixon despises the Welch's cultural attitudes as Kingsley Amis points out, "culture is good, but not the way in what Welches did it (p.147)".

The language of the novel can definitely tell how Kingsley Amis insists on referring to the social differences between his characters. Amis provides these characters with varieties of English language and its dialects in their conversations. Such a technique in this novel actually works very well, because language here reflects the nature of the characters and their true personalities as well as the social and cultural background. Dixon's language appears to be simple and at times refers to common slang expressions

which are appropriate to his lower background. In contrast, the Welch's language includes formal words and phrases just to embody their level of education and their upper position.

### **3.3 The Theme of Education**

Through his novel *Lucky Jim*, it is evident that one of the important themes Kingsley Amis focuses on is his dissatisfaction with the British education. He criticizes such a system as a corrupted one. First of all, we can see this angry attitude through the character Ned Welch the Dean of History Department. It is the fact that the sharp memory is a very important prerequisite that history teacher should acquire and depend on while reading and teaching. This is because history simply means the past and its interpretation. However, Ned Welch in this novel is represented with an attribute as a very forgetful person "Then Welch came up to him and said, inexplicably enough: Ah Dixon, come along now. I want you to meet my son Bertrand and his...his... come along" (p. 40). So how can such an absent-minded person become not only an ordinary History teacher but the chairman of this Department? Another point makes the reader suspicious

about Welch's ability as good teacher is his incapability to judge critically Dixon's research without an outside affirmation. That such people of Welch's type occupy prominent position is by itself an indictment of the academic system prevalent in Britain at that time.

Likewise the main character, Jim Dixon, is terribly criticized for being an incompetent teacher. The way he takes advantage of such a system in order to be a history teacher serves nothing else except fulfilling merely personal interests as he answered when he was asked about the reason of becoming a Medievalist:

No, the reason why I'm a medievalist, as you call it, is that the medieval papers were a soft option in the Leicester course, so I specialized in them. Then when I applied for the job here, I naturally made a big point of that, because it looked better to seem interested in something specific (p.33).

Mr. Beesley, a fellow lecturer who takes his job seriously, feels very angry at the British education authority which has no objection at all to hire disqualified teachers in universities such as Jim Dixon. This education system seems to prefer quantity over quality.

From this point, Maugham's article which is cited in Keulks's book (2003) *Father and son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis and British novel since 1950*, describes and criticizes negatively the new intellectuals of the 1950s such as Jim Dixon and what they represent:

They do not go to university to acquire culture, but to get a job, and when they have got one, scamp it. They have no manners, and are woefully unable to deal with any social predicament. Their idea of a celebration is to go a public house and drink six beers. They are mean, malicious and envious. They will write anonymous letters to harass a fellow undergraduate and listen to a telephone conversation that is no business of theirs. Charity, kindness, generosity are qualities which they hold in contempt. They are scum (p. 106).

Maugham's sharp criticism of the academic system and life in Britain is self-evident and spares us further comments and speculations.

The novel is based on the English Education Act 1944 which allows the lower students to receive their university education as Jim Dixon did who became the history teacher in a provincial university. From this viewpoint Amis portrays *Lucky Jim* as a clash between Lower and upper class people in order to reflect the social verities of the post-war period. All this is

manifest through the way Jim Dixon works under these old Oxbridge professors and principals who somehow occupy the provincial universities. The mutual misunderstandings, misconception and grudge are just symptoms and manifestations of a wholesale social malaise.

### **3.4 Class Hierarchy:**

The main purpose of Amis's invention of the character of Jim Dixon is to express Amis's dissatisfaction and frustration against the social and cultural changes and differences in the British society. Accordingly, the novel reflects the post-war social British structure represented by the two main characters Jim Dixon and Ned Welch. Dixon is the representative of the lower class background who has been baffled by the upper class members such as Ned Welch. As a result, Dixon could not keep going forward to improve his personal life. His future dreams have been thwarted by the presence of the upper class community.

However, one needs to mention the solution that Amis introduces to his readers. This solution briefly lies in the character, Gore-Urquhart who is considered as a mixture of the pleasurable life of the upper class position

and the simplicity and honesty of the lower class people. His suit at the summer ball party, as Dixon notices, is good evidence of his modesty and kindness. It does not have that perfection as someone would expect from such rich and well mannered-man. As Dixon describes him, “His evening suit, too, was not nearly as spectacularly faultless as might have been predicted” (p.109). This is just an example of the many that Amis elaborates. Obviously Jim’s problem is not social and economic: it is moral and behavioral. Indeed, the novel’s significance stems partially from its ability to present the different classes of society and their clashing interests and priorities.

### **3.5 Love and Its Diversifications:**

Despite the ironic and comic narration of *Lucky Jim*, it is considered a conventional romantic story. Jim’s First relationship starts with a young female lecturer, Margaret Peel, at the university where he works. At the beginning, Dixon seems to like her, but Margaret later on seems to be crazy enough to Dixon. She even tries to commit suicide just to convince him about how much she loves him. In this situation Dixon finds himself in a desperate romantic one-sided affair. He is not sure about that and even he



does not want it. This is one of the many pitfalls Jim has to be cautious against.

At the same time, Dixon meets Christine Callaghan the blond beautiful lady whom Dixon dreams about all his life. In the first meeting for both, Dixon finds her an unpleasant person. She starts fighting him rudely, because he mistakes her for another woman's profession. But later when she attempts to help Dixon in hiding the damage he has done to the burning bed sheets, he discovers that there is something tender under her tough personality in contrast to their first encounter. From that moment on, they feel that there is some romantic tie between them, but both of them are attached to someone else. This makes their relationship hopeless and futile. It is these ironies and unpredictable and incidental situations that make *Lucky Jim* carry this fascinating combination between the funny and serious, the romantic and mundane, the sardonic and melodramatic.

The book in some ways reenacts the Cinderella myth, but the difference between this myth and *Lucky Jim* is that the main character in the novel is a male, instead of a female. Dixon in the novel is doomed to be a member of a very lower position. He has to endure the servility which

comes from unworthy and even evil people. He must leave a good impression to his professor Ned Welch so that he would not fire Jim. He needs to attend all his professor's deadly parties. He has to obey him in doing his library research and many other things just to save job (Moseley,1993).

Finally Dixon wins his princess, Christine Callaghan, after she learns that her boyfriend has been cheating her and planning to marry another woman behind her back.

Dixon holds a comparison between Christine and Margaret. Obviously, Christine is the one who wins. For example, he compares both by the way they laugh. Christine's laughing is like music, unlike Margaret's laughter which resembles the sound of ringing bells. "Who, also laughed a clear musical sound not like Margaret's tony silver bells" (p.40).

As a comic book, *Lucky Jim* does not go in one direction of being only farce. Clearly, Kingsley Amis represents many significant themes through his main character, Jim Dixon and his contradictory environment. In fact the novel has more than the pleasure time and entertainment to the British society. It touches mostly all aspects of life that any common person may have experienced in his daily ordinary life. *Lucky Jim* is a book criticizing indirectly or even directly the old sociopolitical English Establishments and their terrible impact on the individual's life and his reaction. All this is associated with the shaky situation of Jim Dixon and its incongruities.

As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Jim Dixon's life is divided into two parts. The first one reveals how much this man is besieged by the mistakes he commits all the time unintentionally. The second part reveals the sharp turn which suddenly occurs at the end of the novel to Dixon. So the new job he is offered and the love of a blond lady makes him the luckiest person ever seen. This makes the book carry a happy ending where the good are eventually rewarded.

When Jim Dixon represents himself as an honest person and starts thinking of himself only at the end of the novel as development. He frees

himself from his social alienation. Everything starts to go right with him and feels victory to his enemies. He is happily employed on his way and wins the love of a very beautiful blond girl. This happens without changing in the social class or changing in politics. The social mobility and politics have nothing to do with individual's desires, but the individual remains the only one who can change his destiny.

This perfect job turns out to be the outcome or the reward for Dixon's honesty against the hypocrisy of the upper class people. Because without this, i.e. Jim Dixon's honesty and frankness, Mr. Gore-Urquhart will not feel interested in Dixon's personality and give him the job.

Therefore, Amis's protest against the old Establishments makes him fit to be classified as one of the Angry Young Men writers. As Bradbury refers to *Lucky Jim*, it "became a summative work of the spirit of fiction much as John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* did in drama" (p. 207).

*Lucky Jim*, then, is a social and moral criticism of the practices of certain classes (the upper-middle class) in segregating people from lower class. In its funny and sarcastic tune, *Lucky Jim* highlights the great extent of hypocrisy, double-dealing and condescension. That the serious is

represented in a very comic way is a sign that Amis employs the comedy for its classical Aristotelian purposes i.e. the combination of seriousness and entertainment in a very remarkable way.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion

The principal goal of this study has been to point out the duality in *Lucky Jim* between comic situations and their serious reflection on the British community. In other words, this novel expresses Amis's dissatisfaction with the world around him after the Second World War, taking into consideration the social, cultural and educational realities.

Amis's comedy then depends on the culture and class hierarchies among his characters in *Lucky Jim*. Amis takes his chance to employ such a deep and biting comedy. He uses the provincial campus as a perfect place for portraying the clash between classes, since people like Ned Welch control these universities, due to their privileged status as graduates from Oxford and Cambridge universities. Ned Welch practices his authority of old English Establishment against lower class people such as Jim Dixon. Often he bullies such staff members. This incongruity between Dixon and Welch establishes on the one hand the comedy of this novel, it constitutes the serious elements on the other. The place, therefore, becomes more like a

closed society. In such a world Jim Dixon finds himself under the control and authority of people like Ned Welch.

For that reason some critics and journalists classify Kingsley Amis by his rebellion against the sociocultural entanglements as one of the angry writes of the literary movement Angry Young Men. Indeed, he deserves this categorization because his *Lucky Jim* describes this covert and even overt spirit of dissatisfaction and discontent in a community that impedes man's basic and inalienable rights of getting a job and a wife. *Lucky Jim* is the struggle of the individual in a difficult and sometimes hostile environment where hypocrisy is the predominant feature.

Although the book betrays a great extent of anger against the sociocultural entanglements, there is a point of optimism as shown in the end of the novel, as the hero gains his rewards in findings the job he likes and the woman he loves. Seen from another perspective, those small and downtrodden people are not always left behind because of their inferior background. Actually they can come out ahead as felt in what happens to Jim Dixon and his farcical and pitiable condition.

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