

THE USE OF SATIRE IN DEPICTING SOCIAL ISSUES IN "LUCKY JIM" BY KINGSLEY AMISS

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**Introduction.** The origin of this novel goes back to 1948 in the common room in Leicester University, where Kingsley Amis visited his best friend Philip Larkin. They had a conversation about the social matters and realized how careless and incompetent teachers were about their job. Amis concludes that they are not capable of teaching. As a result, he began writing his *Lucky Jim* to portray the poor academic life in the society. *Lucky Jim* was not an only book to describe these topics. In fact, during that time a number of works appeared in the same way of Amis's description for the English social and academic life at that time. As in John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953), John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), John Brain's *Room at the Top* (1958) and many others, the same situation of the alienated young man is described and analyzed. The same poor situation of social life was widely studied and sharply portrayed in such works. *Lucky Jim* can be considered as a sharp comic story describing the snobbish academic life. The book is read as one of the funniest novels reflecting the English academic and social life in the twentieth century. There is a dark irony which reflects the real lifestyle of the British community after the World War II. In the article, several important actions and situations are cited in order to show how Amis expresses the humor and comic sides in *Lucky Jim*, and the serious consequences of those actions.

**Main part.** The core of the humour of *Lucky Jim* centers around Jim Dixon, the main character and his stupid and silly mistakes. Amis makes that factor an essential ingredient of his comedy. This is so especially when Dixon tries to cover them up, but ironically he just makes things worse by such futile attempts.

One of the great skills that Amis can possess is the sarcastic technique he can employ, not in the way of telling a joke for an empty pleasure, but in more indirect way. This writer covers the true personality of his character such as Jim Dixon who shows the absurdities of the English academia through his comedy. 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).<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Amis has the skill to take himself away from characters enough to have an accurate assessment of their follies but never get so distant from them that he loses an appreciation of their humanity. prettiness" (p.105).

<sup>6</sup> Brown, S. (2008). Is there life outside of (the genre of) the campus novel? The academic struggles find a place in today's world. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 41, (4), 591-600.

Jim Dixon worked as a Junior Assistant History Lecturer at Red Brick State University in England after World War II. He is completing a two-year probationary period to find out if he will be hired. He comes from a working-class background and is inferior to his arrogant boss Ned Welch and his son Bertrand. Of course, Dixon doesn't like his boss, but he must continue to respect his boss, as he is directly responsible for Dixon's contract renewal. In other words, the relationship between them is based on mutual interest, not affection. Jim Dixon sees his work as a means to break through his miserable life and prepare for a better future. Also, in Bradbury's (1987) pivotal novel *The Man in History*, the protagonist chooses a hero from the same class (the working class) and Kirk he includes all the strengths and weaknesses as in Howard's field. writing his history. However, the difference lies in the treatment of the Academy and its world. There is a lot of hypocrisy and fiction in this novel. Professor Ned Welch, by contrast, sees the story as a perfect way to romanticize the past and revive old English traditions. , using stories to refer to vastly different goals. From this point on, the contrast between Jim Dixon and Ned Welch itself develops, manifesting itself through various manifestations and forms. These mistakes and unintentional failures somehow put the reader in an embarrassing hour, but the comedy of these mistakes adds a sort of flavor to make it more palatable and enjoyable for the reader. Amis' character Jim Dixon's sense of humor makes his predicament less harsh and makes life easier with them. In other words, even the humor and farce hide a stark truth about social and cultural hierarchies and the difficulty of dismantling them. For example, his relationship with Margaret Peale is shown as Dixon perceives it. In fact, he doesn't have the patience to wait and see how this relationship will eventually end. She turns his ordinary life into one of hers of horror and misery, while Dixon Not a beautiful woman who describes her "minimal cuteness" (p.105). This can be seen as a manifestation of Dixon's lack of self-confidence. "Because I am afraid" (p.201). It is clear that he does not have the courage to break up with this woman. He finds himself competing with Margaret's ex-boyfriend, Catchpole. This operating position was also confirmed by Summer Ball's Carol Goldsmith, who warned: "Throw her [her Margaret] her lifebuoy and she will drag you down" (p.121).

The fact that Dixon didn't do anything, didn't even try to release from Margaret's hand, very frustrating for the reader. What's amazing is that he doesn't act even though he knows she's been doing all this. Her willful ignorance of her doing nothing only makes her situation worse, he has an unhappy time with her and is even afraid to see her. Another character that Jim Dixon is trapped in is his professor, Ned Welch. Ironically, Dixon hates his job for all the demands his job requires. (p. 14) What makes his job even more uncomfortable is Dixon's boring company with Ned Welch, and here lies the crux of Jim's predicament: the need to get a job is all his problem. aggravate the For example, in the following quote, the author's description clearly shows the chasm between the hero and the bully boss. "Welch's Evasion Pin" (p.86). Seeing Ned Welch elusively refuse to exonerate

Dixon by giving straight answers and stability as to whether he will be accepted for his job at the end of the probationary period. I can.

As Gardner (1981) suggests, Ned Welch has managed to dissuade him about his Dixon future, making his life difficult by being "infuriatingly vague and evasive" (p. 27)<sup>7</sup>. increase. This certainly widens the gap between these parties on the social ladder. On the first page of *Lucky Jim*, readers can learn how his Amis introduces his two main his characters, Dixon and Welch, and the main actions that advance the story. Dixon in this conversation

Just look and hear his professor, Mr. Welch. He also appears passive and reserved to the awkward and forgetful Mr. Welch, whom Dixon really dislikes, especially when Dixon confuses the instruments flute and recorder, as Amis (1954) recounts: "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 shows the widening gap between Dixon's class and his boss's class. In fact, music becomes a touchstone for recognizing and evaluating one's own cultural background and education. From the start, Dixon found himself in the completely wrong place and he was working with the wrong people. Such arrogant people only care about an empty and pretentious life. You never know what other people like Jim Dixon think and do. But unfortunately Dixon has to hang out with these pompous people to get this job. Apparently, Jim's enemy is the old socio-political system, not only in its content but also in style and form. The way upper-class rulers look down on the poor and rural populations below is unique and perceptive. When they criticized Dixon as, as Mergers once put it, "a shabby little provincial pit" (p. 158). They don't want these hiccups to take their place and live in a fictional realm. In fact, they have to put distance between themselves and these poor people. Here are the social and economic levels of the book. Beneath the farce and jokes lies a serious critique of the ruling institutions that stand in the way of social reconciliation.

Dixon has to hide his own disdain and disgust for the old pretentious establishment represented by Welches and his colleagues. No one can see him because he can take the form of a funny frown. Through these faces, Dixon expresses his anger, rebellion and resentment towards them: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 funny inner thoughts and

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<sup>7</sup> Gardner, P. (1981). *Kingsley Amis*. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

comments about 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 cap less 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).<sup>8</sup>

Further evidence of these strange ideas is suggested in Jim's situation with Margaret: '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). her nose. 'what do you mean?' he asked (p.156).

This sharp contrast between Dixon's humorous and aggressive ideas about what he really wants to do with Margaret and his blunt reaction when nothing happens gives the reader a clear idea of Dixon's inner attitude. In some ways it expresses contempt and dissatisfaction, and in others it expresses his lack of trust and doubt.

At this stage of the analysis, it is necessary to explain the implications of Amis' choice of title for this novel. That he's a happy man, especially in the last two chapters of the novel, is an obvious fact considering he survived all sorts of setbacks and failures. This fact is also true for the rest of the novel. His happiness remains a defining characteristic of his character. His own mistakes and mistakes make the situation worse. However, as his nickname suggests, he ultimately proves to be lucky.

**Conclusion.** As mentioned above, the novel explores social class issues and the poor academic life of England in the 1950s. Kingsley Amis use satire in order to portray the widening gap between different classes and their complicated relationships. Amis's comedy portrays the culture and class hierarchies among his characters in *Lucky Jim*. Amis takes advantage of his chance to create such a deep and biting comedy. He makes great use of the provincial campus as a perfect place for portraying the differences between classes, as people like Ned Welch own these universities, due to their privileged status as graduates from Oxford and Cambridge universities. Ned Welch uses his authority of old English Establishment system against lower class people such as Jim Dixon. Often he tortures such staff members. This disagreement between Dixon and Welch makes up the core of the novel on the one hand, the comedy of this novel, it demonstrates the serious elements on the other hand.

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<sup>8</sup> Salwak, D. (1992). *Kingsley Amis: A modern novelist*. London: Great Britain Barnes & Noble Books.

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