

Jimmy Dixon – hero of the fifties

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Bachelor Thesis
2009



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně

Fakulta humanitních studií

Ústav anglistiky a amerikanistiky

akademický rok: 2008/2009

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Michaela BUDAYOVÁ**

Studijní program: **B 7310 Filologie**

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**

Téma práce: **Kingsley Amis – Šťastný Jim – hrdina padesátých let**

Zásady pro vypracování:

Rozhňevaní mladí muži (společnost 50. let)

Kingsley Amis — život a dílo

Vliv života spisovatele a doby, ve které žil na jeho hrdinu

Obsah knihy Lucky Jim

Seznámení s hlavními postavami

Jim Dixon

- vlastnosti

- rebel nebo hrdina

- proč zapadal a proč nezapadal do společnosti

Rozsah práce:

Rozsah příloh:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Amis, Kingsley. Lucky Jim. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2000.

Bradbury, Malcolm, and Ronald Carter, and John McRae. The Routledge History of Literature in English. London: Routledge, 2001.

Bradford, Richard , and Peter Owen. Lucky Him: The Life of Kingsley Amis. London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2001.

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Hilský, Martin. Současný britský román. Jinočany: H&H, 1991.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

Mgr. Barbora Kašpárková

Ústav anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

30. listopadu 2008

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

15. května 2009

Ve Zlíně dne 11. února 2009



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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce poskytuje informace o britské literatuře kolem roku 1950. Zabývá se rozborem povahových vlastností Jima Dixona, hlavního hrdiny Amisova románu *Lucky Jim* (1954). První třetina práce se zaměřuje na skupinu spisovatelů zvanou Rozhněvaní mladí muži, popisuje také životopis Kingsleyho Amise. Zbývající dvě třetiny práce analyzují vlastnosti a proces začleňování Jima Dixona do společnosti.

Klíčová slova: Hnutí, Rozhněvaní mladí muži, Kingsley Amis, univerzitní román, Jim Dixon

ABSTRACT

The present bachelor thesis provides information about British literature of the 1950s. It deals with the analysis of Jim Dixon, the protagonist of Amis's novel, *Lucky Jim* (1954). The first third of the thesis focuses on the group of writers called Angry Young Men and describes the biography of Kingsley Amis. The remaining two-thirds of the thesis analyse Jim Dixon's qualities and socialization process.

Keywords: Movement, Angry Young Men, Kingsley Amis, campus novel, Jim Dixon

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family who has always supported me during my studies. I would also like to thank my supervisor Mgr. Barbora Kašpárková.

Without her help this bachelor thesis would not have existed.

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INTRODUCTION

The bachelor thesis is concerned with James Dixon, the protagonist of Kingsley Amis's novel, *Lucky Jim*. It describes Amis's biography and the society he lives. Main reasons to choose this topic was my former university's experience with writing two literary essays and my interest in people's qualities.

The present thesis is not strictly divided into theoretical and analytical part. However, a reader can easily recognise that approximately one-third of the text deals with theoretical information and the remaining two-thirds deals with the analysis.

The object of the thesis is to provide the reader with basic information on British literature of the 1950s, primarily acquainted him with the arrival of a group of writers who were dubbed Angry Young Men. In the introductory chapters my aim is to outline the biography and the work of Kingsley Amis, a representative member of the "Angries", and to make the reader acquainted with the plot and protagonists of Amis's famous novel, *Lucky Jim*.

The main purpose is to analyse James Dixon's qualities and to answer why he fits or does not fit into society, and also decide if he is rebel or hero. The first analytical chapter, "Dixon's Character," deals with description of his basic qualities. The following chapter, "Rebel Versus Hero," analyses the relationship between Dixon and other characters of the novel. The last chapter, "Dixon Versus Society," indicates that it is the analysis of the protagonist and the society he lives. It points out the qualities that help Dixon to communicate with other characters or the qualities to make his communication difficult.

In the first part of the thesis were used the following sources: *Lucky Jim: The Life of Kingsley Amis* (2001), *The Angry Young Men: Literary Comedy of the 1950s* (2002) and *Současný britský román* (1992). The more extensive analytical part consists of extracts from *Lucky Jim* (2000).

1 BRITISH LITERATURE OF THE FIFTIES

The British literature of the fifties is typical of the coming of young poets, novelists and playwrights with novelists such as John Wain, John Braine, Iris Murdoch, or Kingsley Amis at the forefront. After the war, drama is becoming more popular, headed by John Osborne and his *Look Back In Anger*; also “The Movement” poets enjoy increasing popularity, such as Phillip Larkin. “The Butler Act” came into being at that time, which made secondary education available for applicants from all classes of the society, provided they had the abilities, irrespective of whether they were rich or poor.¹

The fifties are considered to be a time of prosperity and stability. The Conservatives came to power, led by Prime Minister Macmillan known for his impressive statement “never had it so good”. This statement was partially true because high unemployment and poverty of the 30’s totally vanished, the middle class led a much more comfortable life, and society started buying cars, washing machines, and refrigerators. It was not only this consumptive way of life, but also democratisation of the British education system that were harshly denounced by right wing elder generation authors, such as Thomas Stearns Eliot who, in his book *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* did not accept that education be available to everyone. Another author, Evelyn Waugh, considered writers of The Movement to be careerists who are misusing the Butler Education Act. Despite the fact that The Movement had similar views as the older generation, especially by refusing modernism, they kept being criticised.

A typical feature present in the works of young writers of the 50’s was rejecting anything modern or foreign, and also a satire of snobbishness. Novels of the fifties are very similar to each other. Main characters tend to be young men dissatisfied with post-war British society, usually growing up in lower middle class families, and who, in association with the Butler Act, acquire university degree not only as a result of their education but especially because the main characters, such as Amis’s Dixon, Wain’s Lumpley, or Brain’s Lampton, at the end of the novels usually marry or start dating a woman from upper class society, thus pushing them slightly higher up the social ladder.²

Writers of the 50’s can be considered a rational, ever more conservative generation, looking with disdain on a so called “high” art, such as romantic bohemianism of Dylan

¹ Martin Hilský, *Současný britský román* (Praha: H&H, 1992), 7 (My translation).

² See Hilský, *Současný britský román*, 8-10 (My translation).

Thomas, nature mysticism of D. H. Lawrence, or modernistic poetry of T. S. Eliot.³ They prefer the realistic tradition with emphasis given on an individual's integration within the society.⁴ Such prose represents the mainstream in present times and probably will do so in the future.⁵

1.1 Generally about the Angry Young Men

An important milestone in the fifties was the year 1956 when the "Suez War" took place. It was in this year that journalists started talking about the "Angry Young Men", who were difficult to distinguish from the writers of The Movement. The first time that the term Angry Young Men was used, was on May 26, 1956 in *The Times* newspaper to describe Kingsley Amis's Jim Dixon and John Osborne's Jimmy Porter. The term got into people's sub-consciousness more and more, also due to critics, who made a leading topic of it. Young writers often refused this label and they did not consider themselves to be part of any group.⁶

The expression Angry Young Men caught on even more in *Declaration* (1957), written by the British writer and publisher Tom Maschler. Young authors headed by John Wain, John Osborne, Colin Wilson, or Doris Lessing expressed in *Declaration* their negative views concerning the Suez war, to name one, or they predicted the end of the British Empire:⁷

"Maschler dismissed the AYM as 'a piece of low journalism', and complained that the writers who have set themselves the task of waking us up have been rendered harmless in the AYM cage." He also added:

"It is important to note that although most of the contributors to this volume have at some time or other been labelled the Angry Young Men they do *not* belong to a united

³ See Hilský, *Současný britský román*, 10 (My translation).

⁴ See Hilský, *Současný britský román*, 18 (My translation).

⁵ See Hilský, *Současný britský román*, 19 (My translation).

⁶ See Hilský, *Současný britský román*, 10-11 (My translation).

⁷ See Hilský, *Současný britský román*, 11(My translation).

movement... and that they do not belong to a united movement...Declaration is a collection of separate positions.”⁸

On the other hand Doris Lessing, famous writer, believed that there was such a group: “I use the phrase, not because I think it is in any way an adequate description, but because it is immediately recognizable.” She also declared: “The work of AYM is like an injection of vitality into the withered arm of British literature.”⁹

1.2 The Angry Young Men on Angry Young Men

The generation of the Angry Young Men included such writers as Kingsley Amis, John Braine, John Wain, John Osborne or Collin Wilson. In their most famous books each of them would have a young person as the main character, who was trying to fight against English traditions and class society.

John Braine became a member of Angry Young Men after writing his famous novel *Room at the Top* (1957). This story was also the basis for a film made in 1959, directed by Jack Clayton.¹⁰ After it was published, Braine had been glad of the publicity and became the first who accepted the label “AYM” and said: “Looking at British writing generally, from about 1949 to now I sensed a certain deadness of feeling among writers. Now things seem to be moving. Angry Young Man is misused and over-used label, but it does have some significance if only that it means that the young writer is rejecting literary formulas.”¹¹

However, he also said the following about this group: “The fact is, the whole Angry Young Men business is nonsense”... “There never was a group, and all the people who have been labelled Angry Young Men are all very different” ... “In fact, England being a small country, I know most of them [the AYM].”¹²

⁸ Humphrey Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men: Literary Comedy of the 1950s* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2002), 178.

⁹ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 178.

¹⁰Encyclopaedia Britannica, “*Room At The Top*,” Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/509223/Room-at-the-Top#.html>.

¹¹ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 154.

¹² Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 166.

John Osborne was a playwright and he became more famous after writing *Look Back in Anger* (1956). The play was made into a film in 1959 and it was chosen for the royal film premiere “in the gracious presence of HRH Princess Margaret”.¹³ He told about this group: “The ‘Angry Young Men’ cult ... is a cheap, journalistic fiction ... Fleet Street ... created the AYM ... It didn’t matter much whether they were Angry or even Young ...”¹⁴

Colin Wilson is “the last survivor of the Angry Young Men”.¹⁵ His masterpiece *The Outsider* (1956) made him much money and was translated into sixteen languages.¹⁶ Wilson spoke about the Angry Young Men in this way: “I did not enjoy becoming famous, not one little bit – it was just no fun.”¹⁷

In *Encounter* (1959) he indicated that he had something in common with the other “Angries”:

“I sometimes feel a peculiar discomfort in talking to writers of an older generation: a sense of different worlds, different languages. This disappears when I speak with contemporaries like John Braine, Kingsley Amis, John Osborne. They’ve been through the same mill-race ...”¹⁸

Another important personality of this group was John Wain who became famous after writing *Hurry on Down* (1953). “In his *Declaration* essay he called the AYM label fatuous, ‘a journalistic stunt’.”¹⁹

One could say that according to the writers’ opinions the group Angry Young Men has never existed. Some of these authors did not know each other. They only knew that there were also another authors sharing the similar views, and writing about a young men fighting against society.

¹³ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 189.

¹⁴ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, xi.

¹⁵ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, ix.

¹⁶ See, Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 196.

¹⁷ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, x.

¹⁸ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, xi.

¹⁹ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 178.

2 KINGSLEY WILLIAM AMIS

2.1 His Life

2.1.1 Youth

Kingsley Amis was born in Norbury, south London, on 16 April 1922. He was an only child and began school at St. Hilda's. At the age of ten he started to write blank verses and short stories. Aged twelve, he went to City of London School, which took boys of various backgrounds. Despite the fact that his parents could not afford to pay high fees, he had to go to Oxbridge, where he was expected to win an exhibition or scholarship. In April 1941 Amis arrived in Oxford. He had won here an exhibition, "a kind of cut-price scholarship". In July 1942, after one year in Oxford, he had to leave it because of joining the basic army training at Catterick Camp in Yorkshire.²⁰

2.1.2 Life with Hilly

In January 1946, Amis met Hilary Bardwell. She was seventeen, rebellious and inclining to eccentricity. Behaving like a woman in her twenties. She did not find him very attractive but mainly his personality was attracted to her. She was clever, articulate with no interest in literature or politics. In December 1947 Hilly discovered that she was pregnant. They married on 21 January 1948.²¹ Seven months later, Hilly gave birth to Philip (named after Larkin). One year later they had a second baby, Martin Amis. They had not much money, so they had to move in Harwell, where were living Hilly's parents. Amis had been applying for lectureships in provincial universities. Fortunately, he was invited to the University College of Swansea and was offered the job. First three years in Swansea, they lived in poorly furnished flats. However, in 1951, Hilly inherited £ 2 400. Thus, they could have afforded to buy a house.²² Later, Hilly discovered his notebook, where he had described his affairs with at least two undergraduates.²³

²⁰ Richard Bradford, *Lucky Him: The Life of Kingsley Amis* (London: Peter Owen Ltd, 2001), 19-45.

²¹ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 68-69.

²² See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 79.

²³ Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 180.

In October 1961, Amis resigned from Swansea to Peterhouse.²⁴ In late August 1962, he decided to resign from Peterhouse. He met a successful novelist Elizabeth Jane Howard.²⁵ Hilly had become suspicious that he was having an affair with Jane. She was right and soon after, Amis and Hilly arrange a divorce. It was finished in 1965.

2.1.3 Life with Jane

In the same year, Amis and Jane were married. First months of their marriage they spent in the maisonnette with Jane's brother, than moved to a flat in Knightsbridge.

Finally, they acquired a ten-year lease for a house. Everything was paid by Jane.²⁶ In late 1975, they had found a detached eighteenth-century property called Gardnor House in Flask Walk, Hampstead.²⁷ Their marriage lasted for about 15 years but in November 1980 Jane informed him about the divorce proceeding. Amis wrote to Larkin and had been explaining him, why she had gone. "In his view, she had gone partly because of his lack of interest in sex with her and partly because he did not like her any more." Maybe it was because of his drinking.²⁸

2.1.4 Friendship with Larkin

In April 1941, Amis met one of his friend, Norman Illes. He introduced Amis to Philip Larkin. Their friendship developed fully after war but for the first time they recognized in each other lot of similarities and differences that joined them together.²⁹ In October 1945, Larkin has published number of poems and also one novel, called *Jill*. Amis had almost two years of his degree course left. He decided to work hard at this but also he wanted to give his time to writing. In November 1945, Amis and Larkin met again. Amis admitted that none of his poems had been published yet. Larkin advised him to send them to Reginald Caton, the publisher of Larkin's *Jill*. Two weeks later Amis sent some of his pieces to Caton and in May 1946, they were accepted for publication.³⁰

²⁴ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 194.

²⁵ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 213.

²⁶ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 217-218.

²⁷ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 303.

²⁸ Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 335.

²⁹ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 32-38.

³⁰ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 64.

In this time and also for the remainder of his life he was very influenced by Larkin. Their relationship existed mainly in their letters. Amis once told Larkin: “You are my inner audience, my watcher in Spanish, the reader over my shoulder.” The term “inner audience”, as it is described in *Lucky Him*, is borrowed from Amis’s thesis and it refers to people who are close to an author to almost be an extension of his own personality.³¹

2.1.5 Autumn of His Life

In 1982, he was joined in Gardner House and shared it with Hilly, her husband Alastair Boyd and their son Jaime. Amis and Boyd seemed to get on well. Two years later, they decided to purchase a large Edwardian house and it would be Amis’s home for the rest of his life.³² In August 1995, in Wales, Amis had a fall and a suspected stroke. After some days in hospital, he returned home. But his condition worsened and on 6 September was admitted to University College Hospital, where after contracting pneumonia died on 22 October 1995.³³

2.2 His Work

Kingsley Amis was a famous novelist and poet. He also wrote some pieces of non – fiction but they were not so popular like his fiction. Except for his famous book *Lucky Jim* (1954), he also wrote other novels. They mostly focus on age, murder, Christianity or afterlife. The main feature of his fiction is comedy. He could capture the habits of contemporary society and he often confirmed that his fiction was not based upon his life. On the other hand, he admitted that some of his works were autobiographical.³⁴

In July 1955, came out *That Uncertain Feeling*. Protagonist of this novel is a librarian John Lewis from South Wales. He commits adultery with Elizabeth Gruffid-Williams. She is a wife of a council executive Vernon, who has a decisive influence on the placing of the library job.³⁵ In September 1955, the novel *I Like It Here* was written. Amis considered it as his worst. It included his attitudes to politics, literature and national identity.³⁶

³¹ Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 82.

³² See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 341.

³³ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 416.

³⁴ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 20.

³⁵ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 117.

³⁶ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 146.

Another piece of fiction is *Take a girl like you* (1960). Patrick Standish is its principal male figure. As well as Dixon, Bowen or Lewis, he enjoys making fun of people.³⁷

One Fat Englishman (1963) would be based on Amis's experiences in the USA. Protagonist's name is Roger Micheldene. He is snobbish, overweight, ugly and balding and, as well as Patrick Standish, he behaves lustfully. He drinks, eats and spends much money.³⁸

I Want It Now (1968) focusing upon a man and a woman who are versions of Amis and his second wife Jane. The plot is based upon Amis's experience, when he and Jane spent some time in the United States.³⁹

One year later, his most autobiographical novel, *The Green Man*, was published. Maurice Allington, first-person narrator, is the protagonist of the novel. He confronts "antitheses of his and Amis's life, including monogamy and infidelity, God and atheism, sincerity and fabrication, verifiable truck and palpable fiction."⁴⁰

Girl, 20 (1971) involves two male protagonists. One of them is music critic Douglass Yandell and the second, his friend Sir Roy Vandervane, composer and conductor. "It begins with Yandell receiving a phone message asking him to visit his old friend Vandervane. Yandell has not been there before, and his account of the place is an almost exact representation of the house in which Jane and Amis lived from 1967 to 1975."⁴¹

The Riverside Villas Murder (1974) is also autobiographical novel. Peter Furneaux is the fourteen years old protagonist. The family home in Riverside Villas is similar to one in which the Amises lived in Norbury. Peter's school is a version of Amis's school, City of London. Peter's father, always referred to as Captain Furneaux, is similar to Kingsley's father William Amis. Peter had many difficulties with his father in the same way that Kingsley and William had.⁴²

³⁷ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 170.

³⁸ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 191-192.

³⁹ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 235.

⁴⁰ Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 249.

⁴¹ Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 264.

⁴² See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 271-275.

In Hampstead Amis finished *Jake's Thing* (1978). This novel explains why his relationship with Jane had entered a decline. The novel's protagonist, Jake Richardson, lacks desire to have sex with women.⁴³



Figure 1: Martin and Kingsley Amis, 1991



Figure 2: Kingsley Amis

⁴³ See Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 304.



Figure 3: Hilly Bardwell around the time she met Amis



Figure 4: Elizabeth Jane Howard



Figure 5: Philip Larkin as librarian



Figure 6: John Braine



Figure 7: John Wain



Figure 8: John Osborne



Figure 9: Colin Wilson

3 LUCKY JIM

In the fifties, satirical comedy with elements of parody, called the “Campus novel”, got to the forefront of British literature. These novels are usually placed in a small town, mainly at the English Department. In the case of *Lucky Jim* it was the History Department. The protagonist of these novels is usually a teacher who causes a scandal of some sort. Social blunders accompany him, he either gets into a clash of views with his students or superiors, or he is reading a lecture during which he inadvertently says what he truly feels about his colleagues and superiors. The hero often leads a disorganised life, he spends a lot of time in pubs, has a relationship with wives of his colleagues or superiors.⁴⁴

Lucky Jim's working title was *Dixon and Christine*. Each change that Amis made in this novel was often discussed in the letters with his friend Phillip Larkin. Surname of its protagonist had been suggested by Larkin's current address in Leichestre, 12 Dixon Drive 49.⁴⁵

Hilary Rubinstein, nephew and employee of Victor Gollancz, after reading the typescript sent Amis verdict: “I think it is a really brilliant book and got more fun out of it than anything else I have read for a long time.”⁴⁶ However, her uncle was describing it as “vulgar and anti-cultural”. Fortunately Rubinstein and Gollancz's daughter Livia got his agreement for an offer to be made to Amis – an advance on royalties of £ 100. Finally, on 5 May 1953, Amis wrote to Larkin that Victor Gollancz Ltd. took *Lucky Jim* to be printed: “...they think it will be out in November. Good, isn't it? It will be dedicated to you.” Finally, it was first published by Victor Gollancz Ltd in 1954.⁴⁷

Lucky Jim won the Somerset Maugham Award for fiction and it was also produced and directed by the Boulting Brothers in 1957.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See Hilský, *Současný britský román*, 104 (My translation).

⁴⁵ See Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 47- 49.

⁴⁶ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 54.

⁴⁷ Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 55.

⁴⁸ See Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men*, 188.

3.1 Plot

James Dixon, the protagonist of this novel, arrives at the college to teach history. He wants to make a good impression to keep the post as long as possible. He is trying to be on good terms with his superiors at all cost, especially with Mr. Welch. He has a friend, Margaret Peel, who considers their relationship to be more than a friendship.

Dixon does not find hysterical Margaret at all attractive. He keeps a good relationship with her mainly because she knows the Welch's well and because he feels certain sympathy for her. The person that Dixon feels attracted to is Christine Callagan, niece of the rich Gore-Urquhart and also girlfriend of Bertrand, son of Mr. Welch. Dixon is self-effacing himself and thinks that he can never have a girl such as Christine, and that she was born more for a man from higher social classes.

After several meetings, though, they start being very close to each other. Margaret is jealous and is threatening him. He has a guilty conscience and therefore comes back to her, hoping that she has changed and is not so hysterical.

Christine then returns to Bertrand and everything suggests that it will remain so. Later, though, both Dixon and Christine learn unpleasant news about their partners. Dixon gets to know from Catchpole, whom he knows only from Margaret's talk that Margaret had been lying to him. Christine gets to know from Carol that Bertrand is unfaithful to her.

In the meantime, in a lecture on "Merrie England", Dixon in a drunken state heartily describes the way things are run at the university; he imitates the behaviour of Mr. Welch and all others he cannot stand. Even though the lecture was cut short due to a sudden pretended collapse, the next day he is dismissed from the university.

Dixon thus has neither work nor Christine. After some time Gore-Urquhart shows up – Dixon's lecture made an impression on him because he has the same views about society at the college. He offers him an interesting job in London, which Bertrand was aiming for for a long time.

In the end, Dixon meets Christine again, they both tell each other that they do not feel anything for their partners and they get together. Dixon tells the news to Christine that he was sacked from the college and that he got an offer to work uncle.

The story therefore ends well. Dixon wins over Welch and Bertrand, gets a wonderful job and on top of that a woman he wished for so much.

3.2 Protagonists

Jim Dixon – protagonist of the novel, an assistant lecturer in the Department of History at a provincial college in Britain, fights against hypocrisy and pretence at the college and in the Welch family;

Ned Welch – Dixon's superior, self-centred, music and art lover, old-fashioned;

Bertrand Welch – Mr. Welch's son, he is an artist, he inherited a self-centred character after his father, and on top of that he is arrogant and conceited;

Christine Callagan – a beautiful woman, throughout most of the book she goes out with Bertrand, she comes from a rich family, her uncle is a wealthy man;

Margaret Peel – she also works at the college, she has a higher post than Dixon, she is Dixon's friend, knows the Welch's well and is staying at their house; she is extremely emotional, hysterical, she is not very beautiful;

Julius Gore-Urquhart – uncle of Christine Callagan, rich, influential man, does not like the pretence prevailing at the college;

Celia Welch – Mr. Welch's wife, supports her husband, she reveals Dixon's mischief;

Cecil Goldsmith – Dixon's colleague;

Carol Goldsmith – Cecil's wife, intelligent, mature woman, she and Dixon understand each other very well because they share similar views; she has an affair with Bertrand;

Bill Atkinson – Dixon's friend and flatmate, rather quiet, assists Dixon in his mischief;

Alfred Beesley – also a college teacher, but at the English Department, often drinks alcohol, not very self-confident;

Evan Johns – Dixon's flatmate, also works at the college, ingratiates with the Welch's, and spreads rumours about Dixon;

Michie – diligent student, wants to come to Dixon's lectures, Dixon does not like his eagerness and enthusiasm for history;

Catchpole – former Margaret's friend, who will tell Dixon the truth about Margaret;

Miss Cutler – caretaker at the house where Dixon lives.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* (London: Penguin Books 2000), 7-251.

4 DIXON'S CHARACTER

James Dixon is a very unusual protagonist with features that are more typical for a negative character. As becomes apparent in the course of the novel, most of his negative features manifest only with some people, or characters. The worse side of his character shows in a simple way when confronted with people, as he himself says, he does not like, such as Welch and Bertrand. There are also characters in the book, such as Margaret, to whom he does not feel such loathing, but in some situations he must communicate with them through pretence.

Jimmy Dixon is at heart totally different from what he may appear. From my point of view, his personality traits, which generally may seem to be negative, eventually start to be acceptable and appealing. In my opinion, the reason for this is our empathy and sympathy with the hero, who is forced to pretend and be hypocritical, because the society in which he lives and works has forced him to act that way.

If I am to generally analyse character traits of Jim Dixon I must say that they are influenced not only by the society but also by his anxiety arising from the insecurity of having lost his job. There are several places in the book in which Dixon wonders whether his contract will be prolonged or whether he will be sacked. Once he even hears Welch with a certain Professor of Education discussing that someone new is to come.⁵⁰

He is afraid to lose his job mainly because he has no money. Not that he gets a lot, but that job is his only financial income. He is often in a situation with not a penny in his pocket, which is why he goes to restaurants where he can get something extra when ordering a drink⁵¹ or he has problems with the waiter when refusing to give him a tip.⁵² His poverty is proven also by the fact that his only safe method of saving money is a cupboard where he hides empty beer bottles.⁵³

To a certain extent, it is his fault that he has no money. Many days spent in pubs or at home with a glass of whisky costs him a lot of money. When expenses for cigarettes are added, it is clear that he has problems of saving money. Alcohol and cigarettes are his

⁵⁰ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 29.

⁵¹ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 21.

⁵² See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 204.

⁵³ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 155.

faithful friends. They help him to forget problems and embarrassing moments he caused, or partially help him overcome cold feet.

In the case of Dixon, alcohol played an important part for example in his relationship with Margaret. On the day that a celebration took place at the Welch's, Jim ran away to the pub to forget about his faux-pas, after he had mistakenly considered Christine to be Sonia Loosmore, Bertrand Welch's ex-girlfriend.⁵⁴ When he came back from the pub in a tipsy state he ended up alone with Margaret, who seemed very attractive to him that day. His excitement and alcohol in his blood led to kissing. Dixon was trying to get even more when he started fondling her. Margaret stopped liking it after a while and angrily threw him out of her room. Dixon never managed to explain to himself, why he had allowed this.⁵⁵

Characteristic, in connection with the loss of his job, is his curiosity. He often asks Margaret or Christine after having committed a faux-pas, what situation he is in and whether someone, for example the Welsh's, were not complaining about him. An example is a situation, when Jim asks Christine what Welch thought about his leaving the celebration and going off to a pub.⁵⁶

Jim Dixon has many qualities worth mentioning. Most of them will be detailed throughout this thesis. Generally, among Dixon's worst qualities are lying, pretence, or faking something. Almost each chapter includes a situation of pretence or at least a small white lie.

As an example of such a lie is a situation when in the morning after weekend party at the Welch's, Atkinson calls him. After the telephone conversation he makes use of the situation and says: "I'm afraid I shall have to leave right away, Mrs. Welch ... That phone call..."⁵⁷ That of course was not true, no one was asking him to go anywhere. Dixon merely wanted to leave the obligatory, boring undertaking at the Welch's, which is why his friend Atkinson's phone call came in handy as an excuse.

Dixon's typical characteristic feature is laziness. That often shows as an aversion to do any extra work or to do any work at all. An example is his conversation with his friend

⁵⁴ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 42.

⁵⁵ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 58.

⁵⁶ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 69.

⁵⁷ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 79.

Alfred Beesley, who asks him why he decided to teach The Middle Ages, of all historical periods. Dixon answered: “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.”⁵⁸

One of his negative qualities is also his lack of self-confidence, which involves mainly communication with or introduction to beautiful women from upper social classes. When he saw Christine Callagan for the first time, she seemed very beautiful and charming. He realised he could never have such a woman, that women like her were made more for men such as Bertrand. He will have to make do with women of Margaret’s type.⁵⁹

This statement can be substantiated by what he said about Christine at the ball, when dancing with Carol: “No, honestly, Carol. I’d much rather see her once or twice and not do anything about it - what could I do about it anyway? She’s a bit out of my class, don’t you think? If I did try to do anything I’d only get sent off with a flea in my ear. We’re both tied up with other ...”⁶⁰

Not to talk merely about his bad traits, let me discuss several of his good qualities. He is one of a few who can change his view on people and realise that his former prejudices were incorrect. At first he considered Christine Callagan to be a spoilt young woman. After he talked with her at the Welch’s party about how much beer he had drunk at the pub that day, and when she helped him to cover up the traces when his burning cigarette lit up bed covers in the guest room, he slowly began to change his mind about her.⁶¹

Jim’s strong quality is also his empathy. This ability to sympathise with others helps him to communicate with others. For example, at the ball he saw that Christine was sad because Bertrand did not take any notice of her. Dixon jumped at the opportunity and offered to call her a taxi and they would both go to the Welch’s.⁶²

In Dixon case, though, it is not only empathy which would make his life easier. He has a nose, so to speak, for people. He can recognise the characters of other people and can well use or even misuse them in his favour.

⁵⁸ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 33.

⁵⁹ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 39.

⁶⁰ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 124.

⁶¹ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 68.

⁶² See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 127.

The way he treats others and how he can make use of his strong qualities in communication with others, the Welch's, Margaret, Christine, Johns to name a few, will be analysed in the following text.

5 REBEL VERSUS HERO

James Dixon is a controversial figure whose behaviour is often unpredictable. Once he is smiling and in good mood, at other times in some situations he is aggressive and irritated. He tends to be stubborn and keeps to his point of view at all costs. He is not willing to accept the conservative rules which are followed at his workplace. His behaviour is influenced by the person he is communicating with or the environment he is in at a certain moment. One could say that he is a divided personality who must act according to whether he is among his friends, foes, opponents or superiors.

James is often forced to make pretence mainly because he needs to keep his job at the college, where he signed a contract for an unspecified period. As the college management is about to decide, whether he will be continuing at the college, he is very amiable and tactful toward his superiors, especially Welch, even though in many cases it is unpleasant to him. His pretence is accompanied by a lot of grimaces and making of faces, which he manages to hide to a certain extent.

In my opinion, it is difficult to specify explicitly whether Dixon is a rebel or hero. It is also difficult to judge what a proper rebel and what a hero should act like. Generally the rule is that rebellion is typical of being ignorant, provocative, candid, sometimes up to a point of being cruel, and, not least, not being afraid to express one's views openly. Dixon definitively does not lack these qualities. Apart from that he can control himself and pretend, which makes his communication easier with people he feels contempt for.

Being a hero is often connected with words such as bravery and courage. Heroism is typical of handsome princes from fairy tales, who must use their muscles and sword to overcome a four-headed dragon, to deserve to marry a princess and get half the kingdom.

If we are to take heroism as it is generally perceived, Dixon would not fall into this group. Dixon has acquired few muscles or looks: "...Dixon on the short side, fair and round-faced, with an unusual breadth of shoulder that had never been accompanied by any special physical strength or skill."⁶³

Dixon's heroism should be taken in a completely different meaning. He is a hero because he is not afraid. But it is neither a four-headed dragon nor a dozen men in armour who stand up against him. It is the conservative society which he is trying to fight using all means, mainly his intelligence and general knowledge.

⁶³ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 8.

In my opinion, there is a connection between heroism and rebellion and in Amis's *Lucky Jim* they are both present. It is therefore difficult to specify explicitly whether Jim is a hero or a rebel.

His qualities of both a hero and a rebel each manifests in a different way. In his case it depends on the environment he is currently in. It is also important with whom is Dixon discussing a problem or what person he is in conversation with. As James Dixon said, "It's quite enough. It means each of you belongs to the two great classes of mankind, people I like and people I don't."⁶⁴ Therefore to some people he is nice to some he is ruthless.

5.1 Dixon versus Those He Does Not Like

In this part I will concentrate on the characters with whom Jim Dixon does not get on very well. Some of them do not like him either, e.g. Johns or Bertrand. With others he keeps a more or less good relationship, even though he does not like them, e.g. Mr. Welch, Mrs. Welch, or the diligent student Michie.

5.1.1 Mr. Welch

Mr. Welch is Dixon's superior. His bad traits outweigh the good ones. One could say that he is self-centred, because he likes to listen to himself talking, most of all he likes to jump in other people's conversations. His monologues on his experiences from concerts or mentoring others about the difference between various musical instruments are never ending.

"Now a recorder, you know, isn't like a flute, though it's the flute's immediate ancestor, of course. To begin with, it's played, that's the recorder, what they call _a bee, _that's to say you blow into a shaped mouthpiece like that of an oboe or a clarinet, you see. A present-day flute's played what's known as _traverso, _in other words you blow across a hole instead of ..."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 143.

⁶⁵ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 7.

Welch is often arrogant and misuses his stature. Apart from that, he will not accept that he may have made a mistake. All these three traits show in the situation when he wants Dixon to arrange something for him in the library. Not only did he explain badly what he actually wanted Dixon to do, he managed to push in an irony: “You’re not overburdened with work just now?”⁶⁶

Jim cannot stand Welch’s long declamations. That is why he is not listening during his intelligent lectures, is thinking about something else and only pretends to be interested. In one of his stories, in which he described how a young musician playing a viola inadvertently turned two pages instead of one and the chaos which ensued, Dixon tried to put on the expected expression. Deep in his heart, though, he was hiding an emotion that had nothing to do with interest. He would prefer to present his hidden face directly in front of Welch’s eyes to show what he really thinks about his stories.⁶⁷

Jim let his pretence and faking of an interest reveal itself during a weekend party at the Welch’s when, between two programs of the evening, he asked Welch:

“What’s the next item on the programme, Professor?” he asked.

“Just one or two instrumental items.”

“Oh, that’ll be nice. Who’s first on the list?”⁶⁸

Jim of course does not like Welch’s behaviour. He acts therefore rebelliously, but tries to hide it, which he gets away with to an extent. Jim relies on the fact that Welch does not take a notice, does not listen, or see his grimaces. Despite that he is forced to, often reluctantly, maintain good relationship with him. Welch is the one who decides about Jim’s future, meaning his staying on at the college.

Therefore his personal qualities, such as candidness, do not show in relation to Welch. Even though he would like to tell him what he really thinks about him, he is afraid to lose his job.

⁶⁶ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 172.

⁶⁷ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 8.

⁶⁸ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 45.

5.1.2 Bertrand

Bertrand, Mr. Welch's son, similarly to his father, is self-centred. He likes to go into long monologues and is indifferent to the fact that often no-one is listening to him. Dixon does not like him because he is conceited, cunning, and too self-confident. His cunning shows especially in his relationship with Christine Callagan, who he dates mainly because she is Gore-Urquhart's niece.

Gore-Urquhart is a man of high standing, whose favour Bertrand wants to gain. Bertrand assumes that if he is on good terms both with Christine and with Gore-Urquhart, he will find him a better paying job.

“I have it on more than ordinarily good authority,” he said in measured tones, “that our influential friend will shortly be declaring his private secretaryship vacant. I doubt whether the post will be publicly competed for, and so I'm at the moment busily engaged in grooming myself for the part. Patronage, you see, patronage: that's what it'll be. I'll answer his letters with one hand and paint with the other.”⁶⁹

It is bewildering how Bertrand can flatter others just to get what he wants. Dixon therefore often provokes him with his candid remarks and arguments. Bertrand cannot control himself and never has enough arguments in his defence, so he uses a threat: “That's splendid. Well, if I find you playing this sort of trick again, or any sort of bloody clever trick, I'll break your horrible neck for you and get you dismissed from your job as well. Understand?”⁷⁰ What is more, he is sometimes vulgar, jealous and arrogant:

“I've had about enough of you, you little bastard. I won't stand any more of it, do you hear? To think of a lousy little philistine like you coming and monkeying about in my affairs, it's enough to... Get out and stay out, before you get hurt. Leave my girl alone, you're wasting your time, you're wasting her time, you're wasting my time. What the hell do you mean by buggering about like this? You're big enough and old enough and ugly enough to know better.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 48.

⁷⁰ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 184.

⁷¹ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 184-185.

Dixon usually is not very tactful towards Bertrand. Not only does he dislike his aloof and arrogant manners, Bertrand is also his competitor, because he seeks the attention of the same woman.

James often has his mind full of ideas of meeting Bertrand face to face somewhere in a battlefield or becoming an art critic, so that he could write an unfavourable opinion on his work of art.⁷²

Dixon is a rebel who is not afraid to say his point of view in people's eyes. One of his positive traits is his ability to control himself. In the case of Mr. Welch, he is quite good at it. On the other hand, in the case of his son Bertrand, he somewhat lacks self-control. He often provokes him, laughing at him, and his candidness is often quite ruthless:

“You’re getting a bit too old for that to work any more, Welch,” he said quickly. “People aren’t going to skip out of your path indefinitely. You think that just because you’re tall and can put paint on canvas you’re a sort of demigod. It wouldn’t be so bad if you really were. But you’re not: you’re a twister and a snob and a bully and a fool. You think you’re sensitive, but you’re not: your sensitivity only works for things that people do to you. Touchy and vain, yes, but not sensitive.” He paused, but Bertrand was only staring at him, making no attempt to interrupt. Dixon went on: “You’ve got the idea that you’re a great lover, but that’s wrong too: you’re so afraid of me, who’s nothing more than a louse according to you, that you have to march in here and tell me to keep off the grass like a heavy husband. And you’re so dishonest that you can tell me how important Christine is to you without it entering your head that you’re carrying on with some other chap’s wife all the time. It’s not just that that I object to; it’s the way you never seem to reflect how insincere ...”⁷³

Bertrand and Jim are rivals mostly because they are interested in the same woman. Dixon principally hates his arrogant behaviour and the way he is trying to abuse the trust Christine placed in him. Dixon considers Bertrand to be sly. He knows that Bertrand dates Christine mainly because of a well-paid job offered by Gore-Urquhart. Thus, he rebels against Bertrand's way of behaviour and tries to provoke him.

⁷² See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 50.

⁷³ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 208.

5.1.3 Michie

Michie is one of the intelligent, diligent and honest students interested in history. He is very enthusiastic about history and it is his one big hobby.

Next semester James Dixon is to be his teacher. Michie therefore communicates with him very often, asks him about the syllabus they will be discussing and whether he has got the program of lectures for the coming semester ready yet. Michie respects Dixon to such an extent that he is one of a few students who addresses him “sir”: “Have you got that syllabus together yet, sir?”⁷⁴

Dixon does not like him very much, he considers him to be a bother. He also dislikes that he keeps on coming up to him and asking various intrusive questions. Dixon is also slightly afraid of him. He is worried that Michie has greater knowledge of history than he himself.⁷⁵

The only time when Dixon acts tactfully towards Michie is at the end of the novel, when Dixon is leaving the college after having been sacked. He may be behaving this way because Michie is praising his lecture or because he is leaving the place he disliked so much. Another possibility for his unusual politeness may be the fact that finally Michie discusses a topic which is different from Middle Ages or history generally.

5.1.4 Johns

Evan Johns lives in the same house as Dixon and works also at the college. He is not a favourite member of the college staff, because he is ingratiating himself with the Welch’s family. John’s behaviour can be compared that of Hujer, a character from the Czech film *Marečku, podejte mi pero* or Mazánek from the film *Cesta do hlubin študákovy duše*.

Dixon and Johns do not like each other very much. Dixon minds that he fawns on him and informs the Welch’s. He is making fun of him and playing tricks on him in return.

Their relationship will be analysed in greater detail in the following chapters.

⁷⁴ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 27.

⁷⁵ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 29.

5.2 Dixon versus Those He Likes

The novel describes also characters with whom Dixon behaves sincerely, does not have any pretensions with them, shares their points of view, and looks up to their advice or views. Dixon respects these characters very much, such as Christine, Gore-Urquhart, Carol, or Atkinson, and even though he did not like their behaviour in the beginning, because they seemed to be superficial, conceited, and arrogant, in the course of the book he changes his mind and starts being very happy in their company.

5.2.1 Christine

Christine is Bertrand Welch's girlfriend and at the same time she is Gore-Urquhart's niece. The first time Dixon saw her he realised how much he liked her, but also that he could never have women like her that they are intended more for men like Bertrand. He will have to make do with women such as Margaret.⁷⁶

At the party at the Welch's, when Dixon was exchanging views with Bertrand on rich people, he told Bertrand angrily that he should make the most of them because he will not have them much longer. Christine did not like this rude remark and said to Dixon in a restrained manner: "I'd rather you didn't talk in that strain, if you don't mind."⁷⁷

It is obvious then that Christine does not make a very good impression on Dixon. He considers her to be a spoilt woman sharing her lover's views at all costs. Naturally he does not like this and so he makes fun of her and taunts her.

In the course of time, Dixon changes his former opinion of Christine and gradually starts to realise that she is neither evil nor conceited, as he had thought. He noticed this for the first time when they talked about spoilt sheets and blankets which he managed to burn with his cigarette at the Welch's party after he came back from the pub in a tipsy state. Christine then offered to help clean up everything, which surprised him very much.

All the while that Christine helped him cover up all traces, Dixon was looking at her and she seemed to be even more beautiful than before. How he would have liked to touch her, but he realised he must not be tempted. He was wondering whether what was drawing him to her was love or sexual desire.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 39.

⁷⁷ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 52.

⁷⁸ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 70-73.

In the course of time they become closer to each other. Dixon knows that Christine likes him. He does not believe though that she could ever be his. They are both happy to be in each other's company, but on their way to a more intimate or partner-like relationship there are obstacles in the form of their current partners – Margaret and Bertrand.

5.2.2 Gore-Urquhart

Gore-Urquhart is a rich man in a high position; he is also Christine Callagan's uncle. He is in his forties and fifties and is a great arts lover. Even though he is wealthy, he is neither conceited nor aloof. He knows how to listen to people and what is more, he is quite good at recognising other people's characters.

At first Dixon mistrusts Gore-Urquhart and keeps his distance from him, because he thinks that he is the same as many people from the upper class. Eventually he finds that he was wrong. He starts recognising in him traits which he likes and, in some cases, ones similar to Dixon's.

The first discussion between Dixon and Gore-Urquhart took place at the ball. Here Dixon came to like him when he had ordered beer in pints. Dixon was also happy when Gore-Urquhart had said to him: "You're in luck, Dixon." Dixon felt flattered because he hadn't thought that Gore would remember his name.⁷⁹

During their next meeting, when they were alone just before Dixon's lecture, Gore-Urquhart asked Dixon many questions and Dixon answered sincerely:

"How long have you been in this game, then, Dixon?"

"Getting on for nine months now. They took me on last autumn."

"I've a notion you're not too happy in it; am I right?"

"Yes, I think you are right, on the whole..."

"Where's the trouble? In you or in it?"

"Oh, both, I should say. They waste my time and I waste theirs."

"...This lecture of yours tonight, now. Whose idea was it?"

"Professor Welch's. I could hardly refuse, of course. If it goes well it'll improve my standing here."

"You're ambitious?"

⁷⁹ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 110.

“No. I’ve done badly here since I got the job. This lecture might help to save me getting the sack ... Why have you come here tonight?” he asked.

“I’ve evaded your Principal so many times recently that I felt I had to come to this.”

“I can’t see why you bother, you know. You’re not dependent on the Principal. You’re only letting yourself in for a lot of boredom.”

“I let myself in for several hours’ boredom every day, Dixon. A couple more won’t break my back.”

“Why do you stand it?”

“I want to influence people so they’ll do what I think it’s important they should do. I can’t get ‘em to do that unless I let ‘em bore me first, you understand. Then just as they’re delighting in having got me punch-drunk with talk I come back at ‘em and make ‘em do what I’ve got lined up for ‘em.”

“I wish I could do that,” Dixon said enviously.

“I recognize a fellow sufferer,” he said.⁸⁰

After this long conversation they both realised that they understood each other and shared similar views. Dixon, even though he was slightly tipsy, was not afraid to express his opinions in front of Gore-Urquhart. Jim knew that he understood him and that he agreed with him. Besides, he expressed it in his sentence: “I recognise a fellow sufferer.”⁸¹

Gore-Urquhart represents a kind of salvation for Dixon because immediately after he is sacked from the college, Gore-Urquhart offers him a job. Dixon is undecided at first, because he thinks he will be working with Bertrand. Gore-Urquhart assures him:

“That’s the job you’ve got. I knew young Welch was no good as soon as I set eyes on him. Like his pictures. It’s a great pity he’s managed to get my niece tied up with him, a great pity. No use saying anything to her, though. Obstinate as a mule. Worse than her mother. However. I think you’ll do the job all right, Dixon. It’s not that you’ve got the qualifications, for this or any other work, but there are plenty who have. You

⁸⁰ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 214-215.

⁸¹ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 215.

haven't got the disqualifications, though, and that's much rarer. Any more questions?"⁸²

The relationship between Dixon and Gore-Urquhart is developing in the course of the novel. Although Dixon initially finds him to be the same as another people coming from upper class society, he finally realised that he is men of good qualities, who also opposes the conservative society.

5.2.3 Atkinson

Atkinson lives in the same house as Dixon. He works as an insurance agent; formerly he was an infantry major. In contrast to Bertrand or Mr. Welch he is rather taciturn, sometimes even curt. Atkinson often helps Dixon in his mischief:

"Oh, Bill, I wonder if you could do me a favour."

"Depends what it is," Atkinson said scornfully.

"Could you ring me at this number about eleven on Sunday morning? I'll be there all right and we'll just have a little chat about the weather, but if by any chance I can't be got at ... If you can't get hold of me tell whoever answers that my parents have turned up here out of the blue and will I please get back as soon as I can. There, I've written everything down."

"Afraid you won't be able to last out, or what?"

"It's one of my professor's arty week-ends. I've got to turn up, but I can't face the whole of Sunday there."

"I see. I'll enjoy doing that."⁸³

Despite the fact Atkinson does not play important part in this novel, for Dixon, he is very important. Whenever he says anything, it is worth hearing. Dixon admires his qualities and likes him because he has similar views and in many situations he is his support.

⁸² Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 234.

⁸³ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 34.

5.2.4 Carol

Carol, a forty year old brunette, is the wife of Cecil Goldsmith working with Dixon in the History Department. Carol, similar to Dixon, Gore-Urquhart, or Bill Atkinson despises the superficial behaviour of some college employees, and therefore sometimes she also acts rebelliously:

“Hallo, Jim, how’s it going?” she asked in her abnormally clear voice.

“Badly. There’s at least an hour of scraping and blowing in front of us.”

“Yes, that’s badly all right, isn’t it? Why do we come to this sort of thing? Well, I know why you come, Jim, and poor Margaret’s living here. I suppose what I mean is why the hell do I come.”⁸⁴

Dixon likes Carol very much and she attracts him not only with her femininity, but also with her views and opinions concerning the society. Even though she sometimes seems to be too mature, he considers her a good ally. He always speaks openly in front of her and often she agrees with what he says.

At the Welch’s party Dixon speaks with her about Bertrand in an ironic tone: “It would hardly be worth coming just to meet the great painter, would it?” He sees on Carol’s face that she does not like his remark about Bertrand: “What makes you say that?” After a while Dixon, confused, said: “Well, nothing really,” Dixon said in alarm. “I had a little brush with him just now, that’s all. I got into some mix-up over his girl’s name, and he was a bit offensive, I thought. Nothing drastic.”⁸⁵

Later on, when he sees Carol embracing Bertrand, Dixon realises why she did not join in his taunts at Bertrand. He realises that Carol is unfaithful to her husband and, despite not being good friends with him, he cannot remain detached seeing Cecil’s wife in the arms of a third person, especially such a person.⁸⁶

Several days later he meets Carol again at the ball. During the dance Carol admits to being angry with Bertrand:

⁸⁴ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 45.

⁸⁵ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 46.

⁸⁶ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 55.

“He thinks he’s only got to crook his bloody finger and I’ll come running,” Carol announced in a shout. “Well, he’s mistaken.”

He only said: “Bertrand?”

“That’s the fellow; the painter, you know. The great painter. Of course, he knows he isn’t great really, and that’s what makes him behave like this...”⁸⁷

Carol even confides in to him that she slept with Bertrand. She admits that Bertrand has many women and Dixon finds out that Carol is jealous of them:

“Still, the point is that he gets me all lined up for the Ball, with a hint of other things to follow, and then tells me he’s not taking me after all in front of that mother of his, and in front of dear Margaret too. That’s what annoyed me in the first place. Then he starts trying to conciliate me in front of Christine this evening. That got me down again. Then he takes me in here for a dance and tries to laugh the whole thing off by treating me man-to-man and telling me I know what little girls like Christine are like and how I’m not the sort of person he’s always taken me for if I let that sort of thing interfere in a friendship - note that - between two adults - note that too. Oh, I know I oughtn’t to be taking it like this, but... Honestly, Jim, it does get you down, the whole thing. I feel so fed-up with it all. I don’t even want to bash his brains out any more.”⁸⁸

Carol not only opens her heart to Dixon and confides in him, she can also give him some advice and help. Carol is very percipient and knows that Dixon likes Christine. She also tells him to leave Margaret: “No, you let dear Margaret stew in her own juice. I’ve met people like that before, old boy, and believe me, it’s the only way, only thing to do. Throw her a lifebelt and she’ll pull you under. Take it from me.”⁸⁹

Dixon feels respect for Carol because she is sincere and she knows how to support and advise him. Even though Carol plays a minor part in the book, in Dixon’s life she represents one of the most crucial roles.

⁸⁷ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 120.

⁸⁸ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 123.

⁸⁹ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 121.

5.3 Dixon versus Those He Changes His Mind on

In this novel, similar to real life, there are characters or people who seem to be friendly, and despite their faults we like them and respect them. Sometimes though there are situations when we are forced, even though it is difficult for us, to change our minds about these people and stop considering them as our friends. On the other hand, there are also people, we do not like, because everyone says that they are bad. When we have the opportunity to meet them in person and are able to get rid of our prejudices, sometimes we can change our minds and become friends.

Dixon has experienced such situations after which he changed his mind about Margaret and Catchpole.

5.3.1 Margaret

This over-sensitive, thin lady wearing glasses and a provocative make-up is Jim Dixon's friend, and is staying at the Welch's house. She takes Dixon as her partner; she even sometimes considers him as her possession and even is jealous of all the women who Dixon communicates with: "Ah, you always were one for a pretty face, weren't you? Covers a multitude is what I always say."⁹⁰ ... "I could see you and that girl were finding it all pretty funny, though."⁹¹

In some situations her scenes of jealousy are accompanied by a high pitched voice and panting and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish whether she is about to faint or have a hysterical fit. "You don't think she'd have you, do you? A shabby little provincial bore like you..."⁹²

Despite her jealousy Dixon is on fairly good terms with Margaret. He does not have the same feelings towards her as she to him. He considers her to be more of a friend, occasionally complaining to her, confiding in her with his problems, listening to her advice: "Oh, James, you're incorrigible," she said. "Whatever next? Of course we can't go out; what do you suppose the Neddies would think? Just as their brilliant son's arrived? You'd get a week's notice like a shot."⁹³

⁹⁰ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 44.

⁹¹ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 75.

⁹² Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 158.

⁹³ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 43.

Not only is he on good terms with her because he can confide in her, but also as she lives with the Welch's he has all the necessary information about them. It seems more like he is misusing her: "You'll have to start finding out what he's got lined up for me. So I can start thinking up reasons for not being able to do it."⁹⁴

Dixon does not consider Margaret to be attractive. Often he thinks that she should be more beautiful. In his view Margaret has no taste, she does not know how to dress, does not know which lipstick to use with which dress, and she uses too much make-up.⁹⁵

He also dislikes her displays of affection and gratitude: "How close we seem to be tonight, James."⁹⁶ ... "Because you're so sweet to me and I'm getting much too fond of you."⁹⁷

Whenever James hears these expressions of love he feels that he needs a big distance between them. Dixon knows that Margaret loves him. Even though he does not find her physically attractive in some situations he feels sorry for her and is sympathetic with her. She is so important in his life that he is afraid to tell her sincerely what he feels for her, not to hurt her.

One day he can't stand it any more and explains everything openly to Margaret:

"Look here, Margaret," he said. "I've no desire to hurt your feelings unnecessarily, as you know perfectly well, whatever you may say. But for your own sake, as well as mine, you must get some things straight. I know you've had a very hard time recently, and you know I know that as well. But it won't do you any good to go on thinking what you evidently do think about me and how we stand. It'll only make things worse. What I want to say is, you must stop depending on me emotionally like this. I agree I was probably in the wrong over the dance business, but right or wrong won't make any difference to this. I'll stick up for you and I'll chat to you and I'll sympathize, but I've had enough of being forced into a false position. Get it into your head that I've quite lost whatever interest I may have had in you as a woman, as someone to make love to, or go to bed with - no, you can have your turn in a minute. This time you're

⁹⁴ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 24.

⁹⁵ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 37.

⁹⁶ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 25.

⁹⁷ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 111.

going to hear me out. As I said, the sex business is all finished, if it ever got started. I'm not blaming anyone; I just want to tell you you must count me out as far as anything like that's concerned. That's how things are. And I can't say I'm sorry because you can't say you're sorry for what you can't do anything about, and I can't do anything about this and neither can you. That's all."⁹⁸

After this open confession Margaret suffers a hysterical fit, which is not the only one she had. Her behaviour in the novel is over-sensitive and hysterical. She often says jealous taunts and considers Dixon as her possession.

Even though, Dixon does not like her and her behaviour, he likes meeting her and listening to her. One could say that he is dependant on her, because he is used to her. It is therefore very difficult for him to decide whether to pick her or Christine Callagan.

5.3.2 Catchpole

Catchpole knows Margaret well. There are not many mentions of him in the book and Dixon knows him only from Margaret's talk. Margaret asserts that Catchpole used to be her partner, but he left her and went away to another young woman.⁹⁹

After some time Catchpole calls Dixon and asks about Margaret. Dixon is very impolite with him: "I warn you that if you're thinking of making a come-back with her, you're wasting your time, see?"¹⁰⁰ Catchpole does not understand at that moment why Dixon acts that way and he feels that there must be some misunderstanding. He arranges that they meet in person.

Several days later the two meet in a pub. After a few introductory words Catchpole explains everything: "I think the best thing I can do is give you the true facts of this business. Do you agree with that?" "Yes, all right, but what guarantee have I got that they are the true facts?"¹⁰¹

Dixon told him about the state of her health and after a while, as Catchpole listens, he says: "Thanks very much. That clears things up quite a bit. I'll give you my side of the story now. Firstly, contrary to what Margaret seems to have told you, she and I were never

⁹⁸ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 158.

⁹⁹ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 191.

¹⁰¹ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 235.

lovers in either the emotional or what I might call the technical sense. That's news to you, I take it?"¹⁰²

After Catchpole's long monolog in which he describes Margaret's attitude to him, that she was jealous of every woman around him, that she was keeping him as a possession and had hysterical fits, Dixon realises that everything that Catchpole told him resembles the relationship he himself has with Margaret.

He finds that Catchpole is telling the truth.¹⁰³ Catchpole even tells Dixon to leave Margaret: "Don't try to help her any more; it's too dangerous for you. I know what I'm talking about. She does not need any help either, you know, really. The best of luck to you. Good-bye."¹⁰⁴

At that moment Dixon is angry with Margaret and cannot understand how he could have believed anything she told him about Catchpole. On the other hand, he feels sympathy for her and tries to justify her behaviour. She cannot behave any differently because she is neurotic and over-sensitive, and he cannot leave her just like that.

Catchpole plays in this novel also one of the minor part. However, he is very important in the relationship between Dixon and Margaret. One could say that due to him Dixon realised that Margaret is not proper woman to him and that he should chose Christine.

¹⁰² Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 235.

¹⁰³ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 235-238.

¹⁰⁴ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 238.

6 DIXON VERSUS SOCIETY

6.1 Why Does He Fit in?

Jim fits into society, specifically among his friends or acquaintances, mainly for his sincerity. Even though his candid advice and rebukes seem cruel at the beginning, in the end they agree with him and see that what he is saying is true.

His sincerity plays an important part in his relationship with Christine. Even though at first she thinks he is untactful and rude, she eventually finds that he is not such a brute, that he merely despises people who are superficial, self-centred and conceited, people like Bertrand, Mr. Welch, or in the beginning even Christine. Dixon even tells Christine openly that she seems to him aloof:

“Well, it is true you look fairly sophisticated, if that’s the right word. Even a bit upstage sometimes. But it...” ... “Must be, naturally. It’s ... you seem to ... keep getting on to your high horse all the time; hard to describe it exactly. But you have got a habit, every now and then, of talking and behaving like a governess, though I don’t know much about them, I must admit.”¹⁰⁵

Christine respects his openness, because it helps her to get to know herself and she finds how other people see her. She even trusts him to the extent that she tells him about her relationship with Bertrand and what he would think if she married him. Jim does not want to give his opinion, but after a long persuasion he finally says that she should not marry him. Such an answer is not sufficient for Christine and she asks him to state a reason. He then resolves to say:

“All right, if you want reasons, remember they’re my reasons, though that doesn’t mean to say they oughtn’t to be yours as well. Bertrand’s a bore, he’s like his dad, the only thing that interests him is him. On any issue you care to mention he can’t do otherwise than ignore your side of things, just can’t do otherwise, see? It’s not just him first and you second, he’s the only bloody runner. My God, what you said about him

¹⁰⁵ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 137.

putting you in the wrong by starting rows shows you've got his number. I don't see why you have to have someone else to say it for you."¹⁰⁶

At first Christine looks at his reasoning with contempt: "Even if that were true, it needn't prevent me from marrying him."¹⁰⁷ Eventually, she realises that Dixon was right about Bertrand and that she should leave him.

Dixon's candidness also influences his relationship with Margaret. Even though the whole time he is not honest with her, because he is afraid to tell her what he really feels for her, in the end he decides and tells her everything.(see, page 46) Margaret first reacts with irritation, almost neurotically. Later she calms down and appreciates his openness:

"No, you always say that. This time I'm not going to let you. I just couldn't take what you said, that's all. I thought to myself, I can't bear it, I must stop him, and then I simply lost control of myself. Nothing more to it than that. And it was all so silly and childish, because you were absolutely right, saying what you did. Much better to clear the air like that. I just behaved like a perfect idiot."¹⁰⁸

Not only is Jim a sincere person, his other quality, enabling him to better fit into the society, is his ability to recognise other people's feelings and quickly learn about their qualities. He knows how to use this ability in communication with others.

Dixon for example can see quickly that Mr. Welch is self-centred, arrogant and self-confident. He knows he will be able to get along with him only if he listens to his long monologues and flatter him occasionally. Therefore when they talk about Margaret and her state of health he must flatter him on his kindness, when he lets her stay with them: "Yes, I see. I think living with you, Professor, and Mrs Welch, must have helped her a lot to get out of the wood."¹⁰⁹

Dixon fits into society because he is empathetic. Characters, such as Christine or Gore-Urquhart value his openness, intelligence, ability to provide advice and support

¹⁰⁶ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 143.

¹⁰⁷ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 143.

¹⁰⁸ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 161.

¹⁰⁹ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 9.

others. His ability to make pretence and tell people what they want to hear, helps him fit into other groups, mainly the Welch's, and still staying clean.

6.2 Why Does Not He Fit in?

Dixon does not like people, such as Bertrand, who pretend being someone they are not; he does not like informers and pussyfoots, such as Johns. He tries to fight the conservative atmosphere prevalent at the college and in the Welch family.

When he arrives at the college, in the beginning he has quite bad luck and due to several unhappy incidents he is unable to fit in and make a good impression. During his first week he causes an injury to a professor's knee, when he kicks a pebble lying on the ground; two days later he trips over and knocks over a chair, which the treasurer's assistant is about to sit on.¹¹⁰

Clumsiness, however, is not his only quality with which he introduced himself at the college and which people from his surroundings resented. There are also situations and embarrassments he caused. One of them happened at the Welch's party, when he mistakenly considered Christine to be Sonia Loosmore, Bertrand's former partner.¹¹¹

It is mainly his own doing that he does not fit into society. It is very difficult for him to come to terms with some people's behaviour. Therefore he is often unable to keep quiet and he has to tell them what he thinks about them. Most of all he resents Bertrand and his conceited behaviour, which he tries to fight. (See, page 37)

Dixon is a rebel, who keeps on showing his disapproval using grimaces, making faces and by provocation, taunts and tricks. His biggest target in this sense is Johns, who is, as mentioned in the previous chapter, a contemptible person, ingratiating himself with Welch and his family at all costs. Dixon knows that Johns pussyfoots and tells on him to the Welch's. He is therefore forced to fight against him, mainly by playing tricks on him.

A comic situation in the book worth mentioning is when Dixon wants to revenge for Johns' telling on him to the Welch's about his drunkenness at their party. He decides to retaliate and writes a fake letter signed by a Joe Higgins in which he threatens that Johns

¹¹⁰ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 16.

¹¹¹ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 42.

should keep his hands off Miss Marleen Richards. If Johns does not do as he is told he will come over with his pals and beat him up.¹¹²

Another target of his provocations is Bertrand. At one time he tells him in a rude way that he knows about his affair with Carol:

“What the bloody hell are you talking about?” Bertrand’s breath was whistling through his nose. He clenched his fists.

“Your spot of the old slap and tickle with Carol Goldsmith. That’s what I’m talking about.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking ...”

“Oh, my dear fellow, don’t start denying it. Why bother, anyway? Surely it’s just one of the things you have because it’s your right, isn’t it?”

“If you ever tell this tale to Christine, I’ll break your neck into so many ...”

“It’s all right, I’m not the sort to do that,” Dixon said with a grin. I’m not like you, I can take Christine away from you without that, you Byronic tail-chaser.”¹¹³

After a moment of further sneers Bertrand challenges him for a fight. They exchange several blows, but Dixon wins in the end. To top it all, with Bertrand lying on the ground, Dixon does not forget to add another provocative remark: “You bloody old towser-faced boot-faced totem-pole on a crap reservation,” he said.¹¹⁴

He is not favoured in society also because of his lying, making things up and pretence. Sometimes no one finds out about his tricks, but there are situations when he is forced to admit that he had committed a mischief. In this respect he has problems especially with Mrs. Welch, who had learnt to see through him, and she finds out that it was Dixon who lit blankets at their home, who called them over the telephone and introduced himself as a journalist wanting to make an interview with Bertrand.¹¹⁵

¹¹² See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 153.

¹¹³ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 208-209.

¹¹⁴ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 209.

¹¹⁵ See Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 181-182.

During one call to the Welch's, when he needs to speak to Christine to call of their date, the telephone is answered by Mrs. Welch. At that moment he changes his voice and pretends that he is someone else. But Mrs. Welch recognises him and tells him in an annoyed voice: "I'd like to tell you that if you make one more attempt to interfere in my son's or my affairs, then I shall have to ask my husband to take the matter up with you from a disciplinary point of view, and also that other matter of the ..."¹¹⁶

In my opinion, Dixon's candidness bears fruit in relationships with some people. With others it is more of an obstacle and brings only complications to his life. He does not fit into society for his rebelliousness linked with pretence, provocation and tricks.

¹¹⁶ Amis, *Lucky Jim*, 190.

CONCLUSION

The novel *Lucky Jim* and the other novels written by the Angry Young Men originated because the young representatives of this group were not satisfied with the conservative morale and consumer society in the fifties. They were trying to fight it by means of their novels, particularly by its protagonists, who were mostly young graduates entering the work and beginning their career. They usually refused career because of their aversion to commercial society. However, they finally became the part of the society they had criticized.

The object of this thesis was to acquaint the reader with the literature of the fifties, especially with Kingsley Amis's novel *Lucky Jim*. The main object, however, was to find out how Jim Dixon, the novel's protagonist, was fighting the former society. My aim was to analyse his qualities and decide if he was a rebel or a hero and why he fits or does not fit into society.

On the basis of *Lucky Jim* and other sources used in the thesis, I came to the conclusion that Dixon's contradictory qualities, such as hypocrisy and sincerity, play the most important part in his communication with other characters. Concerning his popularity in society I discovered that, on one hand, his qualities enable him to fit into society, on the other hand, they make him difficult to fit there. It is mainly influenced by the characters he is surrounded.

The question if Dixon is rebel or hero I am definitely not able to answer. In my opinion there is a connection between heroism and rebellion and it depends on each reader to decide it. However, from my point of view, Jim Dixon is predominantly rebel with qualities that help him become hero.

I think I was able to fulfil my objects and hope that extracts I have chosen for analysis, enable the reader become acquainted with Dixon's qualities and the way he treats the other characters.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AYM Angry Young Men

e.g. Exempli gratia; for example

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