

# JIM Dixon; An Isolated Character in Search of a True Identity

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**Abstract:** *'Lucky Jim', an English Campus Novel written by Kingsley Amis, can present a working sphere where there are harsh competitive relationships among the academics. In the novel, the academics' cruel rivalry can be seen as influential in their moral corruption. In this academic circle, Jim Dixon, an inexperienced history lecturer, presents a free willed, relaxed character as quite contrary to the academic principles of the 'Post War England'. In this essay, unlike disregarding of such individuality by the contemporary academics, it is stressed that Dixon can overcome the difficulties in his new working place thanks to his distinguishing characteristics, and his sincerity facilitates him in the quest for happiness. This article intends to question the weakness of academics' perceptions of the real-life concepts such as joy, love, friendship. However, unlike the other characters, Jim Dixon makes the reader think that people's own perception of life and their self determination can only lead to bare happiness in their life. Even though the experiences and self development of Jim Dixon are presented in a modernist approach this essay primarily aims at showing the postmodernist and poststructuralist features in the way that Dixon could possess during the whole novel.*

**Keywords:** Joy, Humanism, Self-reliance, Autonomy, Free will

## 1. Introduction

In 'Lucky Jim' by Kingsley Amis, a socio-educational structure is demonstrated as the main service for an ongoing materialist interest and how mercilessly this structure is turned to an abusing domination over the inferiority in this academic circle is described. This article aims at reaching a proposal that humans, as also stressed in various Poststructuralist views, should react to the social enforcement and tough social standards, thus; they can find personal peace by following their own perception of things and self reliance.

After hundreds years of class issues, the speech on the matters of working class and bourgeois started to be seen obsolete. The attention and interest of working class were directed to the charming products of popular culture. Through a vivid praise of the new products, the working class's purity is manipulated and they were adapted to such a consuming system. (Poster, 2) As a response to such developments in the mass information transfer services, 'Deconstructionists' emphasized that the new correspondence system and its vital substances would indirectly serve for a different mode of materialism and the obedience of working class would be more risky than making a community apolitic. (9)

Jim Dixon, as a contrasting character to other academics, has a distinctive code of behaviorism consisting of joy over boredom, vividness over monotony, encouragement over lack of confidence. Jim is also a sort of rebellious character who is motivated by his own anger with the bourgeois and his actions against Welch and Bertrand can be interpreted as happening as a result of his personal views against the aristocracy of the time.

In his book, Mark Poster states that in this postmodern life the line between words and things, subject and object, inside and outside, humanity and nature, idea and matter becomes blurred and indistinct, and a new configuration of the

relation of action is set in place. [(10)] As it can be revealed from the classless and unrestricted human relationship of Jim Dixon, he presents a figure believing the contemporary standards and social ethics are not contributions but a series of barrier in human's search of happiness. Hence, he prefers to be in an open communication and ignores every kinds of class differences difference. On the other hand, the other academics may follow an immoral behaviorism for the sake of protecting their status and authority.

This article primarily focuses on presenting how Jim Dixon, as a distinctive character, can develop an awake personality towards an ill-planned academic structure and the behavioral corruption of academics.

The article has also have also these objectives to get different responses:

- What and how should education promise the participants a real life real-life goal?
- To what extent does dependence on educational standards become effective in humans' pursuit of happiness?
- Does autonomy assist humans in real life situations?

As a method of study, postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches have been applied in this article. To emphasize the focus point of the hypothesis given in the article, the relevant examples, ideas and discourses have been provided in the light of postmodernist, poststructuralist theories.

### 1.1. The Paradox between Humanism and Materialism in Education

According to the theories of Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard on what 'truth' actually means their statements are worthy. They claim that the disasters experienced in twentieth century Western history are highly because of 'logo centric' philosophical tradition with its firm view on 'truth'. On such a difficult issue, poststructuralists generally tend to recognize the differences, even the disagreeable ones, and demonstrate an unbiased perception towards certain, strict,

totalized patriarchal elements. Post structuralists may be said to avoid political oppression forcefully legalized within the basis of reason and they seem to be in favor of developing a non authoritarian interpretation of all concepts. [(Poster, 16)]

In 'Discipline and Punish', Foucault introduces a type of domination in modern prisons, specific to a technology of power, pointing a mode of production. Yet, it cannot be easily defined as the early domination types were only based upon the act of labor and they brought about class matters. [(Peters, 732)] Here, what Foucault means can be related to the idea that a social system under the influence of capitalism forces the lower class lower-class people to live in a circle where their survival is highly dependent on their labor power. When a possible social promotion happens, a mode of production will still continue to use the labor of this working class on a different basis. As parallel to the statements above, the academic circle described in 'Lucky Jim' has a similar order in which the senior academics cruelly abuse the inexperienced lecturers' labor through the education.

In the book, Peters places the poststructuralist approach to the education in the following lines. The reproduction of labor power formerly was achieved through apprenticeships, but now it is obtained by means of educational institutions. The reproduction of labor power involves teaching skills and submission to the ideology of the established order. [(Peters, 57)] When the academic structure of 'Lucky Jim' is taken into consideration, it seems that a type of production is made through an education model recommending a series of standards and rules functioning for a privileged academic group. A kind of loyalty and obedience to the system are expected so that the superiority of some academics over the students and inexperienced lecturers shall exist.

According to Althusser, humanism is the opposite of the economism. Although economism says that history's motor is the economic issues, humanism claims that humanity is the motor. [(55)] When the social relationships in 'Lucky Jim' are imagined, Jim's sincerity in his talk to other academics and his coherent attitudes despite their keen on self benefits present a pure humanity that Jim still keeps. On the other hand; the academicians in the novel mostly chaise a number of concrete expectations in their relationship with others.

Jim's desire to take violent action against those who oppress him is discharged in harmless private phantasies of a childish nature. [LJ 12] For instance; he never talks to Christine about Bertrand's tricky act upon Carol's confession, revealing that Bertrand cheated on her with Christine while they were in a relationship and he went on seeing both at the same time.

In the academic circle, Professor Welch, his senior, tells Jim to write his own article and adds that this can be a good chance to improve his reputation, because Jim remains notorious for what he did before. Jim needs to ensure his future career in the academy, hence; he searches a suitable subject for his article. He thinks that the previous studies do not work in the real life and he says: 'I thought something

like "Merrie England" might do as a subject. Not too academic, and not too... not too... [LJ 14-17]

As to Welch, Jim's new article seems wonderful in topic, but it is rubbish in content. There are no strong uses in content. This can also reveal Dixon's covering characteristic which conceal his personal in capabilities. His choice of subject can refer to his satiric side and his eagerness to create a piece of fun and happiness that can separate it from the boredom of academic principles.

In the lines following, the acquirements that Jim possesses after his tie with Margaret is summarized: "He'd been drawn into the Margaret business by a combination of virtues he hadn't known he possessed: politeness, friendly interest, ordinary concern, a good-natured willingness to be imposed upon, a desire for unequivocal friendship" [LJ 10].

Margaret, as mentioned before, is an unbalanced and irresponsible female figure. Throughout his friendship with Margaret, Jim Dixon helps her and compensate for her weaknesses. Thus, the things he does for Margaret make Jim develop some personal traits. Ignorant of Jim's care, Margaret flirts with Gore Urquhart at the dance party. She seems interested in the academics by using advantage of her femininity. She has no emotional dependence and she tends to flirt with any men for the sake of her own benefit. The lines stated above mark that Jim Dixon presents a figure who follows a humanly sensitiveness while Margaret chases a temporal expectation on people.

Bertrand's fondness of status and money is one of his characteristics. Even though he is well reputed as Welch's son, he is not capable of having a life as successful as his father does. Thus, he becomes the lover of Christine, the beautiful noble niece of Gore Urquhart, a wealthy art master. His relationship with Christine can be connected to his fondness of money and social status. After Carol's confession about Bertrand's cheating on her with Christine, Bertrand's hypocrisy was revealed.

Professor Welch is interested in music and he loves organizing music parties at his home and he invites people. He wants Jim to read music in the art party and he assigns Jim a tough part to perform. When it comes to Jim's turn to sing, the atmosphere of the place for Jim is not enjoyable enough and the speech is given below:

'You'd better take first tenor, Jim,' Goldsmith said; 'the second's is a bit tricky.' Dixon nodded bemusedly, hardly hearing further laughter from Johns... He flapped his lips to: 'Each with his bonny lass, a-a-seated on the grass: fa-la-la-la, fa-la-la-la-la-la la la-la...' but Welch had stopped waving his finger, was holding it stationary in the air. The singing died. 'Oh tenors,' Welch began; 'I didn't seem to hear. [LJ 38]

Welch was supposed to have helped Jim, his junior lecturer. However, he harms Jim and causes him to get a negative score in front of people. Professor Welch is not protective towards Jim. He is focused on the project, yet he ignores the capability of his minor lecturers. Art parties and his charming breakfast display his boastful side. By admitting

both Margaret and Jim into his home, Welch may also try to show people how helpful he is. On the other hand; he intentionally damages Jim by putting a hard part in the choral performance. This can reveal Welch's merciless side that underestimates other people.

In the conversation between Beesley, a senior academic, and Jim Dixon, it is revealed what hardship academics have to bear until they have an approved position in the academic circle. "Haven't you noticed how we all specialize in what we hate most?" Dixon asked, but Beesley, puffing away at his pipe, had already got up. Dixon's views on the Middle Ages themselves would have to wait until another time" [LJ 34]. After reaching a proficient level at a specific field of study, the academics like Beesley do not prefer to share their knowledge with anybody and they look down on new research attempts by other people. Beesley's missing characteristic is described by Amis in these lines below:

'Beesley, notorious for his inability to get to know women, always came to functions of this sort, but since every woman here tonight had come with a partner...he must know he was wasting his time. Dixon exchanged greetings with him, and fancied he caught a gleam of envy in Beesley's eye. [LJ 107-108]

As it can be seen, Beesley, a well known lecturer, is not capable of communicating with ladies appropriately. In the party, Jim is often accompanied by Beesley, because Beesley wants to benefit from Jim's agility in charming the ladies. Even if he achieves in teaching, he fails in his relationship with ladies and remains alone. It can be implied that even such status owner academics have huge deficiencies whereas they do not tend to help other people in what they are specialized for the protection of some privileges. This section will go on.....

## 1.2. Awakening in the Mind and its Impact on True Perception of Life

Foucault hypothesizes some theories which influence the people's perception of life in the modern world. Among these movements, technologies on the self, possibly the most striking theory in terms of human consciousness, refers to all the ways that humans precede in their souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being in order to reach a happy, wise and moral personality. The individuals in the modern view must be acknowledged to be in a continuous change through the self consciousness, self ethical identity and a domination type that is not based on repression and coercion. Therefore, such conceptions as the obedience and dependence previously adopted as moral states must be replaced by a form of questioning and denial.[Peters, Besley58-62]

Jim Dixon is also a sort of rebellious character who is motivated by his own anger with the bourgeois and his actions against Welch and Bertrand can be interpreted as happening as a result of his personal views against the aristocracy of the time. As it is stated in the book, Nominalism refuses the existence of 'natural kinds'. It also proposes that the objects of the physical world are only abstracts but they have no real function or representations of the natural world. [Peters, Besley 66]

As it is seen in Jim Dixon's view on life, he draws a ruleless, classless and unrestricted personality which makes him distinguished. Rather than obeying the academic standards and his senior Welch's suggestions, he prefers to acknowledge a structure without borders and restrictions. Thus, he follows a way that is more autonomous and self-centered. His nonauthoritarian characteristic disputes every sorts of domination over him and he performs fake behaviors whenever he feels the insincerity in his new workplace.

Associated Professor Yıldırım Çevik, the Assistant Head Of Translation and Interpretation Department in Arel University, defines Jim Dixon's personal traits from a picaresque perspective. In his article, Çevik often refers to Jim Dixon's picaro traits. Below, he defines Jim's characteristics in these statements:

'If, as Miller maintains, "gratuitous trickery" is the picaro's most significant trait, Dixon again fits the mold [Miller, 1967: 67]. He likes tricks for the fun of it, above and beyond, all those he perpetrates for survival's sake. It is this trait that establishes him basically as a picaro. But other characteristics appear as well. As regards protean agility, Dixon proves his qualities as an academic picaro who can find his ways. He shapes himself for each part he is required to play. The uses of masking and face-making serve as a metaphor throughout the novel, dramatizing both the chameleon nature of the world and the corresponding need for protean agility. [Cevik, 66]

As Çevik mentioned in his writing, Jim's face making ability is quite developed and Jim is adjusted to convince whoever he talks to. His life is not on a plan, thanks to his wit; he immediately decides and covers his weakness whenever he comes across a difficult situation. Jim actually believes that there are many people who pretend and act fake behaviors around him. To him, almost nobody is as they seem. Hence; his pretences towards people can be his only way to survive in this academic environment.

When Jim's way of behaviors is evaluated, why he chooses such a method is a discussion matter. As Kant suggests, experience is possible only through the representation of related connection of perceptions. Thus, experience is provided by empirical cognition as a result of individual perceptions. [Wolff, Roth, 5]

After realizing the insincerity in the academic society, Jim Dixon chooses to cover his own personality and alters his acting from person to person. He finds it compulsory so that he can survive in his profession.

The way how Jim Dixon interacts with academics can indicate a specific code of strategy or self discourse on the humanly relationships. Here, Jim Dixon's autonomy can be linked to a cause and effect method emphasizing that our actions are the sole reasons for the changes in the world. How this cause and effect figure appears as the determiner in the result of relations between thought, actions and their effects is a real confusion. As a striking point to cause-effect relationships in the interpretation of human's actions, Henry introduces the idea that human body are classified into three:

organic body, felt body and material body. Apart from the other two, the felt body includes individuals' own sensations and their perception of outer things. This is completely concerned with being self in every way and the sensational experiences are inaccessible to others though. [Wolff, Roth, 6-9]

In the novel Jim Dixon early accepts that the world is full of absurdities and that people's behaviors do not reflect sincerity, but are a complete pretence. Jim behaves trickily towards the people of academic society, yet; he never abandons his sincerity and senses when his sensation is triggered.

Upon confrontation with Christine the first time, Amis describes Jim Dixon's sudden mood by using these lines: "The sight of her seemed an irresistible attack on his own habits, standards, and ambitions: something designed to put him in his place for good". [LJ, 39].

In the whole dialogues of Jim with others are not inspired by the real Jim, yet; it is the first time that Jim has been shaken by unstoppable sense of love in the attraction of a beautiful lady. He also realizes that he can be 'true' Jim for this love's sake. The way he behaves towards Christine is this and his sincerity is responded well by Christine and a love affair starts between them.

Jim Dixon's imitation of Cecil Goldsmith's speech, which he mimics by adding some hardship of speech characterized in Cecil Goldsmith is also found funny and praised:

'Ah'll be parp tar gat you in a taxi, honny,  
Ya'd batter be raddy' bout a parp-parp eight;  
Ahr, baby, dawn't be late,  
Ah'm gonna parp parp parp whan the band starts playeeng...' [LJ 116]

Jim Dixon's acting which shifts from matter to matter solves many possible problems and he takes this advantage for his own benefit. In one of the dialogues with Christine, he confesses that he disguises himself in the phone call as if he had been a reporter who had invited Bertrand to the dance night. Bertrand, unaware of Jim's trick, believes him and accepts the invitation. Hence, Christine will come to the dance party with Bertrand and Jim will see her. [LJ 117]

At the end of the dance night, Jim and Christine go outside the saloon and come across Professor Barclay and Mrs. Barclay standing and waiting for a taxi. In a short while, taxi arrives at the corner, upon that, Jim quickly goes to talk to the driver. He is actually expected to talk about the Barclays's renting the taxi, yet; he tells the driver to go around and wait for them at the other street. After this dialogue, the taxi driver drives there and waits. Jim, returning to Mr. And Mrs. Barclay, tells them that taxi driver will pick up somebody else. After that Jim and Christine leave and have a walk to the point where the taxi driver waits. Upon Christine's question about why he does this, it is revealed that his fiction is the only chance to have a walk and a romantic talk with her and he does not want the Barclays to see them taking a taxi together. [LJ 132 -, 33].

As it is presented through the scenes from the novel, Jim Dixon can highly benefit from his role playing ability. This characteristic can help him even in realizing his emotional wishes. The lines above shows that Jim Dixon often uses his quick wit and he immediately creates fiction to make things advantageous.

In another example from the novel, Margaret tells Dixon that she likes him so much and wants a love affair with him, but Dixon refuses this proposal, because he is conscious that her desire is due to her loneliness. [LJ 111]. Jim's consistency in his friendly relationship with Margaret can demonstrate that he is affectionate, but not a womaniser.

Jim's autonomy and his mind awakening may be a resistance to the harsh class discrimination in the academic circle he has been in. In 'Lucky Jim', the class system seen in the novel provides people with the stability whereas an individual consciousness in 'Constructivist view' requests that the change is the most necessary result of human's acting to the things happening around themselves.

The people who have power in such academic circle misuse the sincerity of apprentices and they do it through the public ethics dominated by the same privileged group. On the other hand, the people whose energy and joy are underestimated, due to their ignored talents, can survive in another work place.

When Jim's rebellious behaviors towards the other academics are analysed, the readers can infer that Jim, through his nonauthoritarian personality, could devastate an obedience based class system and a sort of awakening in the mind comes true.

In this article, one of the matters discussed is whether the satire must be cruel to violate moral standards or it must serve the morality. In the book, Greenberg says that the moral aims of satire have been said to be achieved by usage of wit, play and phantasy. Alvin Kerman describes the satire as 'a rigid moral system' and 'a graceful style'. The playful satire can also include a cruelty by creating anarchy and its one of main services is released as a sort of attack over immorality in society. According to William Ian Miller, these servers working for the stability of moral values are called 'moral menials'. They deal with 'moral dirt' like garbage men and they remind us that a separation good from evil, pure from polluted must be inevitable. [Greenberg, 4-6]

Jim Dixon presents a grotesque figure who possesses a childish nature with plenty of joy, jokes and laughter. Yet, at the end of his story, he appears as a character who strives for reaching some moral aims which are highly underestimated in modern times. Even though his revolutionary and self-autocratic sides may be considered harsh and extreme, the way he follows leads to the destruction of some out of date standards and brings inspiration to those who are in search of a modern man.

## 2. Conclusion

Dixon denies the forms of a materialistic structure supported by the order of a patriarchy and hierarchy. He demonstrates

a self-autonomy against a type of autocracy and coercion included in such an academic sphere. He also resists against all the class issues and ignores the borders among people. As a doctrine of nominalist approach, he never names the contents and a substance important, he contrarily believes that it is human's free thought and understanding that put significance on the concepts and standards.

Jim Dixon as a free willed character is always on the side of being sincere in human relationships. Because of his democratic approach to everything in his life, he denies every sort of classification and believes that people and their rights should be equal. As an individual adopting a particular self-autonomy, he is always guided by his free thought and refuses every kind of strictness and pressure by other people. The character development of Dixon throughout the novel can also demonstrate that such a self-guided person without restrictions and enforcement can find the best way to reach the most suitable profession to his own concerns and his happiness can surely spread to the other people around.

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