



## THE REPRESENTATION OF CLASS HIERARCHY IN “LUCKY JIM” BY KINGSLEY AMISS

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**Annotation.** *The 1950s in England are characterized by the class conflict and social mobility between different layers of society. The advent of universities and colleges comprised almost all people from various backgrounds, but everything worked for the benefit of the culturally elite. The aspirations and dreams of the youth from lower class were not achieved due the upper hand of the wealthy members of society. This disappointment led to the movement “Angry Young Men”, which resulted from the anger and disillusionment towards the prevailing conditions of that period.*

**Keywords.** *Social mobility, Angry Young Men, campus novel, satire.*

**Introduction.** Kingsley Amis is one of the representatives of the movement that was called “Angry young men.” The name was given and enhanced by the critics who thought that all the writers of the group wrote about same problems of the society and expressed anger towards the disastrous conditions. The culture of the middle class and lower classes was considered different and Kingsley Amis belonged to the lower middle class. His father was a humble clerk. So through his writings he shows his anger towards the higher sections of the society and subsequently by parodying their situations shows the culture of his own class.

Amis’s work deserves attention as a serious study of the British Academic World of the time narrated with a comic overtone. “Lucky Jim” is a campus novel, in which the whole story is set in an academic world. Jim Dixon is a freshly inducted lecturer on History in a British University. A drunk Dixon’s lecture on ‘Merrie England’ is one of the comical high points of this work. Study of changing structure in society and resulting class conflict reflected in the parody of events in Kingsley Amis ‘Lucky Jim’ of this period is actually the aim of this paper.

**Main part.** A new age group of writers became famous in the ‘fifties and were known as ‘The Angry Young Men’. These people came from working-class or lower-middle-class backgrounds and were educated in universities but failed to use their education to become part of the routine socialistic elite. Their writing style was not traditional and was labelled realistic and showed disdain towards the existing elite classes also displaying the anxiety of the working and lower middle class after the war. General dissatisfaction in the efforts of the welfare state to eliminate social inequality and distaste for the profit motive was also a central topic in their writings.





“Lucky Jim” by Kingsley Amis is considered a campus novel which shows the hypocrisy, snobbery of the upper class ideals in a satirical manner. 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. affection. Also it is based on affectation and deception rather than genuine and disinterested grounds.

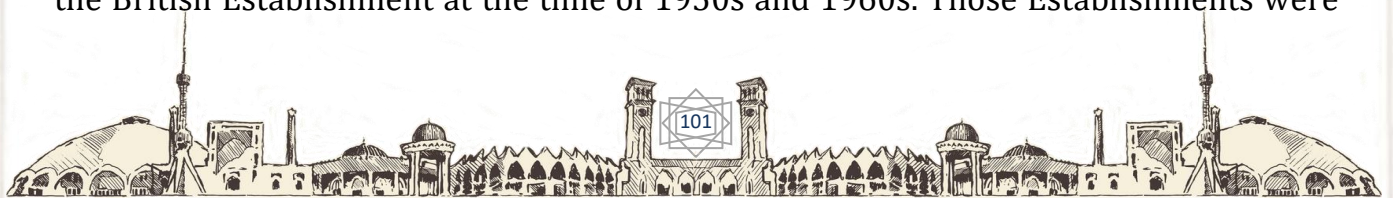
Jim Dixon sees his job as a means of escaping from his miserable life in order to guarantee himself for a better future. Mr. Ned Welch, the professor, sees history as a perfect way of romanticizing the past and reviving the old British traditions. So both, Dixon and Welch, in this novel the same thing can be seen, 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. Even though they work together, their relationship is not friendly. At a point Jim comes into conflict with Bertrand, the son of Professor Welch. Here also, Bertrand is the winner as he is from rich background.

**The Results and discussions.** After the Second World War, Britain struggled to recover 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).

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 forced to work.

It is obvious that Jim's problem is that of environmental and psychological alienation, the failure to adapt 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 of such people.

**Conclusion.** 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. The wide difference between the upper class and lower class people is described by these characters.





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