

Univerzita Karlova v Praze  
Pedagogická fakulta

**The nature of the revolt of The Angry  
Young Men with reference to selected works of  
Kingsley Amis and John Osborne**

Marie Hronová

Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: PhDr. Petr Chalupský, Ph.D.

Studijní program: Specializace v pedagogice - Anglický  
jazyk a základy společenských věd se zaměřením na  
vzdělávání

2012

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma *The nature of the revolt of The Angry Young Men with reference to selected works of Kingsley Amis and John Osborne* vypracovala pod vedením vedoucího bakalářské práce samostatně za použití v práci uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále prohlašuji, že tato bakalářská práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 22. 6. 2012

Marie Hronová

## **NÁZEV**

Povaha revolty Rozhněvaných mladých mužů s odkazem na vybraná díla Kingsleyho Amise a Johna Osborna

## **AUTOR**

Marie Hronová

## **KATEDRA**

Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

## **VEDOUcí PRÁCE**

PhDr. Petr Chalupský, Ph.D.

## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato práce se zabývá literaturou Rozhněvaných mladých mužů. Teoretická část zachycuje, jak druhá světová válka ovlivnila politickou, sociální a kulturní situaci Velké Británie. Jedním z hlavních témat této části je řešení poválečné finanční krize, a tedy je prozkoumán Marshallův plán a politika sociálního státu, a také jejich dopad na vývoj společenských tříd ve Velké Británii. Širší kontext je také poskytnut popisem politických změn na konci 40. a v 50. letech 20. století, konkrétně ztráty Britských kolonií a Suezské krize v roce 1956. Kromě toho teoretická část obsahuje analýzu různých směrů v poválečné Britské literatuře. Pozornost je věnována především literatuře 50. let 20. století a autorům, kteří patří do hnutí Rozhněvaných mladých mužů. Detailnější charakteristika tohoto hnutí je uvedena v praktické části. Tato část se zabývá vyobrazením a kritikou sociální, politické a kulturní situace v Británii 50. let, která je vyjádřena v díle *Šťastný Jim* (1954) od Kingsleyho Amise a *Ohlédni se v hněvu* (1956) od Johna Osborna. Z tohoto důvodu jsou názory Amise a Osborna podloženy odkazy k jejich dílům a tím je vysvětlen důvod jejich nespokojenosti.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Poválečný vývoj Velké Británie, Literatura 40. a 50. let, Rozhněvaní mladí muži, Kingsley Amis, John Osborne

**TITLE**

The nature of the revolt of The Angry Young Men with reference to selected works of Kingsley Amis and John Osborne

**AUTHOR**

Marie Hronová

**DEPARTMENT**

Department of English Language and Literature

**SUPERVISOR**

PhDr. Petr Chalupský, Ph.D.

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis is concerned with the literature of the Angry Young Men. The theoretical part depicts how World War II influenced the political, social and cultural situation of Britain. One of the main topics of this part is the solution of the post-war financial crisis, therefore the Marshall Aid programme and Welfare State policy are examined, just as their impact on the development of social classes in Britain. Further context is provided by the description of political changes in the late 1940s and the 1950s, specifically of the loss of British colonies and the Suez Crisis of 1956. Moreover, the theoretical part contains an analysis of different tendencies in British post-war literature. The main focus is put on the literature of the 1950s and the authors belonging into the movement of the Angry Young Men. More detailed characteristics of this movement is then featured in the practical part. This part deals with the portrayal and criticism of the social, political and cultural situation of the 1950s in Britain, which is expressed in Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) and John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956). Therefore, the views of Amis and Osborne are supported by references to their works to explain the reason of their discontent.

**KEY WORDS**

Post-war development of Britain, Literature of the 1940s and the 1950s, Angry Young Men, Kingsley Amis, John Osborne

## Obsah

1 Introduction.....	6
2 The characterization of the post-war Britain .....	8
3 Social Classes after World War II.....	14
4 Characterization of the post-war British literature.....	16
5 The working-class novel of the 1950s.....	20
6 The criticism of society in Amis' <i>Lucky Jim</i> .....	23
7 The reason of Osborne's anger, reflected in <i>Look back in Anger</i> .....	31
8 Conclusion .....	38
Works Cited.....	41

## 1 Introduction

The late 1940s and 1950s were period full of significant changes, whether from the political, social or cultural point of view. The post-war years are known as the time of austerity and there was a need for a new approach of the government to reinstate the prosperity of Britain and secure acceptable conditions for British citizens. Furthermore, the new era brought a change in culture, which was caused not only by the change of views due to the impact of World War II, but also by the decline of Britain as the world power, change of the class consciousness or the ongoing process of Americanization. However, such changes were not perceived in a purely positive way. A great number of people felt disappointed by the post-war development and change of values. The feelings of disillusion, despair and anger were very frequent and they were naturally expressed in British literature. The aim of this thesis is to reflect on the post-war changes in British politics and society and point out the reasons they were criticized by the authors of the Angry Young Men.

The theoretical part of the thesis (Chapters 2 – 5) offers a closer insight into the post-war development of Britain. It is concerned with the way the British government solved the post-war financial crisis since it has a direct link to a great number of the criticized features in the literature of the 1950s. It discusses the changes in the social policy of the Labour government that were supposed to solve the pressing financial situation of Britain and also considers the impact of these changes on the class division. The foreign policy of Britain is another discussed topic, since it changed significantly in the post-war period and became a frequent motif of the works of the Angry Young Men. Furthermore, the theoretical context of the thesis is also given by the depiction of the main trends in British literature of the late 1940s and the first half of the 1950s.

The practical part (Chapters 6 – 7) includes an analysis of the British society through the points of view of Kingsley Amis and John Osborne. Their criticism of the contemporary political, cultural and social situation is portrayed in the pivotal works of the Angry Young Men, which were Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954) and Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956). Both of the works reflect the changes in Britain and show the disillusion of the working-class people. Therefore, the practical part clarifies the reason of anger of the generation of the 1950s by

analyzing the opinions of Kingsley Amis and John Osborne with the help of references to *Lucky Jim* and *Look Back in Anger*.

## **2 The characterization of the post-war Britain**

There is no question that the World War II was one of the crucial turning points in history. Even despite of the victory over Germany in 1945, the whole world suffered from the consequences of the war for long years afterwards. The impact of the war was easy to detect in all areas of life. After the war, Britain struggled to restore the former position of a world's superpower. However, due to its great losses, its position of the world's most powerful state was taken over by the United States of America and Soviet Union.

The war costs of Britain were immense. Over the six years of war, Britain lost over 350,000 lives, out of which over 90,000 were the lives of civilians. Moreover, the economic situation of Britain rapidly deteriorated. Not only was British economy affected by the pre-war depression, but also the expenses of the war exceeded British budget, thus bringing the economy into debt. Only thanks to the Lend-Lease agreements with the United States was Britain able to take part on the war. According to A. Marwick's study, Britain had exhausted almost all of its financial resources: "In waging war Britain had acquired debts of £ 3,000 million, had allowed domestic capital to deteriorate by around the same amount, had used up overseas investments to the extent of £ 1,000 million, and had had to let exports fall to one third of their pre-war level" (Marwick 23).

The impact of the war was easily perceivable throughout the whole country, where once prosperous areas were now left derelict. The city centres, as well as roads and railways or housings, were destroyed in the Blitz and many of the industrial facilities suspended its activity. Not only was the production in many areas of British industry decreasing, but also the expenses of reconstruction of the infrastructure were a high amount, consequently putting even further strain on British budget. Therefore, the whole country experienced significant shortages of both foodstuffs and materials. Moreover, the decreasing production of British industry together with power outages inflicted a massive wave of unemployment: "Power supplies were cut, creating a wave of unemployment which reached a peak of 800,000 in 1947" (Marwick 23). Due to the post-war difficulties, it was necessary to devise a program of recovery.



Not only Britain, but the whole Europe, suffered from such severe repercussions. Since the state budgets were almost exhausted by the war expenses, none of the European countries had sufficient sources for renovation. A solution to the difficult situation was brought by the United States of America when in June 1947 the US Secretary of State George C. Marshall presented a programme, called Marshall Aid Programme, whose aim was to provide financial help to Europe. Nevertheless, it was not the first time the USA offered help to Europe. During the war, the American government loaned great sums to European countries: “The chief beneficiaries by far had been the UK and France, which had received \$4.4 billion and \$1.9 billion in loans respectively” (Judt 90). These loans were meant chiefly for emergencies. On the other hand, the Marshall Aid programme was unique since it presented a long-term strategic plan, aiming to provide sufficient funds for Europe in the post-war years. It stretched over the period of several years, ending in 1952. During this time, the United States granted \$13 billion, out of which Britain and France received the greatest sums. A quick post-war recovery of Europe was crucial not only for the Europeans themselves, but for the American government as well, since the deficiency in the budgets of European countries had a great impact on American export: “The United States had been particularly hard hit by the trading and export slump of the thirties and spared no effort to convince others of the importance to post-war recovery of liberalized tariff regimes and convertible currencies” (Judt 94). Only with the help provided by the Marshall Aid programme was Western Europe able to overcome the difficulties caused by the war’s impact.

Although the initial help was received from the United States of America, every European country including Britain designed individual plans of renovation. In Britain, the Labour Party, which came to power in 1945, made a commitment to reinstate the social security for British citizens and the Government’s goal was to establish a Welfare State. The major part in this aim had the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services, also known as the Beveridge Report. In this document, Sir William Beveridge stated four assumptions, which became the base of the British policy: “that there should be a national health service, an adequate state pension, family allowances and near-full employment” (Judt 75). At the same time, there was an aim to revitalize the British economy, which was greatly deteriorating due to the insufficiency of the British

funds. The government's solution to the decreasing production was transferring some of the British institutions to state ownership: "It also laid the foundations for what was called the 'mixed economy' by taking into public ownership the coal, iron and steel industries, road haulage, the railways and public utilities such as gas and electricity" (Davies 3). By nationalizing the facilities crucial to British economy and launching a series of measures according to the Beveridge Report, Britain aimed to restore its pre-war prosperity.

One of the most important aims of the Labour Government was the full employment policy, but it also strived for improvement of housings, health care, education and social security system throughout Britain. The financial resources were chiefly acquired by general taxation. To avoid unemployment, the government was bound to create jobs and provide financial help for the unemployed. Therefore, the social security system underwent many changes. Most importantly, the social services now applied to everyone instead of being directed solely on the working classes. Every family with more than one child was paid family allowances and since it was subjected to general taxation, the difference between the poor and the rich was overcome. Another social benefit was secured by the National Insurance Bill: "Social security consisted chiefly of the state provision of insurance—against illness, unemployment, accident and the perils of old age" (Judt 73). Every British citizen, with the exception of the old-age pensioners and students, received a National Insurance card, which enabled them to receive a financial aid in case of unemployment or sickness. However, such allowance was often seen as purposeless since the wealthier citizens deemed the allowance rather insignificant, while for the lower classes the amount was insufficient. Another of the relevant changes in security system was brought by the National Assistance Act of 1948, which secured a financial benefit provided to citizens, for whom the National Insurance was inadequate or in cases of emergencies. Nevertheless, mainly due to the need to pass a personal needs test, the number of people applying for this benefit was not as high as expected: "Compared with the ministerial documents and handouts of the 1930s, those of this new era were genuinely friendly and unbureaucratic and pervaded with the spirit of social democracy and welfare for all; yet the probability is that they never got through to those who most needed help" (Marwick 53). Due to the inadequate efficiency, these changes were often criticised.

Significant and successful innovations were those made in the Health Care system. The pre-war system had been very distinctive for being class-divided due to the various fees for services. There used to be a range of medical facilities, some of them, such as dentist practitioners, had been affordable solely by upper and middle-classes. The free medical care used to be provided exclusively to insured workers. The change came with the National Health Service Act of 1946. After legalization of this bill, health care became free for everyone, regardless of the insurance contributions, which had significant implications: “Non-working women with no private health insurance of their own got coverage for the first time” (Judt 75). This innovation by no means brought dissolution of private wards in hospitals or private physicians, but the patients were able to choose between free and paid services. Similarly, doctors could choose between working in public hospitals or private practice. However, the bill neglected to determine the way the general practitioners should be paid, which induced indignation of the doctors, requiring the traditional way of salary for every patient: “In fact, these doctors resisted the infringement of their traditional professional status which they believed to be involved in the acceptance of a completely salaried service and held out for a scheme resembling that of the old panel system whereby they received a capitation fee for each patient on their list” (Marwick 56). Nevertheless, the changes in the Health Care system had a significant impact for the working class, which could not afford a paid health care service.

An important sphere which had an impact on the unemployment rate and prosperity of the state as well was education. Similar to the health care, the pre-war educational system was closely connected to the social classes. While the upper and middle classes could afford attending grammar schools and continue their studies at universities, it was very common for pupils from the working-class families not to receive a secondary education, leaving them with no other option than accepting a working-class occupation. However, in 1944 the educational policy was innovated, providing not only a better opportunity for all classes, but also a possible way to improve British economy: “Through increased government intervention in the mixed economy, the Labour Prime Minister hoped to create a dynamic, technologically advanced economy; through increased spending on education he hoped to create a better educated and more egalitarian society” (Davies 52). This

Act secured free secondary education for all pupils. The innovation was based on accessible secondary education and eleven-plus exams, which would sort the pupils into grammar schools and secondary modern schools. The grammar schools were still considered to be followed by university studies, while the secondary modern schools would enable the students receive working-class jobs. However, although the grammar schools were supposed to be attended mostly by middle-class students, even the students of lower classes had a better opportunity to move through the educational system. Moreover, the students were now able to choose between attending a state school and private grammar schools, which charged fees but were directly supported by a grant from the Government. Apart from secondary education, significant changes were made even in university education. Due to the decision of the University Grants Committee in 1946, the grants paid to the universities were raised and in the span of ten years, they formed a substantial amount of university income. Moreover, there was higher opportunity for the students to receive a grant from the government to cover their studies: “At this time over three quarters of all students in England were receiving public grants, with the proportion rather higher in Scotland and Wales. Thus the proportion of students drawn from ‘the lower occupational categories’ was higher than ever before; but the odds were still heavily weighted against a university education for a working-class child” (Marwick 61). In spite of the lower probability of a working-class student receiving a university education, there was a great amount of pupils from the working-class families passing the eleven plus exams and thus having an opportunity to study in grammar schools and universities.

Despite the state’s effort, the pre-war prosperity was not achieved again and Britain never reached the position of a superpower. The feeling of failure was even strengthened by the Suez Crisis in 1956. The Suez Canal was a strategic point for all countries, including Britain. To maintain the control over the Suez Canal would allow Britain to hold its leading position in the Middle East. Therefore, when the Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, the British Government, together with France and Israel, decided to take a military action against Egypt. However, the action was perceived as controversial: “The action not only divided public opinion in Britain with an unprecedented intensity, it was also condemned by the rest of the world, most significantly by the USA which

threatened to speculate against the pound” (Davies 2). Due to the lack of American support, the British troops were withdrawn from the Suez Canal and the failed action contributed to loss of British influence in the Middle East and confirmed the loss of Britain’s position as a world power.

### **3 Social Classes after World War II**

Ever since the Industrial Revolution, the outline of British society was defined by the division into the social classes. Division into social classes is a rather subjective point of view, which categorizes the society according to the wealth, income, occupation, power or authority or even life-style. Throughout the history of Britain, such categorization, though perceived by everyone, was a base of inequality between citizens.

Categorization of society is rather difficult, since the lines between the classes were rather blurred due to the variety of criteria. Nevertheless, there were always three levels of social classes. Upper classes always presented the highest stratum of society. Generally, the members of the upper class belonged to aristocracy and held the highest, leading positions in society. It was mainly the upper-class citizens who were the owners of capital. According to the statistics, the upper class presented two per cent of population in 1945. The opposite pole of society was represented by the working class. This class could be defined as consisting of manual workers of various kinds of occupations: “Manual workers and their families formed the working class, with which would usually be included small shopkeepers and publicans in working-class areas” (Marwick 41). As already mentioned, the working-class members commonly received solely elementary education. Throughout the history, this class constituted the major part of British society. The remaining strata of society were generally described by the term of ‘middle classes’. Their range of occupations varied from white-collars workers to businessmen.

The war and the subsequent ways of innovations greatly influenced the class division in Britain. This change was perceivable in all three strata. However, although the war was considered to have the result of blurring the lines between classes, the post-war society was still divided. Despite the post-war shortages and rationing, the traditional life-style of the upper class did not seem to be impaired: “A quick survey of the sources shows that many within the upper-class fold were able to lead a life of considerable amplitude in the age of austerity” (Marwick 43). Nevertheless, the post-war changes brought differences inside of the upper class. Although the upper-class members were usually rich aristocrats, after the war many successful businessmen or politicians were considered to belong to the highest class as well. These distinctions in the class were perceived solely by its members, while

from the point of view of the citizens of the lower classes it was still considered to be a cohesive stratum.

However, this change was not typical exclusively for the upper class, on the contrary, this feature appeared in the two remaining strata as well. A line between the upper-middle and lower-middle class emerged, even though it was slightly lowered by the high taxation. The upper-middle class rather resembled the upper class. However, although they preferred a similar life-style, the upper-middle class lacked the power or dominance of aristocracy and this distinction was very strongly perceived: "...there was a very deep vein of snobbishness making for the continued elaboration of a distinction between those truly aristocratic and those who, for lack of a better phrase, must be distinguished as 'upper-middle-class'" (Marwick 41). Yet, in the point of view of lower-middle-class and working-class citizens, there was not much distinction between the two upper classes.

Nonetheless, the war had the greatest impact on the working class. The new post-war order was made in favour of the working class. Although the general taxation in the post-war years was very high, it did not affect the working class severely, on the contrary, it reduced the distinction between lower and middle classes. Moreover, the strikes of the workers for higher earnings and better working conditions earned them a raise of salaries by fifty per cent. Despite the difficulties that the shortages and rationing brought to the working class, their conditions were improved by the benefits of the welfare state and the post-war years were characteristic by the rising power of the manual workers. Nevertheless, the social order, though favouring to the lowest social stratum, was still distinguished by the inequality between the classes, particularly between the middle and working classes.

#### 4 Characterization of the post-war British literature

However optimistic the post-war mood was with the vision of recovery, the literature of that period expressed a much more depressing view. World War II was an event that ruined human values and hopes and had a significant impact on human consciousness, perhaps even greater than World War I. The authors were dealing with the horrors of war and the changes in the post-war period and therefore expressed feelings of disillusion and anxiety. Their works were frequently characterized by a sense of absurdity and tendency to extremity and nihilism.

Such feelings were greatly inspired by the philosophical movement of Existentialism. The British writers were influenced by the thoughts of representatives such as S. Kierkegaard, K. Jaspers and most importantly the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the author of *Being and Nothingness*. In his work, published in 1943, Sartre expressed “a philosophical vision based as much on the anguish, forlornness and terror of the contemporary historical situation as it was on the fading tradition of humanism and idealism in European thought” (Bradbury 269). Similar thoughts were implied by Albert Camus, another French philosopher, in his work *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Except for the characterization of human existence as empty and cruel, Sartre also called the attention to the value of language, which was damaged by both World Wars. Therefore, he stressed the importance of the writers, whose duty was to restore the value of language: “The writer’s task now was, he held, nothing less than recovery of the word itself, the re-creation of meaning” (Bradbury 271). Indeed, language became one of the most significant topics of the post-war authors, who were inspired by Sartre’s thoughts.

The literature of the end of the 40s was reflecting not only the horrors of war but also the following consequences on post-war Britain. Therefore, the literature was frequently influenced by the experience of austerity, rationing, shortages and bureaucracy. Nevertheless, there were many directions in art, such as realism, moral allegory or fantasy. However, the mood of the literature was definitely not celebratory. Contribution to the post-war literature was brought chiefly by the important writers of the Twenties and Thirties. The first post-war novel was George Orwell’s *Animal Farm: A Fairy story*, published shortly after the end of war in 1945. Together with his following novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell’s work became a significant influence on other authors of dystopian novels. In these



cautionary works, Orwell also expressed thoughts similar to Sartre's view on corruption of language, which had essential influence on the cultural mood of the period. Moreover, the novels also provided inspiration to the authors of socially oriented literature: "It is also possible to see the cautionary note of these novels as establishing a liberal world-view, based on a deep scepticism of political extremes that helps fashion a new lineage of liberal and socially attentive writing that is dominant in British fiction in the 1950s and beyond" (Head 13). It is, therefore, easy to perceive Orwell as one of the influences on the writers of 1950s.

A bleak view of the post-war world can be found in the novels of Graham Greene. His works covered a variety of genres but all of them conveyed a similar message. Influenced by Sartre, Greene described the post-war life as depressing, full of failed loves and hopes and faithlessness. Such attitude can be perceived in his novel *The End of the Affair*, published in 1951. For Greene, history was senseless and corrupted by betrayal and guilt. He also incorporated political and ideological views, although he rather dismissed any descriptions of the class problems: "Even so Greene's post-war novels were not, as he said, works of realism, and they spend little time on the detailed social manners common to much British fiction though anxious class attitudes and ideas of social duty are in them everywhere" (Bradbury 289). A similar view to Greene was shared by Evelyn Waugh. Like most of his contemporaries, he disdained and criticised modern world, including the process of Americanization or the egalitarian policy, describing it as a period of decline. Contrary to Greene, his novels, though conveying depressing views, were delivering his message with a sense of comedy and satire. An important feature of Waugh's novels was the religious faith: "By now Waugh's Catholic faith was becoming a more overt element in his fiction, a consolation set against the late modern chaos" (Bradbury 285). His dislike to inter-war and post-war years of chaos can be found in his novel *Brideshead Revisited*, published shortly after the end of the war in 1945.

However, the bleak views of the world were not only a matter of the end of the 1940s. Even in the literature after 1950, when the age of austerity ended, visions of faithless, corrupted world prevailed. A similar attitude to Greene was expressed by William Golding, whose masterpiece *Lord of the Flies* was published in 1954. Although the tendency towards realism was widespread during this period, his work

was not a realistic novel and did not deal with social questions. It brought a timeless message of what human beings are capable of and addressed questions of “good and evil, being, wholeness and creative aspiration in a godless age” (Bradbury 328).

Another significant author was Iris Murdoch. Like Golding, though her novel *Under the Net* was published in 1954, she did not follow the literary impulse of the 1950s, although she is often identified as a representative of the movement of the Fifties. However, the notions in her novel, including the dedication and title, refer to the existentialist and surrealist authors. Although the novel *Under the Net* is mainly concerned with human relationships, it is easy to perceive the philosophical undertones, based on the thoughts of Plato and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Therefore, Iris Murdoch can be considered to be a main influence on the British philosophical novel.

After the war’s end, there was not much inclination towards experimentation since the philosophy of existentialism and criticism of the post-war age rather set realism as the most significant way to convey the true characteristics of the world. However, existentialism gave rise to another tendency in literature. Its main representative was Samuel Beckett, whose work is by some critics considered to be experimental. Until the end of the 1940s, Beckett was chiefly interested in prose, for which he found great influence in James Joyce. However, after 1950 stage became his focus, though most of his works were written in French, and thus introduced the new movement of the theatre of the absurd. In his plays, he created an absurdist world, in which he questioned a nature of language and parodied both logic and literary form: “Language comes closer to babble or gabble, and takes on the nature of an imperfect or obscure memory incapable of being precisely invoked, meanwhile asking us to consider whether there is identity at all, and how writing comes out of it” (Bradbury 297). In this feature, he directly followed the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre. He strived to create a comedy of writing itself, in which texts became unreliable and human identity doubtless. His works created a new tendency of experiment and influenced a great number of authors.

Except for the works influenced by war and post-war recovery and the philosophy of Existentialism, there was another prominent tendency in the literature of the 1950s. This tendency began with the passing of the British Nationality Act in 1948, which allowed the citizens of the British colonies to receive a national

citizenship of the United Kingdom. Shortly after passing the act, the first ship, the *Empire Windrush*, arrived in Britain, bringing hundreds of immigrants of Jamaica. The Jamaican community brought their own culture and customs. Thus, the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* marked the beginnings of the post-colonial writing and the process of creolization of British literature. The first representative of the post-colonial literature was the British Caribbean author Sam Selvon. His novel, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), was concerned with the life of West Indian citizens in London, who not only belonged to the working-class stratum, but furthermore, were perceived as outsiders. Therefore, the author expressed his feelings of homesickness and disappointment with the life in London of the 1950s.

## 5 The working-class novel of the 1950s

After 1945 in the British world of austerity there was a tendency of the critics to express their disappointment and distrust of the literature. The reason of this trend was constant comparison of the post-war period and literature to the literature after World War I. While the feelings of disillusion and loss of human values were resembling those after World War I, the authors at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were dealing with them in much different way. After 1918, the anxiety of the writers gave rise to the Modernist movement, which allowed them to turn to their inner self and express their insecurities. This movement was highly experimental and elitist. The stress was put on the individual and the subjective perception of the world, on the other hand, there was not much thought of the society as a whole or sentiment with class division. Such elitist movement was what the period after World War II was lacking, perhaps with the exception of Samuel Beckett. It was also the reason of the critics' opinion about the decline of British literature: "Most strikingly, the postwar period reveals a loss of confidence and ambition amongst British writers" (Davies 3). However, the wide variety of literary tendencies, though not elitist, proves otherwise.

Nevertheless, not only the literary critics were of such opinion. There was wide-spread notion of the deterioration of the elitist art and aspiration to raise interest of the public in the High Art again. As such effort can be perceived even the "state-sponsored attempt to inculcate an appreciation of High Art: the BBC began broadcasting its highbrow Third Programme in 1946, projecting it as an educative and civilizing force, though its small audience indicates failure in this regard" (Head 15). This failure signifies that the focus of the public was no longer the inner self, but rather dealing with the post-war changes in politics, economics and social division.

The class division and social changes indeed became one of the most frequent topics of the post-war literature. Although the changes made by the government were favouring the working classes, the notion of inequality still did not disappear. Moreover, there was confusion within the classes, since the class loyalties were considered irrelevant during and after the war but still were not erased. The literature after the war was therefore reflecting not only the changes themselves, but also the feelings of injustice and inequality. Therefore, instead of elitist modernism

there was a stress on realism, thanks to which these changes could be depicted: “The mid-1950s also saw the rise of a new generation of writers, directors, and artists opposed to what they saw as the innate conservatism of the political and cultural establishment” (Davies 140). A great number of new authors, who were coming from the lower-middle-class or working-class background, created the so called working-class novel.

The working-class literature was mainly produced by a group of novelists and poets, who emerged at the beginning of the 1950s, receiving the name The Movement. Its leading figures are represented by authors such as Philip Larkin, John Wain or Kingsley Amis. The characteristic tendency of this movement was to dismiss the thoughts and values of Modernism: “The shared values of the central Movement writers, Amis, Davie, and Philip Larkin, were expressed as impatience with complexity, symbolism, and opacity. For Amis, it was retrograde to admire the modernists – Joyce, Woolf, and Proust all attracted his disapproval” (Head 50). According to the authors of The Movement, writing should be transparent and straightforward. The Movement is partially overlapping with another school of the 1950s, called the Angry Young Men. Its tradition was established by the publication of the novel *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis in 1954. The name of this movement is derived from the title of John Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger*, which became one of the most prominent plays of the period: “This play, along with the first production of Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* and the visit of Bertolt Brecht’s *Berliner Ensemble*, is often cited as marking British theatre’s move from the slumbers of West End bourgeois drama towards serious and innovative new drama” (Davies 175). Among other representatives were John Braine or Alan Sillitoe, the latter was one of the leading representatives of working-class drama. His work *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) is a perfect example of a play concerned purely with the topics of the provincial life and problems of the working-class characters and depicts the frustration of the working-class characters.

The works of Angry Young Men were characteristic by the dissatisfaction with contemporary social situation, which was still highly unfavourable to working classes. Over all, their rebelliousness was instigated by contradictions in “three main areas of assertion: the challenges to the class system, to cultural elitism, and to the metropolitan centre. *Lucky Jim*, which reveals contradictions in all three areas,

thus supplies an excellent summation of the Movement's values and its limitations" (Head 51). Their anxiety was even intensified by the fact, that a substantial part of the writers received a higher education thanks to the Butler Act of 1944 and yet the opportunity for the working classes to prosper from the education was slight. Their novels are often set in the campuses of the redbrick universities and there is perceivable a move away from the metropolitan centre towards provincial subjects. Therefore, the heroes of the Angry Young Men were frequently ordinary, working-class or lower-middle-class characters, who, though educated, are struggling to find their place in society and therefore scowl at the hypocrisy of the upper-middle classes, metropolitanism and elitism. Such features could be found for example in John Wain's novel *Hurry on Down*, published in 1953, in which he expressed his impatience with class-distinctions. Another representative of the literature of Angry Young Men was John Braine, who in his novel *Room at the Top* (1957) proves the social immobility of the working class.

## 6 The criticism of society in Amis' *Lucky Jim*

Amis' novel *Lucky Jim* is considered a typical novel of 1950s and simultaneously a pivotal work of the literature of Angry Young Men. In his novel, Amis expresses all of the views and attitudes of his contemporaries to the social situation in Britain, thus influencing a great number of other authors. The novel is mainly concerned with the social class division and the insecurities and inferiority of the lower classes and criticizes the hypocrisy and pretensions of his superiors. At the same time, Amis' work expresses the dislike of the greatly supported Higher Art and elitism. Although the novel implies strong opinions of the Angry Young Men, they are conveyed with humorous and satirical undertones.

There is no doubt that while writing his novel *Lucky Jim*, Amis was greatly inspired by his own life. Amis' family came from the lower social stratum: "Born in 1922, Kingsley grew up in Norbury, an unfashionable suburb of London, as the pampered, overprotected only child of a couple just barely clinging to the middle class" (McGrath). During the 1940s, Kingsley Amis attended Oxford University, though he never finished his Bachelor's degree. Nevertheless, he was offered a post of a lecturer in a provincial university in Wales. Moreover, Amis' wife came from a prosperous, upper-middle-class family and became an inspiration not only for the hero's aspiration to win a girl from a higher social class, but also her family was the model for the Welches. Amis' political opinions are also visible in the novel. Although his political beliefs were not consistent throughout his life, at the beginning of his career he tended towards the Left. In 1941, he joined the Communist Party and in the time of the publishing *Lucky Jim*, he was a supporter of the Labour Party. Kingsley Amis was also famous for his relish for alcohol: "That Kingsley was an enthusiastic drinker and philanderer was well known to most of his British readers [...]" (McGrath).

Some of the features of Jim Dixon are therefore analogical with the life of Kingsley Amis. Although he received university education, Jim Dixon comes from lower-middle-class background. He is an ordinary character, a junior lecturer of history at a provincial university: "The inferiority of Jim Dixon, [...], is conveyed in class terms, and in such a way to reverse the assumed hierarchy: his escapades make him a kind of lower-middle-class Everyman exposing the sham gentility of people like the Welches" (Head 51). Despite the fact that his origin is never

explicitly mentioned, his background is implied through several instances. One of them is his job. Although he is a lecturer and received university education himself, his position is inferior to the position of his colleagues and therefore he struggles to earn recognition in the university. This characteristics could be considered to be referring not only to the life of Kingsley Amis, but also to the situation of the lower-middle class or working-class university graduates, who, despite of their education, could never receive the same position as the graduates from higher social strata. Moreover, his poor living conditions in a boardinghouse and a pressing financial situation can also be an indication of his lower-class background. In one instance, he even expresses his resentment at his own origins and life in a provincial town: “This time he experienced nothing worse than a small rage at the thought of a little louse like that having a flat in London. Why hadn’t he himself had parents whose money so far exceeded their sense as to install their son in London?” (Amis 178). Therefore, Dixon’s inferiority forces him to condemn the values of the higher social classes. Dixon’s support of the Labour Party is also apparent, although it is never explicitly mentioned: “If one man’s got ten buns and another’s got two, and a bun has got to be given up by one of them, then surely you take it from the man with ten buns” (Amis 51). Similarly to Amis, Dixon also often seeks refuge in alcohol.

Dixon’s inferiority within the university is not only his own imagination, on the contrary, his subordinate position is implied by people whose opinion of Dixon is crucial for his future. Although he struggles to leave a good impression, Dixon is often overlooked or even degraded. The lack of concern of Dixon’s superiors is expressed by constant misspelling of Dixon’s name. An example of this neglect can be perceived during Dixon’s communication with L. S. Caton, an academic, whose approval of Dixon’s article can have a significant impact on Dixon’s position within the university. However, his means of communication with Dixon reflect Caton’s lack of interest: “[...] and another typed envelope addressed to ‘J. Dickinson’ with a London postmark. [...] Inside was a sheet hastily torn from a pad bearing a few ill-written lines in a green ink” (Amis 30). Moreover, Dixon’s superior Professor Welch, the Head of the Department of History, has a decisive say in Dixon’s future in the university, yet he frequently implies Dixon’s inferiority. Not only is Dixon accommodated in the worst room during his stay at the Welches, but later is also forced to do Welch’s work.



Social class distinction is one of the features in *Lucky Jim*. It results from the feelings of inequality of the lower classes and become a frequent topic in the works of the Angry Young Men. Like his contemporaries, Amis felt the anxious atmosphere in Britain and projected it into his works: “Kingsley’s comedy stems from precise social observation” (McGrath). However, despite the serious class overtones, the social situation during the 1950s was not the only topic of *Lucky Jim*. Aside from the class struggle, Amis explores people’s characters: “Maintaining that he had been more driven by questions of character rather than by issues of class, Kingsley declared instead that the novel’s social elements had been ‘largely invented’ by English reviewers” (Keulks, 107-108). Therefore, in his work, Amis also exposes his hatred for pomposity, pretensions and hypocrisy and celebrates wit, common sense and self-awareness.

Throughout the book, Dixon encounters characters who represent features that Kingsley Amis, and consequently Dixon, disdains. However, Dixon is forced to cooperate with these characters and therefore he struggles to make a good impression, although he ridicules their values. The criticism is frequently aimed at Professor Welch. He is often absent-minded, which is implied in his poor driving skills. This is, however, not the main reason of Dixon’s ridicule. Professor Welch and his wife clearly occupy a higher social stratum and are rather pretentious and excessively genteel: “In brief, Jim cannot stand people who lack awareness of the roles they assume. He instinctively rebels against pretenders, shams, and intellectuals – anyone, that is, who places more value on appearance than substance” (Keulks 111). They own a large house, employ maidservants and hold musical events, to which they strive to attract attention of the press. To Dixon, such a kind of lifestyle seems rather unnecessary since due to his job and oppressive financial situation he lives a very humble life.

Kingsley Amis held very strong opinions on culture. As even his university education suggests, he did not reject culture altogether, but he disliked the way culture was appropriated and misused. Especially his attitude towards modernism was very negative. In Amis’s opinion, a narrative should entertain and instruct the readers rather than become an exercise in technique and therefore he disliked writers such as James Joyce or Virginia Woolf: “Accusing these authors of betraying their audience, Kingsley lambasted their formal complexities and verbal

acrobatics” (Keulks 27). Amis held distaste for the greatly supported High Art, for which he was frequently called Philistine, similarly to the main character in *Lucky Jim*. However, Amis himself supported this insinuation, since he disregarded pretentious and artificial values in art and encouraged people to struggle against manufactured standards. Art that Kingsley Amis appreciated ought to be transparent in its form, witty, straightforward and spontaneous. Therefore, he admired jazz music, movies or detective stories.

Amis’s attitude to art is also easy to perceive in his work since Jim Dixon shares his opinion. He sneers at Welch’s admiration of High Art, music and English history: “If Dixon is, as the reviewers said, an intellectual rebel, it is not against contemporary British society or culture, but against genteel high culture, aestheticism and bohemianism, the hangover of Bloomsbury” (Bradbury 321). This attitude expresses the view of Kingsley Amis, who rejected the avant-garde and the elitism of classical art and music. Professor Welch and his family are the best example of this criticism. An example of this cultural pretension are the names of Welch’s sons, whom Dixon also mocks: “[...] nor did he, on the whole, now intend to tie Welch up in his chair and beat him about the head and shoulders with a bottle until he disclosed why, without being French himself, he’d given his sons French names” (Amis 85). Since Amis condemns the opacity of language, his tending to talk extensively yet never getting to the significant part is another of Welch’s characteristics. Since Dixon, much like Amis, values frankness, it is another reason of his impatience with his superior.

Another character who is a target of Dixon’s criticism and derision is Welch’s son Bertrand. He is depicted as pretentious and haughty, but who deems himself to be sophisticated, which can be demonstrated on his frequent usage of French words and phrases. For his culture and life in London, Bertrand accounts himself an elitist painter: “No no; I paint pictures. Not, alas again, pictures of trade unionists or town halls or naked women, or I should now be squatting on an even larger pile. No no; just pictures, mere pictures, pictures tout court, or, as our American cousins would say, pictures period” (Amis 41). This attitude is criticized for two reasons. One of the reasons is Dixon’s contempt of elitism. However, even a greater reason of such criticism is Bertrand’s pretence and hypocrisy since the elitism is Bertrand’s ambition rather than reality. He strives to meet rich artists and mercenaries of arts,

especially the rich Gore-Urquhart, an uncle of his girlfriend Christine. For his goal, he uses Christine while having an affair with another woman. Due to his overall negative characteristics, Bertrand is one of the most critically treated characters in *Lucky Jim*. Another example of his hypocrisy is his pacifism. Although he is described as a pacifist, he does not hesitate to attack Dixon, both verbally and physically.

A dislike of classical arts and music is a very frequent motif in the book and the admiration of Higher Art is usually featured in characters who are depicted with contempt. Another such character is Evan Johns, Dixon's colleague and co-tenant. Throughout the story, Johns is acting in a servile manner to Mr. and Mrs. Welch and becomes the aim of Dixon's mockery for his love for classical music: "Welch, or his son, or Johns was about to take a bath. Which one it was was soon settled by the upsurge of a deep, untrained voice into song. The piece was recognizable to Dixon as some skein of untiring facetiousness by filthy Mozart" (Amis 63). This example and also the instance when Dixon ruins the first cover of Johns' musical magazine depicting a contemporary composer proves his strongly negative attitude towards classical music.

Since the storyline of *Lucky Jim* is set in a provincial university, Kingsley Amis was also able to express his view on education. His own education at Oxford University and his profession of a provincial university lecturer enabled him to form a valid idea of the situation of education in Britain. His attitude to university education was very critical. Similarly to his opinion on art and contemporary culture, he disliked the pretentious manner of provincial universities and of people who tended to consider them equal to the universities of Oxford or Cambridge. However, the provincial universities could never be equivalent to Oxford or Cambridge and, considering the growing number of students, neither could they offer an equal opportunity for everyone: "Education is good ... but it is self-defeating if it isn't done properly" (Keulks 110). For this reason, he ridiculed the way of teaching at provincial universities.

Therefore, Dixon's contempt is also aimed at the academic world and education at a provincial university. His disdain is shared with Amis's own opinion concerning the quality of education from a provincial university that can be never compared to the quality of education provided by Oxford or Cambridge. Therefore,

Dixon's attitude towards the University events seems rather indifferent. He also scorns on everyone who puts an excessive emphasis on the education at redbrick universities: "An academic in a provincial university, he fails to accept the academic values of his seniors, above all those of his head of department Professor Welch" (Bradbury 321). This criticism concerns not only the academics but also the students. An example of this critical view is Dixon's attitude to his student Michie. He is an eager student, coming from background similar to Dixon's, who regards the education in the provincial university as a unique opportunity and struggles to fit into the academic surroundings by sharing the values of his professors. This struggle is reflected in Michie's speech, in which he tends to use a great number of complicated words: "Michie knew a lot, or seemed to, which was as bad. One of the things he knew, or seemed to, what scholasticism was. Dixon read, heard, and even used the word a dozen times a day without knowing, though he seemed to" (Amis 29). This example suggests that in his struggle to ingratiate himself with his professors, Michie's knowledge and sophistication may be only pretended. In this regard, Michie is rather similar to Dixon. Nevertheless, Dixon still dislikes the student since his eagerness could disclose Dixon's ignorance.

Dixon's relationships with women are very complicated. Margaret Peel is Dixon's friend and colleague. From the beginning, their relationship is rather strained, especially because of the obscurity of Margaret's character. Dixon feels he is bound to be loyal to Margaret because of her recent suicide attempt. However, Margaret is another character that bears features which Dixon hates. Just as other criticized characters, Margaret pretends to belong to higher stratum than the one she occupies, even though her effort is not so distinct. At times, she even seems to understand and agree with Dixon's complaints about Welch's values and pretences, yet she gladly visits theatres and balls and likes to attract attention. Her style of clothing is also the proof of her pretence: "He could just about bring himself to praise anything but the green Paisley frock in combination with the low-heeled, quasi-velvet shoes" (Amis 11). The cheap clothing and make-up suggest Margaret's lack of taste in fashion and also her struggle to fit into the higher stratum by looking sophisticated. Throughout the book, Margaret's personality seems to change several times. At first, she evokes Dixon's pity and feelings of obligation to her. However, at times she becomes rather self-centered and sometimes even condescending

towards Dixon: “Poor James? Poor James? It was, in fact, a very just characterization, but hardly one for her to make, surely, her of all people” (Amis 111). In the end, Margaret proves to be manipulative since her suicide attempt was meant to gain Dixon’s affection.

Christine Callaghan is Margaret’s direct opposite. Contrary to Margaret, she comes from a higher social class: “Even so, the object of his desire, Christine Callaghan, clearly occupies a higher social stratum and without the sham. Her uncle Gore-Urquhart, particularly, seems to be the epitome of upper-middle-class metropolitan values” (Head 51). At first, she appears to be rather prim and genteel, but as the story progresses, she becomes Dixon’s ideal. Although she comes from a higher class, Christine works in a bookshop and lacks the pretences of other characters. She is sophisticated and intelligent and, just as Dixon, she dislikes the hypocrisy of other people. Moreover, she is rather straightforward and cordial, which are features Dixon appreciates most. A proof of her cordiality is her melodic laughter, which is put into contrast with Margaret’s affected one. However, despite Dixon’s affection, he is aware that he is unsuitable to make advances to Christine and therefore he is determined to stay loyal to Margaret: “The notion that women like this were never on view except as the property of men like Bertrand was so familiar to him that it had long since ceased to appear an injustice. The huge class that contained Margaret was destined to provide his own womenfolk: [...]” (Amis 39). This is another reason of his despair.

Throughout the story, Dixon is very critical to many features of other characters. However, some of his attitudes prove his own hypocrisy. He despises people aspiring to higher classes through pretences, yet Christine becomes his ideal also because she comes from a higher class. Moreover, Dixon detests Bertrand for his metropolitan views, despite his own longing to build a career in London and promptly accepting a prestigious job offered by Gore-Urquhart. Dixon also values frankness, yet he is never able to express his opinion. He merely sneers and laughs at his enemies in his own mind without ever voicing his disagreement aloud: “He’d never be able to tell Welch what he wanted to tell him, any more than he’d ever be able to do the same with Margaret” (Amis 86). For this reason, he resorts to quiet anger. However, in the end he is able to overcome his inhibitions about voicing his opinions. This fact is perceivable during his lecture on Merrie England. Dixon not

only despises the topic and the values he is supposed to lecture about, but he also knows nothing about it. Nevertheless, he agrees to give the lecture to secure his position within the university. However, when during the lecture he openly mocks not only the theme but also his superiors, he finally expresses everything he condemns. Although his frankness is not the result of his courage but rather of alcohol, which, similarly to Amis, is a way of escape for Dixon, he is later rewarded by receiving a job and an opportunity to leave his despised surroundings.

## **7 The reason of Osborne's anger, reflected in *Look back in Anger***

*Look Back in Anger* is a play of John Osborne, published in 1956. Similarly to Amis' *Lucky Jim*, it became an influential work of period of the 1950s. Its title and the characteristics of the hero gave the name to the movement of the Angry Young Men. Similarly to other works of the Angry Young Men, its main concern is the social class division and inferiority of working-class people and their despair from the unchanging situation. The work also reflects political, social and cultural problems of England in the 1950s, especially the situation in Britain after the Suez Crisis and the end of empire and compares the contemporary situation to the past.

The criticism expressed in the play is presented through the point of view of Jimmy Porter. Although he comes from a working-class background, he is educated and intelligent. His education is a cause of Jimmy's haughtiness and superiority over others, especially over his wife Alison and his friend Cliff, who comes from background similar to Jimmy's but lacks education: "Well, you are ignorant. You're just a peasant. (to Alison) What about you? You're not a peasant are you?" (Osborne 3). Nevertheless, despite his education he owns a sweet stall, which he runs together with Cliff, and lives with his wife in a small attic flat in Midlands. This way of life in itself is a reason for Jimmy's resentment, since he considers himself intelligent and superior, yet he is poor and can not find a suitable job. Therefore, his only defense is his own anger and criticism of every matter that hinders him and his likes to achieve a better position in society.

Jimmy's criticism is mostly directed towards the upper class. This attitude is caused by his own inferior position and impossibility to ever compare to the higher stratum even though he received university education thanks to the educational reform in 1944: "His antagonism towards the upper-middle class is based on a conscious rejection of mainstream society – he has dropped out of the world of careers, perhaps because he is afraid of failure" (Sierz 25). His anger is mainly aimed at Alison's family. Alison comes from an upper-middle-class family since her father, Colonel Redfern, was a military leader in India until 1947. Jimmy strongly judges Alison's family and their values strongly and he transfers the criticism to Alison herself: "And don't let the Marquess of Queensbury manner fool

you. They'll kick you in the groin while you're handing your hat to the maid. As for Nigel and Alison – Nigel and Alison. They're what they sound like: sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous" (Osborne 15-16). However, his spite is not entirely unjustified since Alison's family strongly opposed to Jimmy and Alison's wedding due to Jimmy's lower-class status. Therefore, Jimmy tends to insult Alison for her upper-middle-class upbringing and her communication with her family is perceived as a betrayal. On the other hand, his criticism and insults of Alison makes Jimmy rather hypocritical since by the marriage she gave up not only her upper-class status but also her own family and friends and agreed to live a humble working-class life. Moreover, Jimmy and his friend Hugh used to disrupt parties of Alison's upper-class friends: "In my name, we'd gatecrash everywhere – cocktails, week-ends, even a couple of houseparties. I used to hope that one day, somebody would have the guts to slam the door in our faces, but they didn't. They were too well-bred, and probably sorry for me as well" (Osborne 43). The disrupting of upper-class parties was not only a revenge and mocking of values of the upper-class citizens, but also a revenge against Alison since she was still perceived to belong to the upper-class as well.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider the reliability of the conveyed opinions. Since a great amount of the views is delivered from Jimmy Porter's perspective, they are very subjective. The unreliability of Jimmy's opinions is proved from the criticism of Alison's father. Although Jimmy describes him as strict, rigid and prim, Colonel Redfern seems rather sympathetic when discussing Alison's marriage. Moreover, Jimmy is even compared to Colonel Redfern in his attitude to the present situation of Britain: "You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it. Something's gone wrong somewhere, hasn't it?" (Osborne 70). Nevertheless, this similarity is never perceived by Jimmy himself.

Since the play was published in the year of the Suez Crisis, the political and social situation of Britain is also a frequently dealt with topic. Throughout the play, Jimmy Porter expresses his disappointment with the contemporary post-colonial Britain. He despises the new era and feels rather nostalgic for the past, whether he means his own past and past friends or the past of Britain. Jimmy is always linked to the past, mainly through his description by others. Alison describes him as a



“knight in shining armour” (Osborne 45) and her friend Helena once comments, that Jimmy “was born out of his time” (Osborne 96).

Jimmy’s attitude to the past is a rather sentimental and nostalgic one. On the other hand, he is very critical to the contemporary period, especially the time after the Suez Crisis: “Jimmy constantly sees himself as trapped between a past which can only be looked back at and a present which is unfulfilling. But his idealized vision of the past only reminds him of the poverty of ideals in the present” (Sierz 43). The bleak prospect of contemporary Britain and its decline is contrasted with the idealistic image of Britain during the Edwardian period. This era is known as a time of the greatest prosperity of the British Empire. This view is comparable to the view of Colonel Redfern, who is distressed by the end of colonialism, begun by the independence of India in 1947. Therefore, he fondly recalls his service in India and refers to the loss of the colony as the “last day the sun shone” (Osborne 70). Jimmy also recognizes the Edwardian age as the time when Britain flourished. On the other hand, he is aware it is a bygone era and sneers at Colonel Redfern for his reluctance to reconcile with the change. Nonetheless, Jimmy is depicted as patriotic, although he can see no prospective future of the British nation. The Suez Crisis also seems to have an impact on his attitude to the process of Americanization: “I must be getting sentimental. But I must say it’s pretty dreary living in the American Age – unless you’re an American of course” (Osborne 11). Americanization was easily perceivable in many areas of life during the 1950s. It was another proof of the inferiority of Britain to the United States, which began when Britain was forced by the American government to give up the Suez Canal. Jimmy detests this new tendency and the failure of the British nation.

Jimmy’s working-class background suggests his proletarian views and several instances during his speech about politics prove his tendency towards the left. Nevertheless, his constant criticism and radical ways points to anarchism: “Jimmy opposes the whole conservative Establishment: he mocks class distinctions, public schools, politicians, bishops, and the nuclear deterrent” (Sierz 14). His hatred for the Establishment can be noticed when Jimmy sneers at Alison’s brother Nigel, who stands as a candidate for Parliament. In his mockery, Jimmy reveals his critical vision of politicians: “He’ll end up in the Cabinet one day, make no mistake. But somewhere, at the back of that mind is the vague knowledge that he and his pals

have been plundering and fooling everybody for generations” (Osborne 14 – 15). Despite his frequent criticism, Jimmy is helpless towards the conservative Establishment, just as his likes.

The comments on the education in Britain are very subtle and sometimes are even overshadowed by Jimmy’s accentuating his sophistication. Yet, just as many works of the Angry Young Men do, also *Look Back in Anger* expresses criticism of the educational reform of 1944. Osborne points out that although the Educational Act gave an opportunity to the students of lower classes, they were mostly unable to win recognition in the British society and obtain a job adequate to their education. Jimmy Porter is an example of this habit. Since he did not attend Oxford or Cambridge, his education is not acknowledged by the society. The play therefore points to the inferiority of the redbrick universities: “I don’t think one ‘comes down’ from Jimmy’s university. According to him, it’s not even red brick, but white tile” (Osborne 41). On this account, Jimmy feels resentment toward Nigel, who attended Sandhurst Military College. This academy not only brought him recognition, but it was also the symbol of the conservative England which Jimmy detests.

The play also discusses the state of contemporary culture. The change in the culture of the 1950s was hugely marked by the process of Americanization and the rise of the consumer society: “One area where this change could be seen was the rise of youth culture. By the mid-1950s, the teenager had been invented both as a target of the consumer society and as the object of outrage. Teenagers were a huge new market for clothes music, radios and other goods.” (Sierz 15). This transition was perceivable in the growth of mass culture, represented by the American motion picture, game shows or Rock ‘n’ Roll music. Therefore, *Look Back in Anger* records the war between the growing mass culture and traditional British culture. The character of Jimmy Porter stands for the resentment of the decline of the true English culture and refuses to accept the new ideals of the contemporary teenage generation: “Of course, Jimmy is not a typical teenager: he’s too old, and he’s too snobbish. He calls working-class lads ‘yobs’ and instead of rock ‘n’ roll, he prefers jazz, a much more intellectually respectable music, popular with students” (Sierz 15). Jimmy’s patriotism is therefore apparent even in his attitude to culture. Throughout the play, he frequently alludes to or quotes British authors, such as

William Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot or Romantic poets. His preferences in the music are exemplified by his relish in the music of Ralph Vaughn Williams, a British contemporary composer: “Oh, yes. There’s a Vaughan Williams. Well, that’s something, anyway. Something strong, something simple, something English” (Osborne 11). Nonetheless, even his cultural values are reason for Jimmy’s despair since he understands that his ideals are yielding to the American tendencies.

Jimmy’s attitude is also concerned with the religious and social situation. Jimmy Porter is strongly opposed to any kind of institutional organization, including religion. Religion is linked to the past, to the age that is already over. Jimmy’s behavior, similarly to the behavior of the modern society, is based on personal feelings, and accordingly, even his morals are very subjective. Therefore, religion, based on the polarity between good and evil, the virtuous and the sinful, has no place in modern society. Furthermore, Jimmy judges religion as a tool of control of the society. This can be presented on his criticism of the Bishop of Bromley, whom he dislikes for the support of the manufacture of the hydrogen bomb and the denial of class distinctions: “He’s upset because someone has suggested that he supports the rich against the poor. He says he denies the difference of class distinction. ‘This idea has been persistently and wickedly fostered by – the working classes!’ Well!” (Osborne 6). In this example, Jimmy finds fault with the elitism of the Church. Religion should be based on the equality of people, yet, the upper classes are given priority in this area as well. His dislike of religion is also symbolized by his hate of the sound of bells. Therefore, when Alison decides to accompany Helena into a church, Jimmy feels betrayed.

Loyalty is one of the most stressed principles in *Look Back in Anger*. Jimmy requires loyalty to all of his attitudes and opinions from his family and friends. He was influenced in this belief when he watched his father die alone and felt the betrayal of his family: “The loss taught him not only anger, the central emotion powering the play, but also betrayal – loyalty is Jimmy’s core value” (Sierz, 24). This is one of the reasons of his impatience with Alison and his friendship with Cliff, who, due to his good nature, does not oppose him. Yet, anytime Alison expresses her own opinion, such as when she decides to go back to her upper-class family or go to church that Jimmy despises, Jimmy considers it as a betrayal and reason to insult her. For such decisions, however, he does not blame Alison herself,

but rather her friend Helena: “You’ve let this genuflecting sin jobber win you over, haven’t you? She’s got you back, hasn’t she?” (Osborne 53). As the hardest betrayal is, however, considered not Alison’s decision to leave Jimmy, but rather her refusal to accompany him to visit the dying mother of Jimmy’s friend, since Jimmy feels left alone in his suffering.

One of the most judged features is idleness. Jimmy despises everyone indifferent and phlegmatic and considers it one of the most condemnable characteristics. He stresses the will of life and temperament and requires this feature from all his friends and family: “No one can raise themselves out of their delicious sloth. You two will drive me round the bend soon – I know it, as sure as I’m sitting here. I know you’re going to drive me mad. Oh heavens, how I long for a little ordinary human enthusiasm” (Osborne 8). He claims that he is surrounded by characters who, in his opinion, lack this characteristic. This is another reason of his bitterness and anger. It is, however, not only the characteristic of his friends, but also of the society as a whole: “Why do I spend ninepence on that damned paper every week? Nobody reads it except me. Nobody can be bothered” (Osborne 8). Due to the sloth of the society, he disregards the importance of the newspaper since it fails to induce any reaction. Yet, Jimmy himself is the example of idleness, since, despite his interest and constant criticism, he never even tries to take action.

Throughout the story, he strives to provoke others to passionate reactions. However, to achieve such reaction, he mostly uses insults and his behavior sometimes borders on cruelty. Frequently, his verbal attacks are aimed at his wife Alison, who often seems passive and apathic: “Don’t think I could provoke her. Nothing I could do would provoke her. Not even if I were to drop dead” (Osborne 14). His insults are mostly meant ironically, yet sometimes they are downright offending. What Jimmy seems to strive for is not only to evoke anger of his wife, but also to provoke her to voice her disagreement and her own opinions. For this reason, he often recalls his previous girlfriend Madeline, who was the right opposite of Alison since she was active and unafraid to oppose him. In this regard, Jimmy can be considered hypocritical since after Alison expresses her own attitudes, Jimmy blames her for betrayal. Moreover, Jimmy is at times idle himself, especially when watching the growing affection between Alison and Cliff.

The will of life that Jimmy emphasizes is not a simple enthusiasm and mere voicing of opinions is not sufficient to live truly. He stresses the importance of experience, specifically negative experience. In Jimmy's opinion, suffering, and mainly experiencing death, is the key to valuable life. It is apparent that the death of his father was Jimmy's negative experience. Therefore, he cruelly wishes Alison to experience the same thing: "To qualify as a human being, Alison must – according to her husband – suffer loss, just as he has suffered the loss of his father, and later of Mrs. Tanner. From this loss comes his anger, and his idea of being enthusiastic, alive, human" (Sierz 38). Indeed, in the end, the death of her child brings reconciliation between Jimmy and Alison.

During the story, Jimmy expresses several types of anger. He is angry about the contemporary situation in Britain and the grim future, just as he disdains the unequal opportunity of the working classes. His anger is also directed towards the religion as a measure of control. Moreover, he criticizes sloth and idleness of other people, both in his friends and society as a whole. Another reason of his anger is the impossibility to change his situation in any way. He is unable to ever achieve a better position in society just as he is unable to coerce other people to enthusiasm. Even though his life slightly changes, such as when he begins an affair with Helena, the change does not have a great impact. This recurrence is symbolized by several mirror scenes. An example of such scene is the beginning of Act I, which portrays a sleepy Sunday afternoon when Alison irons clothes while the men read newspaper. It is later repeated only Alison is replaced by Helena. Therefore, Jimmy feels trapped and can only resign to anger and bitterness.

## 8 Conclusion

Both *Lucky Jim* and *Look Back in Anger* are considered pivotal works of the movement of the Angry Young Men. They set the mood of the 1950s and express the attitude of a great amount of writers. Both of these works, just as other works of the Angry Young Men, reflect the changes after World War II and convey the disappointment and criticism of the post-war period. To mirror the true situation of British cultural, social and political situation, the works follow the that time widespread tendency of realism. Both *Look Back in Anger* and *Lucky Jim* express the anger of the main characters, which is mostly caused by the persisting inferior position of the working and lower-middle classes despite the changes made accordingly to the Welfare State programme. However, in spite of sharing similar values, both authors choose a different approach to express their disagreement.

Even though *Lucky Jim* and *Look Back in Anger* were published in the span of two years, each work conveys a different mood and style. While *Lucky Jim* expresses the disappointment at the current situation in a humorous way, *Look Back in Anger* is much more radical in its attitude. The difference in mood then corresponds with the main heroes. Both of the characters are ordinary people and almost anti-heroes. However, Jimmy Porter supports radical values and harsh demeanour, while Amis' Jim Dixon's attitude and mishaps make him easy to relate to.

The post-war Welfare State programme had a great impact on the British society. Especially the lower classes gained from the changes made according to the Beveridge Report and gained benefits such as National insurance or free medical care. Therefore, the post-war period is known for the rise of the lower social strata. However, there was still a difference between the working and middle class, just as between the lower-middle class and upper-middle class. This distinction is reflected in the works of the authors of the 1940s and 1950s, especially in the novels and plays of Angry Young Men. Both *Lucky Jim* and *Look Back in Anger* portray the social situation. Although both works are concerned with the class division and especially with the opinion on the upper and upper-middle classes, each author conveys a rather different view. The author of *Lucky Jim* criticises hypocrisy, pretences and snobbery of the upper classes and his attack is aimed solely at the people who bear such characteristics. On the other hand, John Osborne's criticism is

directed at the upper classes as a whole and his main character aims his disdain of upper-middle class at his wife and her family. Nevertheless, the anger of both characters is caused by their inferior position within society and, despite their criticism, both of them aspire to a position in the higher class.

The consequences of the Educational reform of 1944 are another matter discussed in the works of the Angry Young Men. This reform offered opportunity for students of modest background to attend grammar schools and universities. Moreover, due to the rise of grants paid by government to students the number of university students increased rapidly. Consequently, new universities were established, mainly in small provincial towns. However, the growing number of university graduates reduced the possibility to find a job corresponding to the education. Therefore, the education of Oxford or Cambridge was still preferred, while the importance of the new redbrick universities decreased. The disillusion from the state of British education is depicted similarly in *Lucky Jim* and *Look Back in Anger*. Although the character of *Look Back in Anger* emphasizes his education and his intelligence gives him a reason to feel superior over other characters in the play, both he and Jim Dixon share contempt for the contemporary level of education and undermine the value of the redbrick universities. The reason of this contempt is their inferior position within society despite their reached level of education.

The post-war time also brought a change in British politics. After the war, there was a prevailing tendency towards the Left and the Labour Party gained most of the popularity due to the Welfare State programme. Even in the works of Amis and Osborne there is apparent the preference of the Labour government, which is given by the background of the characters. The political change however did not concern only the home politics, but also foreign affairs. The year of 1947 was significant as the year when the colony of India gained independence and thus marked the end of British empire. The Suez Crisis of 1956 signified the decline of British international influence and loss of the status of the world superpower. This status was taken over by the United States of America and Soviet Union. While the political situation was not very relevant in *Lucky Jim*, it is discussed in *Look Back in Anger*. The play expresses disappointment from the political changes and is connected with the Suez Crisis and the end of the empire. Osborne therefore conveys a nostalgic view of history which is rather depressing but still offers a kind

of security. The past and history is put into a contrast with the present, which is bleak and holds no hope for a future. Since *Lucky Jim* was published two years before the Suez Crisis, it does not hold the same opinion.

One of the main tendencies of the 1950s was the democratization of culture. A great number of authors expressed their negative attitude to elitism and the values of modernism. Instead, they preferred genres of art that were previously considered lower and inferior, such as detective and spy stories or jazz music. Such was the attitude of the Angry Young Men. Consequently, the value of art becomes one of the topics of that time literature. In his work, Amis expresses this opinion and stresses the dislike of the Higher Art. It is one of the central topics of *Lucky Jim*. On the other hand, though Osborne is concerned with art as well, and some instances prove he shares the opinion of his contemporaries, his resentment is however directed at the growth of mass culture and decline of traditional British culture. Nevertheless, the proof of the shared opinion is still present in the play, such as Jimmy Porter's relish for jazz music.

Finally, both of the works express similar feelings of despair over the impossibility to change their current situation. The difference between *Lucky Jim* and *Look Back in Anger* is in the way the characters convey their disappointment. While Jim Dixon's anger is quiet and throughout the story he mocks the disliked features of society, Jimmy Porter expresses his disdain aloud and with intensity since he emphasizes enthusiasm as the key feature of life. His despair from the unchanging situation is therefore conveyed through rage and provocation. Such enthusiasm is of importance in *Lucky Jim* as well, since the hero is rewarded only after expressing his opinions aloud, while is no such reward for Jimmy Porter.



## Works Cited

- Amis, Kingsley. *Lucky Jim*. New York: Penguin Books, 2000.
- Bradbury, Malcolm. *The Modern British Novel*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1993.
- Davies, Alistair, Sinfield, Alan. *British Culture of the Postwar: An introduction to literature and society 1945 – 1999*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Head, Dominic. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002
- Judt, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2005.
- Keulks, Gavin. *Father and Son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis, and the British Novel since 1950*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.
- Marwick, Arthur. *British Society since 1945*. London: Penguin Books, 1990.
- McGrath, Charles. "The Amis Inheritance." *The New York Times*. 22 April 2007. Web. 13 June 2012.
- Osborne, John. *Look Back in Anger*. London: Faber and Faber, 1996.
- Sierz, Aleks. *John Osborne's Look Back in Anger*. London, Continuum, 2008.