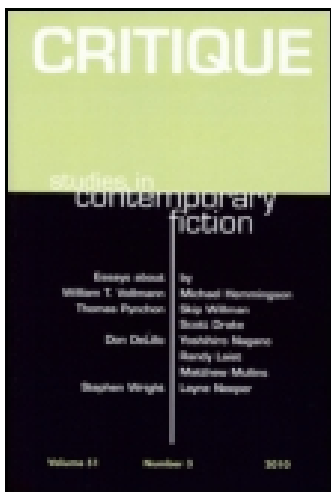


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Class and Conscience in John Braine and Kingsley Amis

JOHN D. HURRELL

Few literary labels have gained such rapid and wide acceptance and yet been so inaccurate as the phrase "angry young men," which is now popularly used to describe a small group of post-war British writers. Originally coined to describe certain fictitious characters created by these writers, it has somehow become attached to the writers themselves, so that they are thought of as constituting a unified school with the single aim of presenting the case for the socially underprivileged.¹ These young writers, principally Kingsley Amis, John Wain, John Braine and the dramatist John Osborne, all write against the background of the Welfare State, and are constantly aware of the moral and emotional strain imposed on a not inconsiderable section of the population by life in a society undergoing a form of social revolution. In their work they all give consideration to class distinction and its related social problems, with particular reference to the "in-between" class of professional men and intellectuals newly graduated, by virtue of state-financed education, from the ranks of the working and lower-middle classes. But there the resemblance ends. Osborne is the only member of the group whose work deserves the adjective "angry," and whose main concern—or so it seems to me—is largely non-literary social criticism. He has gone much further than the others in an anger that strikes at everything he construes as the enemy of social, political, and emotional vigor. Inevitably this has led him to outspoken attacks on the institution of monarchy—"the gold filling in a mouthful of decay"—the Conservative party, and even, in a kind of private war, upper class reviewers who are incapable of understanding his plays because they have had no real social contact with the living counterparts of his stage characters. Osborne seems to be taking art steadily towards political involve-

ment in the European manner; for him the time for good-humored tolerance of the British ruling class is past; his enemies are too dangerous to be laughed at; they must be fought.

Braine and Wain seem satisfied, at the moment, with chronicling the times they live in. Their protagonists have rejected political solutions to their problems, though a political assumption determines motivation throughout the novels. This assumption can be simply stated. State Socialism promised equal opportunity to all, but failed to destroy privilege and did little for those state-educated, lower middle-class young men who could not identify themselves with any established social category. Ignored by the expensively educated, confident upper classes, rejected by the working class (and even discouraged from an attempt to join them by the example of Orwell's almost ludicrous failure), and critical of the comfortable middle classes, they are forced into a political neutrality, even apathy. Their hope lies in association with the class above them, but this involves cynical acceptance of moral and intellectual standards they have been conditioned to reject. Ironically, while it is impossible to "Hurry on Down," there is always "Room at the Top" for the young man of talent who is prepared to sacrifice satisfactory personal relationships to material ends. It may not be possible ever to *become* a member of the upper classes, but by the acquisition of expensive suits, a sports car, and a club membership, it is possible to pass in this society, and even to deceive waiters, taxi drivers, and pub proprietors into giving one the kind of service normally reserved for those "at the top." The price to be paid for this social promotion—as Braine portrays it—is loneliness and atrophy of the emotions, since no human contact can be made without considerable wariness.

For the young man involved, moving in a society whose code of conduct is alien to him, the process of adjustment is likely to be difficult. As material for literature it may be seen as comic or tragic, according to the degree of involvement the writer allows himself. For the comic novelist or dramatist it is a rich field, provided he is sufficiently detached from the characters he creates. For the more socially involved novelist, the attempt at assimilation lends itself ideally to a tragic treatment. The desire to compromise, to lower moral or intellectual standards in a search for social or professional success, continually forces a

crisis of conscience on the young man with more ambition and talent than connections, and it is this crisis of conscience in the young man without a distinctive class allegiance that is treated as comedy by Amis and as tragedy by Braine.

Social success achieved at the expense of emotional and moral integrity is a familiar tragic pattern in modern fiction, especially in America, and Braine has chosen to recount the career of his civil servant hero in these terms. Joe Lampton, in Braine's *Room at the Top*, is the son of working class parents. He has passed his accountancy examinations while in a wartime prison camp for non-commissioned officers.² Slow promotion in the civil service has brought him to a new job in the Treasurer's Office of a prosperous northern town, some distance from the sordid scene of his youth. For the first time he has the opportunity to rise from his social class, to make a fresh start away from his home town background, and deciding that he will go "to the top" he cultivates acquaintances among the wealthy leaders of local society. His envy of the upper classes is longstanding; he has had numerous discussions with his friend Charles in the past, carefully analyzing the prerequisites for success. Charm, for instance, is to be cultivated: "we had the notion that if only we could learn how to use it our careers would be much benefited." Everything, they believe, can be bought—especially women, and the attractiveness and desirability of a man's wife is a measure of his social success. "The girl, with her even suntan and her fair hair cut short in a style too simple to be anything but expensive, was as far beyond my reach as the car. But her ownership, too, was simply a question of money, of the price of the diamond ring on her left hand." His envy of the rich is based on a strong sense of social injustice. "I wanted an Aston-Martin, I wanted a three-guinea linen shirt, I wanted a girl with a Riviera suntan—they were my rights, I felt, a signed and sealed legacy." Joe's decision is to collect that legacy, and he does so ruthlessly, using people as long as they can help him and then discarding them, stifling his conscience whenever it disturbs him, finally entering with determination into a marriage with the daughter of a rich local businessman, conscious all the time that he is debasing his own character and making any spontaneous enjoyment of life impossible. "I was manoeuvring for position all the time, noting the effect of each word; and it seemed to

devalue everything I said." Indirectly he is the cause of the death of one woman, but for this there is no price to pay, except to his own conscience; nobody blames him, and he is left at the end of the novel with everything that he set out to acquire. To achieve wealth and social status he has sacrificed moral and emotional integrity. Although he has been genuinely in love with the girl he marries, this love is now without value, since she has become no more to him than a symbol of social success. He is corrupt, in the fullest sense of the word, and there can be no return to innocence.

Braine's implication is that Joe Lampton's case is typical of many in present-day Britain. Under an earlier and more rigid class system Joe would have been just as envious of others wealthier, better educated and better connected than himself, but it is less likely that he would have been afforded the opportunity to turn envy into action. Joe has falsely assumed that happiness will come to him automatically when he has eradicated envy by raising his social status. Faced with the crisis of conscience he has succumbed to the lure of success, and his tragedy is that of any man who discovers too late that he has exchanged his humanity for a set of social symbols. Where Osborne's characters cry out in frustration against a class barrier that is still to be broken, Braine's hero crashes the barrier successfully but in the process receives wounds that may well prove spiritually fatal. Osborne regards his characters with pity, Braine with a deeper compassion.

Amis has chosen to present a somewhat similar problem in comic terms, and has therefore set himself a harder task, assuming that he wishes his comedy to be taken seriously, as satire rather than farce. In an article on satire that he wrote for the *New York Times* Book Review Section (July 7, 1957) Amis refrained from commenting on his own work, but he sketched in the background against which his three novels must be placed. His attitude in this article will serve, I hope, as my excuse for treating his three comic novels, with perhaps incongruous solemnity, as the expression of a seriously considered view of some aspects of the contemporary British scene.

Post-war changes [in Britain] have been quick to reflect themselves in satire, which next to caricature has always proved the most socially sensitive of the arts. *The welfare democracy,*

with its internal shifts in the balance of power, is a satirical arena far vaster and richer than the stratified democracy which is now yielding place to it. Old-established forms of privilege are on the defensive, although far from being on the retreat: at this stage aristocratic posturings are at their most vapid and most vulnerable. New kinds of privileges are in the ascendant, each battling for mastery: at this stage the vices and follies of the social climb and the economic rat-race offer themselves for deflation. Until the new society is simplified and stabilized, which may not be for decades, we are in for what I have called a golden age of satire.

Most reviewers of Amis's work have not, I think, fully understood the moral basis of his comedy (an idea he would almost certainly reject himself as pretentious, just as he deflated the comments quoted above as "the foregoing sociological homily"). *Lucky Jim* is often referred to as a satire on provincial university life, and individual episodes are cited as examples of Amis's comic imagination; Jim himself is commonly seen as the typical "scholarship boy" who cannot hope to succeed simply because he is out of his social depth. Somerset Maugham shudders at him as a representative of the unmannerly, unprincipled, lazy, and incompetent lower middle classes who will eventually bring Britain to ruin by their ambition.⁸ But such comments avoid the questions which have to be asked: why does Jim Dixon get into the predicaments that Amis relates so vigorously? What is so wrong with society that Jim cannot cope with it without making a fool of himself? Does Amis, in fact, have a consistent comic vision? The answer is to be found in the motivation behind Jim's comic escapades.

Braine treats as tragedy a young man's desire to control his own destiny, and his achievement of this ambition at the expense of integrity. Amis treats the same desire as comedy, allowing his hero to achieve success without losing his sense of proportion. Jim has taken the easy way out on one occasion, by specializing for his degree examination in a subject (Medieval History) that he knew was "a soft option." Now, in his first appointment as lecturer in a provincial university, he is required to teach nothing but this subject. Rightly or wrongly, he feels that the Middle Ages is a period whose cultural importance is greatly over-rated. Moreover, the head of his department, Professor Welch, sees this period of history as a kind of Golden Age, and requires his

junior staff to participate wholeheartedly in pretentious cultural activities designed to reproduce medieval England in the twentieth century. He seems to Jim the epitome of the middle-class intellectual, self-important, sly, and, despite his inefficiency, secure. Thus Jim is forced into an equivocal position: he must pretend to expert knowledge that he hardly possesses, in a subject whose importance he questions, and at the same time he must toady to a man for whom he has no respect. For economic reasons the desire to succeed in the job is strong. But Jim is no hypocrite, and has a guilty conscience about remaining in a position which requires so much deceit to so little purpose, other than financial and social security. Compromise is abhorrent to him. He is thus in a state of constant moral crisis, and it is this conflict between principle and self-interest that Amis presents in a succession of comic scenes. Those aspects of provincial university life which are the objects of his satire are not merely random examples of affectation or lack of principle: they are symbols for the standards that a young man must adopt if he is to succeed, whatever his profession. Jim must never forget to address Welch as "Professor," he must pretend an interest in folk culture, disguise his northern accent, write pseudo-learned articles for the historical reviews, and at the same time connive at the lowering of educational standards to the point where they "chuck Firsts around like teaching diplomas." He must be "well schooled in giving apologies at the very times when he ought to be demanding them." He must, in short, constantly keep his sense of proportion in check, lending his interest and approval to statements and situations he detests.

For most of the time Jim is able to suppress his desire to be vigorously abusive in the presence of pretension. The faces he makes to fit various situations mock at the serious consideration he is expected to give to the vanity and affectation of his colleagues. But the tension caused by this continual compromise increases in him as the novel progresses. It first finds an outlet in drunkenness, when he deserts the musical weekend with Welch and his family to spend an evening at the pub. The episode involving the burning of the bedclothes may seem to be a gratuitous piece of farce, but it is Jim's natural, though involuntary, reaction to a situation in which he is forced to participate for economic reasons in a social event he despises and where

he cannot speak his mind openly. It is the central comic incident in the novel, and many of the later scenes derive from Jim's attempts to avoid the consequences of his action, while not fully convinced that he has been morally wrong at all. The burning of one's bedclothes, he seems to suggest, is a small price to pay for having inflicted suffering on somebody who is morally superior. The reason for Jim's involvement in so many brushes with Welch and his family is that really he does not want to keep his job at all. *Lucky Jim* is not a novel about a young man whose attempts to succeed in his profession meet with constant frustration. It is about a young man who instinctively tries very hard, and not always subconsciously, to be dismissed, since dismissal gives him freedom from compromise.

The tension becomes uncontrollable as Jim's probationary period nears its end. The lecture on "Merrie England," which is, as far as he knows, to be the test of his abilities, serves also as the test of his integrity. The nervousness which allows him to accept the excessive quantities of liquor that are offered him is not simply anxiety over the prospect of a public lecture. Jim is afraid not that the lecture will be a failure, but that it will be a success. Like any hero of the proletarian novel, his fear is that when the time comes he will "sell out." So he begins his address with an unconscious imitation of Welch, continues with mimicry of the Principal, and settles down eventually to complete destruction of the naive historical assumptions which underlie his script, prepared originally to please Professor Welch. Amis has already, in an earlier episode, made Jim's true view of the cultural importance of the Middle Ages abundantly clear.

Those who professed themselves unable to believe in the reality of human progress ought to cheer themselves up, as the students under examination had conceivably been cheered up, by a short study of the Middle Ages. The hydrogen bomb, the South African Government, Chiang Kai-shek, Senator McCarthy himself, would then seem a light price to pay for no longer being in the Middle Ages. Had people ever been as nasty, as self-indulgent, as dull, as miserable, as cocksure, as bad at art, as dismally ludicrous or wrong as they'd been [then]?⁴

Whether this idea is intellectually valid or not is really irrelevant. The important thing is that Jim must, to keep his job, plausibly

state the opposite case. But his desire for self assertion wins, and he totally invalidates the meaning of his words by his method of delivery.

He began to infuse his tones with a sarcastic, wounding bitterness. Nobody outside a madhouse, he tried to imply, could take seriously a single phrase of this conjectural, nugatory, deluded, tedious rubbish.

This stand on principle (as he sees it) begins unconsciously. Jim "could never understand afterwards" how he had come to imitate Welch and the Principal. But the destruction by tone of voice, and the final explicit attack on "the home-made pottery crowd, the organic husbandry crowd, the recorder-playing crowd," is made with full awareness of the probable consequences. Jim is, of course, drunk at the time; he is no dragon-slaying hero, but he has at last refused to compromise for the sake of security. The economic crisis for Jim—job or no job—and the moral crisis, have been forced to a climax side by side, and in entirely comic terms.

In *Lucky Jim* Amis has a firm grip on narrative structure. The period of the action is confined to the last few weeks of Jim's probation; the running battle with Welch and his family presents the crisis of principle in terms of comic conflict of character. But parallel to this, and introducing new elements into the moral framework of the book, is the Jim-Margaret-Christine relationship. In many ways this is the most important element of the narrative, and for the most part it is treated quite seriously. Since Margaret is a lecturer at the university and a guest at the Welch house, and since Christine is Bertrand's girl friend, these episodes are closely integrated into the main story. But the choice Jim must make between the two girls represents another, and fairly distinct, moral and social dilemma. It is not merely a choice between a rather unattractive neurotic girl and an uncomplicated pretty one: it is a further decision to be made in favor of the real rather than the fake, and involves an attempt to break out of the restrictions of class and environment. It is this situation that provides an answer to the question frequently asked about Jim: how far is he to be regarded as the spokesman for Amis in matters of moral behavior? One sentence in particular

places all the virtuous qualities with Jim. "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." Margaret has tried once to commit suicide—or so he believes—when jilted by another man, and he is afraid she will make another attempt if he abandons her. He feels responsible for her, and responsibility for other human beings—especially another lame duck like himself—is part of his code of conduct. Only when he discovers that her suicide attempt was staged for dramatic effect, and was hysterically insincere, does Jim consider himself free to transfer his allegiance to Christine. Margaret's neuroticism is another form of affectation. For all her alliance with Jim against the Welch family in minor matters, she fails him morally by her attitude over the incident of the burnt bedclothes. Her coolness to Jim is only partly caused by her jealousy of Christine; her middle-class sense of propriety is also offended, as it has been when Jim attempts to take her amorous advances at their face value. Christine, on the other hand, represents honesty and good humor, and this central comic episode clarifies the distinction between the two girls.

On her first appearance Christine represents the unattainable to Jim.

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.

As a defense against his own hopeless susceptibility, Jim invents reasons for disliking Christine: she seems arrogant, and she moves awkwardly. The scene at breakfast the morning after the fire is carefully designed by Amis to distinguish between the two girls. Jim deliberately intensifies his northern accent; he picks up a fried egg in his fingers; he tells Christine about his drunken mishap. But she refuses to be either shocked or impressed. She continues eating a large, ungentle breakfast, covering her eggs and bacon with ketchup. Jim notices that her fingers are "square-tipped, with the nails cut quite close," and that her front teeth are slightly irregular. She is clearly neither unattain-

able nor pretentious. Moreover, she says nothing to him about his duty to confess his delinquency to Mrs. Welch. She is, in fact, an ally not merely in an escapade, but in Jim's pursuit of integrity; she, too, has a sense of proportion. However, he cannot rid himself of the feeling that she is out of his class. Recognition of class is, of course, a prerequisite to further friendship. Until Jim has placed Christine in a class background, which in present-day Britain, Amis implies, is no easy task, he cannot tell whether he loves or despises her. During the ride in the taxi after the college dance (a scene in which there is not the slightest suggestion of comedy) Christine reveals herself, too, as a victim of situation. She is so attractive, and seems so confident, that Jim cannot believe she does not really know how to manage her own life successfully. Yet she is really quite unsophisticated. "I look as if I know all about how to behave, and all that But it's only the way I look." She is, in contrast to Margaret, frank about money, paying her share of the taxi fare (in a most un-middle class way) because she earns more than Jim. She stubs out her cigarettes in her saucer, and—perhaps most important of all—she has a faint cockney intonation about her voice. As in Jim's case, moral integrity and modest social origins go together—even when accompanied by a certain vulgarity of behavior.

The ending of the novel, with Jim getting the good job and the pretty girl, has been much criticized as a concession to convention, yet it is surely part of the morality of the book. Gore-Urquhart is a successful businessman, but he is sincere and well-mannered. Despite the pretensions of the university group, they do not stand up when a lady enters the room; Gore-Urquhart does. He is the only person, apart from Christine, with whom Jim can speak without exercising caution, and when Jim leaves for London it is to embark on a career where his freedom from petty affectation will be appreciated, and where the nature of his duties as Gore-Urquhart's private secretary requires him to be constantly on the alert for fakes and bores. I have, of course, simplified the issues involved in *Lucky Jim*. There is much to be ridiculed in Jim, much to be tolerant of in Welch. In this novel nobody escapes satirical treatment (except, perhaps, and notably, Christine) and Jim's lack of social poise, inevitable though it may be in the circumstances, is as productive of our laughter as is the affectation of the Welch family. But

Jim's virtues and defects are those of the new class he represents.

Amis's second novel, *That Uncertain Feeling*, centers round another case of troubled conscience and social friction. He has moved out of the university setting and placed his hero in a public library, but once again a job is at stake, in this case promotion to a Sub-Librarianship. John Lewis is highly susceptible to feminine charm (though as usual with Amis, mainly when it is of the obvious variety) and succumbs easily, despite his settled antagonism to her class, to the advances of Elizabeth Gruffydd-Williams, a young married woman from local upper-class society. He is somewhat shocked when he discovers that her husband is chairman of the Library Committee and that she can give him sufficient inside information to ensure his success with the appointment board. Only later does he discover that everything has been rigged in advance, and that he has been selected for promotion simply because the committee chairman wants to spite the Chief Librarian by appointing a man the latter dislikes. Thus Lewis's debates with his conscience turn out to be purely academic after all, since he would have been successful without Elizabeth's assistance, which at the last minute he rejects. Having allowed himself to drift with the situation for some weeks, making no clear decision about his moral position, integrity submerged under an irresistible attraction for Elizabeth that is composed partly of sexual desire and partly of social vanity, Lewis finally decides to refuse the job when it is offered to him. But the complication that arises from this indicates that Amis has moved beyond the fairly simple issues of *Lucky Jim*. Lewis's principles are all very well, but what about duty to his wife and two children, who are existing in much less than comfort on his meagre pay? Aren't these principles merely selfish? Does he have any right to despise his present job as dull, let alone refuse the promotion? The problem is raised, but left in the air. Lewis's wife apparently forgives him for his marital waywardness (there is a break in the narrative at this point) and the situation is saved by their removal from the scene of temptation, with his integrity—and hers—left intact.⁵ When the novel closes he is at work in the office of a colliery in another town, still being tempted by other women but determined to resist.

Unlike *Lucky Jim*, this novel is marked by an almost totally serious treatment of the main incidents. Despite what has been

said by reviewers, it is certainly not an advance on the earlier novel as comic fiction. Indeed, much of the humor is purely gratuitous, even irrelevant. Once again affectation is attacked, as exemplified by Welshmen who ape English upper-class society, Welshmen who extoll Welsh folk culture beyond the limits of reason, and middle class tradesmen with social pretensions. John Lewis does battle with corruption, on a small scale, but his main conflict is with his own concupiscence. It is, of course, this that leads him into his encounters with the Anglicized Welsh *nouveaux riches*, but these encounters are productive of humor only because he has a natural tendency (unrelated to moral disapproval) to involve himself in ludicrous situations. In fact, precisely those decisions for or against moral integrity that in *Lucky Jim* are productive of satirical humor are in *That Uncertain Feeling* the cause of purely non-humorous scenes. Certainly this novel does not put Amis into the category of "angry young men"; indeed it is the best evidence he could adduce in proof of the misapplication of that label. *That Uncertain Feeling* happens to take place in the same year as *Lucky Jim* (there is at least one allusion to an incident in the earlier novel, involving the notorious historian Caton) and it contains a limited amount of incidental satire on contemporary British society, but the basis of the narrative is a personal crisis peculiar to the protagonist; the sociological implications are really quite minor.

Amis's latest novel, *I Like It Here*, is barely worth serious consideration, since his careless writing and ambivalent attitude towards the central character almost negate the more praiseworthy features. But it does illustrate, better than the earlier books, some of the difficulties of a satirist at the present time. Once again there is a strong attack on affectation, in this case the cult of "abroad" as being in all ways preferable to "home," and there is an attempt to expose a possible literary fraud. The hero suffers a minor twinge of conscience over an attempted adultery, and Amis provides a great deal of widely dispersed minor social satire. What spoils the comic idea is that Amis has created a hero in the likeness of journalistic portraits of the typical frustrated intellectual grown angry, yet has used him as the mouthpiece for perfectly serious ideas. Bowen is a fabricated figure, seen from the outside only, lacking any credible motivation in terms of the story. Our knowledge of him is complete only

by reference to the composite character of the "angry young man" supplied to us by numerous reviewers. *I Like It Here* shows Amis desperately trying to shake off a label that he feels—and justly—to be quite inappropriate. Resistance to affectation, distrust of the upper or richer classes, irreverence towards the established literary giants, are portrayed as ridiculous poses. The effect is to invalidate any moral points that Amis has made in the two earlier novels, as well as in this one. He has apparently not realized the danger implicit in parody of his own work. Jim Dixon, for instance, had very good reasons for his anti-intellectual attitude; so had John Lewis; in both cases the narrative provided particular examples of cultural pretentiousness that could justifiably be mocked. But Bowen, in *I Like It Here*, making his living as a literary parasite, effects almost no distinction between sincerity and affectation. Ignorance is a virtue, raw life is always ruined by art, all practitioners of the arts (to use his phrase) are hypocrites; any "non-ironical cultural discussion" is a "betrayal." If he feels while in Portugal that a visit to Fielding's tomb was not entirely wasted, he must nevertheless keep quiet about it when he returns home.

The reason for this persistent undercutting of sincerity is plain. Amis is essentially a serious writer (a point I have already labored), yet he is afraid of his own sincerity and has adopted an attitude of detached sophistication. He seems to suggest that in an age in which any stand on principles appears utterly ludicrous the only writer who can command our attention is one who *seems* not to care deeply at all. The problem is entirely one of literary presentation, as Amis suggests in one of Bowen's frequent lapses from character.

Bowen thought about Fielding. Perhaps it was worth dying in your forties if two hundred years later you were the only non-contemporary novelist who could be read with unaffected and whole-hearted interest, the only one who never had to be apologized for or excused on the grounds of changing taste. And how enviable to live in the world of his novels, where duty was plain, evil arose out of malevolence and a starving wayfarer could be invited indoors without hesitation and without fear. Did that make it a simplified world? Perhaps, but that hardly mattered beside the existence of a moral seriousness that could be made apparent without the aid of evangelical puffing and blowing.⁶

In *Lucky Jim* Amis certainly seems not to care, and the result is that his moral seriousness has been "made apparent" in comic terms without recourse to didacticism. To a lesser extent this is also true of *That Uncertain Feeling*. But in *I Like It Here* the literary craftsmanship that should carefully control the impression of *insouciance* is lacking, and the extent to which Amis really does have any concern for moral issues is left in doubt. Yet without this concern there can be no true satire, for the great satirist is the least cynical of men. However, Amis has elected to anatomize contemporary British life in a considerably more demanding literary form than Braine, and it is hardly remarkable that only one out of his three novels to date is satisfactory as consistent satire.

FOOTNOTES

1. For example, Diana Trilling, who sees nothing but self-pity and envy in these writers, compared with the pride of Lawrence, still speaks of them in collective terms and makes no distinction between the authors and their characters. She takes issue with the label, but denies any moral value to the writing. "I keep thinking of your English contemporaries, those angry young men as they are so inaccurately called, who are so full of self-pity and envy and not at all angry, really, because it takes pride to be angry and they have no pride. What a poor spectacle their protest makes alongside that of Lawrence whose pride and rage were like a banner! I'm glad that we in our country have not yet produced a counterpart of this English thing, it reassures me that we're still a going concern over here." (Introduction [in form of a letter to a young literary critic, Norman Podhoretz] to *Selected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy Inc., New York, 1957.)
2. His rival in the novel, Jack Wales, was also in a prison camp. But he was an officer, a member of the privileged classes, and having no need to prepare for future security contrived to escape. Even bravery, and the social status it confers, is a prerogative of the upper classes, so Braine suggests.
3. Maugham has his facts wrong. Jim does not "write anonymous letters to harass a fellow undergraduate." He is not an undergraduate at all. According to Maugham, Jim represents a class which holds in contempt "charity, kindness, generosity." But these are the very qualities that Jim reveres; he is, however, prevented from exercising them by the people around him, the established pillars of the university.

He lands the good job and the pretty girl, at the end of the book, precisely because his rival does not possess these virtues. Virtue is rewarded so thoroughly in *Lucky Jim* that Amis could easily be accused of sentimentality. Maugham's comments would certainly apply, though, to Braine's Joe Lampton, had *Room at the Top* appeared when Maugham made his attack (in the *London Sunday Times*, December 25, 1955).

4. Quotation from *Lucky Jim* is from English edition published by Gollancz & Co., Ltd. (An American edition was brought out by Doubleday in 1954 and has recently been reissued as a paperback by The Viking Press).
5. Jean, John Lewis's wife, is tempted to permit him his liaison with Elizabeth provided it has the effect of obtaining the promotion for him, even at the expense of their marital happiness. Obviously this is a situation that cannot easily be presented in comic terms, so Amis allows us to assume the reconciliation between them, which must have been based on Jean's decision for integrity rather than for security, without including it in the narrative. The shirking by Amis of issues he has raised himself is even more apparent in *I Like It Here*.
6. Quotation from *I Like It Here* appears by permission of Harcourt, Brace, and Company, publishers.