

Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* adlı eserindeki "Merrie England" temalı konuşma: Başarı mı veya Başarısızlık mı?

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Özet

İlk İngiliz kampüs romanı, Kingsley Amis'in *Lucky Jim*' i ilgi çekici akademik bir hiciv veya İngiliz akademik yaşamının saçma kısıtlamalarıyla genel anlamda 1950'lerin İngiliz taşra hayatına karşı aşağıdan gelen bir çığlık gibi çeşitli gerekçelerle alkışlanmıştır. Aynı zamanda, roman yanlış anlamalar, çatışmalar ve manipülasyonlar hakkındadır. Romanın karakterleri, kitabın başından sonuna kadar, çeşitli yollarla birbirlerini anlamaya veya kontrol altına almaya çalışmaktadırlar. Profesyonel geleceği konusunda derin kaygı barındıran baş karakter, Jim Dixon kendisinin Profesör Welch'in yanı sıra nevroitik meslektaşı Margaret tarafından istismar edilmesine izin vermektedir. Bu çalışma Jim Dixon'a Welch tarafından dayatılan "Mutlu İngiltere" temalı ve romanın doruk noktasını getiren umum konuşmanın bir başarı veya başarısızlık olduğunu analiz etmeye, veya eğer varsa, bu olayın olumlu bir sonuçlarını bulmaya çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şanslı, konuşma, başarı, başarısızlık, akademik yaşam

The "Merrie England" lecture in Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*: a Success or a Failure?

Abstract

Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*, the first British campus novel, was acclaimed on several grounds: as an engaging academic satire or a cry from below against the ridiculous confinement of British academic life as well as the British provincial life of 1950s in general. It is about misconceptions, conflicts and manipulations. The characters of the novel, throughout the book, try in various ways to understand each other or put one another in check. Jim Dixon, the central character, who harbors deep anxiety about his professional future, allows himself to be exploited by Professor Welch as well as his neurotic colleague, Margaret. This article attempts to analyze whether Jim Dixon's public lecture on theme of "Merrie England", which was imposed on him by Welch and through which the climax of the novel comes, was a success or a failure and, discover, if any, favorable outcomes of this event.

Key Words: Lucky, lecture, success, failure, academic life

Lucky Jim is a famous novel written by Kingsley Amis in 1954, which has been considered as a novel that marks the beginning of a new genre or at least a new wave for the British novel. This new wave has been known as the campus novel. David Lodge has regarded the primary accomplishment of Amis as “seminal campus novel” and “a classic comic novel” (Lodge, 1992, p. v). Kenneth Womack, on the other hand, considers *Lucky Jim* as the quintessential campus novel of the twentieth century (Womack, 2002, p. 27). In the eyes of contemporary critics, the publication of *Lucky Jim* established Amis as one of the “Angry Young Men,” a group of British writers of the 1950s whose work protested against social rigidity and injustice. Amis wrote nineteen additional novels during his lifetime, none of which matched *Lucky Jim*’s success. As Amis’s first published novel, *Lucky Jim* set the tone for Amis’s lifelong preoccupation with the role of higher learning in Britain. *Lucky Jim* was also the first in a long line of British campus satires that shifted the object of ridicule from the students to the faculty. Malcolm Bradbury praises the novel and states that “The real revolution represented by *Lucky Jim* was primarily a cultural one; it represented a significant alteration in the register of fiction, a paradigm shift of clear importance” (Bradbury, 1993, p. 324). In his review of the novel, John McDermott stresses, in his book called *Kingsley Amis: an English moralist*, the need of investigating Amis’s work as an ironical and ethical design. He asserts that “it is a novel about good people and bad people,” and continues to state that it is “about right and wrong ways of behaving and thinking, and, as in all the major novels, its main interest and much of its delight lies in feeling the tension between these elements” (McDermott, 1989, p.54). Amis, by emphasizing this tension about the academic community through his extensive satiric views, presents readers with a means for reconsidering the social and ethical functions of the academic community and its residents.

The novel tells the story of a junior lecturer, Jim Dixon, at a red brick English university. He is fresh out of school and working at his first real job; a position in the history department at an obscure academic institution. As the story goes along, it is understood that Jim is not a very effective lecturer and has not been credited well both professionally and as a person. His concern is to secure his place at the university for the next year and the only way to achieve this appears to be through Professor Welch’s approval who is his superior and the head of department. Jim is aware that Professor Welch is not thinking highly of him and believes that he might ask him to leave at the end of the semester. The way things work around the university suggests Jim that Welch is the decisive power and he needs to gild his reputation in order to be able to stay the next year. Even though he attempts to mend his ill-reputation in Welch’s eye for the sake of his employment concerns by behaving obsequiously until he cannot carry it any longer and everything comes to a resolve when the novel reaches its peak at the “Merrie England” lecture which Welch asked him to prepare for as he knew Jim was bound to do as he wanted.

The novel's main focus is Jim's interplay with the pretensions in the academic life he found himself in. Amis doesn't always portray Jim as a sympathetic character but readers find Jim's complaints and his silent denouncements reasonably agreeable. Luck plays an important role in the novel as Jim becomes triumphant in the end getting both the dream life in London together with his dream girl. As the "Merrie England" lecture is seen to be the climax of the novel that takes place towards the end, this article strives to discuss the grounds for which it is interpreted as either success or failure and to extend of what it is so.

However, before attempting to analyze "Merrie England" lecture, which has become a part of a tradition of recollecting the glorious period of England, it will be a very good idea to understand the significance of this event. The notion of Merry England, in an archaic spelling "Merrie England", emerged during the Middle Ages and portrayed a utopian mode of life that lower class of people, namely peasants, sought to lead. In a broader sense, it indicates an alleged necessary Englishness with nostalgic implications, and combines cultural symbols such as the thatched cottage, the country inn, the cup of tea and Sunday roast. This was seen as a mythical setting which embellished the storybooks about fairytales written for children during the Victorian period. They often include nature-loving fictitious beings like fairies, elves and the legendary Robin Hood. It is described by Oxford folklorist Roy Judge in his article called "May Day and Merry England" as "a world that has never actually existed, a visionary, mythical landscape, where it is difficult to take normal historical bearings" (Judge, 1991, p.131). It may be regarded as an outcome of nostalgic imagination, as a psychological or political design. This sympathetic and favorable concept of Merry England affirm a longing for certain aspects of an earlier society which is absent in modern times. In the novel, this "Merrie England" lecture becomes a source of uncontrollable laughter among the student audience and it grows even funnier as Jim goes on and on with it. Jim's opinion of this lecture is expressed in the following words:

The point about Merrie England is that it was about the most un-Merrie period in our history. It is only the home-made pottery crowd, the organic husbandry crowd, the recorder-playing crowd, the Esperanto... (Amis, 1992, p.238).

Despite his contempt towards that particular period of England and its connotation in modern times, Jim does not have any other chance but carry on with the task of delivering this end-of-the-term lecture.

Since *Lucky Jim* is acknowledged as a definitive work for "campus novel", it has received a lot of criticism both appreciating the success of it and also lampooning it. Before presenting some of the criticism, it is necessary to mention the origins of both the contradicting views of comprehension of the novel as well as the class differences and the problems that inspired Amis to write a novel. Even though *Lucky Jim* finds its basis in Amis's visit to Senior Common Room at Leicester University in 1946, the fictional work, Womack states,

owes its genesis to the confluence of three historic moments in twentieth-century British social and literary history: the passage of the Education Act of 1944, the advent of the redbrick university in England during that same era, and the subsequent apotheosis of *Lucky Jim* as the master-text of the Angry Young Man movement in the 1950s (Womack, 2002, p.28).

Education Act of 1944, one of those three historical events, the landmark educational acts of the mid-nineteenth century, attempted to undermine the place of university education as an exclusive privilege of the upper classes. According to this act students would continue their primary education until they were 15 and still they would have a chance for free education in grammar schools and secondary modern schools. Eventually this act increased the number of students with working-class backgrounds and resulted also necessitating the expansion of the university system which led to the construction of redbrick universities all over Britain. Murray Roston, in his book entitled *The Comic Mode in English Literature: From the Middle Ages to Today*, details the situation in the following lines:

The sweeping from power of Churchill's party immediately peace was declared and its replacement by a socialist government had led to major reforms, among them the opening of universities to all social groups. Oxford and Cambridge had until then preserved in their admissions policy a long-established preference for sons of the wealthier classes, especially where the family had generational bonds with or had made impressive donations to a particular college. Even when scholarship winners from a lower class were admitted, the lifestyle encouraged by the authorities paralleled closely that of the well-to-do (Roston, 2011, p. 227).

This rapid expansion had its side effects such as the system generating disoriented young men who were in between two different class attitudes which was considered to be the emergence of the "angry young man" movement. The foremost literary work of the movement was John Osborn's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) among others to which Amis's *Lucky Jim* was also added despite Amis's refusal to be considered a part of.

Kingsley Amis himself was an Oxford graduate who came from a working-class home and later took up a position as a lecturer at a provincial university which adds the fact that his work is fictional but not completely off the course of reality. Amis employs the craft of comedy in his fictional work as a means for sharing his beliefs about the moral state of academic life during his era and during which his novel first emerged. Womack, commenting on Amis's direction of satire and the situation of universities at the time, states:

His (Amis's) satiric attacks on the university community find their targets, moreover, in those privileged individuals who endeavor to maintain the academic status quo in their favor through the exploitation of junior colleagues, and, ultimately, through the threat of expulsion from the seemingly sacred groves of campus life. As Amis's novel so stridently reveals, the very threat of severance from

the scholarly community poses as a powerful obstacle in the young academic's path to self-knowledge (Womack, 2002, p.27).

However, the idea of the novel was not as a result of his experience of teaching. It originated during a visit to his close friend, Philip Larkin, to whom the novel was dedicated and who was working at the University of Leicester at the time. When he was waiting and looking around thinking, he said to himself, which Brian W. Shaffer records in his book called *Reading the Novel in English 1950-2000*, "Christ, somebody ought to do something with this'. Not that it was awful – well, only a bit; it was . . . a whole mode of existence no one had got on to from outside . . . I would do something with it" (Shaffer, 2006, p.37).

Despite the benevolent literary criticism, fervent admiration and generous reader response, which were manifested in Stuart Wright's words when he states that Amis's "modern classic that continues to sell 50.000 copies annually" (Wright, 1994, p. xlvii), he had received harsh criticism from prominent literary figures. John B. Priestly was one of the first reviewers of Amis's novel to express discomfort. He argued that the "New Novel" presented lack of commitment and stated that the fictional worlds, described in the novels such as *Lucky Jim*, were implausible and questionable and further expressed his remarks in his book called *Thoughts in the Wilderness*: "I am never quite convinced that what they tell me is happening really is happening" (Priestley, 1957, p.55). William Van O'Connor, in his book *The New University Wits and the End of Modernism*, also disapproves of the new fiction Amis's novel initiates and is of the opinion that such progress symbolized a cultural clash. He further adds that the traditional "world of Oxford accented culture," or "gentleman's world" which was in sharp contrast with the appearance of university-informed authors who rejected to be left in the middle of that world (O'Connor, 1963, p. 139).

The novel sets a ground for Amis's remarkable command of sarcasm, irony and bitterness which can be seen almost at every part of it as well as in Jim Dixon's thoughts and behavior. Jim, along with other young people, had the privilege of receiving university education due to the educational reform despite their working-class background. However, even though the working-class people were given rights to higher education, they could not surmise the reaction and attitudes of the aristocracy and the upper-class towards it. Kenneth Allsop, in his book entitled *The Angry Decade: a survey of the cultural revolt of the nineteen-fifties*, comments on this problem: "It seems to me that Amis, whether or not he had that specific intention, accurately defined and explained many of the grudges of the post-war fund-aided, who believed that although they are being permitted to undergo an educational process hitherto much restricted, it is only on sufferance" (Allsop, 1964, p.59). These intolerances and bias of the upper-class people towards the educated working class people were recorded in *The Sunday Times* after the publication of *Lucky Jim*. W. Somerset Maugham, who practically declared an ideological war against *Lucky Jim*, expressed his disapproval of the values displayed in the novel and reserved his severe criticism on the character of Jim Dixon identifying him with that of its creator and calls him "England's rising new archetype." He further comments that people like Jim

did not go to university to acquire culture, but to get a job, and when they 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 to 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 in to a telephone conversation that is no business of theirs. Charity, kindness, generosity are qualities which they hold in contempt" (Bradford, 1989, p.23)

Lucky Jim represents superfluous English man. The initiation of new educational scopes has presented university degrees to individuals who had to sacrifice their home and family in order to obtain them, who were obligated to use a language different than the one they speak at university when they visit their home during the vacations. These people were isolated from the class from which they emerged. But they cannot simply acquire traditional convention, quietly attain the table manners and imitate the voices of the indifferent arrogant young man they encounter for the first time at the Oxbridge dinner table. The accomplishment of such task would be betrayal to their own upbringing and their own former personalities. It would also be betrayal to their own moral beliefs, which the elite class people commonly do fail to comprehend. Lucky Jim is compelled by his own historical background to be an alien and a critic until their country becomes completely unbiased.

All this negative criticism was acceptable and maybe even agreeable if the purpose of the novel was to promote such a character like Jim Dixon and his way of life and further to denigrate the academia of the time and to display it as worthless. However, the purpose is not understood as such by the majority of the readers and critics who actually saw a serious self-criticism with the aim of refining or at least drawing the attention to where the current situation was leading to regarding the British higher education culture which Amis himself had been a part of. It is also necessary to underline one more criticism on how wrong Amis was understood. Gavin Keulks, in his book called *Father and Son*, charges several critics with "critical myopia" among whom Brigid Brophy stands out as a prominent example. Brophy accuses Kingsley of sacrificing the novel's artistic form as well as the "psychological consistency" of his characters and recounts him as "unimaginative bloody minded" (Keulks, 2003, p.108). She goes on to state that "His heroes' bloodymindedness is not permitted to flower into the gangrenously poetic beauty of a sick joke: it remains unimaginative bloodymindedness, easily convertible into the blubber-lipped sentimentality of the ending of *Lucky Jim*" (Brophy, 1967, p.219). In order to defend himself and respond to the charges directed at him by Somerset Maugham, P.B. Priestley and Brigid Brophy, Kingsley Amis declared that his novel's social elements had been, to a great extent, fabricated by the English critics themselves. He argued that even though his novel had grave social implications, the issues could not be dwindled to simple conflict of class. Kreulks further comments on the issues Amis mentioned and states that "they were inherent elements of comedy and satire, a lampooning of over-formulated absurdities" (Keulks, 2003, p.108). Amis, at an interview conducted by Dale Salwak in 1975, disclosed the annoyance with which he approached the critical attempts to associate him with Jim:

Jim and I have taken a lot of stick and a lot of bad mouthing for being Philistine, aggressively Philistine, for saying, "Well, as long as I've got me blonde and me pint of beer and me packet of fags and me seat at the cinema, I'm all right." I don't think either of us would say that. It's nice to have a pretty girl with large breasts rather than some fearful woman who's going to talk to you about Ezra Pound and hasn't got large breasts and probably doesn't wash much. And better to have a pint of beer than to have to talk to your host about the burgundy you're drinking. And better to go to the pictures than go to see nonsensical art exhibitions that nobody's really going to enjoy. So it's appealing to common sense if you like, and it's a way of trying to denounce affectation (Salwak, 1975, p.8).

Hence it is clear that Kingsley Amis utters an open distaste for pretentiousness and affectation which indeed establishes the very grounds of the novel. He is concerned with deflating wrongfully contorted forms of culture. His satire was motivated by the way culture was appropriated and misused by self-inflated people (Keulks, 2003, p.110). Amis states that "one theme of *Lucky Jim* is getting good things wrong," and continues to say that "culture's good, but not the way the Welches did it. Education is good ... but it is self-defeating if it isn't done properly" (Keulks, 2003, p. 110).

Building upon these views, Kingsley Amis satirizes the microcosm of the campus, the anti-culture hero; Jim Dixon has to deal with. Initially, Jim does not intend to change anything about the artificial university medium that he finds himself in. His presence there is also not through will or ambition. He is displaced. He is aware that he is a lousy teacher. Even though he criticizes the pretentious life going around him, he himself is not even close to the ideal representative university teacher and/or a person who probably is present in his imagination as a model which he must be using as an archetype upon which he builds his criticism. His behavior is hypocritical. For the most part of the novel Jim has completely different thoughts than his actions. And the faces he does behind people or at times when he is alone as reactions to what he doesn't like to put up with. There is a deliberate contrast in his inner and outer worlds. His public appearance does not match his internal until he confronts Bertrand. He is Welch's son, who is an arrogant "artist", bearing the same fictitious and sham characteristics as the rest of the Welches. When he first meets Jim is at the madrigal gathering at Welches house. He comes from London with his girl friend Christine with whom Jim later on get close and because of whom the fight takes place.

According to David Lodge, the most significant scene of the book is the scene in which Jim fights with "the bearded pacifist painting Bertrand" and knocks him down despite a black eye he receives from him. That appears to be accurate and true. Upon a close reading and critical analysis of the scene, Lodge's opinion makes a better sense. This scene is, in fact, the turning point or the climax of the novel. The fight is critical because until that moment Jim was inwardly feeling trapped in the microcosm of the community he has lived in. He had let himself continue to act hypocritically, even at times, the urge to stand up to and rebel against the set standards upon him surfaced. Until the fight it all went unsaid but it should not be considered a

defeat since they stimulated him to take steps towards transformation and helped him to break the spell. These transformational steps initially started when he was drafting his “Merrie England” speech. When he writes the conclusion part of the speech which had to be extensive, he sets the overall duration to 59 minutes. A part of his draft is given below:

something on the lines of 'Finally, thank God for the twentieth century' would satisfy him, but it wouldn't satisfy Welch..... This survey, brief as it is, would have no purpose if left as a mere' – he crossed out 'mere' -'historical record. There are valuable lessons here for us, living in an age of prefabricated amusements as we do. One wonders how one of the men or women I have tried to describe would react to such typically modern phenomena as the cinema, the radio, the television. What would he think, accustomed as he was (had been? would have been? is?) to making his own music (must look at Welch at this point), of a society where people like himself are regarded as oddities, where to play an instrument himself, oneself, instead of paying others to do s2o, to sing a madrigal instead of a cheap dance-lyric, is to incur the dreaded title of "crank", where... (Amis, 1992, p. 131).

Circumstances have not yet come to the point of the climax that the realization dawns on Jim. As he writes the lecture, his guard which he takes against the public starts descending. At the beginning of chapter XX, reader comes to see a nicely-written, well-integrated set of sentences which mark the ending of Jim's “Merrie England” lecture.

'WHAT, finally, is the practical application of all this? Can anything be done to halt, or even to hinder, the process I have described? I say to you that something can be done by each one of us here tonight. Each of us can resolve to do something, every day, to resist the application of manufactured standards, to protest against ugly articles of furniture and table-ware, to speak out against sham architecture, to resist the importation into more and more public places of loudspeakers relaying the Light Programme, to say one word against the Yellow Press, against the best-seller, against the theatre-organ, to say one word for the instinctive culture of the integrated village-type community. In that way we shall be saying a word, however small in its individual effect, for our native tradition, for our common heritage, in short, for what we once had and may, some day, have again – Merrie England (Amis, 1992, p. 138).

One way to interpret this concluding paragraph is that all the reactionary faces which Jim has been making, found expression in these well-composed sentences. It was right after when he drops the pen that Bertrand barges in. This confrontation is the most important moment of radical change for Jim, not because he defeats Bertrand, something which he has been longing for quite a while, but because it is the merger of a thought and an articulation happening simultaneously and both belonged to Jim. He finally makes it “The bloody old towser-faced boot-faced totem-pole on a crap reservation, Dixon thought. 'You bloody old towser-faced boot-faced totem-pole on a crap reservation,' he said” (Amis, 1992, p. 141). These lines mark the change. They are indicative of Jim overcoming his inner pressure and tearing it out. He has taken a step towards becoming a whole person. There is yet the lecture itself to be delivered.

Even though the drafting of the lecture is pivotal, delivering the lecture plays the conclusive part. They complement each other.

The lecture scene, which is one of the most humorous incidents in contemporary fiction, presents the readers the rebellious nature of Jim Dixon and brings about the climax of the novel. When he enters the lecture hall and scans the audience, Jim realizes that this place seems “to contain everybody he knew or had ever known, apart from his parents” (Amis, 1992, p. 213). This causes him to feel “like going round and notifying each person individually of his preference that they should leave” (Amis, 1992, p. 213). Experiencing complete alienation from his own verbal utterance and feeling so out of control due to grave intoxication that engulfs him at one point, Jim, before his absolute downfall, which constitutes his lecture’s grand finale, visualizes himself to sound “like an unusually fanatical Nazi trooper in charge of a book-burning reading out to the crowd excerpts from a pamphlet written by a pacifist, Jewish, literate Communist” (Amis, 1993, p. 226).

During the lecture, with the influence of being half drunk, not fully conscious, Jim starts imitating the voices of people who he has been considering as pretentious. In this state Jim, being freed from the conscious state which might have again prevented him from saying the things he thought of saying, acts naturally and speaks his mind. He doesn’t feel any constraints to mock, to imitate, to criticize or to comment upon. He improvises an answer to the most purposeful question “what, finally, is the practical application of all this?” and utters that the “point about Merrie England, is that it was about the most un-Merrie period in our history” (Amis, 1993, 231). In the end, he is forever interrupted as a consequence of his drunkenness and Welche’s having witnessed and heard enough. Gavin Keulks states that “this scene can be interpreted as the novel’s true turning point in that it portrays Jim’s transcendent release from the constraining world of the Welches” (Keulks, 2003, p. 114). This is what Jim gains from the whole experience. He is now bound to become a better person, a man of integrity. As it were a divine blessing, he got his dream job in London which Bertrand was drooling over and the dream girl, who, he thought, would never deign to belong to him, as can be deduced, due to his recent transformation. Despite its failure-like appearance, the speech turned out to be a success for the anti-hero and an achievement for the novel’s author in terms of the portrayal and conveyance of the intended message through satire. As a result of the lecture, Jim, as the adjective before his name suggests, obtained favorable outcomes despite losing his only means of income. In other words, Jim, even though, he was fired due to his terrible lecture, manages to get rid of Margaret and his ill-rewarding job at university. Jim ensures his mental as well as physical liberation.

David Lodge claims that Jim, by his riotous outburst, “ceases to be a guilty hypocrite and reaps his reward” (Lodge, 1966, p.255). *Lucky Jim* wraps up in a neat and comical way: he races against time, to catch up with Christine at her London-bound train if he intends to put things on a normal footing with her. Unfortunately, the bus he is on board to, moves in an absurdly slow motion; everything in the world appears to conspire against his timely arrival at the station and

Christine. Jim, when the bus comes to a halt at one point, thinks that the bus-driver was probably “slumped in his seat, the victim of syncope,” or had suddenly “got an idea for a poem” (Amis, 1992, p. 243). After a while another car delays the movement of the bus once again, and

Dixon thought he really would have to run downstairs and knife the drivers of both vehicles; what next? what next? What actually would be next: a masked holdup, a smash, floods, a burst tyre, an electric storm with falling trees and meteorites, a diversion, a low-level attack by Communist aircraft . . . ? (Amis, 1992, p. 245).

When Jim reaches to the station and catches up with Christine, he discovers that she has “finished with Bertrand” (Amis, 1992, p. 248) and comes to learn about the artist’s illicit relationship with Carol, who has also deserted him. Jim lets Christine know that he has parted ways with Margaret for good and that he has received an incredible job offer from her “Uncle Julius” (Amis, 1992, p. 250), which Bertrand was after. Thus, the novel concludes humorously, and indicates a possible union of two deserving people.

The “Merrie England” lecture marks the end of his academic career because it turns out to be catastrophic and destructive. It does cost him a job, which he desperately tried to keep while working under a supervisor he despises and makes a complete fool of himself when he accidentally knocks down the chair on which the Registrar was about to sit down. Merritt Moseley sympathizes with Jim’s predicament and states that he is “unjustly doomed to low status and to enduring his own servility towards unworthy and even evil people” (Moseley, 1993, p.22). However, after the disastrous lecture, Jim, “departs for comedy’s literary reward of a good job and the nicest girl, out there in the ordinary commonsense working world” (Bradbury, 1993, p. 321). Fortunately for Jim, the philanthropist, Gore-Urquhart, Christine’s uncle, who shares Jim’s strong dislike for academic and artistic pretense or hypocrisy any kind, comes to his rescue and offers him a well-paid job in London. The novel ends with the prospect of happiness, economic success, and marital union emerging from the ashes of the main character’s insecurity, embarrassment, and bad luck. Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim* is both intensely funny and deadly serious. It is also both a satire on academic milieu as well as a comic romance. William Van O’Connor quotes Amis in expressing his views on the importance of the satiric mode to the Britain of his time where Amis states:

We are in for a golden age of satire, in my opinion, and if this is so we will be fortunate indeed. Satire offers a social and moral contribution. A culture without satire is a culture without self-criticism and thus, ultimately, without humanity. A society such as ours, in which the forms of power are changing and multiplying, needs above all the restraining influences of savage laughter (O’Connor, 1963, p.81).

Notably, the novel concludes with a note and promise of healing and cleansing. The order has been restored and justice continues to prevail in the world for Jim Dixon. Gavin Keulks, in his article called “Kingsley Amis”, expresses his ardent admiration for both Kingsley Amis and as well as Jim and states that “a half-century after its release, the novel continues to receive

mention as the greatest comic novel of the twentieth century, and its hero – Jim Dixon – ranks among the most popular antiheroes in contemporary literature” (Keulks, 2011, p. 11).

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