UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID

FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA

Departamento de Filología Inglesa II

(Literatura de los Países de Lengua Inglesa)

TESIS DOCTORAL

Referencias sociológicas y culturales en la obra de John Osborne

The cultural and social dimensions of the works of John Osborne

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTOR

PRESENTADA POR

María del Mar Vega Esteban

Director

Juan Manuel Núñez Yusta

Madrid, 2016

UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras

Departamento de Filología Inglesa II

REFERENCIAS SOCIOLÓGICAS Y CULTURALES EN LA OBRA DE JOHN OSBORNE
THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE WORKS OF JOHN OSBORNE

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTOR

PRESENTADA POR

Doña María del Mar Vega Esteban

Bajo la dirección del doctor

Juan Manuel Núñez Yusta

Madrid, 2015

TESIS DOCTORAL

DE

MARIA DEL MAR VEGA ESTEBAN

Licenciada en Filología Inglesa

REFERENCIAS SOCIOLÓGICAS Y CULTURALES EN LA OBRA DE JOHN OSBORNE

THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE WORKS OF JOHN OSBORNE

Director:

DOCTOR JUAN MANUEL NÚÑEZ YUSTA

UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS
DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍA INGLESA

MADRID, 2015

Abstract

An overview of what better remembering the works of John Osborne can teach us about British drama, culture, community and identity; about reform acts in postwar Britain, such as the 1944 Education Act, and their interpretation; about inspiring British lives and stories including those of the Angry Young Men (AYM) movement and new writing in the 2000's.

Finally, I propose a personal explanation why such topics as education, politics, relationships, national identity and language, form a crucial part of the ongoing national narratives and social debates.

Fecha de inscripción de la tesis: El día 28 de diciembre del año 2009.

Acknowledgements:

Writing is a lonely work or at least it seems so, until one writes acknowledgements and realizes to what extent this research is the result of collaboration. My heart felt thanks to Dr Juan Manuel Núñez Yusta, my doctoral supervisor, who has offered intellectual, practical and moral support throughout the research process. A warm thanks to Dr Felix Martin and Dr. Jorge Braga Riera. I would also like to sincerely thank the interlibrary loan librarians of the Central Library of the Universidad Complutense of Madrid, for facilitating the books and articles required. My work has been considerably enhanced by the enthusiasm and support of Professor Felicia Farron-Davis. Scholars from other universities have helped me by sharing their knowledge of, and insights into, this research work. From the late Professor Luc Gilleman, one of Osborne's latest champions, I've received not only kind words, but also critical appreciation of my work. I also sincerely give my thanks to Professor Aleks Sierz who answered practical question concerning the British stage, and to both Alan Sinfield and Kimball King for encouraging me to go on with my project and wishing me luck, as well as to artistic director Amanda Knott who offered her help and her knowledge in the field of drama. I am also truly indebted to Professor Friedman for his interest in the outcome of the dissertation and for his encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction

"A lifelong satirist of Prigs and Puritans." (David Hare, 1995).

John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) marked the beginning of a revolution in the theatre of post-World War II (WW II) Britain. It was considered the most immediately influential expression of the mood of the "Angry Young Men."[1] It is hard to understand what happened in English literature in the fifties without some knowledge of the historical circumstances at that time. The determining factor was the return of a Labour government to power in 1945 with enormous popular support. British voters wanted change; their hopes went with their votes and were not entirely unfulfilled. Under the leadership of Clement Attlee, Labour quickly set about turning promises into action. In 1946 they nationalized the coal industry; transport (1947) and steel (1949) followed soon after, with electricity and domestic gas. In 1946, they legislated for a National Health Service, guaranteeing medical treatment for all, irrespective of wealth. Pensions and housing were improved. In 1947 India and Pakistan became independent, leading the way for Britain's divestment of its former colonies.

All these changes were what the people had voted for but they took place in conditions of economic hardship, the consequences of the war. Britain had to build itself up again at the same time as it was trying to reconstruct itself. The result was not merely hardship but also a sense of diminished status in the world. In 1948 Britain accepted invaluable American aid under the European Recovery Plan. It could not have done otherwise, but it was to prove a bitter pill to swallow for the Labour government.

The period covering the decades of the 1950's, the 60's and the 70's, was one in British history where radical changes in all fields of knowledge were taking place and affecting, in one way or another, the cultural climate of the time and therefore the social vision of the writers. References are made to the problems British society was undergoing at the time. For example, the economy in the post war period (The Age of Austerity, 1945-50) was on the surface recovering but with a toll of an under fifth of the population lacking basic needs.

[1] Osborne, as modest young playwright, on the barge on the Thames that he shared with Anthony Creighton, 1956. Fig.1, p.262, in this dissertation.

The theatre of the late sixties and seventies was in constant turmoil exploring its own limits and challenging what "bourgeois" theatre had taken all too granted. At the same time, the study of the author cannot be separated from that of his work, in as much as the study of the social and cultural upheavals affecting Britain and the rest of the world form the context where Osborne's work arose. In this way, a searching inquiry into the relationship between his work and its social and cultural dimension is our aim pursued, since its full and specific original context challenges and informs the perception of ourselves in the starting decades of the twenty-first century.

Aims and Methodology

The question under investigation has been addressed with a focus for each of the chapters. The full and original specific character of the works analyzed in their original context, challenges and informs our perception. In this way, the central aim of this dissertation is to provide the reader with a general knowledge of the sociological and cultural background of the works of John Osborne and its implications for a better understanding of the theatre in Britain during the first decade of the new millennium. As specific aims it pursues the following ones, which are to be developed along the body of this work in full chapters. It analyses the topic of education during the postwar period when reform measures were implemented. It is the issue most related to class and gender and references to it are to be found in plays such as *Look Back in Anger* (1956), *The Entertainer* (1957) and *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964), all of which tackle the question of social mobility. A second specific aim is that of explaining how the youth phenomenon came into being during the affluent period of the 1960's at the wake of the welfare state, and how his plays explore this social theme at a time when theatre, jazz and folk song were the characteristic New Left cultural forms. To describe what brought about in a number of middle aged writers of the time the frame of mind the movement of "The Angry Young Men" embodies, and analyze different attitudes to this question. To illustrate the sense of a vanguard breaking through and riding a new wave of artists contesting and presenting the social reality on stage, ranging from the 'Angry Young Men' of the 1950's to the 'in-yer-face playwrights' of the mid 1990's. After censorship was abolished in 1968, young dramatists no longer found a censorious Lord Chamberlain conditioning their writing. The term 'In-Yer-Face-Theatre' is described by

Aleks Sierz as a theatre of sensation. This type of theatre jolts both actors and spectators out of conventional responses, touching nerves and provoking alarm.[2] To explain the significance of the dramas of Osborne on understanding the dominant and subordinate cultures of this time in British theatre, and what the end of official theatre censorship in 1968 brought to the British stage. To establish the relationship between both these cultures within the cultural studies tradition that will lead the reader to an understanding of the emergence of youth subcultures and their meaning through drama. Considering that the correlation or even the coalescence of words and action is what most clearly distinguishes theatre from literature, to undergo a critical appreciation of the language game found in Osborne's drama to encourage further investigations in this field. To discuss the implications of racism, sexism and homophobia, the scope for subaltern resistance, and the ways through which the system tends to accommodate or repel diverse kinds of dissidence. To account for the work on gender and race, culture and language that has been undertaken by literary scholars telling us things about the nature and meaning of the imperial enterprise. To study the relationship between theatre and identity that will suggest to what extent Osborne's plays were a form of political expression. To focus upon the controversial issue of 'Anger' in the light of what later came to be known as identity politics in the context of new writing in British drama, and how it questioned the reality of the immigration experience in this country. To highlight Osborne's contribution to the playwrights who followed him and the impact of his work on society as a whole.

How this presentation through dialogue meshes with the plays' overall commentary on British society (especially the 1950's) is a matter which has been explored. The breadth-first approach consists in the reading and study of critical works as a methodological foundation, which helps to shape the cultural and social factors and implications. As in fiction and poetry, theme is the central idea expressed by a play. The analysis and support required for its articulation demand a close look at the parts: the language, events, characters and outcome of the play. According to critic Aleks Sierz:

> In previous decades, from the "Angry Young Men" of the late 1950's to the in-yer-face playwrights of the mid-1990's, there was a sense of an avant-garde breaking

[2] Billington, M. (2007). *State of the Nation. British Theatre since 1945*. London: Faber and Faber.

through and riding a new wave of artists writing and presenting the social reality on stage.[3]

It will be posited, that an exploration of the significance of Osborne's dramas on understanding the dominant and subordinate cultures of this time in British history is highly relevant, and that their relationship will be established within the cultural studies tradition and the emergence of youth subcultures and their meaning through drama. "Considering that the correlation or even the coalescence of words and action is what most clearly distinguishes theatre from literature"[4], a study of the language game of Osborne's drama will be accounted for. Its implications of racism, sexism and homophobia, the extent of subaltern resistance and the different ways the political system copes with different types of dissident ideologies outside the conventional and established ones will be considered for a critical appreciation of his work.

In this sense, it is interesting to consider the way David Cannadine[5] emphasizes the work undertaken by literary scholars about how they saw the British Imperial enterprise, highlighting at the same time the work on gender and race, culture and language. The study of the relationship of theatre and identity will suggest to what extent Osborne's plays were a form of political expression. The controversial issue of "Anger" is focused upon in the light of what later came to be known as identity politics in the context of "New Writing" in British drama, which at the same time questioned the reality of the immigration experience in Britain. The Royal Court Theatre is one of the venues where it was born; it was what may be called "a white" theatre.[6]

According to Aleks Sierz,[7] the story of "New Writing" begins with the arrival of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* on the 8 of May 1956 at The Royal Court Theatre. Throughout its history, The Court has striven to represent contemporary life and culture. In 1998, its Artistic Director Ian Rickson expressed the credo in a way Devine himself would surely have approved: "We're not particularly interested in plays with wigs or plays set in drawing rooms. We want to put real life on stage in all its complexity and so we look for actors who can do that."[8] The English Stage Company's opening production

[3] Sierz, A. (2011). *Rewriting The Nation. British Theatre Today.* London: Methuen Drama, p.26.
[4] Denison, P. D. (1997). *John Osborne: A Casebook.* New York and London: Garland Publishing,Inc.
[5] Cannadine, D. (2002). *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[6] At the Royal Court: Writers, actors and directors. Fig.2, p.263 in this dissertation.
[7] Sierz, A. (2011). *Rewriting The Nation. British Theatre Today.* London: Methuen Drama, p.16.
[8] Rickson, I. (1998, September 20 Sunday). *Independent on Sunday.*

on the 2nd of April 1956 was Wilson's *The Mulberry Bush*, known in the Court as "the Wilson."

Two questions will be considered as starting point of the dissertation. The first one is formulated in the following way: How far does an audience have to go in thinking about what goes on in the characters' heads to understand what is happening on stage? The second one is: And, how do all the facts, related to the cultural and social dimensions of the plays analyzed in this work, change or influence our understanding (as readers or audience) of them?

Reading books and articles about the subject ensures the researcher a wide approach to the topic in question, since the fields of knowledge it covers are varied and complex, as well as the instruments (such as the approaches from the point of view of critical analysis) used by these different areas of study. In this cross-disciplinary study, Sociology will be accounted for, since its concern with the analysis of the social construction of reality will help in the study of Osborne's characters and their relation with society. Other disciplines considered are Social and Political Sciences, which will be of great help when analyzing the work of John Osborne, besides History and Theology which are well considering.

The methodology used in this dissertation consists of an in depth reading of the works of John Osborne and of the books which review them and assist in its elaboration, especially monographs about the writer. This will eventually develop into a corpus of literary analysis worth considering in reaching a better understanding both of the writer and the characters created by him. The study of the social and cultural context of the decades when his plays were written, staged or taken to the media is a task that aims to be worthy of analysis, in the global framework of critical appreciation in the field of literary studies. It will also be explained what the end of official censorship in 1968 brought to the British stage.

The author's intentions are usually manifest within the text and, while the text has been decentred in the cultural studies model, it has not been erased. Context remains essential but only in its relation to the text. In a sense, this relationship is the object of this study, especially since the context we are most concerned with is the one Osborne was more aware of. It is only through its more nuanced features such as reviews, playbills, recollections, drawings, photographs, and sometimes film versions when a theatrical performance is made accessible. Here we contend that the most important,

substantial and often most readily available trace is the play text which is fundamental to any interpretation.

Our approach falls into six chapters. On the whole, this research work will explore the following dimensions of the impact of Osborne in the following areas (fields of knowledge): Education (chapter one), Politics (chapter two), Social Relationships (chapter three), Language (chapter four) and Cultural Identity (chapter five).

Theoretical and Textual Approaches

The work undergone for the elaboration of this dissertation has been fundamentally historicist, in an attempt to reconstruct the political and social environment in which Osborne's work was originally written and produced, tracing the development of some of the theories and approaches in British Cultural Studies. Thus, for the method employed, we are primarily indebted to post-war British cultural studies. In this sense, the approach which has been followed has been influenced by the emphasis on the way cultural studies scholars have come to highlight contemporary ways of life, placing their efforts to a better understanding of the function of ideology and the material bases of artistic production, as well as their explicit political commitments. The project of cultural studies is explained succinctly in Alan Sinfield's book where he insists that criticism must be concerned not about literature and its context, but about literature in its context,[9] which has given way to new ideas and various trends in literature, drama and film, as well as the lifestyles and concerns of mainstream and minority cultures as they have emerged decade by decade. It introduces the term social construction into the social sciences. By this he means that scholars cannot merely gloss allusions to contemporary events in a text or simply explain an author's social and political views. More importantly, they account for the ways in which a text's meaning is produced in a particular time and place, within specific cultural institutions and for historically constituted audiences. As theatre historians have increasingly recognized, these issues are specifically important in understanding a theatrical performance. Arthur Marwick's *British Society since 1945*[10] is a study of British Society and lifestyles since the Second World War, and is a material resource used for the elaboration of this dissertation. *The Social Construction of Reality*, written

[9] Sinfield, A. (1983). *Society and Literature, 1945-70.* New York: Holmes and Meier, p.3 Introduction.
[10] Marwick, A. (1982). *British Society Since 1945.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, and published in 1966 is thus worth considering. Willmar Sauter explains in *The Theatrical Event* that "The awareness of the significance of contextual perspectives has been growing during recent years and now far exceeds traditional background of a topic. The context is not only a background; on the contrary, contexts are integral to the understanding of the event itself."[11] Hebdige's *Subcultures*[12], which tells about Britain's post-war youth subculture styles as symbolic forms of resistance, proves to be one of the most influential books on the theory of subcultures.

Hence, following a cultural materialist-oriented critical approach, this project aims to investigate the historical, the social and the political circumstances in which Osborne's work was produced, circulated and then received by audiences and readers. This is Raymond Williams' term, his *Marxism and Literature*[13] is a key text and the work of Stuart Hall and the whole Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies which he directed is equally important for it. "Materialism" and the associated materialist and materialistic are complex words in contemporary English. The complexity of the argument given by Williams about the development of the words related to "matter" for reasons of our argument, leads to relate the concept with the socialist revolt against capitalist society.[14] Richard Johnson, a former director of the tremendously influential Birmingham Center for Cultural Studies, explains that "the aim is to decentre the text as an object of study. The text is no longer studied for its own sake, not even for the social effects it may be thought to produce, but rather for the subjective or cultural forms which it realizes and makes available."[15] Johnson's phrase "makes available" is crucial because it suggests that the text does not create meaning in a vacuum, but that it appropriates existing ideas and emotions and puts them to a particular discursive or rhetorical use.

---

[11] Sauter, W. (2000). *The Theatrical Event: Dynamic of Performance and Perception.* Iowa: U of Iowa, p.251.
[12] Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture, the Meaning of Style.* London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
[13] Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and Literature.* Oxford University Press.
[14] Ibid., pp.199-200.
[15] Johnson, R. (1986). What is Cultural Studies Anyway? *Social Text* (16), p.62.

The State of the Question

This doctoral dissertation seeks to investigate the historical, social and political circumstances in which Osborne's works were produced, circulated and received by the audience and the readers. For this I will follow a cultural materialist critical approach, a term coined by Raymond Williams in his book *Marxism and Literature* (1977).

With a plan in hand, we proceed in this section to survey scholarship that has been done on this question—framed generously in the title of the dissertation—making sure to write a summary of each argument for inclusion in the "state of the question" section of this dissertation.

Reading books and articles about the subject ensures the researcher with sources for a wide approach to the topic in question, since the fields of knowledge it covers are varied and complex, as well as the instruments (such as the proposals from the point of view of critical analysis) used by these different areas of study. The following ones have ensured that the research and development needs within the field of cultural studies are identified and addressed.

One of the best authors on the sociology of literature is Alan Sinfield. For a theoretical/sociological approach, we have considered as a good starting point his book *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain*. It has been compared to the following classics: *The Angry Decade: a Survey of the Cultural Revolt of the Nineteen-Fifties* and John Russell Taylor's *Anger and After* written around the same time. It is also of absolute importance Tom Maschler's *Declaration*, especially the contributions written by Osborne and Kenneth Tynan.

We have also studied and referred to Harry Ritchie's *Success Stories: Literature and the Media in England 1950-1959* and Dan Rebellato's *1956 and All That*. For background and context, the following hefty tomes by David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain: 1945-1951* and *Family Britain1951-1957*, proved to be very informative.

Strangely, one of the best social historians of British culture is a Frenchman. In his book, *A Social History of England* there is a good description of the 'blocked society' of the 1950's, completing the research with the much useful information provided by essays written by fellow playwrights, especially Arthur Miller's *Timebends: A Life* and David Hare's *Obedience, Struggle and Revolt: Lectures on Theatre.* Doubtlessly, Osborne's essays as well as his two autobiographical books have been essential to accomplish this study.

The kiss-and-tell authorized biography by John Heilpern and the book *John Osborne, Vituperative artist* written by Luc Gilleman (the scholar who has most recently been working on John Osborne) have been fundamental references to define our approach.

Ronald Hayman's *John Osborne* (New York: Ungar, 1968[revised 1972]) is a general study of Osborne's work with chapter length examination of the individual plays ranging from *Look Back* to *West of Suez*. Hayman stresses his concern for the individual hero in Osborne's work, frequently showing how it works against a fullness of dramatic expression and locks Osborne into a repeated pattern. The book includes a list of stage productions and cast links for all the London and New York premières.

John Russell Taylor, Ed. *John Osborne: Look Back in Anger, A Casebook.* (London: Macmillan, 1968) compiles very useful and frequently cited collection of essays, as well as reviews of first performances, selected writings by Osborne, critical studies, and contemporary perspectives of his work. This casebook includes twenty-first performance (London) reviews of *Look Back,* five prose works by Osborne ("The Writer in His Age", "The Epistle to the Philistines", "That Awful Museum", "A Letter To My Countrymen", and "On Critics and Criticism"), eight critical studies (John Russell Taylor's "John Osborne", Katherine Worth's "The Angry Young Man" George E. Wellwarth's "John Osborne: 'Angry Young Man'?", Geoffrey Carnalls "Saints and Human Beings: Orwell, Osborne and Ghandi", Edwin Morgan's "That Uncertain Feeling", John Mander's "The Writer and Commitment", Mary McCarthy's "A New Word", Charles Marowitz's "The Ascension of John Osborne"), three foreign reviews by Harold Clurman, John Gassner, and Guy Dumur; and nine points of view on the play (Allardyce Nicoll's "Somewhat in a New Dimension", from Laurence Kitchin's *Mid-Century Drama*, from James Grindin's *Postwar British Fiction*, An Osborne Symposium from the National Theatre Program, Lindsay Anderson's "Stand Up, Stand Up", Stuart Hall's "Something to Live For", and an extract by Tom Milne from *Encore*). Taylor's introduction provides an overview of the play and its contemporary social milieu and a discussion of some of the criticism *Look Back in Anger* has received. In the "General Editor's Comments", A. E. Dyson gives a critical analysis and something of a personal response to Osborne's play.

Martin Banham's *Osborne* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969) Introduction, which precedes individual discussions of Osborne's plays to 1968, is well considering in this study. It is a defence of the playwright as more than an angry young man or a

social reformer. Even though Osborne's drama is used as a weapon against those elements in society that impede the individual's freedom, he alone has modernized the British Theatre and brought it into the centre of controversy. Banham concludes that it is most appropriate to measure Osborne not so much in terms of individual plays but in the larger framework of a serious exploration of social and moral issues. Plays examined include *Look Back in Anger, The Entertainer, Epitaph for George Dillon, The World of Paul Slickey, A Subject of Scandal and Concern, Luther, Plays for England, Inadmissible Evidence, A Patriot for Me, A Bond Honoured, Time Present* and *The Hotel in Amsterdam*.

Alan Carter's *John Osborne* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969) discusses all of Osborne's plays up to *The Hotel in Amsterdam* (1968), and includes a biographical chapter and an extensive bibliography. Osborne is considered primarily as a playwright of social criticism. His most original contribution to the English theatre was bringing the word "love" back into vogue: the love between man and woman and the love between man and society, the element that focused attention upon him during the 1950's.

Alan Carter's book (2nd ed. 1973) describes Osborne's work as provocatively honest and his plays as experiments that ask questions rather than provide answers, emphasizes on private and public voices and analyses from *Look Back* (1956) to *Very Like a Whale* (1971). It has a First performance list and an Appendix of selection from the Osborne Symposium, Royal Court, 1966 plus a Bibliography.

Simon Trussler's *John Osborne* (London: Longmans, Green, 1969) is a critical and biographical discussion of Osborne and his work from *Look Back* to *Hotel in Amsterdam*. This 39-page study is the 213th book of the Writer's and Their Work series.

Simon Trussler's *The Plays of John Osborne: an Assessment* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969) focuses on Osborne's instinctive craftsmanship as he presents detailed analysis of all of Osborne's plays to *Hotel in Amsterdam* (1964). Included in the book are brief plot summaries, critical commentary, appraisal of Osborne's non-dramatic writings, and an extensive bibliography. Trussler attempts to avoid an overly biographical approach which most critics have taken in relation to Osborne's drama. His main purpose is to establish Osborne as a dramatist of the first rank and to provide a companion study of plays' thematic importance. Each play is taken individually with no consistent attempt to depict recurring themes or a stylistic development. The plays are analyzed not only as literary texts but also as works for the theatre. This book includes

some comments on Osborne's journalism plus a brief chronology, a cast list and a bibliography.

Harold Ferrar's *John Osborne* (New York Columbia UP, 1973) offers a 48 page monography on Osborne's brand of realistic dramaturgy, which Ferrar situates in the main currents of social and theatrical history of the mid 1950's. A critical commentary, often cursory, on plays which range from *Look Back in Anger* (1956) to *West of Suez* (1971).

Herbert Goldstone's *Coping with Vulnerability: the Achievement of John Osborne* (Washington, DC: UP of America, 1982) examines Osborne's work twenty-five years after *Look Back in Anger*. He asserts that the first fifteen years overshadow the last ten. It is of interest for future researches the comparison of Osborne's characters to Ibsen's, Chekhov's, and Pinter's characters; he argues that they all exhibit conflicting feelings about self-worth. It includes chapters on *Epitaph for George Dillon*, *Look Back in Anger*, *The Entertainer*, *Luther*, *Inadmissible Evidence*, *A Patriot for Me*, *A Bond Honoured*, *Time Present*, *The Hotel in Amsterdam*, *West of Suez*, *A Sense of Detachment*, and *Watch it Come Down*. The Bibliography includes selected reviews of productions.

Ronald Hayman's *John Osborne* (Heinemann, London1968. 92pp. Expanded version, New York) draws attention to Osborne's solitary heroes who isolate themselves from society yet who oddly epitomize social conditions in England and, at the same time, their monologues dictate the rhythm and structure of the plays. The book is divided into chapters on *Epitaph for George Dillon*, *Look Back in Anger*, *The Entertainer*, *The World of Paul Slickey*, *A Subject of Scandal and Concern*, *Luther*, *Plays for England*, *A Patriot for Me*, *Inadmissible Evidence*, *A Bond Honoured*, *Time Present*, *The Hotel in Amsterdam*, *West of Suez*. It includes a Chronology, a stage production list, cast list of London premières and New York productions, as well as a bibliography.

Arnold Hinchliffe's *John Osborne* (Boston, Twayne 1984) provides the reader with an examination of twenty-five years of his work, from *Look Back in Anger* (1956) to *A Better Class of Person* 1981, plus a Chronology and a select bibliography with annotations.

Malcolm Page's *File on Osborne* (London Methuen 1988) compiles a valuable survey of Osborne's work from *The Devil Inside* (1950) to *God Rot Tunbridge Wells* (1985). It includes an excellent checklist of summaries of the plays. Of value for future

studies is the detailed performance history, excerpts from reviews, and selected comments by Osborne on his work. A brief Chronology and select bibliography with some helpful annotation is also given.

Eugene Greeley Prater's *An Existential View of John Osborne* (Pine Hill: Freeman, 1993) categorizes Osborne's work as existentialist drama were characters are trapped in a dilemma of choices, conditioned by meaninglessness or driven by the faith of self-confidence. It examines Osborne's plays within an existentialist state of uncertainty. The characters represent some of the following attitudes: alienation, lack of authenticity, confrontation of boredom, and loss of motivation and care.

Chapter 1

Education in Post-War Britain: References in *Look Back in Anger* (1956), *The Entertainer* (1957) and *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964)

> "And they dreamed dreams, above all of the United States, the land of modernity, freedom, space, jazz, spontaneity…" Malcolm Bradbury, 1982: *On young Britons in the 1950's*.

1.1. Historical, Social and Political Background

Look Back in Anger (1956) is commonly credited with being the play in which Osborne expressed a sense of frustration and anger at the depressing circumstances of post-war Britain. Jimmy Porter, its protagonist, is regarded as an embodiment of the emotions of a particular age and class especially the generation of young men who had been expecting to leave behind their lower-class origins by benefiting from higher education. Jimmy is educated beyond his social roots; however, he cannot get what he expects from his education. Despite his university degree he has worked, as Alison tells her father, as an advertising salesman, a neophyte journalist, and a vacuum-cleaner salesman. Then he starts to run a sweet stall for a living which is not a proper job for a graduate man either. According to Berkowitz, "inability to fulfil the anticipations is a frustration."[16] Jimmy should have been working in a job suitable for his university education. He has been to a redbrick or provincial university instead of Oxford or Cambridge, and that should have been enough. Not even redbrick, but white tile, as he says. To the younger members of John Osborne's post-World War II generation, the angry vulnerability of a young man, helpless to affect any change in his own life and overwhelmed with bitterness at the British class system, became a rallying point for a general sense of frustration. For Porter, who has graduated from a redbrick university, even language such as "coming down" used by Oxford and Cambridge graduates, remains an insurmountable barrier between the privileged and their social subordinates. And this is how Alison voices it: "He didn't even have a job. He'd only left the university about a year…No – left. I don't think "one comes down" from Jimmy's university. According to him, it's not even red brick but white tile."[17] Questions regarding the topic of social mobility and indirectly addressed in the play are:

- Who should university education really be for?
- Gentlemen? Or an elite group, not of family, but of intellects?
- Gentlemen and an intellectual elite, judiciously mixed?
- Or was it the democratic right of all who wished for it? Or merely of all who could benefit from it?

[16] Berkowitz, L. (1969). *Roots of Aggression: A Re-examination of the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis.* New York: Atherton, p.16.
[17] Osborne, J. (1978). *Look Back in Anger.* London: Faber and Faber. From now on: *L.B.* Act II, Scene I, p.42.

Jimmy Porter's university degree does not make him a member of a higher class. Carl Bode suggests that "Jimmy knows that he is the displaced intellectual and that surely embitters him."[18] He is aware of the fact that he cannot change his social status only by a university degree however hard he tries to. Therefore, as Bode claims, Jimmy is "a man who has tried and failed to become middle-class."[19] The proper writer, John Osborne, has described himself as educated at a rather cheap boarding school. The phrase betrays the uncomfortable self-consciousness that makes Jimmy Porter, this angry young man, so gripping a stage character, lacerating himself as he lacerates the shrunken, mean half-life of the Britain he sees around him: "Nobody thinks nobody cares. No beliefs, no convictions and no enthusiasm. Just another Sunday evening."[20]

The reason for placing the issue of Education first, is mainly to acknowledge its relevance in the construction of a modern society in post WW II Britain, and thus as agent and vehicle of that change. Initial reviews of the play approximate what theatre audience must have felt when it was premièred. For instance, the critic Patrick Gibbs, reviewing the first production of the play in 1956 for the *Daily Telegraph* states: "The leading character (Jimmy Porter), 'a man of education' living in poverty, would seem to be intended as a full-length study in resentment."[21] To understand this remark, resentment will be linked to anger and contextualized in the provocative labelled "Angry Young Men" movement. The only time the expression "*Look Back"* (from the title) comes up in the play is when Alison says: "I keep looking back as far as I remember, and I can't think what it was to feel young, really young. Jimmy said that to me the other day. I pretended not to be listening."[22] This remark comes up in one of the rare moments when Jimmy is out of the room and she talks of nothing but him in the way that he would want her to. It has to do with Jimmy's quest for a lost innocence (childhood time) and the upbringing and selective examination process to which a child is subjected. My argument is that educational opportunities during the post-war years gave way to a high proportion of working class boys, as in the case of Jimmy Porter, with a place at university level, but who would feel utter deception when finishing their advanced studies. At the same time, educational processes at this time seem to have had less impact upon the life chances of girls and of children from ethnic minorities.

---

[18] Bode, C. (1959). The Redbrick Cinderellas. *College English , 20* (7), pp.331-37.
[19] Ibid, p.335.
[20] *L.B.*, p.17.
[21] Russell Taylor, J. (1968). *John Osborne: Look Back in Anger: A Casebook.* London: Macmillan, p.42.
[22] *L.B.*, p.28.

Ironically, it is a product of Jimmy's proletarian and Alison's upper-middle class upbringing and hence the certain incongruity of Jimmy's simultaneous feelings of identification with the working classes and the aristocracy. Social mobility, this endless movement in "social space", composed of the struggles of individuals to rise into the class above, is reflected in the play. The young man who is rising in the world may sometimes find the family from which he sprang an obstacle to his full acceptance by the class to which he aspires. "His usual response is to find a family of his own and …in the fullness of time he may well find himself to become the respected (and accepted) head of an upper middle-class family."[23] Osborne narrates in his autobiography an episode from his childhood in which he reflects this: "We (M. Geoffrey Wall and himself) both came from homes where books and music were almost completely disregarded."[24] Expelled from school, the young John Osborne entered the professional world with only a couple of O'levels to fend for himself.

Jimmy Porter is less in search of a particular background than of a lost innocence; "A quest for certainty"[25] against depressing sameness and for a lost innocence. He now looks back in time when he still possessed that instinctive innocence which he now feels to be lacking. This lost innocence is linked more to the idea of a myth than to a reality. Whether mythophobe or mythophile, all commentators look back at the first production of *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court, "the cauldron in which the myth of anger was cooked up." From the brash imperative of its title to the symbolism of its ironing board, it is a play teeming with ingredients for myth-making. What holds them all together is the play's emotionality. Categorised at the time by Allsop as an "Emotionalist"[26], Osborne not only explored feelings, but flung them at the audience. Luc Gilleman discusses this in the following terms: "With Jimmy constantly calling out for tea, food and tobacco, life in the attic is characterized by an almost foetal dependency in which Alison's role is that of a much harassed mother patiently doing her boy's ironing. Such claustrophobic cosiness is to Jimmy both enjoyable and threatening."[27]

---

[23] Maude, A., & Lewis, R. (1949). *The English Middle Classes.* Plymouth: Phoenix House Limited, p.15.
[24] Osborne, J. (1981). *A Better Class of Person: An Autobiography. 1929-1956.* London and Boston: Faber, p.81.
[25] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.52.
[26] Allsop, K. (1958). The Emotionalist qtd. in K. Allsop, *The Angry Decade: A Survey of the Cultural Revolt of the Nineteen-Fifties*. London: Peter Owen, p.96.
[27] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.55.

The topic of "Education" is very much related to class and gender issues. Firstly, we must consider the fundamental changes taking place under the educational policies during this period. Secondly, we will make an analysis of references found in the plays *Look Back* (1956), *The Entertainer* (1957) and *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964), where this topic, although little, appears. The fact that Jimmy Porter is referred to as "a man of education" highlights the education theme and thus gives it the relevance that further readings of the play will achieve among critics. In the May 1957 issue "The Writer in his Age" of *London Magazine*, John Lehman asked various writers how far they were concerned in their writing with fundamental current issues such as "atomic weapons and the levelling down of classes through discriminatory taxation."[28] Writers from Enright and Wain to Golding and Colin Wilson produced either equivocations or conservative responses; only Osborne and Silvia Plath (American and educated at Smith College) spoke up for political commitment. This was partly due to the notion that the welfare state had instituted all the changes necessary for the good society, including "the education of the likes of themselves."

The main argument of this chapter concerns the fact that Education will be a key issue in Osborne's works, to which other aspects such as social mobility and gender inequalities will be related. According to historian Bédàrida:

> ...since the war the whole of the class set-up brought itself up to date adapting itself to the needs of a technological out-put minded world. But underneath there always remained the age-old confederacy of birth, money and power ... the characteristic that was peculiar to England was that the criterion for discrimination was not related simply to money, as in the United States, but to birth, breeding, occupation, way of life and education. Class was symbolized by a way of being, behaviour, gestures and above all, accent. People had only to open their mouths to be identified as 'them' or 'us'.[29]

Following the cultural materialists critical line, we will investigate the historical conditions in which *Look Back* (considered a textual representation) was produced, circulated and received, since it was first premièred in 1956. Then, we will focus in the relation between dominant and subordinate cultures, the implications of racism, sexism and homophobia, the scope for subaltern resistance and the modes through which the system tends to accommodate or repel diverse kinds of dissidence.

[28] Lehman, J. (1957). The Writer in His Age. *London Magazine , 4* (5), p.38.
[29] Bédàrida, F. (1991). *A Social History of Britain 1851-1990.* Routledge, p.282.

The full implications of earlier literature for the present come up only when they are understood in its context. In *Look Back* we find an example of a graduate student (Jimmy Porter) whose job is that of running a sweet stall at a time when Britain was enjoying full employment (1956). This, depending on the point of view of the audience indicates that he is a layabout or that without family and Oxbridge backing, a graduate in that society had trouble discovering fulfilling work. Nevertheless, now, in the twenty-first century, it might indicate notable enterprise at a time of economic recession. The constant factor, a graduate running a sweet stall, can be analysed and contextualized, as the original audience of *Look Back* did, although the significance is different since the play assumes, in every nuance, the context of 1956. We may read it without taking this into account, imposing our own context, but we thereby limit ourselves to reinforcing our own assumptions, rather than taking the opportunity to envisage a different kind of society. Although the world of 1956 is not ours, our society is derived from it and the way to discern that derivation is not to assimilate but to distinguish. The full and specific character of *Look Back* in its original context challenges and informs the perception of ourselves as readers or spectators of the play.

The topics discussed permeated the play, especially in the first production with Jimmy Porter played by the actor Kenneth Haigh. He played the role as a Socialist and only secondarily as an emotional misfit. In retrospect, this "provincial trumpet-player"[30] from the white-tiled university pre-figured two movements, student-revolt and black militancy, that weren't to flower until the next decade (1960's) and which are no doubt key elements for Jimmy's frustrations.

"The English hate energy", said one of the Royal Courts directors, Lindsay Anderson, who noted that no sooner had a new kind of drama began at last to appear than a press rushed to give it the name "kitchen sink", in an effort to patronise it, contain it and kill it with the easiest instrument to hand, the convenient English weapon of class. The legend tells us that when the curtain went up on that evening in May 1956 the audience gasped at the sound of the words which came from the stage.

These textual productions must be read in the context in which *Look Back* was written and premièred. It is a post-war play concerned with the issue of education during the period of the Cold War. We can formulate the following question in relation to this: What were the intellectual aspirations of post-war British youth and how are

[30] Hare, D. (2005). A Defense of The New. In D. Hare, *Obedience, Struggle & Revolt*. London: Faber, pp.87-110.

they presented in the play? The action takes place in an attic one-room flat where the action is unfolded to the spectators. The fact that the play has a strong hold in the social reality of its day does not necessarily make it a propaganda piece, nor does it make Jimmy Porter the mouthpiece of a protest movement. He is presented in the stage directions as a young man around 25, with the rather sad, natural intelligence of the self-taught; this gives a hint of the fact that he belongs to the working-class. Unlike middle-class students, his world is actually a much private one, based on post-war conditions in England and shaped by the structure of British society. However, the underlying theme of the play is not simply that of Jimmy Porter against that society or Jimmy against those who stand for that society in his very special private environment. Above all, he represents the desperate attempt of an individual coming to terms with himself and with the world where he lives. Jimmy hungers for power from the position of social insecurity, from the sick taste of continual defeat. His education as a scholarship boy has left him with a "Hunger for Culture" and although where he finds himself only well enough is reading the safest classics, he is nonetheless uncertain about certain values. Hoggart remarks: "That minority who become conscious of their class-limitations and take up some educational activity – so as to 'work for their class' or improve themselves – tend to be ambiguously regarded…. On the other hand, there is often a mistrust of 'book learning'."[31] He is burdened with longings and aspirations totally at odds with his own circumstances in life. In his famous speech, Jimmy says: "There aren't any good, brave causes left. If the big bang does come, and we all get killed off, it won't be in aid of the old-fashioned, grand design. It'll just be for the Brave New-nothing very much thank-you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus."[32]

His Messianic cry "Hallelujah! I'm alive!"[33] was appropriated by the New Left subculture with the creation of the Angry Young Man (AYM) myth. There is a reference to the AYM that comes up in a BBC radio programme on Sunday 15th April 2012, and in which they are labelled a "Bright Young Thing." It is made in the context of talking about Terence Rattigan, highlighting the relevance of this group of the angry young men, in the literary discourse of the present time. Thus, the term AYM was coined and must be understood in the context of the emergence of the New Left, which

[31] Hoggart, R. (1992). *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments.* London: Penguin, p.84.
[32] *L.B.*, III, i, p.84.
[33] *L.B.*, I, p.15.

is discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. It was encapsulated in the coinage of the two following terms: AYM and "the Establishment", the latter initially over the cover-up for Burgess and MacLean, to specify the power through which the already powerful maintain their dominance. The Establishment is a term used to refer to the traditional ruling class elite and the structures of society they control, and also employed to describe specific entrenched elite structures in specific institutions, although it is usually informal in application. The term was to be coined by the British journalist Henry Fairlie. In September 1955 he wrote a column in the London magazine *The Spectator* about how the friends and acquaintances of Guy Burgess and Donald MacLean, two members of the Foreign Office who had defected to Moscow, tried to deflect press scrutiny from the men's families. He defined that network of prominent, well-connected people as "the Establishment", explaining:

> By the Establishment, I do not only mean the centres of official power – though they are certainly part of it – but rather the whole matrix of official and social relations within which power is exercised. The exercise of power in Britain (more specifically in England) cannot be understood unless it is recognized that it is exercised socially.[34]

Jimmy's frustrations turn into self-loathing and are then re-directed outwards into aggression against Alison. Loss of one's roots and insecurity, the latter shielded by ignorance, usually foster a tendency towards introspection and egocentrism, while at the same time, they obstruct drive and self-confidence. In a way, Jimmy Porter has left the working-class and finds it impossible to gain access to the middle-class. It is easy to understand that for defensive reasons he does not wish to do so either. There is also a strong bond of solidarity regarding his relationship to the working-class represented by the female figure of Mrs Tanner, which makes him linger on. His rather profound insight into the mechanisms operating within the class structure makes the differences, as far as he is concerned, irreconcilable.

Jimmy is a 'scholarship boy' and the education system has left him uncertain as to his 'sense of belonging', uncertain as to the nature of his ambitions and not equipped with enough staying power to put any of them into effect. According to Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy*, the scholarship boy comes from the working class, whose members are for the most part destined to academic failure. These working class students (among whom Jimmy is to be considered):

[34] Fairlie, H. (1955). Political Commentary. *The Spectator*, p.77.

> ... are as a result uncertain, dissatisfied and gnawed by self-doubt…though they have as much will as the majority, they have not sufficient to resolve the complex tensions which their uprooting, the peculiar problems of their particular domestic settings, and the uncertainties common to the time create. With them, the sense of loss is increased precisely because they are emotionally uprooted from their class.[35]

This seems to have been the result of the educational trajectory and changes in Britain since the very end of WWI:

> In the Twenties, the public school had been the much battered target of progressives and the subject of angry exposures by novelists and playwrights. In the Thirties, the Old School Tie became faintly comic, focus for the derision of the Western Brothers. It had been left to the Egalitarian Forties to accord it both respect and power, tempered only by occasional embarrassed recollection of the resounding pledges of 1943.[36]

Osborne's enemies are what Mathew Arnold called philistines, a biblical word of which Osborne is particular fond. For him, Modern philistines lack not school education but life experience and vitality. Therefore, in the late fifties and early sixties, the better educated higher classes were more likely to be the philistines. From the seventies onward, however, when the welfare state assumed definite shape (only to be nearly immediately dismantled) the philistines were the welfare ideologists who preached the new morality of liberalism. This was done with a self-righteousness often instilled by liberal education.

1.2. Education Policy in "The Age of the Common Man/Boy"

From the sociological point of view, Jack Common's most ambitious novel, *Kiddard's Luck* (1951)[37], published in November to considerable critical acclaim, offered, according to Pritchett "a rich, tolerant, considered, and indeed really brilliant picture of working-class life and a profoundly human one."[38] He declared that the largely autobiographical account of a working-class childhood in Newcastle during the early part of the century "... makes most of the novels of working-class look faked and

---

[35] Hoggart, R. (1992). *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments.* London: Penguin, p.291.

[36] Hopkins, H. (1963). *The New Look: A Social History of the Forties and Fifties in Britain.* London: Secker and Wanburg, p.172.

[37] Common, J. (1990). *Kiddard's Luck.* Bloodaxe Ltd.

[38] Pritchett, V. S. *New Statesman.* qtd. in Kynaston, D. (2009) *Family Britain 1951-1957.* New York: Walker, p.47.

overstrained." *The Daily Express* even speculated that "it may collect the jackpot, as Walter Greenwood did 20 years ago with *Love on the Dole.*" It did not happen so. Having been, "too late (and perhaps unwilling) for the Proletcult of the 1930's", Common found himself "too early (and perhaps too old) for the Angry Young Man marketing of the 1950's."

Before WWII, only 14 per cent of Britain's children continued their education beyond elementary school and of these, only a small proportion were working class children. Yet by the Fifties, surveys showed that the grammar schools were beginning to present "a petty fair cross section" of the communities of which they were part. Taking England as a whole, the children of manual workers by then constituted about half the grammar school population; the children of skilled workers (around two-fifths) represented the grammar school's largest single social element. Many young people from working-class families entered higher education and embarked on non-manual careers; even larger numbers started work in manual occupations and climbed into non-manual ones.

The Setting of *Look Back* is presented in the stage directions in the following terms: "The Porter's one room flat in a large Midland town."[39] The Midlands was among one of the first authorities to build comprehensive schools in the early 1950's, with the result that many other local authorities adopted Coventry's plan with a physical house system, specifically designed for pastoral care. Comprehensive schools were often compared with grammar schools, so that in the 1960's Harold Wilson referred to comprehensive schools as "Grammar Schools for all." This was a strategy designed to overcome the fears of the general public about the abolition of the grammar schools.

In the 1950's and the 1960's, debate focused on the structure of schooling, key issues being whether grammar schools should be abolished and the comprehensive school system adopted. At the same time, demands for a more scientifically and technically qualified workforce prompted calls for a new structure of higher education based on colleges of advanced technology, polytechnics and new universities:

> "Interwoven in the public, professional and political discussion of these reports was the work of sociologists exploring social class differences in educational opportunity and relating these to many of the features of the social and cultural organisation, both of education and family life."[40]

---

[39] *L.B.*, I, p.9.

[40] Williamson, B. (1990). *The Temper of the Times: British Society Since World War II.* Oxford: Blackwell, p.137.

Women too benefited from the expansion of higher education. Indeed, the number of women going to university increased much faster than the number of students from working-class backgrounds. If Britain was divided into three social classes, the men in the top or "service" class (professionals, managers, proprietors and supervisors) were outnumbered by those from manual, working-class origins and during that period, the majority of British men had either moved into a different class from the one in which they were born, or had married a woman from a different social class.

Higher education was an area of considerable debate. Since the publication of the Barlow Report (1946)[41] it was argued that England required provision of higher education places if it was to meet the demands for an advanced, technologically trained society. In the immediate post-war years, claims were made for former university colleges to become universities in their own right. It was not until the early 1960's that a group would appear championing the cause of a new university that would be appropriate for a Midland city, where industry might be more interested in applied rather than pure science.

Educational policy in the post-war era was governed by the major Act, The Butler Act[42], passed in 1944, and, at times more important for reasons of social analysis, the interpretation placed upon it. The major strength of the Act was that it ensured that all pupils would, around the age of eleven or twelve, move on to a form of secondary education which would at least be continued till the age of fifteen. Thus, the potential for mobility through the educational system was greater than it had been in the 1930's. The Education Act provided "secondary education for all" in age-specific schools and ensured that an increasing number of young people were spending a large portion of their adolescent years in the company of their peers, removed from the responsibility of work (or the vicissitudes of unemployment) and could thus be readily seen as a distinct social grouping. The Youth issue became a central theme coming up in the debates about the effects of affluence upon traditional moral and social values and allegiances. The general affluence seemed particularly available to teenagers and as one observer commented, "the young were the outstanding financial beneficiaries of the post-war

[41] *The National Archives.The Barlow Report of 1946* (n.d.). Retrieved January 23, 2011, from http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/before-after-second-world-war.htm

[42] Gillard, D. (2011). *Education in England the history of our school.* Retrieved December 20, 2011, from http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history

situation."[43] The problems which seemed to engage the country's political, intellectual and moral opinion-leaders were more those of affluence than of poverty. The young, especially, were now seen to enjoy more time and money than they had in previous generations but seemed to lack direction or moral purpose.

This was something new, reflected in *Look Back* and clearly of great importance. It represented not only expanding opportunities for talented individuals, but also, in the once for all circumstances of the Forties and Fifties, the upward movement of a whole social class. The outlines of a national educational system, from primary school to university, were at last becoming vaguely discernible. The main area of opportunity was the university, turned into a public responsibility and in theory open to all. But the failure to reform the public school system, or adjust the social dominance of Oxford and Cambridge meant that universities, especially Oxford, continued to reproduce most of the cultural values of their privileged pre-war existence. "A landmark has been set up in English Education", *The Times Educational Supplement* declared, "The Government's White Paper promises the greatest and grandest educational advance since 1870."[44] Between 1947-48 and 1958 spending on public university, in real terms doubled. Expressed as a proportion of the national income it grew by 75 per cent.

By the later Fifties, some of the first fruits of this educational revolution were discernible. Before, the British working classes had been largely a secret people with their own language, ways of thinking and codes. Theirs was a world which remained, in the south at least, largely impenetrable by any person from the middle classes. In print and on stage – since working class writers were rare – representations of them were condescendingly "anthropological", from the outside looking in, as to be found in the comic chars of Punch, Noël Coward's naval ratings and the stoic idealised workers of Orwell's *Wigan Pier* (1937). As for the working classes themselves, there appeared to be two alternatives to the traditional not like us self-segregation: the political attitude of class-conscious challenge or the earnest attitude of the small body of working class seekers after "Knowledge and Culture."

The developmental process of a scholarship boy did not necessarily lead to a contradictory organization within his personality. However, it did so in a large number of cases due to the isolation and sense of loneliness, which was almost unavoidable for

[43] Hopkins, H. (1963). *The New Look: A Social History of the Forties and Fifties in Britain.* London: Secker and Wanburg, p.424.
[44] Kynaston, D. (2007). *Austerity Britain 1945-1951.* London: Bloomsbury, pp.27-28.

the child to suffer sooner or later. This could have been the case of Jimmy. It seemed that more normal two-way communication might at last be opening up. In many of the working class children who left the new schools was to be noted a new sort of social assurance, a new disposition to speak their minds in accents and idioms of a new universality. Youth Employment Officers who recalled pre-war years, reported that young people had a much clearer, more positive idea of what they wanted to do after leaving school. Doors, which had been closed, were seen to be opening. There were moments when it seemed that the "Age of the Common Man"[45], so long overdue in Britain, might yet be ushered in by the "Age of the Common Boy." In the universities, as in the secondary schools, new strata of the nation were being tapped. For the boy without means before the war a university place was inevitably thought of as an Oxbridge place, and had been held out as a rare and glittering prize for the brilliant. In the decade after the war, a university place was officially recognised as a normal right of all who possessed "good all-round ability."[46]

In 1959, great changes took place at university level. The net of examinations and scholarships was cast so wide that it caught nearly all the talented sons of the poor. But the colleges in Oxford and Cambridge were simply not large enough to hold all the talent that had been found and subsidized. As a result, a good many of the scholarship boys went to the regional universities, the urban universities newly built of raw red brick instead of the ancient stone of Oxford or the mellow clay of Cambridge. These new universities, in Leeds, Leicester, Hull and a dozen other cities were, as a matter of fact, better and stronger than Oxbridge in certain fields. Their professors may be abler, their spirit more progressive and alert. Notwithstanding and in spite of the social changes, the prestige of Oxbridge remained immense.

In 1924, the new Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, had boasted that he had formed a cabinet of which Harrow should not be ashamed, and that it included six members of the Old School. Thirty one years later, political reporters were noting that of the nineteen members of Anthony Eden's new Cabinet no less than ten were from his Old School Eton. More significantly, one in every three of Labour's post-war Cabinet Ministers had been a public school man. Perhaps the best proof was that the redbrick

[45] *U.S. History.* (n.d.). Retrieved from The Age of Jackson: http://www.ushistory.org/us/24a.asp

[46] Cf. Ministry of Education recommendation to local authorities making university grants: awards "should not be regarded as prizes to outstanding students but as a proper form of assistance for students of good all-around ability for whom in the public interest that a university education should be."

professors preferred, even then (in 1959), to send their sons to Madalein or Kings, Balliol or Trinity.

In fact the proportion of young people going to university now doubled one in thirty against one in sixty before the war. Public expenditure on university grants and scholarships had multiplied sevenfold. Yet, ironically, as at eleven plus, the effect was to extend competition rather than to reduce it, spreading confusion and anxiety. The Robbins Committee[47] found in the early 1960's that there were more lower class students only because the number of students had doubled: the proportion was the same as in 1939. It is in this sociological context where the character Jimmy Porter is articulated, trying to come to terms with the times and with all the social and cultural changes taking place in Britain at that time.

1.3. Literacy and Education: The Myth of the 'Angry Young Men' and the Education Issue

One of the most important consequences of this new educational policy was the generalization of literacy to previously unknown levels and the creation of new trends and moods, anger included, in public opinion. This phenomenon is evidently reflected in *Look Back*, which opens staging Jimmy Porter sprawled in an armchair reading the papers. It finds its interpretation in Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (1957),[48] a book which throws a great deal of light on how an Angry Young Man could develop skilfully combining two different sorts of writing. One is cultural autobiography, the story of the influences on the author's own youth in a working-class neighbourhood of Leeds. On the whole, Hoggart views his past with a rare blend of sympathy and appraisal, seldom marred by sentimentalism. The other sort of writing is a literary and cultural analysis of the publications and entertainments intended for the working classes: in American jargon, the *mass media* and the *mass arts*. Here, Hoggart interprets a subject, which only sociologists had dealt with before. He makes the middle-class reader aware of unsuspected reasons for the flourishing of British television in the working-class, for the

[47] Committee on Higher Education (1963). *Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins.* Retrieved December 21, 2011, from http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/robbins/robbins1963.html

[48] Hoggart, R. (1992). *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments.* London: Penguin.

perfect triviality of nearly all afternoon papers and for the continued acceptance of the *News of the World* (the most vulgar and widely circulated Sunday paper in Britain).

The most relevant section of Hoggart's book for the issue of education is headed "Unbent Springs: a Note on the Uprooted and the Anxious." The first of its two parts, "Scholarship Boy", is doubtless about Hoggart himself. He traces the gradual alienation of the boy from the working-class family. It starts simply with a word of praise for his intelligence from the male members of his family rather than the female. The boy works hard and wins his first scholarship. Yet he is still living at home and still wants the best of both worlds. At night when he must do his homework, his friends are out somewhere, perhaps at the street corner, and his family goes on with its normal pattern of odd jobs and talk to the accompaniment of the "telly." He tries to study – and must – but the problem is considerable. Hoggart is at his best when he reminds us of the obstacles to study that no one would think of without personal experience. For example, he describes the problem created by the fact that the only warm room in the house is the family room. No British working-class family would heat a bedroom simply for a son to study in and for his part he would not wish to be cut from his family. So he stays among them but tries to shut out their amiable noise.

Then as time passes and work is rewarded, the boy moves from one scholarship to another. As he moves he changes his accent and acquires a new scale of values. His schoolmaster becomes in a sense his father. His education evolves into a series of hurdles, of examinations to pass. He learns to be receptive, retentive and meticulous. He does not see that his education is failing him by leaving him no zest for knowledge for its own sake, and no boldness. At last, when the young man with his university degree is ready to take his place in the world, he faces an entirely new situation. He is now confronted with a large world, disorderly filled with emotion and unreason, far different from the neat, artificial universe he has been conditioned to. Small wonder that he is more apt to end by feeling lost and displaced, anxious and angry, than either the lad from the lower classes or the young man born to the assurance of middle-class life. Hoggart goes on to say:

> I am sometimes inclined to think that the problem of self-adjustment is, in general, especially difficult for those working-class contemporaries, but not to go much farther. I am not implying a correlation between intelligence and lack of unease; intellectual people have their own troubles. But this kind of anxiety often seems most to afflict those in the working classes who have been pulled one stage away

> from their original culture and yet have not the intellectual equipment which would carry them to move on to join the 'declassed' professionals and experts.[49]

This must have been the case represented by Jimmy Porter and his fellow university students with their sense of uneasiness. It is interesting to see how ex-working-class boys, who moved to the next rank in the social ladder and worked in different managing areas of society as could be the case of a professional professor, an important executive and committee-man or a successful journalist, might experience a tendency to vertigo which would also betray a lurking sense of uncertainty. Nevertheless, many students of that time, whose home and neighbourhood culture were unsympathetic to literary culture, found it strange, difficult and perhaps unappealing. And this is how Jimmy must have considered Cliff when he calls him ignorant (i.e. lacking education) in a tone of humour. He says this jokingly and affectionately but denouncing, at the same time, the failure of Labour's bold democratising intentions of their education reform "Free education for all", as a great advance towards a unified, modern society. Nevertheless, the retention of fee paying schools and the division of the rest into grammar and secondary modern, with an extension of "intelligence" testing, continued pre-war trends and ensured that privilege was perpetuated behind a façade of democratic advance.

The case of education is often cited as an example of an area where a deliberate attempt at social engineering through uniform provision by the state has, in Britain at least, apparently failed to achieve the objectives set by its advocates, having proved neither effective in improving standards nor redistributive, in spite of the fact that, as Burguess remarks,

> ...since the end of the Second World War there have been numerous changes in the structure of state education provided in the UK. There have been changes in the provision of nursery education; new methods have been adopted in the school system as project materials have been introduced into infant, junior and secondary schools; the selection system has largely been replaced by comprehensive schools; the school leaving age has been raised to sixteen; and more places are available for students to engage in further and higher education. As such it would appear that there have been large-scale educational changes.[50]

The result was that talent could not get realized in the education system because of class privilege and Jimmy Porter was one of the misfits, having to lower his

[49] Ibid., p.293.

[50] Burgess, R. G. (1984). Aspects of Education in postwar Britain. In J. Obelvekich, & P. Catterall, *Understanding Postwar British Society*. London and New York, p.128.

professional ambitions to accord with the opportunities in the labour market. His situation is aggravated by the importance given to Literature teaching conceived not as a class culture but a universe culture in the tradition of Mathew Arnold, who had asserted that "the aim and end of great literature is truth and that its criticism of life is permanently acceptable to mankind."[51] Thus, the teaching of literature seemed a generous welcoming of an ever-widening range of people into full humanity that reality did not confirm as such.

1.4. Music and Education: Jazz Considered as a Cultural Element

Jimmy Porter playing jazz music with his trumpet appears as a definite symbol and a sign of identity of the AYM generation, as can be confirmed by the importance given to it by a number of authors. Colin Mac Innes's novel *Absolute Beginners*[52] was written during the 1950's, a time when pop culture was transforming from 1950's jazz and early rock to a new generation on the verge of the 1960's reflecting an enthusiasm for what Black immigration meant to British culture. The characters of this novel project the feeling of the time, the 1950's, with the protagonist having all the left-liberal hopes of the day, concerned about the following matters:

> They had believed the official story about the basic fairness of British institutions. In the history books, they tell us the English race has spread itself all over the damn world; gone and settled everywhere, and that's one of the great splendid English things. No one invited us, and we didn't ask anyone's permission I suppose. Yet, when a few hundred thousand come and settle among our fifty million, we just can't get it.[53]

As readers, we perceive not only a gap between generations, but also a negative attitude from the police, the law and the press towards the immigrant population. A new self-awareness burst with peculiar intensity upon young writers seeking a forum for their message of dissatisfaction with things as they were. In *The Long Revolution* (1961), Raymond Williams begins his derogation of commercial entertainment by

---

[51] Arnold, M. (1962). *Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* Michigan: R.H. Super, p.209.

[52] MacInnes, C. (1980). *Absolute Beginners.* London: Allison and Busby.

[53] Sinfield, A. (2004). *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain.* London and New York: The Athlone Press, p.146.

granting that "jazz is a real musical form."[54] The following lines from *Look Back* also mention this popular form of music which came to be popular at the moment:

> CLIFF. That blinkin' trumpet-why don't you stuff it somewhere?
> JIMMY. You like it all right. Anyone who doesn't like real jazz, hasn't any feeling either for music or people.[55]

Simultaneously, the 15-20 year old age group acquired a privileged niche in society, whence it proceeded to assert its independence, energetically and sometimes aggressively. This change in the situation of the young had various causes, such as were the early maturity of teenagers, the massive redistribution of earnings in the consumer society to the advantage of the young, and the considerable increase in mobility thanks to the development of individual transport. So there came into being a whole cultural world peculiar to the young. Following Frank Musgrave, one may identify this "youth culture" (which sometimes assumed the character of a counterculture) by the following characteristics:

> ...lack of interest in political or economic power, lack of respect for authority, disregard of frontiers and labels, desire for utter authenticity, freedom and unpossessiveness in the sexual relations, a taste for art and music and states of ecstasy, community feeling and an urge to share, a passion for leisure and liberty, repudiation of the idea of property – "all one needs is a sleeping bag."[56]

Not only theatre, but also jazz and folk-song were the characteristic cultural forms of the New Left. Writers adopted jazz, an initially Black music, and an example of this is John Wain who wrote about how jazz had been substituted by rock-an-roll.[57] In this way, literary intellectuals, seeking a serious cultural form that was not associated with established high culture, appropriated jazz as a form that was not conventional culture. The BBC and other cultural institutions felt a sense of hostility towards it. When the Duke Ellington Band visited England in 1933 *The Times* wrote:

> The expert who could disregard their emotional effect might conceivably derive aesthetic enjoyment from his rhythms, but the ordinary listener probably does not,

---

[54] Williams, R. (1961). *The Long Revolution.* London: Chatto and Windus, p.364.
[55] *L.B.*, III, i, p.48.
[56] Musgrave, F. (1974). *Ecstasy and Holiness: Counter Culture and the Open Society*. London: Methuen. qtd. in Bédàrida op.cit.p.262.
[57] Wain, J. (1962). *Strike the Father Dead.* London: Macmillan, p.254.

> and is probably not intended to do so. It is enough the effect be immediate and violent.[58]

The passion of this form of art, jazz, bounded the friendship between Amis and Larkin whose novel *Jill* (1946) portrays two different kinds of Oxford students. One of them belongs to the upper class and is snobbish, selfish and brutal. The other one, from The North of England, is anxious, innocent with the attributes of an intense scholarship boy. For his part, Colin MacInnes caught the frustrations it evoked but hardly touched upon its deeper, social causes and fully explored such alienation in his great London trilogy: *City of Spades* (1957)[59], *Absolute Beginners* (1959)[60], *Mr. Love and Justice* (1960) both three dealing with individuals – blacks or Teenagers – who found themselves at odds with all the social icons such as authority figures, tradition, class distinctions and Tory politics. All in all, we can say that *Look Back* was a starting point that illustrates once more that subcultures appropriate what they want from a text, even if in Britain the Black dimension of rock-n-roll was relatively unappreciated:

> ...most literary intellectuals were hostile to rock-n-roll, and so, from the late 1950's, was the New Left. However, young writers, and specially those linked with the Movement, were also opposed, in part, to traditional cultural attitudes. Where teds appropriated rock-n-roll, writers adopted another initially Black music: jazz. The relation between the two types of music made it especially urgent to distinguish them. John Wain wrote that the decline of jazz after 1948 had left the ground to become "choked with a particular noxious weed they called rock-n-roll."[61]

By 1958, Colin MacInnes depicted a changed social landscape: "The two nations of our society may perhaps no longer be those of the 'rich' and the 'poor' (or, to use old-fashioned terms, the 'upper' and the 'working' classes)."[62]Music is explored in its wide social and aesthetic context in *Look Back.* Church bells are always associated with the forces of convention in society but are here opposed to them by the jazz trumpet Jimmy plays, which corresponds to a free, natural human state of affairs unrestricted by convention and social pressure. "Musical rhythms are also evoked by Jimmy's infatuation with jazz and his way of spontaneously switching into vaudeville song-and-

---

[58] Sinfield, A. (2004). *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain.* London and New York: The Athlone Press. p.159.

[59] Maclnnes, C. (1957). *City of Spades.* London: Mac Gibbon & Kee.

[60] MacInnes, C. (1980). *Absolute Beginners.* London: Allison and Busby.

[61] Sinfield, A. (2004). *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain.* London and New York: The Athlone Pres, p.158.

[62] MacInnes, C. (1958, February). Pop songs and Teenagers. *The Twentieth Century*.

dance routines."[63] Alison speaks about the importance given to music by Jimmy: "He had his own jazz band once, when he was still a student, before I knew him. I rather think he'd like to start another, and give up the stall altogether."[64] And in which the trumpet takes the religious form of a "rough-tongued bell" since with its "individual sound / Insists I too am individual."[65] It is important to account about this for critical reasons, and here we find Jimmy the "emotionalist." Jimmy's words are: "Anyone who doesn't like real jazz hasn't any feeling either for music or people."[66]

The symbolism of jazz is best represented in the film version of the play *Look Back* of 1959. Free Cinema films nearly always used jazz sound-tracks which were characterized by its commitment to realism, emotional truth and breaking taboos about representing sex. These three features are to be found in Tony Richardson's film of *Look Back* starring Richard Burton, Mary Ure and Claire Bloom. They were produced by Woodfall Films, a Production Company which had been set up by Richardson and Osborne himself to produce the latter's plays.

The film adaptation of *Look Back* opens with the frenetic Dixieland jazz of Chris Barber as background to the titles. Free Cinema films nearly always used jazz sound-tracks; "Momma Don't Allow" (1956) was set in a club with the Christ Barber Band playing. We see foot dancing, ecstatic faces, and a close-up of Jimmy Porter playing the trumpet enthusiastically. This way of introducing Jimmy suggests the archetypical jazz musician losing himself in his music, providing pleasure to others, but lonely and self-destructive, he then leaves the jazz club on his own, playing a few bars in the deserted streets including "Rule Britannia." Suddenly, an unseen trumpet answers him from a building. He replies and then the other is silent, and we focus on his frustrated face being Jazz the secret language of rebellious youth and the connection with his incomprehensible anger.[67]

Considering jazz to be a distinctly American sound, this trendy type of music formed part of John Osborne's theatre. Its existence is protest enough, contributing as a cultural element in the construction of the myth of the Angry Young Man in Britain, with *Look Back* as its iconic representation. Osborne himself acknowledged

---

[63] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge. p.49.
[64] *L.B.*, II, p.41.
[65] Larkin, P. (1955). *The Less Deceived.* London: Marvell Press: line 13.
[66] *L.B.*, II, i, p.48.
[67] Zyl, J. V. (1989). Film Adaptation as an Interpretation of a Play: The Case of "Look Back in Anger". *South African Theatre Journal* (2), pp.4-18.

indebtedness especially to Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, emphasizing the role their drama played in facilitating his reception in Britain: "These men conditioned English audiences emotionally for the kind of plays I am writing."[68] Music in the form of jazz scores becomes part of Tennessee Williams plastic theatre, as in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (premièred 1955)[69]. Its political dimension and its social relevance, focusing on *Look Back*, are well a matter of consideration.

As a text: The opening stage directions resort to musical terminology to explain the different personalities of the characters in the play. This recitative is punctuated by angry bursts on the jazz trumpet, as Jimmy (the anti-hero) practices next door.

As a movie (film version): The film begins not in a room but in a club, with Jimmy playing the trumpet. It aligns him with the left-liberal intelligentsia and respectable popular culture (in contrast to rock and roll yobs). His audience in the club is mixed: male and female, black and white. Here, Jimmy symbolizes the three themes that meant most in international cinema in the 1950's: the generation gap, race prejudice and jazz music.

As drama (theatrical elements): Musical rhythms are evoked by Jimmy's infatuation with jazz and his way of spontaneously switching into vaudeville song-and-dance routines which he executes with the help of his friend Cliff. It becomes clear then that the play has been constructed not so much with a view of exploring themes and ideas but rather as an orchestration of psychologically plausible emotional affects.

1.5. Class and Education: The Rise of the Meritocracy

The issue of upward mobility through education was a story that appeared in the initial novels of the upward mobile young man (women figured in so far as they impeded or facilitated his rise) and was actually based on the experience of writers who had finished their education before 1944. According to Sinfield[70] the theme wasn't grasped at all precisely. Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* is vague about Dixon's background and *Look Back* says little about education, discussing it in the context of the typical trope of the "welfare state."

---

[68] Dempsey, D. (1957). Most Angry Fella. *The New York Times Magazine* (VI), pp.22-27.
[69] Williams, T. (2009). *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.
[70] Sinfield, A. (2004). *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain.* London and New York: The Athlone Press, p.265.

Richard Hoggart[71] thinks the theme of upward mobility through education is articulated only towards the end and relatively briefly in Philip Larkin's *Jill* (1946).[72] Set in the war years and published in 1946 it took off from here in 1957. In this novel the 'scholarship boy' is being described as someone who becomes a 'declassed' expert. Hoggart expresses it in the following terms: "... he has succeeded at the price of separation from lower class culture and feels unease in his new sphere. He is at the friction point of two cultures"[73] adding to the fact that "despite the rich diversity of the English provinces the provincial universities had hitherto remained stunted and obscure, starved both of cash and of talent."[74]At that time, "Redbrick" began to move strongly forward and this dominant mood is best described by Harry Hopkins:

> Indeed, it seemed not impossible that the social historian of the future might detect in the new assertiveness of these provincial intellectual centres, already a source of new 'novelists and prophets', a critical factor in the vast, still more than half hidden process of social evolution quickening in these years.[75]

Five new universities had been created by development of university colleges. Several others, like those of West Sussex, (Brighton), York and East Anglia (Norwich), were being planned originally with an innovating enthusiasm, which no longer touched a forelock to Oxbridge. At Nottingham, Birmingham, Southampton, millions were poured into the building of modern campuses and laboratories. Nor would provincial universities in the future be so open to the reproach of being merely suburban establishments whose students "went home for tea." Much attention was being given to the construction of what were rather forbiddingly called "Halls of Residence." In strategic places, large sums were spent in transforming the old proletarian "white tile Tech University" into the new regional "College of Advanced Technology."

Students of technology, after three to five years of advanced work, were now to take the new (1957) Diploma of Technology, stated to be the equivalent standard of a university "honours degree" (though quite firmly not a university degree). English education was riddled with odd anachronistic caste distinctions although it was

---

[71] Hoggart, R. (1992). *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments.* London: Penguin., pp.291-300 qtd. in Sinfield Op Cit. p.265.
[72] Larkin, P. (1964). *Jill.* London: Faber.
[73] Hoggart, R. (1992). *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments.* London: Penguin, p.292.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Hopkins, H. (1963). *The New Look: A Social History of the Forties and Fifties in Britain.* London: Secker and Wanburg, p.168.

increasingly evident that the whole structure and concept of university education was only at the beginning of a long course of social change.

In *Look Back,* Jimmy declares: "Have you ever seen her brother? Brother Nigel? The straight-backed, chinless wonder from Sandhurst." This comment about Alison's brother, Nigel, is full of ironic humour: "The Platitude from Outer Space – that's brother Nigel. He'll end up in the cabinet one day, make no mistake." In relation to 'Sandhurst' he remarks: "But they knew all about character building at Nigel's school, and he'll make it all right."[76] Sandhurst is a military school and is related to the building up of character.

Osborne relates in his autobiography the kind of attention received from adults, which often constituted outright rejection. For example, immediately after stating that no adult addressed a question to him, Osborne goes on to say:

> When I was at boarding school, when I went out to work, until the day she died when I was thirty, my father's mother never once asked me anything about myself. I think she had a glancing fondness for me. If I volunteered information, she would smile a thin winter of contempt and say nothing. Or change the subject firmly. To how my cousin Tony was doing at Sandhurst. How her niece Jill was engaged to such a nice young man who had been to Blundell's School and had a very high position in Lloyds Bank in Lombard Street. I was convinced that her dismissive smile was aimed only to chill my father's coffin yet again.[77]

He continues in the chapter of the same book, under the heading "Tomorrow, The Empire", quoting a piece of writing by a schoolmate called Eric, published in the schools Bulletin *The Michaelian* of April 1944, about "Character- Forming": The Headmaster of Ardingly, in a recent letter to *The Times*, writes: "Public Schools regard the training of character as of more importance than the training of either mind or body."[78]

It is worth mentioning John Osborne's detailed account of the education system at that time: "St Michael's was probably not much seedier or inefficient than many other schools of its kind, offering the merest timid trappings of a fake public school for the merest expense."[79]

---

[76] *L.B.*, I, p.20.
[77] Osborne, J. (1981). *A Better Class of Person: An Autobiography. 1929-1956.* London and Boston: Faber, p.130.
[78] Ibid. p.133.
[79] Ibid. p.128.

And he writes on: ..."Boys could go on to the Higher School Certificate and even, rarely, to the Redbrick or White Tile universities and colleges."[80]

In *Look Back* there is another reference to the education/class issue made in the following song, the tone of which is frivolous and alluding to a very expensive private school for girls called Roudean:

> Now there's a certain little lady, and you all know who I mean,
> She may have been at Roudean, but to me she's still a queen,
> Someday I'm goin' to marry her, when times are not so bad,
> Her mother doesn't care for me
> So I'll ave to ash're dad.
> We'll build a little home for two,
> And have some quiet ménage,
> We'll send our kids to public school
> And live on bread and marge.[81]

Although so many young people felt the compulsion to "try for the university" not all were secure in the possession of the old middle class sense of Election. As in the Grammar Schools, substantial numbers fell out under a mental or emotional burden that seemed beyond their present capacity to bear. And once again there came those vast questions that were so baffling because they challenged a system of assumptions, which had not hitherto required to be stated because in England "these things", under the traditional way of thinking, had always been understood.

These were matters which Jimmy, and most of those other intellectual young men and women of his generation, must have borne in mind during their time at university, after finishing their school years. A contemporary audience recognized the subtext (political and educational) that gave rise to the character of Jimmy Porter. The realism of *Look Back* does not lie in its three acts, one set, small cast treatment, but in the fact that people were prepared to accept Osborne's fiction as real. Thus, Kenneth Tynan dealt with the character created by Osborne, Jimmy, as though he was a real person:

> One cannot imagine Porter listening with a straight face to speeches about our inalienable right to flog Cypriot schoolboys. You could never mobilize him and his kind into a lynching mob, since the art he lives for, jazz, was invented by the Negroes; and if you gave him a razor, he would do nothing with it but shave. The Porters of our time deplore the tyranny of 'good taste' and refuse to accept

[80] Ibid. p.129.
[81] *L.B.*, III, i p.81.

> 'emotional' as a term of abuse; they are classless and they are leaderless. Mr Osborne is their first spokesman in the London Theatre.[82]

In the same way, Williams noted down how educational processes had considerable social impact:

> In post-war Britain, occupation and education were closely linked and the possession of educational qualifications was increasingly seen as what, above all else, made social difference legitimate. The idea of the meritocracy, with its associated value of equality of educational opportunity, was widely endorsed even though there were disagreements about what form of educational system would realise such goals.[83]

The overall pattern of education was based on distinct social divisions reinforced by social class, gender and race. Education provided status and opportunity, yet research had shown that there had been marked inequalities in educational opportunity. In particular, much research done in the 1950's and 1960's had pointed to the class inequalities that existed within the educational system. Indeed, Harsley[84] had indicated that in the post-war period there were significant gains in educational life-chances for those who participated in secondary education, with the result that there were real improvements in the educational life chances of working class boys. Two important issues, gender roles and class sensibilities, had historically in public schools been involved both with their reproduction.

In an article published in April 1959 in the magazine *College English*, Dr Carl Bode[85] wrote about the group of writers who were to be labelled *angry*. He gives a perspective in which he denies the real existence of a movement and instead labels them as "The Redbrick Cinderella" (in fact, the title of the article). The title could also well read as "The White Tile Cinderella", considering Jimmy Porter's commentary about having studied in a "white tile" university, with its class issue implications.

Pertaining to this, Bode says: "No one really knew how it all started. One theory is that it began with the precocious boy Colin Wilson who made *The Outsider* both a picture of himself and a symbol of his kind."[86] Through his grossly over praised first

---

[82] Tynan, K. (1956, May 3). "The Voice of the Young" Review of Look Back in Anger. *London Observer,* p.8.
[83] Williams, Raymond. "Drama and the Left". *Encore* (1959), Vol. 5. p.12.
[84] Halsey, A. H. (1980). *Origins and Destinations: Family, Class and Education in Modern Britain.* Oxford University Press.
[85] Bode, C. (1959). The Redbrick Cinderellas. *College English , 20* (7), pp.331-337.
[86] Ibid.

book he popularized the image of the lonely bitter young intellectual. Another theory is that the first Angry Young Man was a brash British broadcaster named Woodrow Wyatt. Nevertheless, Jimmy Porter, our hero of *Look Back*, was really the starting point. According to Heilpern[87], The Royal Court's press agent called Osborne an Angry Young Man. When writing about what are known as the Angry Young Men, it is tempting to adapt Leavis's remark about the Sitwells: "They belong to the history of publicity rather than poetry." The term received wide recognition after journalist Tom Maschler assembled essays from various upcoming writers in a volume entitled *Declaration*.[88] This book aimed at becoming the manifesto of a new literary movement, though the authors brought together in this way, as were Doris Lessing, Colin Wilson, John Osborne, John Wain, and Bill Hopkins among others, shared no common program. Publicity has given us the phrase "Angry Young Man", even though the briefest examination of the careers of those of whom the label shows as such were not very angry, and some of them not even very young.[89]

Christian apologist Leslie Paul used the phrase in 1951 as the title of his autobiography, but the book had nothing to do with the phenomenon that appeared five years later, except for being an account of a sense of disillusion with the isms of the 1930's. In 1957 John Osborne declared: "I have only met Mr Amis once briefly, and I have never met Mr Wain, or any of the rest of these poor successful freaks." But a label has its uses, if only as a means of drawing attention to oneself by denying the applicability of the description. John Wain's publishers advertised his books with the display card: "John Wain is not 'an Angry Young Man'."

Back at the Royal Court, interest in *Look Back* had been growing slowly and not very surely. But by the second week in July 1956 the signs were that the play's fortunes were about to change. This was the result of an unintended masterstroke of arts publicity. The invention of the literary catchphrase was inspired by Leslie Paul even though the phrase was first used by the Press Officer of the Royal Court Theatre, George Fearon, who was having great difficulty in publicizing a play which he loathed.

---

[87] Heilpern, J. (2006). *John Osborne: a Patriot for Me.* London: Chatto & Windus.

[88] Maschler, T. (1957). *Declaration.* London: Mac Gibbon & Kee.

[89] "Some of them however were truly very young. Michael Hastings was eighteen when his play *Don't Destroy Me* was produced in 1957, Jane Gaskell sixteen at the publication of her novel *Strange Evil* that same year. Shelagh Delaney, "the Francoise Sagan of Salford," was nineteen when in 1958 Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop produced her play *A Taste of Honey*. An instant success, it transferred to the West End shortly after. After the relative failure of her next play *Lion in Love* (1961), Delaney disappeared from the public eye to pursue a quieter career, writing for radio and television". Ibid. p.63.

Quite inadvertently, he came across the promotion gimmick he badly needed when a journalist asked for his opinion of John Osborne. Fearon replied, rather despairingly, that he supposed the new playwright was "a very angry young man." The chance remark caught on and Osborne suddenly acquired a glamorous reputation in the press as an enraged protester and rebel.

All through *Education and the Working Class*, Jackson and Marsden[90] indicate their disapproval of snobbery in the upwardly mobile; they deny that our central culture and middle class values are the same to each other. They ask: "is it at all true, as the head teachers say, that the working-class (three quarters of the nation) bring nothing of their own to meet the cultural inheritance?"[91] But here we notice how the cultural inheritance is said to be waiting there in the school for the lower-class pupil to meet it and the best Jackson and Marsden can manage is to leave it open.

In this regard, Kynaston's states his interest in the following comment:

> ...the first draft of an undated essay by Young "Is this the Classless Society?" and probably written during the second half of 1951 and almost certainly rejected for *New Fabian Essays*. (It is) a fascinating piece, it anticipates not only Young's own, *The Rise of the Meritocracy,* of seven years later but also the concern felt by Crosland (with whom he was friendly) about the inadequacy of equality of opportunities as a goal.[92]

Young makes a detailed account of the ways in which there had emerged greater equality of opportunity over the previous decade of its publication, but firstly he warns about the following: "If we base our hopes on equal opportunity alone we may find our destination is not Utopia but America."[93]

According to Sinfield:

> "Michael Young's popular satirical essay was predicated on the idea that educational selection would become ever more efficient, to the point where the lower orders revolt out of their inextinguishable humanity."[94]

He mentions the writer Dennis Potter[95], who returned several times to the theme; by the time he wrote *Stand Up, Nigel Barton* (1965), Barton's appeal to his working-

---

[90] Jackson, B., & Marsden, D. (1962). *Education and the Working Class.* London: Routledge.
[91] Ibid. p.244.
[92] Young, Michael. *The Rise of the Meritocracy, 1870–2033* qtd. in Kynaston, David. *Family Britain, 1951-1957,* p.85.
[93] Kynaston, D. (2009). *Family Britain 1951-1957.* New York: Walker, p.85.
[94] Sinfield, A. (1983). *Society and Literature, 1945-70.* New York: Holmes and Meier, p.3 Introduction, p.266.

class background could be met with the following cocktail party remark: "There's nothing unique about that. It's been well documented in Jackson's and Marsden's book." The different ways in which there had emerged greater equality of opportunity included among others, a better standard of education for working-class children and he gave the example of public schools, noting that "if the last decade, the forties, is any guide, these schools will take a very long time to die." The controversy is pointed out by Kynaston:

> In an obvious sense, of course, Young welcomed enhanced equality of opportunity, but not if it came at the expense of enhanced equality of status... "In a genuinely classless society, people would not be foes but brothers' he insisted. 'But by stressing competition as the partner of equal opportunity, men are being turned into foes of each other. The stress is on success. The effect is to excel. The aim is to do better than your fellows. The result is a strain on ordinary people which ordinary people are not built to bear.' Near the end came the direct political message: 'We want neither rule of the elite or dictatorship of the proletariat, but rule by all of the people."[96]

Adding later, referring to the famous sociologist D. Glass, that:

> ...the public schools themselves were now clear for the time being of any political threat. 'Though the 1944 Education Act will no doubt greatly increase the amount of social mobility in Britain', the sociologist David Glass remarked in 1954 in...his pioneering survey *Social Mobility in Britain*, 'there is an upper limit to that increase which the Act itself imposes by leaving the independent public school system substantially intact'. This was, he added, a fundamental inequality of educational opportunity 'likely to cut across the line of social mobility, blocking ascent to, and limiting descent from, the upper reaches of social status'...So long as the clever child of poor parents is given a free place in a school which will develop his aptitudes to the full, the parent who is prepared to make sacrifices to provide his child with better-than-average schooling, has as much right to spend his money on that as on a better television set.[97]

Consequently to his awareness of that situation, Jimmy dismisses the socialist rebuilding of post-war Britain as the "Brave-new-nothing-very-much-thank-you". One can easily imagine him speaking the line, jotted for possible use in Osborne's 1954 notebook among many that found their way into the play and quoted in *A Better Class of Person*: "The Welfare State, everyone mopping about having to bear the burden of everyone else."[98] For him, the Welfare State is a society of sulking people, constantly

---

[95] Potter, D. (1967). *Stand Up, Nigel Barton(1965), in The Nigel Barton Plays.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.
[96] Sinfield, A. (1983). *Society and Literature, 1945-70.* New York: Holmes and Meier, p.3 Introduction, p.86.
[97] Ibid, p.142.
[98] Osborne, J. (1981). *A Better Class of Person: An Autobiography. 1929-1956.* London and Boston: Faber, p.262.

pressured by social obligations. He has nothing to say about nationalization. Both his interest and his bitterness are focused on the relation, or lack of it, between education, intellect, and power in British public life. Jimmy Porter would rather sell candy than put the education he acquired in his "white tile" university at the service of advertising or journalism of the kind he has tried his hand at. Meanwhile, he has to watch his brother-in-law Nigel, "the straight-backed, chinless wonder from Sandhurst", effortless drift toward a political career that will probably lead him to a seat in a Tory Cabinet.

On its surface, *The Entertainer* (1957)[99], which proved yet another tremendous box-office success, seems even more confused than *Look Back* in the stances it adopts towards meritocracy. The protagonist Archie Rice, we learn, has turned his back on his private schooling as a gentleman to pursue at a defiantly shabby distance his father's career as a music hall entertainer. Such hope as he still allows himself, he invests in his daughter Jean, a spirited young meritocratic of the post-war school system, determined to overthrow the old men responsible for Britain's humiliation at Suez. She wants to change her society for the better, she is independent enough to question her father's and fiancé's values, and she cares for her family, even though her life style differs noticeably from theirs. In so far as Archie has an agenda of his own, it is even more radical than Jimmy Porter's. Osborne's aim is to show us a single wrecked family, and to suggest that the clue to its disintegration lies in the breakdown of solid Edwardian values. They had dignity and commercialism has destroyed it, as it destroys poor Billy.

Billy Rice, Archie's father, can be difficult and unpleasant. He can't stand his Polish neighbours, regards blacks as sexual libertines, provokes Phoebe, Archie's second wife, and drifts off into his own private reminiscences. He would replace the curriculum of Britain's discredited educated classes with a culture even more down to earth and feels that the present world differs greatly from the Edwardian world which he most enjoyed and loved. If he were given the task of rebuilding "Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land", his foundation for it would be the memory of the Edwardian music hall and as Billy's remark shows, he clings to the Edwardian past, a time of certainties:

> BILLY. And about all. Do you know, I spent thousands of pounds in his education. Went to the same school as me. And his brother. Thousands of pounds. He wasn't one of these scholarship people, like you. And where its got'em?[100]

[99] Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer*. London: Faber and Faber, 1957.
[100] Ibid., I, p.19.

This leads to the idea that the urban working class culture of the music hall, with its songs and jokes, was the only authentic one he considered Britain had known but which was not as fantastic in its 50's context as it may seem now to have been. Osborne adopts an attitude to marriage, sex, leisure, money, mother's-in-law, politics, and the Empire, rooted in working life and owing no debt to the working man's masters. As an example of this we find:

> Archie Rice's lament for the halls his father played which was Osborne's contribution to the new historiography, and its efforts to redefine the syllabus of the "educated person" in Britain's new *meritocracy*.[101]

In the play *Inadmissible*, there is a feeling of mockery in the verbal rhetoric of Bill Maitland, a good example of the playwright's social invective. Osborne uses the discourse of the recently (at the time of writing the play) instilled Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson 'promising the salvation of Britain by crack commandos of scientists, technologists, and administrative wizards.' In the year 1964 meritocracy meant something different in the British culture. Britain's loss of its Empire had diminished the sense of itself and its place in the world. "Bill lumps these new age meritocrats along with such phenomena as minicars, television dons, property developers, and the inventors of the Swinging London, as bread-and-circus diversions from the real sickness of Britain."

According to Denison:

> When Osborne wrote *Inadmissible Evidence* in 1964, meritocracy had taken on a new meaning in the British mind. Bill Maitland, the foundering lawyer whose self implosion is the action of the play, mocks sneeringly at the rhetoric of Harold Wilson, recently installed as Labour prime minister, promising the salvation of Britain by crack commandos of scientists, technologists, and administrative wizards. Bill lumps these new age meritocrats along with such phenomena as minicars, television dons, property developers, and the inventors of the Swinging London, as bread-and-circus diversions from the real sickness of Britain: the loss of the nation's sense of itself and its place in the world. What Bill wants is what he sees Britain needing: to be whole, to be certain, to be able to cope with reality, to be himself again as he remembers being when young. [102]

[101] Denison, P. D. (1997). *John Osborne: A Casebook.* New York and London: Garland Publishing,Inc. p.12.
[102] Ibid.

The following speech taken from the play *Inadmissible*, illustrates these ideas:

> BILL. I am thirty-nine years old, practicing solicitor and commissioner for oaths at 34, Fleet Chambers, E.C.3. I have worked in service of the law…I don't even know why I took up the law…Perhaps I did think I might land up on the bench even. Or with learned counsel Mr. Jones. No, but I never seriously thought of myself being brilliant enough to sit in that company, with those men, among any of them with their fresh complexions from their playing fields and all that, with their ringing, effortless voice production and their quiet chambers, and tailors and mess bills and Oxford Colleges and going to the opera God knows where and the 400, whatever I used to think that was.[103]

Maitland embodies his country's sense of loss and impotency, of being the outcast inheritor of a shrunken state, robbed of great expectations. The only help meritocracy could give him in his predicament would be the comprehension of a great artistic intelligence endowed with a talent large enough to understand him and portray him to himself.

The protagonists of the three plays discussed previously, Jimmy Porter, Archie Rice and Bill Maitland, felt great expectations when young in an economic system based on meritocracy, as promised by the labour welfare state, but are left with a sense of frustration and their looking *back and forward* cannot be but *angry*. The AYM's main achievement was to articulate a sense of dissatisfaction felt in the 1950's by a great part of the educated youth group of Britain. They represented a combination of qualities such as youth, ambition and restlessness, and were also concerned with the class issue, at the same time generating a creative sort of energy. Their politics tended to be anti-American and in favour of those less privileged members of society. Nevertheless, these university young men were still old-fashioned in many of their attitudes; they listened to folk-music and jazz, tended to rebel by reading or writing books and instead of commercial television they watched the BBC. In the case of Osborne, his bad-boy image had less to do with politics than with misogyny and in the cultural imagination of the time, anger was a game much related to masculinity.

[103] Osborne, J. (1965). *Inadmissible Evidence.* New York: Grove Press, pp.16-17.

Chapter 2

Politics in John Osborne's work: A Cultural Materialist Approach

> For that matter, what is History about? The conclusion I reached was that the real central theme of History is not what happened, but what people felt about it when it was happening; in Sir Philip Sidney's phrase, 'the affects, the whisperings, the motions of the people', in Maitland's, 'men's common thoughts of common things', in mine, 'the conversation of the people who counted'. (Young, G. M. (1964) *Portrait of an Age*, Preface. Galaxy Books).
>
> "Socialism is an intellectual Proteus" (H.G. Wells, *The New Machiavelli*).
>
> "Socialism is about people and the Labour Party has forgotten it or perhaps it never knew it?" (Osborne, "Fighting Talk").

In 1967, Osborne wrote about left-wing activism in general and about his participation in an antinuclear sit-down demonstration at Trafalgar Square in 1961:

> Odor of Self-Righteousness. I resolved then that I should never engage in this kind of concerted affair again unless some unforeseeable situation should arise…There is an odor of psychopathic self. There is a certain kind of militant animal, writes playwright John Osborne, which seeks out and exploits political crises for reasons of personal aggrandizement and creative frustration. There is an odor of psychopathic self-righteousness about many of the hardy annual protesters. I have long ago refused to sign those glib and predictable letters to *The Times*, including the one during the recent Israeli crisis when so many of these cause-happy activists leapt to the telephone and their pens. The same principle applies to the Viet Nam war, the very name of which has become a synonym for left-wing sanctimony.[104]

2.1 Historical Context: John Osborne's Political Feeling in Britain's Post-War Era

The following two questions will be accounted for in this chapter:

- To what extent can we talk about John Osborne's plays as political theatre?
- What does the phrase political theatre mean?

Alan Sinfield's *Literature, Politics and Culture in Post-war Britain* is an important reference for our study, working as a model with direct engagement in the politics and history that influence the production of literature. It presents a cultural materialist study keenly aware of "the historical conditions in which textual representations are produced, circulated and received."[105] Sinfield explains that cultural materialists will engage with questions about the relations between dominant and subordinate cultures, and considers the implications of racism, sexism and homophobia, the scope for subaltern resistance, and the modes through which the system tends to accommodate or repel diverse kinds of dissidence to be accounted for in a critical appreciation of literary works.

A critical comment on the play *Look Back* and on the general political climate of that time is made by theatre critic Harold Clurman, who writes in the following terms in his review to the first performance of the play *Look Back*:

> I saw the play at its opening in London, where it was received by the leading critics with an excited gratitude which astonished as much as it pleased me…Immanent reality plus a gift for stinging and witty rhetoric are what give the play its

[104] Osborne, J. (1967). Supporting the Cause. *Encounter*.

[105] Sinfield, A. (2004). *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain.* London and New York: The Athlone Press. Materialism and Subculture (xxxvi).

> importance. It is not realism of the Odets or Williams kind, nor yet poetry, although it has some kinship to both.[106]

Of the American writers of the thirties, Clifford Odets is one of the most influential to the 1950's British theatre. The first production of *Waiting for Lefty* (1935) [107]which deals with the growing threat of the First World War was linked with social insecurity at the time. In this context, Odets main character, Lefty, was born out of the depression – unemployment, Fascism, the Popular Front. "Strike!" was Lefty's lyric message and it was through this cry that the youth of that time had found its voice. This remark meant a call to the mobilisation of society as a whole for a greater measure of involvement in a world free of falsehood, economic fear and servitude to stupidity and greed. In 1935, the play had much the same effect on the American theatrical climate as the first production of *Look Back* was to have on the British theatre twenty-one years later.

Some years later, Osborne was faced with a society where domestic security hides the threat of immediate and total destruction. In 1957, director Lindsay Anderson, for example, advocated "vital theatre" and the notion of 'commitment' in *Encore*[108], a theatre magazine the subtitle of which reads as *The Voice of Vital Theatre* and in which the word *Vital* evoked energy, urgency and youth.[109] In this way notions of life and vitality, exemplified in Jimmy's "Halleluiah! I'm alive"[110] speech, were part of the controversial debate taking place around the play *Look Back.* This new type of theatre represented a form of dissidence since it contested hegemonic previous practices, thus giving off the unmistakable sense of controversy. Osborne was in blind revolt against the England of his time and Britain had become a phantom empire of falsehood. For him, Politics meant an attitude towards the world. And Socialism coincided with the writer's concern which was all about the notion of feeling. In a well known essay he states: "a writer can demonstrate feelings. It takes an extraordinary human being to demonstrate action as well." "Socialism'', Osborne wrote in 1957, "is about people living together, and the sooner the leaders of the Labour Party stop arguing about sugar

---

[106] Clurman, Harold. "The World of John Osborne." *Observer* (1959).
[107] Odets, C. (1994). *Waiting for Lefty and other Plays.* New York: Grove Press.
[108] Hunt, Albert. "Only a Soft-Centred Left." *Encore* (1961): pp.5-12.
[109] Maschler, T. (1957). *Declaration.* London: Mac Gibbon & Kee.
[110] *L.B.*, p.15.

and cement and wake up to the fact the better…The Labour Party has concerned itself too much with order papers and ignored human behavior."[111]

Osborne's demonstration of action took place in just rare occasions. He made a guest appearance on television in Labour election programs, actively supported the cultural boycott against South Africa, and in one much publicized occasion, was arrested during a CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament)[112] demonstration in Trafalgar Square.

Osborne witnessed this event and described it in the following terms:

> This took place well into the second week of September 1961 and the Committee of 100's Campaign for a mass sit-down in Trafalgar Square on Sunday the 17th had been shrewdly stage-managed. The preliminary meetings I had attended were overloaded by experts in dissidence, those who would have been most at home in the days of Babylon, locked in canonical disputation and Deuteronomical intrigue among the tribes of Israel.[113]

From the beginning, people from all sections of society got involved in the cause. There were not only scientists aware of the full extent of the dangers which nuclear weapons represented but also religious leaders such as Canon John Collins of St Paul's Cathedral concerned with resisting the moral evil which nuclear weapons represented. The Society of Friends (Quakers) was very supportive of it, as well as a wide range of academics, journalists, writers, actors, and musicians. In 1958 the young still sought a "Cause and a Faith" in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament which spread across the country with remarkable speed, reviving the lost spirit of both writing and marching.

Richard Eyre, successor to Peter Hall as artistic director of the National Theatre, is among one of Osborne's critics who looks for political commitment in his plays and

---

[111] Osborne, J. (1957). Fighting Talk. *Reynold News*.

[112] The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) is an anti-nuclear organization that advocates unilateral nuclear disarmament by the United Kingdom, and for international nuclear disarmament and tighter international arms regulation through agreements such as the use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and the building of nuclear power stations in the UK. It has formed part of the peace movement in the UK since 1957. On Easter Monday, 1959, 50.000 took part in the Aldermaston March; in 1960, almost 100.000. It claims to be Europe's largest single-issue peace campaign. Since 1958, it has organized the Aldermaston March, which is held over the Easter weekend from Trafalgar Square, London, to the Atomic Weapons Establishment near Aldermaston. It attracted a good deal of attention and the CND symbol appeared everywhere.
Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Campaign_for_Nuclear_Disarmament.

[113] Osborne, J. (1957). Fighting Talk. *Reynold News* .

failing to find any, dismisses it. He comments on Jimmy Porter's rhetorical question "There aren't any good causes left?" in this way: "Is there a more solipsistic cry for the post-war years than that of JP's in a time when the world has become better informed than ever?"[114]

Presented below is a transcribed passage of an interview with Lisa Goldman, Artistic Director of "The Red Room Theatre Company" set in 1995. It is not an academic definition but one based on her theatrical experience. She insists on the difficulty of finding a definition of political theatre, seeking a better one that could be that of public theatre because it would miss out ideas of what is political and the challenge of the status quo:

> Well, this is a really difficult question, this question of definition of political theatre, and it always comes up, and in a way I think it holds us back from actually talking about the real issues involved. Partly because, depending which way you look at, you could either say that all theatre is, in a sense, political, in that it's all ideologically described in some sense or another. Or you might say that political theatre is only that which is very consciously seeking to change the status quo and is political in that sense, and that's the sense in which it tends to be used. But I suppose that I would put forward that maybe a better definition for that theatre of change is public theatre, because, in a sense, that sidelines the notion of political theatre which is very tricky and difficult, and full of all sorts of stereotypes. And, actually, perhaps opens out a new, perhaps a fresher debate, so perhaps the definition of public theatre might be a more useful way of talking about theatre which is dealing with public issues and seeking to change, because it also includes within it notions of public engagement, public access, public responsibility. All of which at the moment are very important questions for society as a whole, but particularly for theatre practitioners and audiences.[115]

In this interview, one of the academic books on the subject, Patterson's *Strategies of Political Theatre* (2003)[116] is mentioned and gives a definition of political theatre in the following terms: "The kind of theatre that not only depicts social interaction and political events, but implies the possibility of radical change along socialist lines."[117] The book doesn't discuss about John Osborne but it helps to reach the conclusion and to argue that he did write along socialist lines and that the type of socialism he reflected in his work was both ethical and vital. For Osborne, the principal ingredient of *Look Back*

---

[114] Eyre, R. (1994). *Utopia & Other Places.* Vintage.

[115] Goldman, Lisa, et al. "Debate: Political Theatre." *Red Room debate on political theatre.* Dominic Cavendish. 26 September 2003.

[116] Patterson, M. (2003). *Strategies of Political Theatre: Postwar British Playwrights.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[117] Goldman, Lisa, et al. "Debate: Political Theatre." *Red Room debate on political theatre.* Dominic Cavendish. 26 September 2003.

was "vitality". In this regards he says: "The other claim I would make for it after all this years is honesty. I tried to write it in a language in which it was possible to tell the truth."[118]

The general sense of apathy expressed by Jimmy Porter's most celebrated line in *Look Back*, "there aren't any good, brave causes left", was evidently untrue in the year of the play's first performance (1956). The Suez crisis, the Soviet intervention in Hungary, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and the "threat" of egalitarianism are just a few examples of social causes to be found at the time of its première. British political theatre acquired a unifying identity and international visibility in the late 1950's and early 1960's, when the voice of young men with working class origins was to be heard for the first time. The things which really did matter to Osborne where those concerned with the notion of "feelings" and what that meant to him. Such attitudes were an example of the fact that, in Britain, such energy went into discussing the politics of culture. Sierz highlights this idea in his book *John Osborne's Look Back in Anger* (2008) by mentioning the writer Mark Ravenhill. Instead of the class terms in which the moment of 1956 is usually discussed, Ravenhill[119] outlines the repressed sexual politics of the 1956 new wave. The conflict between the old and the new could also be seen as that between an affected gay establishment and vigorous straight newcomers.

2.2 The Left in the 1950's in Britain: The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Hydrogen Bomb. On Cold War Escalation

After the fall of the Attlee government in 1951 a course of events took place:

> The rise of Bevanism, the conflict over German Rearmament, the loss of the 1955 elections by the Labour Government, the accession of Gaitskell to the leadership, the adoption of Industry and Society, the first Aldermaston March, the defeat in the 1959 election, the final victory of Gaitskell, the publication of Signposts for the Sixties, unity in opposition to the Common Market, Gaitskell's death.[120]

During the 1950's Keynesian capitalism had eliminated mass unemployment and allowed a steady increase in the material standard of living of the working classes. Affluence meant that capitalism was able to prevent cyclical hunger and destitution.

---

[118] Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber, p.45.

[119] Sierz, A. (2008). *John Osborne's Look Back in Anger.* London and New York: Continuum Modern Theatre Guides, p.57.

[120] Anderson, Perry. "The Left in the Fifties." *New Left Review* 29 (1965), pp.3-18.

Another issue which dominated the struggle for Socialism in Britain was the Cold War, which meant a period in the history of mankind where capitalist regimes had established a powerful negative identification of socialism with the political order of the Soviet Union. Socialism was stopped dead everywhere in Europe while the world slipped towards destruction under the threat of the Atomic Bomb, one of the targets of Osborne's verbal attack.

This was the general historical context of the fifties. In that post-war decade there was a sense of inertia to the people of Europe**.** Osborne made this clear in noting: "If one word applied to that post-war decade it was inertia." He reflects in his autobiography on the sense of apathy which characterized the times:

> The country was tired, not merely from the sacrifice of two back-breaking wars but from the defeat and misery between them. The bits of red on the map were disappearing as the flags came down and the names we knew on mixed packets of postage stamps were erased. Like so much else, it all happened without people being very aware of it.[121]

Lack of sustained social criticism was a feature of the intellectual culture of the period. Jimmy Porter, the main character of *Look Back* (1956), felt hurt because things had remained the same. Nevertheless, Colonel Redfern grieved that everything had changed. The reason for this feeling was that there were at the time relatively few forums outside the main institutions of political power for initiation into political practice.

> The leaping hare of the Victorian imagination had began to imitate the tortoise even before 1914, but in that Summer of 1955 it was still easy enough to identify what was regarded as a permanent Establishment.[122]

Miliband noted that one of the main differences between the thirties and the fifties was that the latter "often appeared to lack the instrumentalities of radical change."[123]

Refusing to actively participate in the political or cultural process did not necessarily imply contentment however, nor was it right-wing in a simple sense. Writing about the docility of British intellectuals in 1955, Edward Shills points out that "in the main, scarcely anyone in Great Britain seems any longer to feel there is anything

---

[121] Osborne, J. (1985). *A Better Class of Person and God Rot Tumbridge Wells.* London: Faber and Faber, p.43.
[122] Heilpern, J. (2008). *John Osborne: The Many Lives of the Angry Young Man.* Vintage Series, p.278.
[123] Miliband, R. (1961). *Parlamentary Socialism.* Allen and Unwin, p.347.

fundamentally wrong … Never has an intellectual class found its society and its culture so much to its satisfaction."[124]

Raymond Williams (1959) writes in the following terms about the difficulties in estimating the direction followed by people of the Left in relation to theatre matters: "Many of us on the Left are deeply committed to drama and the theatre, but I think we find, in detail, considerable difficulty in estimating our direction."[125]

According to Bolton, John Osborne's early plays, both *A Subject of Scandal and Concern* and *Luther*, emerged out of the author's anti-nuclear activism and of his anger regarding the role of Britain's political leaders in the escalation of Cold-War tensions that led to the Berlin Crisis of 1961.[126] In these plays, Osborne came to view blasphemy as a form of hurtful speech *(blasphemia*) being used by Church and State to silence and punish those who speak out devotedly against orthodox religious belief. In spite of dramatizing historical cases of blasphemy, Osborne wanted his audience to recognize the risky consequences in the Cold-War era of the charges and offence of blasphemy and submission to orthodox viewpoints.

The New Left was created in 1956 by the twin crisis of Suez and Hungary, growing rapidly from 1957 onwards with the rise of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. This social movement was born in response to the conflict between the East and West which threatened the existence of the human race and the development of the hydrogen bomb. It came from previous practices such as the Campaigns against the Slave Trade, Governor Eyre, the Bulgarian Atrocities and the Boer War. A great number of working class and lower middle-class youth members formed the base of the movement, revolting against a society of which the hydrogen bomb had become the potential weapon. This revolt was made possible due to the relative prosperity diffused by British capitalism in the fifties, which had created the preconditions of an autonomous teenage world with power and leisure to enjoy itself. British youth revolted, in the name of its own potential emancipation, against the increasing impotence and impersonality of social life in Britain.

For them, thermonuclear weapons were not merely a specific threat to their future but the general truth of their present. They felt a radical lack of control over the forces

---

[124] Hill, J. (1986). *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963*. London: British Film Institute, p.21.

[125] Williams, Raymond. "Drama and the Left". *Encore* (1959), Vol. 5. p.12.

[126] Bolton, J. (2010). Blasphemy in John Osborne's A Subject of Scandal and Concern and Luther. *Modern Drama, 53* (1).

governing their own lives. In this way, the hydrogen bomb became the central myth of society itself or to use an analogy taken from the field of literary criticism, it was a "mythical correlate" of the whole society. In refusing it, the campaigners necessarily refused the forms of organization of which it was the ultimate logic. Thus, confronted with the atrophy of political parties and the bureaucratization of public life, CND became a movement of protest in its aims, in its methods and in its organization. It meant a pure affirmation of democracy and spontaneity, rebelling against the established blocked society, against the proverbial patience and self-effacement of the English common people. As its leaders always claimed, it was a new kind of politics, of the kind which moved large masses of people in this period. The convergence of the two phenomena, the two crisis of October-November, in Central Europe and the Near East, produced what came to be known as the New Left. The Hungarian revolt led to a wave of resignations from the Communist Party and the Suez Affair obscured many previous apolitical or indifferent members of the younger generation especially in the universities. From the start, they felt a rejection towards both Stalinism and Social-Democracy.

Suez and Hungary were external crises, and as such did not have a direct influence on British society as a whole. The Soviet intervention in Hungary was an unwilling re-enactment of Stalinism by a regime proceeding towards de-Stalinization. The Anglo-French invasion of the Suez Channel was the key political event of 1956 and assumed considerable symbolic importance since it meant the last act of an imperialism already outdated in its ambitions and methods. The crucial factor, however, was a run on the pound necessitating an IMF (International Monetary Fund) loan, which needed American agreement; British compliance with the cease-fire arrangements was the price that Eisenhower extracted. French and British governments were furious at the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company by Egypt's President Nasser in July 1956, since this would mean that effective control over the strategically important canal passed into Egyptian hands. They engineered an invasion of the channel zone with the assistance of the Israelis and seemed determined to stand firm against international unease. Eisenhower however, with only a week to go before the American presidential elections, engineered a condemnation of the invasion at the United Nations. Eden was exhausted and becoming ill, and there were rumours of Soviet intervention.

Thus the circumstances of its birth give relatively little indication of the real character and importance of the New Left for, despite its conjunctional origin, it did

have deep roots in the British situation and reflected a definite moment in the development of post-war British society.

These historical circumstances are reflected in Osborne's play, *The Entertainer*. One of the female characters, Jean, has returned home because she is thinking of breaking off her engagement with her boyfriend Graham. This character represents that of a young man with a temperament and beliefs radically different from hers. She feels increasingly impatient with political defeatism, and has lately become actively involved in local programs for social improvement and in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In contrast to that troubled, searching character, Graham seems to have been born, according to Gilleman, "ready-made in a three piece suit with attaché case in hand"[127], while Jean says "I went to the Rally in Trafalgar Square last Sunday"[128] thus expressing a different personal attitude to the issue, which reflects Osborne's social concern.

2.3 Osborne's Social Concerns. Where did Osborne's Pacifism Stem from?

The First World War (1914-18) produced some literary works which were remarkable for looking at the topic of pacifism. Ernest Hemingway referred to the First World War as "that dirty war."[129] For Wilfred Owen wars in general were cruel to both the conquered and the conquerors. Shortly before his end he drew the conclusion that war in any form and for any cause was incompatible with Christ's teachings:

> Already I have comprehended a light which never will filter into the dogma of any national church: namely, that one of Christ's essential commands was Passivity at any price: Suffer dishonour and disgrace, but never resort to arms. Be bullied, be outraged, be killed; but do not kill.[130]

There were significant differences between the pacifism of the twenties on the one hand and that of the late fifties on the other. The Committee for Nuclear Disarmament did not have an influence comparable to that evidenced in the Peace Ballot of 1934. At that time, Bertrand Russell was still leading the ranks of the pacifists. On the late fifties,

---

[127] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.68.
[128] Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer.* London: Faber and Faber, 1957, p.27.
[129] Hemingway, E. (1926). *The Sun Also Rises.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
[130] Wilfred Owen qtd. in Johnston, J. H. (1964). *English Poetry of the First World War.* Princeton, p.40.

however, it was not a demand for the abolition of war but for abjuring the use of nuclear arms.

The influence of those writers delivered its fruit in the thirties. The historian David Thompson states that, "Most war books now (i.e. in 1929) became anti-war books". The Second World War (1939-46) did not produce any farewells to arms in the English speaking world. There were only a few expressions of horror over the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki such as Edith Sitwell's "Three Poems of the Atomic Age." In the English speaking world there was no criticism of the war in Europe, far less of the ethics of war. The War against Nazism had acquired the character of a crusade. Indeed the disclosure of Nazi brutalities during the post-war trials had the opposite effect, that of turning intellectuals against pacifism.

In the late fifties and early sixties there was a re-appearance of pacifism more outstanding in drama than in other forms of literature. An example was John Wain's "Song about Major Earthly." It was published in *The Listener* of August 6, 1959 containing the following editorial introduction:

> This poem and song about Major Earthly was suggested by, and is based on, a few lines John Wain read in a newspaper describing the contents of a book called 'formula for death: E=MC…(The Atomic Bomb and After' by Fernand Gigon…).[131]

The book describes how Major Claude R. Earthly, pilot of the aircraft which carried the second bomb to Nagasaki, later started having nightmares.[132]

John Wain attempted to stir the conscious of the allies, but quite some thirteen years after the disaster, while Wilfred Owen and his contemporaries exposed the horrors of warfare, vividly reflected in their works, after a personal experience of the trenches in the First World War. George Orwell had done the same during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Osborne, on the other hand, was only ten years old when the Second World War began so he could hardly owe his pacifist sentiment to any personal disenchantment with the warfare. Admittedly, some of the other dramatists and poets, who became vocal at about the same time as Osborne, were older and could presumably have had memories of the German *Blitzkrie*. Doris Lessing was born in 1920 and one of her characters, Myra Bolton, the protagonist of the play *Each His Own Wilderness*[133]

---

[131] Wain, John. «Prologue.» *The Listener* (1959).

[132] Ibid., pp.208-9.

[133] Lessing, D., Kops, B., & Wesker, A. *Three plays: Each his own Wilderness, The Hamlet of Stepney Green, Chicken Soup with Barley.* Hamondsworth, Middlesex : Penguin plays New English Dramatists.

feels fully preoccupied with conducting propaganda against the dangers of the Hydrogen bomb. It is not, however, a remorse for the past but nightmares about the future that seem to disturb the older generation of this play. Moreover Lessing is far from taking the Easter Marches seriously and instead she exposes their ineffectiveness and frivolity. But the point of the play is that the younger generation represented by her son Tony feels apathetic towards politics all together. He is sick of the simulated explosions, which his mother plays on her tape recorder in aid of her disarmament programme.

Arnold Wesker's *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958)[134] dramatizes the history of the labour movement from 1936 to 1956, a period in which pacifist sentiment is depicted only in the first phase i.e. around the year 1936. One political shock after another, from the Russian betrayal of Spain to the Russian intervention in Hungary, shatters the left-wing movement in Britain. Thus, pacifism, which usually accompanied anarchism or international communism, received a set-back accordingly.

Another clarifying reference can be found in *The Long and the Short and the Tall* (1958)[135] which is set in the Malayan jungle during the last World War. From that it should not be concluded that Willis Hall knew anything at first-hand about the war against Japan. He, like Osborne, was only ten years old when the war started. The play depicts the dehumanizing effect of the military machine which does not allow the British privates to think of a Japanese prisoner of war as a human being. It can be deduced from this that the emergence of pacifist sentiment in the fifties in Britain had no direct connection of the writers with the Second World War.

It is Bertolt Brecht, the German playwright, the one who links the contrasting intellectual climates of the two post-war periods. He was consistent in his pacifism from the days of his school, to his death in 1956. Indeed, he suffered exile from his homeland immediately after Hitler came to power in 1933. In the English speaking world, however, his influence began to be felt in 1956 when the Berliner Ensemble visited London. It cannot be a mere coincidence that pacifism, like Epic Theatre and alienation, appeared on the London stage after the memorable year of 1956 with Osborne's iconic *Look Back.*

---

[134] Wesker, A. (2011). *Chicken Soup with Barley* . London: Methuen Drama.

[135] Hall, W. (1994). *The Long and the Short and the Tall.* Halley Court Jordan Hill Oxford OX 2 8E: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Some of the political events of the fifties reinforced the moral behind Brecht's plays. Britain still had some colonies resentful of British rule and in some of them the natives organized acts of terrorism against British soldiers. In places such as Kenya and Cyprus, they became the only symbol of the British government available on the spot, and the victims of terrorist fury.

Osborne makes critical references to wars in many of his plays. *Look Back* hits out at many targets at once. "There are no good causes left" he announces and although, as Osborne has pointed out, this is a dramatic and not a polemic statement, merely the rhetoric of despair, it does seem to convey a sense of contemporary helplessness extending beyond the character speaking. Osborne indeed uses one of the good, brave causes of the thirties, the Spanish Civil War, to demonstrate the changing feeling of the fifties. Jimmy Porter registers his protest against society, especially the upper class members, who showed such indifference to his father's death. His anger and sense of impotence flourishes from having witnessed as a child his father dying slowly of wounds received in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). He, thus, refuses to conform, to take the place on the social ladder to which his university education might have entitled him, according to the system of patronage he so much resents. In the play, the Established Church comes in for its share of criticism along with the rest of the Establishments. At the beginning of the play Jimmy and Cliff exchange newspaper gossip about the Bishop of Bromley whose words, paradoxically, throw more weight on the side of the war than of peace:

> CLIFF. Oh, it says here that he (i.e. The Bishop of Bromley) makes a very moving appeal to all Christians to do all they can to assist in the manufacture of the H-Bomb.[136]

Similarly, in *The World of Paul Slickey* (1956) which is mainly directed against the mass media and their commercialism, Osborne finds occasion for disapproving of military commitments engaged in for glory and prestige. Jo, the secretary, exposes the hollowness of a Commonwealth which can be preserved only by sacrificing British

[136] *L.B.*, p.13.

soldiers: "This united Commonwealth family, our lifeline that must be preserved at the expense of British soldiers shot in the back three times a week…"[137]

In *Luther* (1961), Martin's concern is with militancy rather than militarism. In defence of his aggressive behaviour, Luther claims the support of Jesus Christ:

> MARTIN. I can think of nothing better than the Word of God being the cause of all the dissension among us. For Christ said, "I have not come to bring peace but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father."[138]

Whether or not Luther is here interpreting the words of Christ justly, Osborne leaves us no doubt about the streak of ruthlessness in his character. Once the German peasants are stirred against the authority of the Pope and the Cardinals, they get out of hand. Luther, however, supports the princes in their attempt to crush the Peasant's Revolt. The Knight rebukes him, pointing at the corpse of a peasant in the following terms:

> THE KNIGHT: Wasn't he included when the scriptures were being dictated? Or was it just you who were free, you and the princes you've taken up with and the rich burghers…[139]

All that Martin can say in his defence is: "There is no such thing as an orderly revolution."[140] It may be permissible to draw from this the conclusion that revolutions like wars proceed from unsound minds – a conclusion that Swift drew nearly three centuries ago:

> For if we take a survey of the greatest actions that have been performed in the world under the influence of single men, which are the establishment of new empires by conquest, the advance and progress of new schemes of philosophy, and the contriving, as well as the propagating, of new religions; we shall find the authors of them all to have been persons whose natural reason had admitted great revolutions…[141]

Osborne's most systematic exposure of militarism is made in *A Patriot for Me* (1961). This play occupies a very special place in Osborne's work on different accounts. Among the cast are Alfred Redl, Lit-Col. Ludwig Von Mohl and Gen. Conrad Von

---

[137] Osborne, J. (1959). *The World of Paul Slickey: A Comedy of Manners with Music.* London: Faber, p.42.
[138] Osborne, J. (1961). *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber, p.84.
[139] Ibid., p.89.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Swift, J. (2007). *A Tale of a Tub.* Echo Library. Chapter 16, Section IX p.72.

Hotzendorf. *A Patriot for Me* which deals with homosexuality and the decline of an Empire (in this case the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the year before the First World War) was not licensed for public performance by the Lord Chamberlain. It is a play based on fact, which follows the military career of a brilliant young officer, Alfred Redl, in the service of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Redl advances rapidly through the service despite the handicap of poor social background, thanks to his dedication and hard work. Eventually he becomes a full Colonel in the Intelligence Service. Redl's homosexuality, something he tried to deny in himself for many years, exposes him to blackmail from the Russians, for whom he agrees to serve as a spy. The play ends up with him committing suicide.

A Patriot for Me works on two themes; one, the decline of a great empire and the increasing depravity of a society based on privilege, and the other, the personal anguish of the homosexual in a society which knows about the extent to which homosexuality is practiced, even amongst its elite, and yet persecutes the individual who dares to be publicly open about his sexual desires. In this way, the parallels with the Britain of the 1960's are obvious, and the anti-establishment themes that are constant factors in Osborne's work are fully exploited. It takes place during the last quarter-century of the Habsburg Monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, from 1890 until 1913, a period of cold war between the Empire and Russia for control of the Balkans that resulted in WW I. The play *A Patriot for Me* premièred in 1965 only four years after the construction of the Berlin Wall, four years after the anti-nuclear Trafalgar square sit-down at which Osborne and a great many other protesters were arrested, three years after the Cuban missile crisis, and only shortly after the Gulf of Tonkin incident which caused the escalation of the war in Vietnam. Though being one of Osborne's most ambitious, most complex and best executed plays and though it was generally praised and appreciated by the public, it was the first to be produced at considerable financial loss to the Royal Court Theatre and to Osborne himself. The Lord Chamberlain had insisted on cuts so extensive that, had Osborne agreed to them, the play would simply not have made sense. Here Osborne dramatizes the incidents of a war fought in nineteenth century Germany. Perhaps the inspiration came from Brecht's choice of the Thirty Year's war as the background of *Mother Courage and her Children* (1939). Osborne regards the Army as a part of the Establishment, like the Royalty and the Church of England. Now, these institutions are not seen in purely Marxist terms by Osborne, as instruments for the exploitation of the working class. Brecht's simplicity was not possible in a country

where the Labour party had been in office more than once. Osborne sees it in psychological terms. Major Redl's dedication to the military code of honour is a form of perversion, like homosexuality and indebtedness, which are the essential accompaniments of the military code. Hotzendorf claims that "The army's like nothing else. It goes beyond religion."[142] Part of the appeal to this cult lies in its snobbery. Mohl asserts that "even in this modern age of what they call democracy, the army is still a place of privilege."[143] But Mohl's anti-democratic sentiment is not to be confused with a mere unwillingness on the part of the privileged few to surrender their privileges. There is something Coriolanus-like in his hatred of the common people. He is not content merely to reject the doctrine to the brotherhood of man. He holds that, "Some men have a style of living like bad skins, course-grained, erupting spotty."[144]Devotion to militarism as a religion calls for sacrifices as great as monasticism, as exemplified in the following dialogue:

> Mohl: What about marriage?
> Redl: I'm not contemplating it, not for quite some time, that is.
> Mohl: Good. You've got ideals and courage...[145]

The action of *The Entertainer* (1961) takes place against the background of Anglo-French military adventure in the Suez conflict. Of the two sons of Archie Rice one (i.e. Frank) resists conscription and is sent to jail for six months. Thereafter he is appointed porter in a hospital. He is made to stoke the boilers. His sister, Jean, thinks he would have been better off in the Army, "sticking a bayonet into some wog."

> PHOEBE: …A boy like him shouldn't be doing it. Hospital porter. D'you know they made him stoke the boilers?
> JEAN: Yes. He'd have been better off in the Army-sticking a bayonet into some wog.[146]

But Mick, her other brother who joined the army, gets killed. Militarism in Osborne forms part of the upper class ethos, which the public schools, especially Eton and Harrow, are seeking to perpetuate. Mick's brother, Frank, sings sardonically, a song

---

[142] Osborne, John. (1965), *A Patriot for Me*. London: Faber and Faber, , p.48 and Osborne, J. (1973). *West of Suez, A Patriot for Me, Time Present, The Hotel in Amsterdam.* New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, p.106.
[143] Ibid., p.51 and Ibid., p.109.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., p.27 and Ibid.,p.91.
[146] Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer.* London: Faber and Faber, p.31.

in which he blames this ethical code for the ills of English society and includes the following reference to a private university: Those playing fields of Eton / Have really got us beaten.[147]

Osborne emerges as a serious artist concerned with social and political matters, as any dramatist must be, whose work for those causes occurs in the theatre, whose main weapon is the tool of language which he uses as extrovertly when writing about socialism as when writing about a character. His most important social concern is about the way people relate in a domestic setting, inside the family, and among the community as a whole. Osborne insists about the fact that politics ought to be concerned with style, with aesthetics, rather than with economics, with the material condition of life. Rejecting any intention of solving social problems, he enumerates "the questions of socialism" which a creative artist should be asking about ordinary working people. As a Socialist writer he can say very little about the kind of houses, schools, or pensions, but there are questions he can formulate which are more concerned with feeling:

> ….how do people live inside those houses'..What are the things that are important to them, that make them care, give them hope and anxiety' What kind of language do they use to one another' What is the meaning of the work they do? Where does the pain lie? What are their expectations? [148]

Examples of this are to be found in the following plays. In *The Entertainer*, Osborne equates upper class with "effete" and describes Billy in the following terms:

> when he speaks it is with a dignified Edwardian diction – a kind of repudiation of both Oxford and cockney that still rhymes "cross" with " force", and yet manages to avoid being exactly upper-class or effete.[149]

At one point Archie says, "We'll try to be a little normal just for once and pretend we're a happy, respectable, and decent family."[150] The use of "normal", respectable, and decent in this speech is significant connecting the domesticity of its language context to the more general social one.

There is at least a glimpse of a portrayal of happiness in *Luther*, III, iii. Martin Luther retires from active campaigning for Protestantism after changing the face of Germany. Thereafter he marries an ex-nun and settles down to domesticity. He tells

---

[147] Ibid., p.74.
[148] Osborne, J. (1957). They Call it Cricket. *Declaration* , pp.61-84.
[149] Ibid., p.13.
[150] Ibid., p.58.

Staupitz that there are three ways out of despair, "One is faith in Christ, the second is to become enraged by the world and make its nose bleed for us, and the third is the love of a woman."[151] Presumably, Osborne approves of the third alternative. In this way, the final scene of the play, with Luther married to Katherine von Bora, a former nun, and having had a child by her, are quiet and of a more domestic kind.

Another brief episode of happiness occurs in a short play called *Under Plain Cover* (1963). In the first half of this play Mr and Mrs Turner, the main characters, appear to experience something like a perfect married life, based on mutual understanding and a complete absence of reserve in their mutual relationship. Their game of make–believe might not seem very impressive to a sophisticated reader but this is the nearest Osborne gets to presenting happiness in any of his plays. The Reporter, a character in the play, describes their life, before the journalists and photographers decide to destroy their happiness, in the following way: "that ordinary happy couple with their everyday care and worries, their bonny babies…As they sat in their urban little suburban home, watching the telly, planning for the kiddies' future, discussing the new concerns of young people in love."[152]

It will be noted in the above passages that Osborne's paradise, like Milton's, is a domestic one, concerned with the family, the small community, not a political one of big parties. Its inhabitants are engaged in daily activities not in organizing committees and study circles or in addressing public meetings. Osborne always actively refused the label of political writer and maintained from the beginning of his career the idea that he held no theory or "dogma."[153] Nevertheless he was often vociferous in his condemnations of the Conservative and Labour parties. He described Tories as "always detestable" and as being a party of those who handle enormous power without responsibility to anyone but "themselves." His response to the Conservative government's decision, with Labour's connivance, to develop a nuclear arsenal for Britain, was stated in the following terms: "There is murder in my brain, and I carry a knife for any one of you Macmillan, and you Gaitskell, you particularly."[154]

Whatever the depth of his disdain for the Tories this pointed invective against Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell, shows the real focus of Osborne's political anger. His

---

[151] Osborne, J. (1961). *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber, p.96.

[152] Osborne, J. (1963). *Plays for England:The Blood of the Bambergs and Under Plain Cover.* London: Evans Brothers Limited, p.121.

[153] Findlater, R. (1957, September 29). The Angry Young Man. *New York Times* (II), pp.1-6.

[154] Osborne, J. (1961, August 18). A Letter to My Fellow Countrymen. *Tribune*, pp.193-94.

point is not the simplistic one that Labour can act as despicably as the Tories, but that in some ways it has acted even more so. In their unimaginative selfishness, the Tories have at least been consistent with their principles. To Osborne, however, Labour had abandoned its own principles and had thereby betrayed those whom it should have most ardently been defending. If the working people of Britain supported the Conservatives during the Suez Crisis he wrote, they did so because "after fifty years of talking cant about brotherhood and ethics, the Labour Party still had not managed to tell anyone what Socialism meant". And what does it mean? According to Osborne, "Socialism is about people, and the Labour Party has forgotten it."[155]

This definition, given by Osborne, may be rather vague, but it goes to the heart of how the British Left has struggled to define itself and its principles. His derision of the Labour Party for talking cant does not cast aspersions on concepts such as brotherhood and ethics but on their emptiness as terminology in the Labour Party's use of rhetoric. Osborne expressed his contempt about the way the Labour Party used concepts such as brotherhood and ethics, as part of their rhetoric, but that would sound empty of meaning. In 1968, a year of international political upheaval, a literary critic was curious about whether he had moved towards a right wing political position. But Osborne answered that he had always had leftish radical sympathies and that feeling had not changed. But what had changed was the nature of leftism itself: "A lot of left-wing feeling nowadays strikes me as instant mashed potato radicalism. It hasn't been felt through and worked through. I find it easy and superficial and tiresome." This contrasts with the backward glance from 1961 recalling the feeling, felt through and worked in post-war Britain.

Osborne remarks:

> In the 1945 election when The Labour Party got in, people like me thought the world was going to change, but instead it got more drear and austere. It was dull time, joyless and timid. This was followed by the collapse of the Empire and the Suez crisis. We became very disillusioned and out of this feeling came out writing, which so many people identified with because it was expressing what they felt themselves..[156]

The terms brotherhood and ethics are vital to his conception of socialism, as they have been to British socialists since the mid-nineteenth century. At that time, what

[155] Ibid.

[156] Osborne, J. (1968, July 7). Interview with John Osborne. (K. Tynan, Interviewer)

Stanley Pierson (1973) has termed "ethical socialism"[157] predominated in Britain and sought to oppose capitalism by means of an often vaguely defined humane social structure. Though later supplanted by the Fabians, and in turn by the Labour Party, ethical socialism has exerted an influence on all subsequent socialist movements in Britain, even on the Communist Party. This comes up in the principles of the New Left[158] and in the political agenda of Labour leader Tony Blair, as well as in the drama of Osborne. The tradition of ethical socialism is more than just a political option and more than just a blueprint for restructuring society, which is precisely the attitude Osborne took in defining his own political stance. "I am not going to define my own socialism," he wrote:

> Socialism is an experimental idea, not a dogma; an attitude to truth and liberty, the way people should live and treat each other. Individual definitions are unimportant. The difference between Socialist and Tory values should have been made clear enough by this time. I am a writer and my own contribution to a socialist society is to demonstrate those values in my own medium, not to discover the best ways to implement it.[159]

Osborne will thus fulfil his role as a Socialist by being an artist who cares. Therefore, the theatre for Osborne is a weapon and those who work in the theatre have power which they should never underestimate:

> I am not a politician, and I am not a philosopher; I am an artist working in the theatre. I have never set up as a critic of society, handing down angry commandments, written on tablets of white tiling from the summits of the Royal Court Theatre. But I have been made the founder member of a new stereotype, the Angry Young Men, created by journalists, who are obliged to think in this glib unreal terms because the easiest way to dismiss anyone is to fix a label on them.[160]

Socialism for Osborne meant to "stand up, say what you think about whom and what you don't like in our society and to hell with making a fool of yourself and the more enemies you make the better."[161] Socialism for him was all about feelings and he expressed them mainly in terms of outrage and scandal. It was a way of looking at the world but never a political doctrine. "Socialism", Osborne wrote in 1957, "is about people living together and the sooner the leaders of the Labour Party stop arguing about

---

[157] Pierson, S. (1973). *Marxism and the Origen of British Socialism: The Struggle for a New Consciousness.* New York: Corner University Press.
[158] Barnes, J. (1994, August 22-29). The Modernizer. *The New Yorker* , p.70.
[159] Osborne, J. (1957). They Call it Cricket. *Declaration*, pp.61-84.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.

sugar and cement and wake up to the fact the better…The Labour Party has concerned itself too much with order papers, and ignored human behaviour. It should turn its attention to the things that make people feel." According to Gilleman[162] at a time when the welfare state was still being built, this was an inappropriate remark for Osborne to make since these small material things made people's life easier, and a more comfortable one. Supplying sufficient amounts of sugar and cement or finding ways of funding free sets of teeth for a population that had never enjoyed the benefits of adequate dentistry were definitely "things that matter" to them.

But Labour, Osborne thought, did wrong to appeal so much to people's "cupidity". It sought technological and technocratic solutions for what was, in effect, a spiritual hunger. Typically, Osborne found it neither improper nor inconsistent to vent his anger against the materialism of others. Welfare was originally the phrase "welfare" from "well" in its still familiar sense and "fare", meaning primarily a journey or arrival but later also a supply of food.[163]

In 1961 and in reaction to the Berlin Crisis that nearly triggered a third World War, Osborne sent a particularly vehement open "Letter to My Fellow Countrymen" to the socialist newspaper *The Tribune*. It has usually been referred to as "Damn You, England" and is now memorable due to its hysterical tone:

> The task facing Socialists has never been more difficult and we are not going to achieve anything by being polite. If you want Socialism, you won't get it without coining some new words. You can't beat the Tories (and I don't mean simply the Conservative Party) at their own game of politeness and platitudes. "I believe in Britain!" proclaims the Tory, meaning that what he believes in is a Tory Britain, and that if you suggest that there are a whole lot of things about Britain that stink, you are a cad. He wants you to shake hands and pretend there are no fundamental differences between us, and when you look at the House of Commons it is difficult not to see his point. "Let us all pull together!" and then (this is the one to make you feel really shabby and old-fashioned) "All this class hatred is *out of date*". If you are rash enough to mumble the word Socialism, you are made to feel that you had said something like "horseless carriage" – poor, simple, unsophisticated old thing (Osborne "Fighting Talk").[164]

[162] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.2.

[163] Welfare was commonly used from C14 to indicate happiness or prosperity (c.f. WEALTH): 'thy negheburs welfare (1303); 'welfare or ilfare of the whole realm' (1559). A subsidiary meaning, usually derogatory in the recorded instances, was of merry-making: 'such riot and ydlenesse' (1470); 'wine and such welfare' (1570). The extended sense of welfare, as an object of organized care or provision, came in e C 20; most of the older words in this sense (Charity) had acquired unacceptable associations (Williams, *Keywords*), pp.332-333.

[164] Osborne, J. (1957). Fighting Talk. *Reynold News*.

John Osborne has suffered particularly harsh criticism concerning his dramatic competency and his political integrity, in spite of having been recognized as an important and perhaps great writer. In the enthusiasm that greeted the first production of *Look Back* many saw in his work a new force they hoped would revitalize the British theatre and enable it to act as "a harbinger of the New Left, of Anti-Apartheid, and of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament." This was the case of literary critic Trussler who refers to Jimmy Porter's feelings towards social issues in the following terms:

> But I don't think Jimmy Porter would have been clamouring for his membership cards: his emotional needs may have been typical, but his response to them was exceptional – a word Osborne has himself used to describe the condition of his heroes. He has his defenders who see in his work a theatrical vitality which make much adverse criticism seem petty and pedantic.[165]

Nevertheless, his plays often met with sharply negative reactions that at times had a particular bitter edge, as though his failure to fulfil certain expectations constituted a kind of betrayal. Such disappointment was due to a number of causes, not the least of which was Osborne's consistent and sometimes sarcastic criticism of the British Left. His assertions, such as "I really don't have political affiliations, although I suppose I once did believe I must be a socialist"[166] cause some to believe that the development of his political beliefs mirrors that of Kingsley Amis. This conclusion, however, entails a misunderstanding both of Osborne and of the particular character of British Socialism. If we put Osborne's work within the context of the history of socialism in Britain, and compare him to openly committed writers such as Brecht and Shaw, we can better appreciate how his drama powerfully expresses anger not only at what Britain did become, but more specifically, at what it never became. For Osborne, that lost potentiality is tied to socialism as much as to anything else. In *Déjàvu* (1991), his sequel to *Look Back*, the middle aged Porter reflects on his famous emotional state:

> What's he angry about? They used to ask. Anger is not *about* … It is mourning the unknown, the loss of what went before without you, it's the love another time but not this might have sprung on you, and greatest loss of all, the deprivation of what, even as a child, seemed to be irrevocably your own, your country, your birthplace, that at least is as tangible as death.[167]

---

[165] Trussler, S. (1969). *The Plays of John Osborne: An Assessment.* London: Gollancz, p.50.
[166] Osborne, J. (1957). They Call it Cricket. *Declaration,* pp.61-84.
[167] Osborne, J. (1991). *Déjàvu.* London: Faber. Act. II, p.102.

Engels observed that socialists in Britain regard their theory as "a credo and not a guide to action"[168], meaning their belief in such principles as class warfare and the redistribution of wealth rarely led to any revolutionary activities. Therefore, Socialism to Osborne meant to "stand up, say what you think about whom and what you don't like in our society and to hell with making a fool of yourself – and the more enemies you make the better." In this he followed his grandfather for whom a socialist was a man who doesn't believe in raising his hat. His reluctance to participate in acts of violence or in any act that would immediately threaten the rule of capital became an increasingly prominent aspect of socialism in Britain, from the primarily ethical concerns of Morris and other late nineteenth-century socialists, through the Webbs and Fabian policy of permeation, to the mid-twentieth century ascendancy of the Labour Party when Herbert Morrison could confidently proclaim: "Socialism is what a Labour government does."[169]

The title of Osborne's play *Look Back* is central to the much repeated question concerning this issue among theatre practitioners: "What is he angry about?"

> I wish that I could understand who the angry young men are, how many of them there are and what they are angry about (…) Mr Colin Wilson had spent a weekend in my house and gone away again before I ever suspected that he was supposed to be angry, and then I only suspected it because I read it in the newspaper.[170]

Jimmy Porter was too busy displacing his frustrations onto his wife to develop a coherent socialist analysis. The play's political limitations derive also from its dependency on Orwell who ranked high with the New Left because he seemed right on Stalinism and imperialism and had reported on poverty and popular culture, and because atomic weapons offered the prospect of a *1984*-type war economy. Once more and according to Sinfield, *Look Back* takes up Orwell's analysis of "the decay of ability in the ruling class"[171] found in *England, your England* (1941), hence Jimmy's rage towards Alison's gang and towards Nigel, the chinless wonder from Sandhurst, and his complaint that they have been "plundering and fooling everybody for generations" (their countrymen)[172] which is Orwell's same expression. Orwell places ex-colonial

---

[168] Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1942). *Selected Correspondence 1846-1895.* New York: Dora Torr, p.450.
[169] Ponting, C. (1989). *Breach of Promise: Labour in Power 1964-1970.* London, p.400.
[170] Hollis, C. (1957). Keeping Up With the Rices. *Spectator* (CXCIX), pp.504-505.
[171] Sinfield, A. (2004). *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain.* London and New York: The Athlone Press, p.296.
[172] *L.B.*, p.20.

reactionaries and the intelligentsia as the two groups most affected by the decline of the ruling class, and as reference of this in *Look Back* we find Alison's ex-Indian father as well as Jimmy. According to Orwell, Jimmy shares many of the characteristics found in the left-wing intellectuals. He may sound negative and irritable, can offer the irresponsible complain of one who never expects to be in power, and would be more ashamed of standing to attention during the national anthem than of stealing from a poor box.

Osborne wrote a small number of historical plays that include *A Subject of Scandal and Concern*, which is about the last man convicted for blasphemy, *Luther* and a third one, *God Rot Tunbridge Wells* which deals with the figure of Handel. These plays, although set in the past, deal with the historical moment of Britain at that time, so they can be considered as state of the nation plays. The topical reference of the play *A Patriot for Me* is made clear from the start and was not made insignificant to Osborne's audience when the play premièred in 1965. Just before the onset of WWI, the war that put an end to the Empire, it appeared that one highly placed military officer who had headed the Empire's Intelligence Service had betrayed his country.

2.4 Complexity of the Cultural Position 'Anger' Represented: The Politics of Vital Theatre

The objects of mockery cast in *Look Back* include Jimmy's assault on the upper classes, the Sunday papers, and all things royal, thus revealing a curious localism at a time of profound social change, which derive not so much from anger as from envy. To attack these institutions of the Establishment was to attack the symbolic centre of the hegemonic agreement. In this context, the opposition to censorship was apart from the opposition to nuclear weapons, the political/cultural cause most likely to unite a wide range of theatre activists after 1956, acquiring a distinctive political logic.

Jimmy Porter's values are the same as those of his maker. The stage directions given at the beginning of the play describe Jimmy in the following terms: "He is a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, (…) a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike. Blistering honesty or apparent honesty like his makes few friends." [173]

[173] *L.B.*, p.5.

The context in which he makes this accusation is a marriage firmly cemented in unhappiness and enduring, because each of the partners is trapped into the others neurosis. Beyond that, however, it is the "Brave New nothing-very-much, thank-you-world", the British welfare state devastated of its ideals and stuffed with American-style consumerism. "It's pretty dreary living in an American Age of course" Jimmy says, "unless you're an American of course." Britain had already been five years under conservative rule and was still to remain so for another successive election until 1964. The Welfare State, coined by Professor Alfred Zimmerman in the 1930's in distinction from Hitler's Warfare State, came into widespread use during the war to point a sharp contrast.

Though Jimmy Porter is working class, he has profited from the free education for all schemes that were introduced after WWII. Recently graduated from one of the newer universities, he vents his anger against his upper-class wife Alison and everything that makes her attitude of silent withdrawal typical of her class and of society at large: "All this time, I have been married to this woman, this monument to non-attachment, and suddenly I discover that there is actually a word that sums her up", Jimmy says.[174]

Most people would agree that Jimmy Porter is not an easy man to live with and that his much harassed wife is not to be envied. Yet the word that sums her up according to Jimmy is not reticent, modest, or endlessly forbearing, but "pusillanimous."[175] It is the blanket epithet Jimmy casts over all he dislikes: wife, Establishment figures like Alison's brother Nigel, "the Platitude from Outer Space" and society in general. It sums up not only his wife's attitude, but also the state of mind which the welfare state had helped to promote. Given the atrophied state of socialist activity in the mid fifties, it is not surprising that Jimmy Porter's generation see a lack of brave causes in their world.

Britain's post-war Labour government had promulgated the following measures so as to establish the Welfare State:

a. National Health Service, unemployment insurance and national pension plan.
b. Nationalization of major industries, to build the infrastructure for a socialist state.
c. Finally, measures that implemented the Education Act of 1944, Labour's price for participating in Churchill's wartime coalition.

---

[174] *L.B.*, p.21.

[175] Sinclair, John. *Collins Cobuild. English Language Dictionary*. London and Glasgow: Collins, 1988. Pusillanimous: Adjective meaning wanting of firmness of mind, of small courage, having a little mind. From the Latin, pusillus, very little, and animus, the mind.

The years 1953-4 saw the arrival of a new civilization, that of the affluent society. Growth and prosperity were hand in hand. Nevertheless, the affluent society was developing its own pathology, leading to new aches of conscience and fears of being suffocated by an uneasy state of wellbeing. In face of the glorification of bourgeois values and appetites saturated with selfish satisfactions, there arouse a mood of rejection, even of revolt among the population.

The first waves of protest came in the middle of the 1950's and took the form of a revolt against all the traditional conventions of society, denouncing the whole existing system – the Establishment, politicians and authority, traditions and institutions. These protests were unclear in their aims, bitter and sharp in expression and became manifest in three different ways: literary (represented by the "angry young men"), social and political.

Between 1948 and 1951, $2.7 billion in American Marshal plan loans had been directed into the welfare state and some claimed that this had falsed the vision of a just society on which a new world was being built. By 1951, the Labour government returned back, but with a reduced majority, and had lost the impetus of its reform "We accepted the revolution of 1945, and were looking forward to governing England again for a good part of the rest of this century"[176], with the Conservative Party ("Dame Alison's mob" as Jimmy's friend Hugh calls them) back to power. For the next decade, British politics was formally characterized by a remarkable consensus between both main parties.

Once they lost the elections, Labour lost touch with the essence of socialism. More pragmatic socialists such as Raymond Williams, came to fear that the welfare state had been a Trojan horse through which American style materialism had entered the country. According to Osborne, what had finally conquered the nation was not visionary enthusiasm but it was instead "the grocer's mentality of balanced accounts", and not defiance. The welfare state or "People's Capitalism", a popular oxymoron of the time, "may have put an end to capitalism as we know it" as Bryan Magee phrased it in his 1962 socialist tract "The New Radicalism", giving way to a new and more subtly dangerous welfare-state development in the 1960's. For Osborne the welfare state's utopian idealism was not the humane alternative to communism and capitalism and was inevitably accompanied by a sense of betrayal.

[176] Bédàrida, F. (1991). *A Social History of Britain 1851-1990.* Routledge, p.197.

The dominant mood of the times is best described by Harry Hopkins in his popular social study *The New Look*:

> In the middle-aged, dismay was heightened by poignant memories of the Thirties, suffused with the bright orange promise of Mr Gollancz's Left Book Club, still lit by the afterglow of the Russian Revolution, and the heroic achievement of the Socialist Sixth of the World. The young had felt then that they held in their hands the keys to a Better World. All they had to do was to get to the doors and insert them. But now alas, the doors were open. And they were seen to be *small prosaic* doors leading to television sets and washing machines. As for the keys they were in the care of economists and technicians.[177]

The good news was that the state was becoming less reactionary, mainly because the people's management ideal had proven to be more effective than forceful repression, something industrial psychologists working in large American companies demonstrated daily. In the sixties the welfare state gave rise to an unprecedented flowering of narratives that displaced small social affects onto an aesthetic level, in an attempt to symbolically work through some of the frustrations and anxieties experienced by the disorientated individual.

Between the fifties and the seventies, there were comic redemptions of frustrations. Women, whose condition was most spectacularly improved by Welfare measures, chose this time of increased maternity care to write upsetting stories about the deprivation of single mothers. Apparently, all was not what it seemed: under the welfare state conditions, appearances were more than deceptive. As Doris Lessing put it in *The Four Gated City*:

> Great business entities fought: but they worked together behind the scenes, and employed the same firms, or people. The newspapers that remained might call themselves Right, Left, or Liberal, but the people who wrote for them were interchangeable, for these people wrote for them all at the same time, or in rapid succession. The same was true of television: the programmes had on them the labels of different companies, or institutions, but could not be told apart, for the same people organized and produced and wrote and acted in them.[178]

In this climate Jimmy Porter raises his Messianic cry demanding absolute loyalty: "either you're with me or against me."[179] Everywhere, this character finds a proof of the workings of a dangerously equalizing force: "even the book reviews seem to be the

---

[177] Hopkins, H. (1963). *The New Look: A Social History of the Forties and Fifties in Britain.* London: Secker and Wanburg, p.372.
[178] Lessing, D. (1969). *The Four Gated City.* New York: Koopf, pp.511-512.
[179] *L.B.*, III, i, p.86.

same as last week's. Different books – same reviews." Differences that once were essential, such as those of culture and language, were rapidly disappearing. He complains about the fact that half of the book reviews of the English novel were written in French. In this context of multiculturalism, national identity is threatened with extinction:

> There's a Vaughan Williams. Well, that's something, anyway. Something strong, something simple, something English. I suppose people like me aren't supposed to be very patriotic. Somebody said….we get our cooking from Paris ... our politics from Moscow and our morals from Port Said.[180]

This leads to Jimmy's following remark: "Always the same ritual. Reading the papers, drinking tea, ironing… Our youth is slipping away."[181]

Where then is the individual to find the factors by which to measure both personal identity and development? Against the general feeling of depressing sameness, Jimmy can only voice his energy and vigilance constantly trying to convince him and others that he is nobody's fool, that he knows what is going on and that he can see what people are about. He turns into a public speaker and it is precisely this art of public speaking, of showmanship, that most attracts Osborne. References to this can be found scattered across the text of the play: the Bishop of Bromley, who represents the establishment of the Church of England, denies the existence of class distinctions[182]; Jimmy reproaches Alison's brother, Nigel, the "chinless wonder from Sandhurst" who ought to be given a medal for "Vaguery in the Field"[183], he can see through the "Marquis of Queensberry manner" of Alison's parents and knows "they'll kick you in the groin while you're handing your hat to the maid"[184]; Miss Drury may look like a mild old gentlewoman but in fact she is just an old robber; and, finally, he is not taken in by Helena, who appears however under-drawn, but at least in Act II she can ask the questions about Jimmy that by this stage are puzzling the audience.

In *Look Back* we are reminded of the fact that there are certain writers who gave the impression that it was altogether indelicate to write in English at all, which was the reason why the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* abounded with italics, until they sometimes looked like linguistic lace curtains:

---

[180] *L.B.*, p.17.
[181] *L.B.*, p.15.
[182] *L.B.*, p.13.
[183] *L.B.*, p.20.
[184] *L.B.*, p.21.

> JIMMY. I've just read three whole columns on the English Novel. Half of it's in French. Do the Sunday papers make *you* feel ignorant?
> CLIFF. Not 'arf.[185]

Thoroughly sickened by modernity, he dreams of how solid life must have seemed for the affluent classes in the Edwardian era. By the mid-1950's, it had become evident that many hopes connected with Labour's victory in 1945 would go unfulfilled regardless of who held office, and despite all the expectations raised by propagandistic appeals for national unity during the Second World War, "the effect of the war was not to sweep society on to a new course, but to hasten its progress along the old grooves."[186] For Osborne and others, this realization brought with it a sense of lost or aborted opportunities that in many ways left Britain the same as it had always been, and in other ways, had diminished its status. With the election of Labour, Osborne said:

> People like me thought the world was going to change, but instead it became more and more drear and austere. It was a dull time, joyless and timid. This was followed by the collapse of the Empire and the Suez Crises. We became very disillusioned and out of this feeling came our writing.[187]

Osborne's disillusionment originated, however, in the perceived failure of Attlee's government to follow through completely on the socialist reforms it negotiated and the persistent failure of subsequent Labour governments to develop them. Osborne's themes of friendship, loyalty, and marriage lead some to defend him as "a poet rather than as a committed political figure"[188], or to explain his work as an exploration of "social inequities in terms of personal relationships."[189]

2.5 The Personal: A Necessary Prerequisite for Political Action

While not inaccurate, such analysis tends to reduce his work to the truism that the personal is an extended metaphor for the political, whereas for Osborne, as for the ethical socialists, no politics of any moral authority can fail to take the personal as its

---

[185] *L.B.*, pp.10-11.
[186] Calder, A. (1969). *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945.* New York, p.17.
[187] Weatherby, W. (1981). Middle Age of the Angry Young Men. *The Sunday Times Magazine*, pp.30-42.
[188] Billington, M. (1973). A Patriot for Me at the Waldorf Palace. *The Manchester Guardian*, p.24.
[189] Rusinko, S. (1989). *British Drama 1950 to the Present: A Critical History.* Boston, p.36.

priority and as the necessary prerequisite for political action. Many of his characters are lapsed socialists, politically detached and discouraged but not converted to any conservative ideology because their discouragement stems from a faith in socialism, which the politics of post-war Britain has betrayed.

This sense of failed expectations on the part of Attlee's government and of British socialist policies in general, is part of the sometimes vociferous criticism and mockery of socialism that pepper Osborne's plays. He had no patience for a romantic socialism that would seek to liberate the down-trodden masses from their capitalist oppressors. He sometimes portrayed the narrow-minded complacency of the lower-middle-classes as one of the greatest barriers to progressive change in Britain and the almost total absence of working class characters in his drama indicates his belief that the pervasiveness of bourgeois values has blurred, and thus diminished the importance of class distinctions for social analysis. For example, the racist and xenophobic sentiments of the Rice family in *The Entertainer* (1957); the violent, rural middle-class in *Watch it Come Down* (1976) and *Try a Little Tenderness* (1978); the reactionary rural folk and the repeatedly disparaged lower middle class in *Déjàvu* (1992); the islanders in *West of Suez* (1971) who commit the politically absurd act of murdering an aged British writer; and the middle class jury in *A Subject* that sentences the harmless Holyoake to prison, all make clear that Osborne had no sentimental attachment to the idea of the lower and middle as simply innocent victims of an exploitative political and economic system.

Therefore, Osborne's work reflects the basic premises of ethical socialism, where political failure originates in the moral failings of groups and individuals. The masses slumber in self-satisfied and sometimes brutal complacency, while the individual with insight, passion, and especially, imagination, succumbs to a bitter despair which negates any promise he or she had. "Moral good", wrote Osborne, "which is what Socialism is about, is club-footed without the imagination" but an imaginative public policy depends upon the initiative of those individuals who can spark a wide-spread rethinking of the purpose of the state.[190]

There is an equivalent attitude in William Morris's dislike of what he called artificial systems for regulation and control in place of which he would substitute "a public conscious as a rule of action", rather than the authority of state institutions.[191] The attitude towards the state, however, lacks theoretical rigidity; therefore, it remains

[190] Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber, p.195.
[191] Morris, M. (1966). *William Morris: Writer. Socialist* (Vol. 2). Oxford, p.96.

open to a wide range of possible interpretations. A politics that incorporates it must accept a certain ambiguity as to the determination of what constitutes socialist practice, an ambiguity which is both the great strength and the Achilles' heel of British socialism. Whereas it can aid in the resistance to authoritarianism, it can also lack the determination to restructure society decisively along egalitarian lines, and it is this lack which seems to have been the particular dilemma of British socialism since the Second World War, the one which provides the unifying theme of Osborne's work.

Perhaps surprisingly, his emphasis, which falls on the historical importance of the individual, has an implicit parallel with Leninism. Lenin had no patience for Fabian efforts to help capitalism evolve into socialism. Instead, he felt the party must act as a catalyst for revolutionary change and seize power on behalf of the proletariat. Osborne's general disdain for the lower classes as possible instigators for revolution has led him to look for a moral elite to take up this responsibility, those moral Luthers who might make a difference. The Communist Party, in his view, had nothing to offer, and neither did the Conservatives, with their conviction that "human nature cannot be changed or improved beyond a material level." Instead, Osborne looked to the country's intelligentsia, its writers, actors, journalists, film makers, college graduates, even lawyers and again finds little reason for hope. He was, thus, an ethical socialist in search of a cadre in one of his characters who could save British society, but nevertheless could not find one.

The British intelligentsia found itself in a peculiar state of inertia after the fall of the Attlee government. By the late 1950's, the nation had become an archaic society trapped in past successes, aware for the first time of its lassitude, but as yet unable to overcome it, while the intelligentsia itself had largely become "parochial and quietist: adhering to the established political consensus without exercising itself greatly to construct or defend it."[192] Many of Osborne's characters fall into this category – Jimmy Porter, Ben and Sally Prosser, Pamela Orme, George Dillon, Archie Rice, Laurie – all who, in one way or another, hate the ruling political consensus in Britain but who cooperate with it insofar as they can conceive of no effective way to oppose it. Fully conscious of their moral and political apathy, however, they live in a state of enlightened false consciousness, the endless self-irony or wide-awake bad faith of a society, which has seen through its own pretentious rationalizations. They no longer

[192] Anderson, P. (1992). *English Questions.* London, p.194.

believe in who they are, as individuals or as a society, but since they cannot believe in becoming anything else, they remain inert in their critical self-awareness.

The play *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964) marks a transition in Osborne's examination of this problem. His earlier plays of Britain sharply historicized the nation's dilemma in the 1950's, that of trying to bridge a gap between modern Britain and its idealized past, where imperial glory and military triumph supposedly contributed to a strong sense of national purpose. In *Inadmissible Evidence* Bill Maitland denounces the welfare state accusing it of having encouraged a lower middle-class materialism and philistinism. It had made people calculating and smug, or, as Bill Maitland put it, it had turned the mini car into everyone's mini dream. *Inadmissible's* hero, Bill Maitland was, some complained, "a failure luxuriating indulgently in failure."[193] For Gilleman, "Maitland not only harangued against the drabness of welfare state consumerism but also spewed his bile upon those two prime objects of modern adulation, technology and youth."[194] For Jeremy Seabrook, consumerism as a term of abuse implies:

a. That people buy consumer goods in the belief they can buy happiness.
b. That such people have an insatiable desire to shop and spend and acquire possessions.
c. That their relationships with these possessions are more important to them than their relationships with their people.[195]

Bill Maitland's attitude to the world resembles that of Jimmy in *Look Back*. BILL: (bangs the newspaper) Look at this dozy bastard: Britain's position in the world. Screw that. What about my position?[196]

With *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964), however, Osborne's plays of Britain turn sharply away from such historicizing and become more overtly recognizable as Britain of the 1960's and 1970's, although they are not as directly tied to historical specific details as his earlier work. In this way *Epitaph for George Dillon* (1958), *Look Back* (1956), and *The Entertainer* (1957) all examine contemporary Britain's break with some of its political, cultural, and moral traditions, but the later plays are concerned with what may be termed the spiritual mediocrity and aridity that results from this

[193] Osborne, J. (1994). *Almost a Gentleman: An Autobiography 1955-1966.* London and Boston: Faber, p.242.
[194] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.125.
[195] Seabrook, J. qtd. in Obelkevich, J., & Catterall, P. (1994). *Understanding post-war British Society.* London and New York: Routledge, p.152.
[196] Osborne, J. (1965). *Inadmissible Evidence.* New York: Grove Press, p.29.

break. Although Archie Rice, Jimmy Porter, and George Dillon are certainly mediocre in their ways, theirs is the mediocrity of the failure of the "Outsider." However, in the later plays, this spiritual mediocrity, a form of cynicism, emanated primarily from the most prominent and successful members of the British intelligentsia, who now preferred co-optation by the power establishment to angry resistance against it. In their enlightened false consciousness they understand their predicament and that of the nation, but in their cynicism and despair, they can do nothing about it.

The differences between Archie Rice and Bill Maitland clearly show Osborne's change of focus. Rice's struggle to preserve not only his livelihood but also a way of life in the music-hall has its tragically heroic aspects, despite his personal shortcomings. The world has changed and as a result has pulled away from him, leaving him stranded and isolated in the past. Raymond Williams has argued in *The Long Revolution* (1961) about the music hall being the last vestige of a living working class culture that was finally destroyed by new forms such as strip tease shows, pop music, or television sitcoms. In constant transformation, the music hall prepared the way for these contemporary forms of entertainment. Politically speaking, however, it was far too involved in the contradictions of lower-class life to have its reality summarized by the terms progressive or reactionary. "I maybe an old poup," says Archie with some justification, "but I'm not a right-wing."[197] On the other hand, Maitland is also isolated, but only because he has pulled himself away from the world into an alcoholic miasma of his own making. Osborne makes us aware of the depths of Maitland's anguish which does not come from having been swept aside by a historical process that renders him anachronistic, but from his having stood aside having abandoned his place in the world, as solicitor, father, husband, and, by implication, citizen. Shortly after *Inadmissible's* first production in 1964, thirteen years of Conservative reign had come to an end.

The Labour party, now led by Harold Wilson, having campaigned under the banner of science and youth, won the elections with a small majority of five. A number of liberal reforms would mark a new era. Capital punishment was abolished in 1965 and homosexual relations between consenting adults were legalized through the Sexual Offences Act of 1969. At that time, when the play reached the stage, the Beatles had sold a then incredible 110 million records of *A Hard Day's Night,* and the James Bond movies *From Russia with Love* (1963) and *Goldfinger* (1964) were making a furore.

[197] Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer.* London: Faber and Faber, p.61.

Female fashion became naughtier and looser. Following the 1960 trial, exculpating Penguin Books for publishing an unexpurgated version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and other uncensored prose publications, such as the Marquis de Sade's *Justine* (1791) and John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1749), *Inadmissible* saw the light. Both *Patriot* and *Inadmissible* were milestones in the ongoing battle with theatre censorship, in which Osborne played a leading role.

Inadmissible is one of the plays in the history of drama depicting an often rehearsed theme in the history of drama, which is that of human passion clashing with the laws and the customs of the time. Although it was written in the context of increasing liberalization, nearly every line from it had to be defended. Many concessions had inevitably to be made, but the play that finally reached the stage was for its time remarkably frank about sexuality and courageous in its attacks on outmoded laws regarding divorce and homosexuality. The reason for Lord Chamberlain's action was that the play dealt explicitly with sexual situations of a kind that would remain criminal until the Sexual Offences Act of 1967.

Anthony Page directed the first production of *Inadmissible Evidence*, which took place at the Royal Court Theatre on 7 September 1964. A convenient way of evading difficulties of text and structure was the critical strategy of doing so on leading actor instead of focusing on playwright. Every good actor that auditioned for this role proved a disaster. Osborne was looking for an actor who looked at the world tortured within and cool and controlled in the outside. Therefore, director Anthony Page introduced him to Nicol Williamson, a young and upcoming actor. At twenty-seven Williamson seemed too young to play the role of the thirty-year old Maitland, but, as Osborne noted in his diary, this man's vision of himself and of the world was prematurely old. Williamson proved to be perfect for this role. "The seeds of Maitland are in me" he proclaimed to reviewers, who duly noted Maitland's "churlishness and petulancy in the Scottish actor whose smile looks like a sneer."[198]

According to Alan Brien (1965), Williamson, an enormously talented actor, criticises his role from within, reaching now with stony gargoyle gloom, now with glowing sexual conceit, his face twitching with nervous energy and then collapsing like sinking soufflé, as he listens to his own voice.[199]A reason for the play's impressiveness is the sheer force of Maitland's presence throughout the play. While in almost every

[198] Lewis, P. (21 September 1964). Enter the Rebel Who Slams Doors on Success. *Daily Mail*.
[199] Brien, A. (21 March 1965). Osborne Sets his Seal. *The Sunday Telegraph*.

Osborne play the central character dominates, in *Inadmissible Evidence* this tendency seems even more pronounced since, except for one brief episode, Bill is on stage during the entire play. Ronald Bryden (1964) remarked that he even added something indefinable to the role, lending subtlety of affect to speeches that fill five to seven pages in the printed play text: "he fills every cranny of Maitland's portrait with knowledge, the nervous sweating, the lurching jocularity, and the sick waves, tangible as nausea, of self-disgust. He makes Maitland a glass man, each shift and terror transparent, while amassing the twitching motives and counter-motives into a semblance of individual solidity. He gives failure a face crystalline enough to reflect our own."[200] This superb performance made Williamson earn the Best Actor of 1964 award. In playing Maitland, Williamson in fact seemed to die on the stage.

Maitland also makes for a striking contrast with Luther. In Osborne's early plays, his protagonists all had been defeated, to some degree, by their circumstances. With *Luther*, Osborne shows that he does not see history merely as an arena of impersonal forces that sweep the individual along in their wake, but one in which an individual can harness them or change their course to a significant degree by forging a community committed to political action. When Osborne returns his focus to modern Britain, however, this tempered optimism completely vanishes, and he presents an individual who cannot maintain any communal bonds, either personal or professional. Maitland is an individual who has no ties to any collective entity, primarily because he has chosen not to have them. He is the existential opposite of Luther, and as the opening dream sequence indicates, is on trial for being so. His adaptation in his defence, however, of Harold Wilson's 1963 speech to the Labour Party Conference, suggests that in addition to this one man, an entire political tradition may also be on trial, in Osborne's view, for its own form of moral disintegration.

As the opposite of Luther, therefore, Maitland is also the opposite of those Supermen, Christs, and Giants that the vital socialists once envisioned in their dreams of the coming socialist world. In effect, he severs all human ties, thus negating all his potential, but in this regard he differs only in degree from Osborne's later protagonists. If Maitland cannot or will not accommodate the world in any manner, the failure of these other protagonists is a willingness to accommodate in the wrong manner. If

[200] Bryden, R. (18 September 1964). Everyosborne: Inadmissible Evidence. English Stage Company. *New Statesman*.

Luther's example seems impossible and Maitland's despairing solipsism unacceptable, then Osborne's characters choose a third way by accommodating themselves to a society they despise in exchange for the prestige and financial regards it has to offer. As Osborne felt the Labour Party has done, they find a way to coexist with what they should oppose but at a tremendous price both for them and to the nation.

The measure of this price is closely associated with each protagonist's function in society. One important cultural development in post-industrial capitalist states has been the increased identification of the intelligentsia with the media and entertainment industries and the mass culture they generate. His protagonists directly participate in these industries, and for the most part, they do so quite successfully, for not only do they make comfortable incomes, many have also achieved a celebrity status. The failure of Archie Rice and Jimmy Porter results in part from their unwillingness or inability to market themselves and their ideas in a manner that would grant them these material rewards. George Dillon almost makes the same mistake, until he puts aside his Shavian like drama and writes more commercially viable works of lewd banality. In this case, Wyatt Gillman, Ben Prosser, Pamela Orme, Ted Schillings, Laurie and his companions, and even the middle-aged Jimmy Porter follow Dillon's example. Because they are not politicians, they do not formulate public policy, but as celebrities and artists within a mass culture, they do have an influence on the formation of popular opinion. They despise this mass culture and often voice their wish for something to supplant it, but the co modification of their ideas in the consumerism of this culture makes their discontent politically impotent and irrelevant. They support and are supported by what they loath because they cannot conceptualize an alternative, despite their talent, imagination, and access to the market of ideas.

The moral distaste they have for themselves in part accounts for the occasional nostalgic tone of Osborne's work, which some have mistaken for the sort typical of a conservative ideology. Ian Buruma describes the nostalgia of the Right as driven "by a fear of disorder, of change, of uncertainty" with a longing for lost imperial glory and an authoritarian aristocratic rule.[201] These fears certainly beset some of Osborne's characters, but the predominant tone in his work is not a reactionary retreat into an idealized past but a quest and sad longing for a lost age that never really existed. In *West of Suez* (1971) the idea of nostalgia is clearly reflected in Robin's words: "Christopher

[201] Buruma, I. (1994). *Action Anglaise.* The New York Review of Books.

feels that obviously. Robert, as someone said, if you've no world of your own, it's rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's."[202]

For example, in *The Hotel in Amsterdam* (1968), we find Laurie's longing for some kind that will release him and his friends from K.L. and the world he represents. He imagines something akin to a socialist community as William Morris might have envisioned it, a rural, non-industrial locale, where labour entails a sense of creativity and self-fulfilment, a utopian refuge where they could share a happy, communal existence that would include "People who would fit in with everyone":

> I would learn carpentry…and brick-laying. I would work on the house. Gus knows all about electricity. Margaret could drive…Annie's the great horse expert. We could use them and maybe hunt if we get over our green belt liberal principles. And Dan could, well he could just paint.[203]

Iris Murdoch described the dangers of mass technological society and proposed in *The Bells* (1958) and *The Idea of Perfection* (1964) a form of socialism of the small-scale. It is working with our hands in small communities, she suggested, that we shall find peace and satisfaction.

It is significant that in many ways the characters of the plays mentioned above reflect the constituency of the New Left – educated, middle-class, and intolerant of anything that smacks of Stalinism or even trade union socialism. The New Left had little interest in socialism as political dogma or social science, and instead viewed it as a philosophy of humane and non-exploitive individualism, as did the ethical and vital socialists. In this way, New Left socialism shares the weakness of its predecessor, a theoretical flexibility that often undercuts its effectiveness as a weapon against capitalism. For example, its emphasis on racial and gender equality has been largely appropriated by the power structure of capital, once again turning an oppositional critique into a self-critique which modifies that structure without fundamentally altering it. As a result, class conflicts in society continue, though in an ideologically perverted form.

Osborne's recurrent use of the theme of civil war illustrates this point. The racism of the Rice family implicitly directs the violence of colonial wars against their fellow countrymen; Jimmy Porter facetiously imagines himself being put up against the wall

---

[202]Osborne, J. (1973). *West of Suez, A Patriot for Me, Time Present, The Hotel in Amsterdam.* New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, p.28.
[203] Ibid., p.291.

and shot in the coming revolution. In *Déjàvu*, a local newspaper likens vandalism to an invasion "by a new model army intent on what must appear to us to be unmotivated reprisal on an innocent, law-abiding community."[204]

Civil war becomes reality in *Tenderness* (1978) and *Watch it* (1976), two plays whose endings echo that of Shaw's *On the Rocks* (1933). They represent the moral failure of the intelligentsia in modern Britain. It meant a manipulative form of leadership which only seeks its own selfish end and a willingness to stand passively by, while society tears itself apart. Ted Shillings and Ben Prosser exhibit a milder form of the solipsism found in Bill Maitland in that neither really cares for anything beyond the small confines of his private self. A politically active and imaginative community is something they cannot or don't want to envision. As with Maitland, their political and moral sense of isolation leads them to establish personal relationships that mirror the destructiveness of their public activities and carries the theme of civil war into the private sphere.

The conjunction of the public and the private, accounts for the Laurentian priority relationship found in Osborne's work. With perhaps two exceptions, *The End of Me Old Cigar* (1975) and *Under Plain Cover* (1963), his entire body of work is devoid of marriages, or even relationships, that have the equilibrium we find in Lawrence. In Osborne's work, his characters' disappointment has given way to a psychological tearing and rending without mercy. Repeatedly, and usually in moments of exhaustion, these couples voice a nostalgia for what has never been (in a quest for certainty) and contemplate a different sort of relationship, that which would nurture rather than destroy the other, but then they fall back into the accepted reality of their lives and the pattern of destruction begins anew.

Always, however, the implication is that if one relationship could be set right before the damage becomes irreparable, then, in effect, the world would change. That is, the achievement of a Laurentian equilibrium could well have a ripple effect on those around them. On this point, Osborne's work returns to the philosophical point from which it began, the importance of the individual to any possibility of improving the quality of human existence, and as with the ethical and vital socialists all else follows from this belief. In their view, the purpose of socialism was to institute some form of co-existence between human beings that did not entail a forced collectivism, and as long

[204] Osborne, J. (1991). *Déjàvu*. London: Faber, p.55.

as this goal was met and economic exploitation eradicated, they were not overtly concerned with blueprints for a future socialist state.

And neither was Osborne in this same matter. Instead, he repeatedly made the point that only the individual can be a catalyst for imaginative change. However, he also made clearer, and perhaps never more clearly than in his last play *Déjàvu* (1992), the sense of the remote possibility of this change. His return to Jimmy Porter, now referred to simply as J.P, brought Osborne's career full circle in more than one way, so it is instructive to compare his last condition of English drama with its predecessor. If JP seems to have changed little in the intervening years, it is in part because neither has Britain done so. There are, of course, important differences between the Britain of the 1950's and that of the 1990's, in spite of the fact that in both decades the nation was a liberal welfare state under Conservative rule, a combination guaranteed to keep reform in check and, under Thatcher, to roll it back significantly. In addition, from JP's point of view, both decades share a smug and intolerant complacency that makes them equally contemptible, though they express it in markedly different ways. One gauge of this difference can be seen in the respective Bishops of Bromley in each play. In *Look Back*, the Bishop appeals to all Christians to assist in the manufacture of the hydrogen bomb and believes the working classes have fomented the rumour that he supports the rich against the poor. In *Déjàvu* (1992), the newly installed Bishop, the Reverend Ted, prefers jeans and open-necked shirts to ecclesiastical garb, has written a theological book on teenage unemployment, and blames the Establishment for the plight of the inner cities. According to Sinfield's (2004) social analysis of British Institutions, they have their own histories and internal structures. The liberal outlook of many bishops in 1997 derives from the fact that they took orders in the late 1950's and early 1960's, and were influenced by the progressive mood of that time. It has taken two or three decades for some of them to reach positions of seniority. In other institutions (Television) progressive attitudes came to the top very quickly and then went back into recession.

Though JP despises both Bishops, he prefers the first one, but not because his politics is more palatable. Nor does he differentiate between them on the basis of their hypocrisy, since the first believes in both God and the hydrogen bomb, and the second believes in neither. In fact, despite their difference, they both combine politics with religion and regard the poor as a threat to be dealt with, even if by different means. From JP's point of view, the first has the advantage of being an enemy one cannot possibly mistake for a friend. With regard to the working classes and whoever would

fight on their behalf, he wore his ideological heart on his sleeve, and it had quite obviously never bled for them.

The Reverend Ted's concern for making religion less pompous and more humane might seem just what the Jimmy Porter of *Look Back* would have wanted with the church. It only deepens JP's anger, however, because he sees it as a betrayal that masquerades as deliverance. The issue is not simple one of Church policy and doctrine. The Reverend Ted represents the pervasive condition of Britain as a whole. J.P does not despise the new Bishop because of his support of liberal and socialist programs, but because he and those like him are willing to accept partial answers and call them whole and deal only with problems that lend themselves to facile solutions. For JP, the Reverend Ted has a dishonesty more disgusting than the earlier Bishop's spiritual brutality in *Look Back*, a dishonesty made all the worse because the current age shares it.

The dishonesty of the 1990's however, differed from that of the 1950's. In the latter decade, Jimmy Porter aimed his invectives at a nation determined to hang on to its imperial past and rest complacently on cherished certainties. By the 1990's, Britain had transformed itself but not, believes JP, to a degree that makes much difference. If he attacked various movements of social reform and protest, he did so not because he believed, or Osborne believed, in empire and aristocracy. He attacked them because these movements are only those of reform and protest and not the vehicles of revolution they presume to be. For Osborne, the Reverend Ted and those like him, both in and out of the church, fail where Luther succeeded because they tinker with an unjust system that was morally bankrupt more than half a decade ago and remains so to the date. They offer accommodation and call it liberation, thus leaving the fundamental causes of human unhappiness in place even as national leaders and the issues they attempt to address supersede one another.

JP would agree with the Reverend Ted that society does indeed suffer from spiritual and political failure, but in an "age of privatized selfishness", he says, where the government "raises temples to the greater glory of greed and the sanctification of profitability"[205], a complacent intolerance that assumes the trappings of socialism might well be the worst response to post-industrial capitalism because it co-opts and neutralizes what Osborne saw as the best hope which may be achieved. Although, as

[205] Osborne, J. (1991). *Déjàvu*. London: Faber, p.23.

happens in the play, vandalizing churches, naming a shopping district after Winnie Mandela, and smashing the memorial to a Victorian war hero might serve some political purpose, in themselves they are little more than trivialities that undermine the cause of socialism by claiming to be more than the revolutionary gestures they actually are. Jimmy Porter and JP, therefore, stand as Osborne's great socialist spokesmen because they will not cheer on a revolution that fears its own personal and has settled into a complacent satisfaction over its accomplishments. In this refusal, the precepts of ethical and vital socialism become particularly important. Any socialism that cannot be determinedly self critical, cannot fully liberate the individual and will eventfully solidify into collective dogmas and their accompanying bureaucracies, which offer the security of structure in place of the responsibility of freedom. As Osborne intimated, Jimmy is a flawed character because he can find no common ground with their people. Though bad enough in itself, he nonetheless sees this failure as nothing worse than blindly insisting that only one form of common ground exists.

If Jimmy Porter and J.P. are failed socialists who in historical circumstances might have succeeded, the moral power they nonetheless exude comes from the reality of this potential. Even if they do not consider themselves to be socialists and will have nothing to do with any socialist politics, their commitment to their British tradition of individualism makes them implicit advocates of that parallel tradition of British socialism. Just as Lukacs believed, in relation to critical theory, that any writer who accurately describes the realities of capitalism contributes to the cause of socialism, so Sidney Webb felt "the progress of Socialism is to be sought mainly among those who are unconscious of their Socialism, many of whom, indeed, still proclaim their adherence to Individualism"[206], thus it can be concluded by stating that the individualism of Jimmy Porter and J.P. is of a particular uncompromising sort.

Once, Osborne's grandfather pointed out at another man on the street and asked, "Do you know who that man is?" "No" I said. "That man is a Socialist. Do you know what a socialist is?" "No." "Well a Socialist is a man who never raises his cap to anyone."[207] Without regard to dogma, the refusal to raise one's cap marks the individual's resistance to those social forces which would demand such obedience. As a dramatist, Osborne never gave it except to those who had the courage to doubt accepted

[206]Webb, S. (1983). Socialism in England. In S. Webb, *British Socialism: Socialist Thought from the 1880's to 1960's* (p. 62). London: Anthony Wright, p.62.
[207] Osborne, J. (1957). They Call it Cricket. *Declaration*, pp.61-84.

certainties, and for him, any politics that would presume to deliver us from oppression must begin at this same point, whether we recognize it as socialism or not.

Political correctness was born in the political turmoil of the late Sixties curiously coinciding with Gorbachev's policy of "glasnost" (openness) and "perestroika" (reconstruction) and thus with the end of communist threat and the Cold War. Osborne strongly showed his dislike of political correctness as being a form of self-censorship advocated to attune speech to the varied reality of modern society. What constituted the main source of the deep-seated conservatism which prevailed in the 80's was the liberal sensitivity rather than the dictatorial prohibition or censure. It became an object of public debate around 1987 and was suggested to be an attempt on the part of the political right to find a new way to discredit the ideal of the tolerant and caring society.

From the start, new writing had a strongly naturalistic style and a social realist agenda, and was involved in the project of rewriting ideas about what national identity meant, as well as staging new plays. Professor Stephen Lacey (1995) calls it "working-class realism." This means a view of society which depicted working-class or lower-class life in an unglamorous and often deliberately dirty way, opposing the ruling culture of middle-class values and emphasising social problems such as violence or poverty while stressing the truth or authenticity of this experience. Scottish playwright David Greig calls this theatre style "English realism", outlining its characteristics in the following terms: This "new writing genre which has so thrived in subsidized spaces over the past 40 years, attempts, as one of our leading playwrights put it, to show the nation to itself."[208] He points out that the most popular playwrights in the West End in the 1950's were French wordsmiths such as Jean Anouilh, rather than British playwrights. An example of this is given in Kingsley Amis *Lucky Jim* (1954) where around the reading of an Anouilh drama, the anti-hero of the novel mutters bitterly: "Why couldn't they have chosen an English play?" thus exposing public issues. In Sierz's words (2011), with this form of English realism a new genre of English drama came into being where "the real world is brought into the theatre and plonked on the stage like a familiar old sofa".[209]

As in all forms of art, a new wave is followed by another one. Among the theatre people who have helped create the story of new writing have been press officers such as the Court's George Fearon, who came up with the Angry Young Man label, critics such

[208] Greig, D. Rough Theatre. In R. (eds) D'Monté, & S. Graham, *Cool Britannia*, pp.208-21.
[209] Ibid.

as John Russell Taylor, who documented the successive new waves, as well as Kenneth Tynan, the campaigning *Observer* critic and advocate of the new. Director Dominic Dromgoole, for example, has stated that "it would be hard to imagine a better record of the way we live now than could be drawn from the plays of the past forty-five years." Playwright David Edgar argues that each "new wave" dealt with a different subject matter. So the first new wave of the late 1950's and early-to-mid 1960's was mainly concerned with the "working-class empowerment" in the wake of the welfare state. Then, for the generation that followed, forged in the youth revolt of the late 1960's, the questions were much more aggressively political, namely, revolution or reform? In the 1980's, the "ground shifted once more, as women, black and gay playwrights confronted the question of difference and identity."[210] A new generation of in-yer-face playwrights, such as Sara Kane and Mark Ravenhill, emerged in the 1990's, a decade in which the characteristic subject of a conversation between playwrights and their audiences was the crisis of masculinity. But, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, there has been a revival of political drama and a concern with national identity.

The image of a vigorous heterosexual nation promoted by new writing has also attracted criticism. In a widely quoted 1999 newspaper article, Mark Ravenhill argued that the new wave writers of the 1950's, led by Osborne, were straight boys whose mission was to clear away the feyness and falseness of post-war theatre, which was dominated by gay writers such as Terence Rattigan and Nöel Coward.

[210] Luckhurst, M. (2006). *Blackwells Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama (1850-2005)*, Oxford: Blackwells, p.399.

Chapter 3

Look Back in Anger **and Human Relations: What goes on Between People and How that Influences their Behaviour**

Act One: Jimmy: Hallellujah! I'm alive!
(*Look Back in Anger*)

Look Back in Anger is not only credited for being one of the few works of drama central to British life, its name being one of the most evocative in cultural history, but it is also one of the most famous plays of post-war British theatre. Its significance, quite simply, is that it changed the history of theatre with an original and distinctive voice. Its opening night, on 8 May 1956, rapidly became legendary as the event which marks "then" off decisively from "now", no less than a "revolution."[211] As Professor Dan Rebellato says, "The story of British theatre in 1956 has been so often retold that its shape, its force and meaning have been lost in the familiarity of the telling."[212] *Look Back* was constantly brought back into the Court's repertory during 1956 and 1957, but the biggest box-office draw at that time was Devine's Christmas revival of William Wycherley's Restoration classic *The Country Wife* (1675) which saved the theatre financially. Kenneth Tynan's weekly columns for the *Observer* from 1954 to 1963 addressed social issues. New institutions, such as George Devine's English Stage Company at the Royal Court and Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop at Stratford East, were starting to emerge. He wittingly attacked the clichéd drawing-room comedy set, invading the temple of entertainment and was also there to act as a guide, philosopher and critical friend to a new movement that saw the advent of John Osborne and Arnold Wesker at the Royal Court and of Shelagh Delaney and Brendan Behan at Stratford East. Tynan had a supreme linguistic gift in describing performances which is made evident in his review of Olivier's *Coriolanus* where he describes a voice which "sounds, distinct and barbaric, across the valley of many centuries, like a horn calling to the hunt or the neigh of a battle-maddened charger."[213] Nevertheless, he failed to spot the exuberant promise of Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* when it first appeared in 1958. But Tynan, like all great critics, could also be wrong. He often attacked Peggy Ashcroft on class grounds, referred more than once to her "Kensington vowels" and wrote off Michael Redgrave's supreme Hamlet because of its supposed failure to connect with other actors. He was the first British critic to recognise Brecht's Berliner Ensemble as one of the world's great companies, wrote brilliantly about the Moscow Art theatre and was deeply responsive to the work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, saying of

[211] Taylor, R. (1978). *Art an Enemy of the People.* Brighton: Harvester, pp.9,14 and 28.
[212] Rebellato, D. (1999). *1956 and All That.* London: Routledge, pp.225-6.
[213] Tynan, K. (1964). *Tynan on Theatre.* Penguin, p.96.

the latter's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1954) that the dialogue "begs for speech so shrilly that you find yourself reading it aloud."[214]

According to Aleks Sierz there are two ways of looking at a modern myth: the mythophobic and the mythophilic.[215] The first uses the debunking approach, usually seeing myth as "a media event." For mythophobes, myth and reality don't mix. Ritchie's strength lies in his meticulous account of what happened, his weakness in his superficial understanding of how myth works. And while the mythophobes point out that the opening night of *Look Back* on May 1956 was a rather dull evening, the myth-makers see it as a historic moment.

This chapter will further on discuss, through a pragmatic approach, the relationship between the central characters, the married couple formed by Jimmy Porter and Alison, his wife. They represent a warring couple; something had gone wrong somewhere in this relationship. *Look Back* sparked off the first "New Wave" of what came to be known as "Kitchen Sink Drama." It expressed the vivid sensibility of the "Angry Young Men" and Jimmy Porter, its anti-hero, became the spokesman of a whole generation. Its passionate dialogue, "full of tenderness and pain", is in accordance with the literary tradition of a love-hate relationship. It is a compelling and powerful play that has something important to say about gender and relationships.

3.1 Gender and Relationships in *Look Back in Anger*

Social relations encompass many areas of interest. The components to be considered for the argument proposed are delineated onward. The appearance of a new social class in post World War II British society was represented on stage with *Look Back*. Thus, Englishness and Class are issues central to the understanding of the argument of this chapter, which is about the relation between the bullying, blue-collar Jimmy Porter and his brow bitten upper-class wife.

It is interesting to consider what the British actor Matthew Rhys remarks about his role as Jimmy Porter in the 2012 revival of *Look Back* in Broadway and about the

[214] Ibíd., p.157.
[215] Sierz, A. (1996). John Osborne and the Myth of Anger. *New Theatre Quarterly, 12*(46), pp.136-46.

different meanings of the play.[216] There follows part of an interview with actor Matthew Rhys, who plays the role of Jimmy Porter:

> TS: What do you think the play is about?
> MR: The beauty of this play and why I love it is because I've seen it many times with different actors and it means a number of things for different people. There are those who think it's a play about the abuse within the relationship and then there are those who think it's about being trapped. The play will always bring up different things for me. I find it hard to confine it to being about one thing. It's about a lot of things, which is why it appeals to a wide audience and why it's so universal.[217]

Look Back deals with the inertia and lack of resolve that were said to be typical of the welfare state. It appears to be a social play or state of the nation play containing many topical references which are indeed meaningful only to an audience of the late 1950's. But there was a dark side to this brave new post-war world: the Cold War and the abundance of nuclear weapons. Nuclear annihilation was a real fear and this was made evident in May 1956, when a civil-defence exercise took place in London and Birmingham, based on the hypothesis that 10 megatons hydrogen bombs had been dropped.[218]

This iconic play is still occasionally revived, and has established itself in the canon as a work that signals the transition toward increased directness in the language of the post-war British stage. Young male actors, Mathew Rhys remarks, remain appreciative of its long and challenging set speeches. This is made evident in the play's portrayal of gender relationships which is the main issue of this chapter. The play helped initiate a new way of showing contemporary life in the theatre. In it, gender functions centrally in the way the play is structured, conveying its social and sexual messages.

The following passage from the British Theatre Archive forms part of an interview to the writer Arnold Wesker. He significantly remarks about the fact of *Look Back* being a love story concerned with values that involve feelings such as friendship, loyalty and compassion:

> And I don't share the view that *Look Back in Anger* is a political play. I believe it's a love story, and that what I mean not political in the broadest sense of the word, the crudest sense, it was a love story and his concerns were for the passing of old-

[216] Sara Goldberg and Matthew Rhys. Photo by Joan Marcus. Roundabout Theatre Company. Fig.3, p.264 of this dissertation.
[217] Rhys, M. (Winter de 2012). A Look at Acting. (T. Sod, Entrevistador) Education Department at Roundabout Theatre Company.
[218] Osborne and Ure march to "Ban the Bomb", September 1959. Fig.4 p.264 in this dissertation.

> fashioned values. Like friendship and loyalty and compassion, I mean his anger with what's her name. Jimmy Porter's anger with. the name of the wife [LAUGHS] isn't that awful? Not Angeline, not Angelica. Well anyway. his anger with his girlfriend was that she was cold towards the woman who had done so much for the two of them. The old woman who had the sweet stall. And that's what that play's about. Old-fashioned values. And he's looking back in anger because in looking back there was a sense of honorable values and he's angry that they're lost.[219]

Bearing in mind the oft mean-spirited attacks on *Look Back*, it is time to rescue the play from the enormous condescension of posterity and acknowledge once again its continued contemporary relevance. On stage, its spirit of attack and combative air is still thrilling. Osborne's challenge to conventional wisdom and cant is still inspiring. This new theatre was a form of dissidence since it contested hegemonic previous practices. Nowadays and under present conditions, to insist on the importance of feelings, as he did, may seem excessive, but then excess was a political response against the moderation preached by the dominant classes.

Look Back (1956) is mainly remembered as a play "in which rebelliousness and disillusionment shout themselves hoarse for no reason at all in the person of Jimmy Porter."[220] On stage, Jimmy vents his anger so powerfully that he seems to be keeping a kettle of real bitterness constantly on the boil. The central aim of this chapter is to follow the line of plausibility that made this play a credible or truthful emotional experience for so many spectators. For this matter, we will answer the following question in relation to Jimmy's bad mood: Why is Jimmy angry and desperate? Jimmy Porter's most celebrated line, "there aren't any good, brave causes left" although evidently untrue, is made in the context of rhetorically attacking women and this is the point to be discussed here. In Act Three, Scene One, he remarks "in his familiar, semi-serious mood": "There aren't any good, brave causes left" which recapitulates the previous line in which he declares: "I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and forties, when we were still kids"[221] and at the same time echoes Jimmy's Act One speech about homosexuals who "seem to have a cause."[222] Jimmy constantly feels himself as being trapped between an ideal past which can only be remembered and a present which is

[219] Wesker, A. (19 de 12 de 2003). Theatre Archive Project. (E. Jeffrey, Entrevistador)
[220] Blamires, H. (1979). *A Short History of English Literature.* London: Methuen, p.408.
[221] *L.B.*, p.84.
[222] Ibid.

unfulfilling for him and that only reminds him of the poverty of ideals which surround him.

Emotionally, the past releases in him feelings that lead him nowhere and turn into senseless aggression which is aimed at women. Jimmy's only and total allegiance is to his own being so he attacks every part of his wife in which he does not see himself. The following speech, for example, begins as follows: "Why, why. Why, why, do we let these women bleed us dry", and ends in a similar vein: "No, there's nothing left for it, me boy, but to let yourself be butchered by the women."[223] It contains images of blood and this litany of whys echoes Alison's desperate cry in Act Two Scene One: "Why, why, why, why! (…) That word's pulling my head off!"[224] So the political idea that "There aren't any brave causes left" is sandwiched between two highly rhetorical and declamatory Strindbergian speeches with verbal attacks on womanhood and which contain strong echoes of the curtain line to Act One. "She'll go on sleeping and devouring me until there's nothing left of me."[225] Women are depicted in this play as enemies, bloodsuckers of manhood and annihilators of male potency. On 14 November 1956, Osborne wrote a provocative article in the *Daily Mail* titled "What's gone wrong with Women?" which starts as follows:

> A revolution is taking place, a revolution that affects every of us, politically, socially and personally. . . This revolution is in the relationships between men and women, and the results of it are touching every aspect of English life. . . I am constantly being asked: What are you angry about? What really angers me is not so much the situation in which I see ourselves, but the refusal of nearly everyone to recognize it.
>
> I believe, a great deal of this is due to the fact that we are becoming dominated by female values, by the characteristic female indifference to anything but immediate, personal suffering.[226]

In 2001, Peter Buse attempted a psychological reading of *Look Back* by using the concept of desire theorized by French psychologist Jacques Lacan in his essay "The Significance of the phallus"[227], first published in 1958. According to Buse, Jimmy's 'petulant demands' for newspapers, food, drink and attention exemplify precisely the Lacanian 'big Other' while the apparent contradiction between his insistent desire for

[223] Ibid.
[224] *L.B.*, p.54.
[225] *L.B.*, p.38.
[226] Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber, pp.255-8.
[227] Lacan, J. (1977). The Signification of the Phallus, 1958. In A. Sheridan, & A. Sheridan (Ed.), *Ecrits: A Selection* (pp. 280-291). New York: Norton.

love and his constant dismissal of love are also consistent with Lacanian theory. According to this same theory, the interpretation of the last scene in which Jimmy stays on with Alison is the following: "Here is desire in all its perversity – it is not really interested in getting what it wants, but is instead obsessed by the lack or loss which propels it."[228]

Look Back is about the fascinating and heartbreaking relationship and the failure awareness experienced by the married couple formed by Jimmy Porter and Alison, focus of our analysis. By focusing on the reasons (why) of Jimmy Porter's anger, the play's implied logic of realistic representation *(vraisemblance*) will be revealed to the audience, thus reflecting a symbolic (and not a mechanical) functionalist convention of reality on stage.

The marriage of the Porter's was based on Osborne's marriage with Pamela, his first wife, although he always denied it (he married five times). The relationship between the play's central characters, Jimmy and Alison, has been turned into readily identifiable symbols: the front-cover illustration of Aleks Sierz's *John Osborne's Look Back in Anger* (2008) is a wonderful example of this. The design shows an ironing board with a red tie draped over it. The ironing board conveys a sense of traditional domestic drudgery while the tie is a clear phallic symbol, its colour signifying anger with a hint of left-wing radicalism and voicing a chapter by Gilleman that reads "Osborne's Phallic Art" of his book *Vituperative*.[229] It can even resemble Jimmy's symbolic musical instrument, the jazz trumpet. As soundscape of the play, a trumpet played offstage is excellently contrived to create an atmosphere of breaking nerves on stage. Musical rhythms are also evoked by Jimmy's infatuation with jazz. There is a comical moment in the play were he spontaneously switches into vaudeville song-and-dance routines which he executes with the help of friend Cliff.

3.2 The Setting in the Original Production and the Role of Gender

The attitude towards women in this play is revealed in the setting. In it we can see how the ironing board has become a prop and a key feature in the design of the posters for different further productions of the play. Part of the immediate shock of

[228] Buse, P. (2001). *Drama + Theory: Critical Approaches to Modern Britsh Drama*. Manshester: Manshester University Press, p.19.
[229] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.1.

Look Back lays in the impact of its setting; a hothouse domestic focus of the one-room setting evoked a sense of stifling domesticity. The most powerful early statement of Osborne's social awareness is his comment about it, written in the *Preface* to the Evans Acting Edition of *Look Back*: "People who believe that the setting of *Look Back* is unutterably squalid are simply unaware of the facts of life, that there is a housing shortage, that a great many houses are not only old, dirty, and hideous, but are unaware of the ugliness of their own surroundings, ugliness they have helped create themselves."[230] The set was an act of semiotic vandalism in the social context of 1950's Britain and challenged almost point by point the iconography of the bourgeois living room and the country-house drawing room, delineating a living space in a contemporary Midland town. As the play opens, Alison dominates the action in visual terms by standing at the ironing board, thus revealing the domestic labour that is normally hidden in the so called well-made play. It is well considering that this domestic activity is performed by a woman, even though she is not represented by a servant in the domestic setting and that the emotional attention of the play relies on Jimmy.

Martin Banham (1969) asserts that "the setting is a revolution in itself." He states that, "the audience was invited to look into a world that was singularly sordid but real." To him, "the set was a real challenge to the audience's sensitivity and stomach."[231] The setting of the play – the Porters one-room flat in a large Midland town – meant a theatrical revolution in itself and its visual impact cannot be over-estimated. The audience was invited to look into a world that was drab but at the same time real and to many people comparable only with such plays as Gorky's *The Lower Depths* (produced by the Moscow Arts Theatre on December 18th, 1902). The props used in *Look Back* were minimal consisting of a gas stove, a chest of drawers littered with clothing, books, etc, light from a skylight, the hero slouched in an old armchair reading a paper, the heroine ironing in the middle of the room dressed in one of her husband's old shirts.[232] In the simplicity of the setting, John Osborne invites the audience to be concerned with the housing problems of 1956 England. Hence, "It was realistic as it was sordid."[233] Significant sections of the British population at the end of the 1950's

[230] Osborne, J. (1957 First edition, first printing ed.). *Look Back in Anger, A Play in Three Acts.* London: Evans Brothers.
[231] Banham, M. (1969). *Osborne.* Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd Ltd, pp.12-13.
[232] Ibid., p.13.
[233] Langhamer, Claire. "The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain." *Journal of Contemporary History* 40.2 (2005): pp.341-362.

still remained excluded from the home-centred society. Housing need at the time remained a crucial political issue. Then, a focus upon the home, its significance, meanings and the lived experiences and relationships within it allows the reader/ spectator to explore the tension between past, present and future within post-war Britain and encourages the reader/audience to see the decade of 1950's as "a period of instability rather than unthinking smug conventionality."[234] In this way, James Obelkevich remarks that "the one post-war trend that stands out above all the rest is the growing significance of the home."[235] This writing style had a combative air in this time. After all, national identity in Britain seemed to be at stake and "Kitchen Sink Drama" became the cultural revenge of upwardly mobile lower-middle class writers against what they perceived to be an elite group of snobbish effete and Europhile dramatists. To the imagined effeminacy, they counterpoised a muscular masculinity. Abstract ideals were countered by down-to-earth writing. At the end of the 1950's housing need remained a crucial political issue and significant sections of the British population still remained excluded from the home-centred society.

Reviewers described the set, which had been designed by Alan Tagg, as "shabby", "sordid" or "squalid." "The household squalor is a little overdone", opined the *Financial Times*.[236] It is curious to notice that, despite the fact that the play was later seen as the harbinger of "Kitchen Sink Drama", there is no kitchen sink shown up in production photographs. But, since the room is an attic, there is a cistern placed at the front of the stage. In this first production,[237] Jimmy's laddish behaviour is emphasized by a box which bears the legend BEER IS BEST and its politics of disillusionment among young people is conveyed by a newspaper poster about rising prices which is pinned to the wall with the following legend: UP AGAIN: BREAD PHONES SMOKES.[238] In this production, the musical element was also a theatrical device which loads the play with added meaning for the audience: "Each curtain went up with dead-beat traditional jazz with plenty of trumpet" and "at the end of the first scene in Act II

---

[234] Hall, L. (2000). *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880.* Basingtoke.

[235] Obelkevich, J., & Catterall, P. (1994). *Understanding post-war British Society.* London and New York: Routledge.

[236] Taylor, R. (1978). *Art an Enemy of the People.* Brighton: Harvester, pp. 9,14 and 28.

[237] Kneale, N., Osborne, J. (Writers), & Richardson, T. (Director). (1959). *Look Back in Anger* [Motion Picture].

[238] The first production of *Look Back in Anger*, with left to right Kenneth Haigh as Jimmy Porter, Alan Bates as Cliff Lewis, Mary Ure as Alison Porter, June 1956. Fig.5, p.265 in this dissertation.

Bunk Johnson's "Just a closer walk with thee" was brought in, harsh and loud."[239] Other mood music was that of Vaughan Williams' Symphony in E.

The cast included Kenneth Haigh (Jimmy), Mary Ure (Alison) and Alan Bates (Cliff). On the Lord Chamberlain's insistence, the play's production had nine changes, including "the cutting of a lavatory", a "homosexual" reference and the alteration of a phrase that contained the words "excessive love making."[240] Haigh's style emphasized Jimmy's declamatory rudeness, his rhetorical hectoring and his deliberate antagonism, while Ure went on ironing "with a look of blanched sorrow on her face, which is white and exhausted after a hundred sleepless nights, tormented by a hundred ceaseless headaches."[241] The acting was probably quite raw, and some witnesses of the event remembered unforgettable "moments of naked emotion", such as "Haigh's breathless, feverish incredulity when Jimmy Porter returned from the funeral to find that Alison had just walked out on him."[242] Osborne remembers one drawback of this casting; he was aware that whenever Haigh "wasn't feeling it", referring to the whole and full interpretation of the character created by him, he would miss out a speech. So, not every performance was exactly the same.

According to Professor Luc Gilleman's article: "From Coward and Rattigan to Osborne: or the Enduring Importance of *Look Back in Anger.*"

> The "Angry Young Man" is synonymous with the following: impatience with the status quo, refusal to be co-opted by a bankrupt society, an instinctive solidarity with lower classes, an undisciplined energy and an angry ambition that leads to unsuitable matches with the upper class.[243]

A critical analysis of the so called 'Angry Young Men' illustrates the dilemmas, hopes and possibilities for action that defined the central characters that dominated the plays, films and novels of the time. The fact was that they were men and they were young and this was read primarily in sociological terms, but its label must be also related to a gender analysis. This is not only a question of how women are represented in the period and of how the relationship between class, politics and gender is

---

[239] *L.B.*, n.pag.

[240] De Jongh, N. (2000). *Politics, Prudery and Perversions: The Censoring of the English Stage 1901-1968.* London: Methuen.

[241] Hobson, H. (1984). *Theatre in Britain: A Personal View.* Oxford: Phaidon, p.90.

[242] Hayman, R. (1979). *British Theatre Since 1955: A Reassessment.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.90.

[243] Gilleman, L. (2008). From Coward and Rattigan to Osborne: Or the Enduring Importance of Look Back in Anger. *Modern Drama , 51* (1), pp.104-25.

constructed. The connection between class/social positions and sexual insecurity are vividly made clear in *Look Back* where class resentment (struggle is too strong a word for it) is inseparable from an antagonism towards and fear of women. Thus, the connection between class, social positions and sexual insecurity is central to the way the play is structured. In its rhetoric, it could easily be anti-gay and anti-female (chapter four of this dissertation). Jimmy Porter is a semi-educated, seedy, desperate young man, whose longing for refinement has trapped him into marrying a woman socially his superior. Although he is too vulgar, disagreeable and uncouth to make of himself a tragic hero, his predicament, which is that of the individual's isolation in his environment, has endowed him with tragic dimensions. "Jimmy, who is content to run a sweets stall, is not concerned about lack of money. The cause of his frustration is not that obvious; what rankles in him is the realization that he does not 'belong'."[244]

3.3 A Conventional Critical Response to the Play

In a conventional critical examination of human interaction, one chooses the beginning term of a series of withdrawals and provocations most often in accordance with one's own sympathies and allegiances. With relationships between individuals of such an aggressive nature it is no wonder that Jimmy's and even Alison's speeches should be teeming with expressions of war imagery. Through the use of similes, Porter names two types of enemies: women and the Establishment. Women are depicted as bellicose individuals. In this way, watching Alison go to bed he notices her warlike manners: "The way she jumps on the bed, as if she were stamping on someone's face, and draws the curtains back with a great clatter, in that casually destructive way of hers. It's like someone launching a battleship."[245]

A good pretext for Jimmy is to launch into a diatribe against women as a whole, accusing them of being noisy with their weapons (i.e. their cosmetics) and basically aggressive, as testified by the example of the two girls who once shared a house with him: "with those two, even a simple visit to the lavatory sounded like a medieval siege."[246] Nevertheless, we have to consider that he says all this jokingly and

[244] Balakian, N. (1959). The Flight From Innocence: England's Newest Literary Generation. *Books Abroad , 33* (3), p.264.
[245] *L.B.*, p.24.
[246] *L.B.*, p.25.

affectionately. Osborne recognized the humorous tone of his play in conversation with Richard Findlater:

> I remember that at the preview of *Look Back in Anger*, on the night before it officially opened, there was a packed house- unlike the premiere- with a lot of students, and people laughed all the way through. But George and Tony [George Devine and Tony Richardson]said, "Why are they laughing?" And I said, to both of them, "Because it's supposed to be funny."[247]

What does the word "Man" in Angry Young Man (AYM) connote? At a time when women (and Alison is a good example) were often metaphors for suffering and symbols of victimisation, men were imagined as active subjects, even if the activity leads nowhere. Masculinity equalled freedom and mobility. *Look Back* is typical of its decade in that the class war was fought in the bedroom, an example of what Anthony Burgess called "hypergamy", meaning marriage by a man into a social class higher than his own.[248] In *Lucky Jim, That Uncertain Feeling, Look Back, Room at the Top,* the hero who is of working class origin, is married to or involved in a public liaison with middle to upper middle-class women, despite the fact that he doesn't really enjoy it at all in the long run.

The 1944 Education Act and its sequels had enormously speeded up this process, so that the university education which was formally the culmination of two or three generations of earnest striving on the part of the whole family, was from then on available to the sons (apparently much less to the daughters) of working class families if they were bright enough, and tough enough. Although higher social class had not been determined entirely by education in England, it was probably the single most important component of class. Considering that *Look Back* (1956) deals with the theme of a gently nurtured upper middle-class girl (Alison) who is strangely magnetised by a lower class intellectual (Jimmy Porter), this chapter is a detailed study of the tension created between the married couple. The play pulses with energy; Jimmy and Alison are a warring couple and in a short time span, the emotional space between them dilates, contracts, and dilates again. This mechanism reaches its highest point in Act I when Jimmy in an excess of physical action, smashes on to Alison's ironing board. As a consequence she burns her arm, and her scream of pain and disgust chases him out of

[247] Findlater, R. (1981). On the Writer's Side In Conversation With Richard Findlater. In R. Findlater, *At The Royal Court: 25 Years of the English Stage Company* (pp. 19-26). Derbyshire.
[248] Gorer, G. (1957). The Perils of Hypergamy. *The New Statement and Nation,* p.53.

the room. "There's hardly a moment when I'm not – watching and wanting you", Jimmy says afterwards in explanation "I've got to hit out somehow."[249]

In a personal correspondence with Amanda Knott (artistic director of Creative Cow Theatre Company), about her job as a theatre practitioner and her experience in the revival of *Look Back*, she writes in these terms about the 2011 production of the play: "it has no physical violence in it and no bad language. Merely an angry young man whose frustrations get the better of him."[250] With this assumption in mind we can readily agree about the importance of Jimmy's role in the play, the tone of humour found in it and of how, in spite of apparently looking as such, Alison is not really portrayed by Osborne as a battered woman. Amanda Knott's remark in her e-mail message also acknowledges the play's relevance in the history of drama: "It will be the 55th Anniversary Tour of John Osborne's masterpiece. When it was first performed at London's Royal Court in 1956, it was regarded as a turning point in modern drama and subsequently gave rise to the phrase 'angry young man'."[251]

Osborne was conscious that some critics had taken offense, when he wrote in 1993:

> Somewhere in the world the play is performed every night. People are bemused, dismayed or, I hope, exhilarated by it and driven to laughter. There have been homosexual and black versions. The lesbian angle must surely be to come. Misogyny is attached to it forever, and the American-Freud view of Jimmy and Cliff as lovers is still irresistible to academics and feminists alike. It's an old war horse that has paid my rent for a lifetime, and seems able to bear the burden of whatever caparison is placed upon its laden back.[252]

Misogyny is a hatred of women, which is expressed both as a fear of the female figure, such as Jimmy's idea of Alison's sexuality as having "the passion of a Python. She just devours me whole every time",[253] and as a male desire to dominate women. From this point of view, Osborne is interpreted as harbouring very strong anti-feminist ideas. He stages the confrontation between Jimmy and Alison in terms which emphasize her biological vulnerability. According to Wandor (1981),[254] *Look Back* can't be read as a misogynist play and precisely because it is about the crisis of mid-twentieth century virility that it is important. Jimmy complains about Alison's lack of feeling; he would

---

[249] *L.B.*, p.33.

[250] *Look Back in Anger* 2011 revival. Creative Cow touring repertory Theatre Company, Exeter (England). Fig.6, p.265 in this dissertation.

[251] Knott, A. (2011, June 5). «'Re:From Amanda Knott creative cow Look Back in Anger'.» *Email to Maria del Mar Vega.*

like to wake her up of her 'beauty sleep',[255] to conceive a child and then miscarry. For Wandor, Alison's capacity for motherhood frightens Jimmy, as a consequence wishes her to suffer rather than enjoy pregnancy and is satisfied when she cannot have any more children after her miscarriage.

The plot of *Look Back* is a conventional one. On the surface it tells the story of the marital failure between two people from different social classes, the problems of such a union, the wife leaving the scene and her eventual return. The action requires characters to be isolated from the outside world in an entrapping room. It is concerned with the increasing destructive consequences of an unhappy marriage between Jimmy Porter, a young working class intellectual with some of the attributes of other characters such as Marchbanks, Stanley Kowalski and Rupert Birkin, and Alison Redfern, a beautiful, sensitive girl who has left the apparent security of her upper middle-class family to live with Jimmy in bohemian poverty but emotional intensity. He represents an unsuitable suitor for her and her father's worst of fears. At one point in *Look Back*, Osborne mentions a "proper little Marchbanks",[256] an allusion to Shaw's 1897 play *Candida,* which aptly enough is as much about male chauvinism as about philistinism. Though Jimmy is working class, he has profited from the "free education for all" schemes that were introduced after the war. He recently graduated from one of the newer universities not even "redbrick" but "white tile" as he says.

Jimmy vents his anger on his upper-class wife Alison and everything that makes her attitude of silent withdrawal typical of her class and of society at large. "All this time, I have been married to this woman, this monument to non-attachment, and suddenly I discover that there is actually a word that sums her up" Jimmy says.[257] That word is "Pusillanimous." This accusation is made in the personal context of a marriage firmly cemented in unhappiness and enduring because each of the partners is trapped into the others neurosis.

What happens between characters on stage will be the main point of analysis here. In a conventional critical response to realistic drama, interaction is talked of as a

---

[252] Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber, p.49.
[253] *L.B.*, I, p.37.
[254] Wandor, M. (1987). *Look Back in Anger: Sexuality and the Family in Post-War British Drama.* London: Methuen.
[255] Ibid.
[256] *L.B.*, p.18.
[257] *L.B.*, p.21.

function of character. But in a pragmatic approach the interactional dynamics foregrounds and everything else (character, plot, ideas) works as a function of it. The difference in approach becomes crucial in an interaction such as that of *Look Back*, which consists in a series of withdrawals (on the part of Alison) and provocations (on the part of Jimmy). In Osborne's words "drama rests on the dynamic that is created between characters on the stage. It must be concrete and it must be expressed, even if it is only in silence or a gesture of despair. The theatre is not a schoolroom, nor is it, as many people seem to think, a place where discussion takes place, where ideas are apparently formally examined in the manner of a solitary show-off, in an intellectual magazine."[258]

The attitude of opposition and resistance was struck in Tynan's first review, which praised the play's "drift towards anarchy, the instinctive leftishness, the automatic rejection of 'official' attitudes." He already observed the circularity of the interaction between the couple as early as 1957. Spectators could see themselves reflected in the characters' attitude:

> Mr Osborne's picture of a certain kind of modern marriage is hilariously accurate; he shows us two attractive young animals engaged in competitive martyrdom, each with its teeth sank deep in the others neck, and each reluctant to break the clinch for fear of bleeding to death.[259]

Significantly, British film in the 1990's also offers an at-a-glance view of an emergent masculine culture. Like theatre, British film had suffered a crisis of funding in the 1980's and was struggling to support new work. Significant among the films that helped to revive the fortunes of the cinema industry in the 1990's, were those that variously represented masculinity in crisis with an innovative film-making style that aesthetically captured the mood of disaffection and its attendant sub-cultural world. The adaptation of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1996)[260] gave expression to a 1990's generation of Thatcher's children, disaffected young men who, in the absence of any purpose – political, social or otherwise – lead directionless lives in an urban world of designer drug-taking. The success of the film was in part due to a drug-taking lifestyle.

---

[258] Carter, Alan. *John Osborne.* Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1969. John Osborne, preface to an excerpt of *The Entertainer in Writers' Theatre,* ed. Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall (London: Heinemann, 1967), and qtd. in Alan Carter as motto to his monograph, *John Osborne*.

[259] Tynan, K. (1956, May 3). "The Voice of the Young" Review of Look Back in Anger. *London Observer,* p.8.

[260] Welsh, I. (Writer), & Boyle, D. (Director). (1996). *Trainspotting* [Motion Picture].

Undeniably, the title of Osborne's play *Look Back* seems key to all this. Hence, to the much repeated question 'what is he angry about?', Hollis, writing with deliberate facetiousness, remarks:

> I wish that I could understand who the angry young men are, how many of them are and what they are angry about (…) Mr Colin Wilson had spent a weekend in my house and gone away again before I ever suspected that he was supposed to be angry, and then I only suspected it because I read it in the newspaper.[261]

Jimmy Porter seems to be angry about everything. He is trapped in domestic politics and hits at political targets (say, the H-Bomb, the prime minister and the middle-classes) which are intertwined with his attacks on friends and lovers. As Stephen Lacey has persuasively argued, "Porter's opinions are not directed out to the audience, or even naturalised as political opinions, but are part of Jimmy's psychological warfare with Alison" and occasionally Cliff.[262]

Look Back meant an oft-celebrated emotional impact, but what is to be analysed and argued here is the sound articulation of the structure responsible for the play's historical importance in the accounts of literary history. Firstly, we shall consider what John Osborne once said "I want to make people feel, to give them lessons in feeling. They can think afterwards." At the end of the article he writes:

> I am not going to define my own socialism. Socialism is an experimental idea, not a dogma; an attitude to truth and liberty, the way people should live and treat each other. Individual definitions are unimportant. The difference between Socialist and Tory values should have been made clear enough by this time. I am a writer and my own contribution to a socialist society is to demonstrate those values in my own medium (the theatre), not to discover the best ways of implementing them. I don't need to step outside my own house to canvass for the Labour Party.
>
> Years ago, TS Eliot wrote: "In a society like ours, worm-eaten with Liberalism, the only thing possible for a person with strong convictions is to state a point of view and leave it at that." Substitute Toryism for Liberalism, and I'd say that this very roughly sums up my present socialist attitude, an experimental attitude to feeling. All the fields of experiment must be tackled by their own experts-economists and sociologists, town planners and educationists, industrial psychologists, observers, lawmakers and truth seekers."
>
> "Nobody can be very interested in my contribution to a problem like the kind of houses people should have built for them, the kind of school they should send their children to, or the pensions they should be able to look forward to. But there are other questions to be asked – how do people live inside those houses? What is their relationship with one another, and with their children, with their neighbours and the people across the street, or on the floor above? What are the things that are important to them, that make them care, give them hope and anxiety?

[261] Hollis, C. (1957). Keeping Up With the Rices. *Spectator* (CXCIX), pp.504-505.

[262] Lacey, S. (1995). *British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in its Context 1956-1965*. London and New York: Routledge, p.12.

> What kind of language do they use to one another? What is the meaning of the work they do? Where does the pain lie? What are their expectations? What moves them, brings them together, makes them speak out? Where is the weakness, the loneliness? Where are the things that are 'unrealized'? Where is the strength? Experiment means asking questions, and these are all the questions of socialism."[263]

Not only is Osborne concerned with the way people feel like in their daily life but at the same time he questions their happiness:

> Most of us can, at the moment, confidently expect to live at a reasonably comfortable material level, but very few of us can be rich. What kind of energy is it that is directed principally on behalf of good old number one? Is it going to make us happy?[264]

According to Professor Luc Gilleman: "For Osborne, vituperation was to affect the miracle of self-levitation by which a genuinely vital art would come to stand free from a constraining narrative trellis." [265]

In this way, Osborne pointed out that the theatre is neither "a school-room" nor a place for discussion and examination, and if there are any lessons to be taught, they should be lessons in feeling, which in itself would become meaning. So any literary analysis of an Osborne play that starts by separating form from content and aims at evaluating ideas rather than rhetoric or "poetry" will end up dismissing it as a tangle of contradictions. This is not always typical of other realistic plays such as those of Bernard Shaw for example, which Osborne disliked, because in them critical translation forms part of the very make-up of the play and occasionally reveals itself in long argumentative speeches. But in Osborne's plays, ideas are rarely fully developed and instead are bandied about, sometimes resulting in thematic inconsistency or vagueness. Osborne adviced the actors in his plays in the following terms: "Let the text surprise you, as if it took you off balance, and lift you up even further into the battle of defeat and confusion. Take the words *out of the air*."[266]

David Hare became aware of how the plays had aroused powerful feelings: "For those of us still shaken by the events on stage, it seemed clearer than ever that John's trilogy of *Look Back* (1956), *The Entertainer* (1957) and *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964)

---

[263] Osborne, J. (1957). They Call it Cricket. *Declaration*, pp.61-84.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.22.
[266] Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber, p.48.

are not important for what they are said to have removed from the English stage – good taste, irony, deflection, lame jokes, and rigidly chewed upper lips – but revolutionary for what everyone now forgets they put in their place. I mean strong feeling."[267] Admittedly, the plotting of Osborne's play is somewhat clunky. Its characters spend much of their time telling the audience their life stories, and Helena's exit at the end is an unrealistic dramatic device to bring Jimmy and Alison back together again. And considering what is of relevance for our argument about communication in human relationships, Osborne writes in the following terms about this issue: "…Now when the techniques of communication are almost boundless, there has never seemed to be so little to say to one another, or so little desire to say it."[268] Alison's silence is perceived as another weapon and a threat to Jimmy's own voice.

Arnold Wesker talks about language and relationships in the following terms:

> EJ: You say that the idea that conflict in life is rooted in a failure to communicate is one of the most fatuous notions to grow out of the sixties'. Could expand on this a bit, and do you think the theatre of the sixties propagated this view?
>
> AW: Well, look, again, I'm not a scholar, I'm not an academic, I haven't investigated this in depth. I'm talking as an observer of the scene. And people talked a lot about the failure, people failing to communicate, and that's what Harold Pinter's plays are about, the failure of communication. And I just thought, well actually the reverse happens. I think people fight each other because they communicate their dislike and hated of each other only too well. People have a. they smell each other out. They just have an instinct about other people that. people do communicate. They may not say the words but they communicate something. And you know whether you want to spend time with someone or whether you don't want to spend time with them. So, I.I just think people make easy and facile statements. To explain things, and I didn't think that carried weight. It didn't seem to carry the weight people attributed to it.[269]

These ideas about people, the way they feel and whether they feel happy or not in their daily lives is, according to Osborne, what theatre should be concerned with.

In the quoted and part of the same interview quoted below, Arnold Wesker speaks about the way Osborne related with the people around him:

> But he used to have these enormous summer parties when he lived in Surrey; he had a house in Surrey. And the world came. Everybody came. It was very lavish. Champagne and food and things for the kids, "Bring the kids!" he'd say and, and dogs. So it was difficult not to have an affection for him I was I felt critical about the plays as they came out one by one, but still he had a quality of passion that I think is missing from contemporary drama. It was a.it was a.what he's on record as saying is

[267] Hare, D. (2005). A Defense of The New. In D. Hare, *Obedience, Struggle & Revolt*. London: Faber,p.39.
[268] Osborne, J. (1966). On Critics and Criticism. *The Sunday Telegraph*.
[269] Wesker, A. (19 de 12 de 2003). Theatre Archive Project. (E. Jeffrey, Interviewer).

> that "I want people to feel, in the theatre, I want my plays to make people feel" and I understand that, but I don't think it's enough. They have to think as well. But I've always believed, and I don't know if I wrote this in my autobiography, but the reason why he had to feel is because he had a mother who had no feelings, and so feelings very important to him. I mean, he looked after her, this mother, he was a very good son in the end and in his autobiographies, I don't know if you've read them, they're beautiful, elegant and moving, the critics said how awful he was about his mum but I don't think he was. I think that given the kind of unfeeling woman that she was he was very good with her, understanding, he made explanations to excuse her behaviour but he never really forgave her because she didn't give him the love and emotion he wanted. So that's why I think he felt that.[270]

In this way, the play's implied logic of realistic representation, which demands that the action and events in a play should be believable (*vraisemblance*), would reflect a symbolic (not mechanical) functionalist convention of reality on stage (against a previous stale convention). This is what reaches the audience/reader. What is important in the first place is to find the reason of Jimmy Porter's anger and despair by answering to the following question: Why is Jimmy Porter angry and desperate? The answer to this question is central for a sound reading of the play. The motivation behind this anger, through a study of the human interaction taking place in the play, leads to an understanding of the aesthetical and ideological consequences of this *vraisemblance* (which demands that the actions and events should be believable). Anger is defined in the field of emotion studies by Sianne Nagai in *Ugly Feelings*[271] in the following terms: The term "emotion" designates a particular feeling experienced by somebody, while "emotionality" refers to a quality or a potential. Emotionality is the (often latent) ability to be emotional, whereas emotions are specific manifestations of emotionality. But this analysis of individual emotions often ignores the fact that emotions easily transform from one into the other. If there is no change in the fundamental situation, fear might give rise to anger, which might turn into sadness that gives way to pleasure. This shows that individual emotions are different interpretations and evaluations of a given emotional state being in the case of *Look Back* that of vituperation.

3.4 A Pragmatic Approach: "Family myth" and "Paradox" in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*

A reading of *Look Back* from a pragmatic approach will be useful as a critical tool to find an answer to the problem of Jimmy's mood. This may seem trivial yet it is

[270] Ibid.
[271] Ngai, S. (2005). *Ugly Feelings.* USA: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.

only apparently so. We are, in fact, interested in the line of plausibility, which made this play a credible or truthful emotional experience for so many spectators.

Look Back turned to be one of the first examples of language-oriented realism. Osborne wants to put on stage people of flesh and blood who exhibit a natural fitfulness. According to critic Alan Carter (1969), the type of characters he creates for this play poised "heat", "a kind of emotional glow" burned inside them. In the circumstances of 1956, the flames leapt high: JIMMY. …I may write a book about us all. It's all here. Written in flames a mile high. And it won't be recollected in tranquillity either, picking daffodils with Auntie Wordsworth. It'll be recollected in fire, and blood. My blood.[272]

In this speech it seemed that Osborne had ripped out an inner part of him and tossed it bleeding, onto the stage. Osborne has been criticised for being angry with everything, for spreading his attack so widely that he cannot in effect be angry about anything. Critics have thus tried to respond to the question of what Jimmy Porter is angry about and this has led them to arrive to a partial understanding of his behaviour which has been reflected in different reviews about his work. Benedict Nightingale was quick to point out that, although Osborne's Jimmy Porter seems resolute when he asserts in his most celebrated line that "there aren't any good brave causes left", this was evidently untrue, as we have already argued in the previous chapter. It is also significant that the play's classic statement "there aren't any brave causes left" speech begins as follows: "Why, why, why, why do we let these women bleed us to death?" First seen as an attack on society, the play's plot is actually based on the degradation of women. Osborne's boyish image at the time of Suez had less to do with politics than with misogyny. In November 1956, Osborne wrote a provocative *Daily Mail* article, in which he blustered: "What's Gone Wrong with Women?" and in which he claimed that his anger was "due to the fact that we are becoming dominated by female values, and by the female indifference to anything but immediate, personal suffering."[273] As the New Left's critic Stuart Hall wrote in 1961, Osborne tries to "burn his way into the tangled subliminal area where the issues of politics and the issues of love and sex merge, mingle and collide."[274]

---

[272] *L.B.*, II, i, p.54.

[273] Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber, pp.255-258.

[274] Sierz, A. (2008). *John Osborne's Look Back in Anger.* London and New York: Continuum Modern Theatre Guides, p.p. 38-39.

In a review written by Osborne about Tennessee Williams, published in the *Observer* (20 January 1957) and titled "Sex and Failure", he suggests that a playwright is merely explaining how he would have written the plays (Osborne, 1957).[275] He praises the plays of Tennessee Williams for their portrayal of suffering and considers critics to be "an assault on the army of the tender-minded and tough-hearted, the emotion snobs who believe that protest is something vulgar, and to be sorry is to be sorry for oneself." The plays of Tennessee Williams are about failure which is what makes human beings interesting, and in reply to those critics who say that the characters are neurotic and therefore too exceptional, Osborne remarks:

> Adler said somewhere that the neurotic is like the normal individual only more so. A neurotic is not less adequate than an auditorium full of "normals." Every character trait is a neurotic writ small. I like my plays writ large and that is how these are written… These plays tell us something about what is happening in America and that is something we must know about. Lacking a live culture of our own, we are drawing more heavily than ever on that of the United States… America is as sexually obsessed as a medieval monastery. That is what these plays are about: sex.[276]

Gilleman's pragmatic approach to *Look Back* helps to achieve a sound articulation of its structure. Thus, concepts such as family myth and paradox derived from a "family interactionism"[277] grounded in Gregory Bateson's early work on schizophrenia are deployed to create a verbal illusion of interaction in plays such as *Look Back.* The shared "family myth" consists of a silent agreement among members concerning their mutual position and their respective roles in the interaction. Communication affects behaviour and this is its pragmatic aspect. The correlation or even the coalescence of words and action is what most clearly distinguishes theatre from literature. It is thus a study of the language game of modern drama in which characters obsessively clarify and explain situations only to find themselves, ever deeper in a muddle of confusion. This realistic play possesses a *vraisemblance,* a method of recreating reality, which demands from the critic a different analytic approach in order to articulate the theatrical experience.

---

[275] Osborne, J. (n.d.). Sex and Failure. Review of Tennesse Willians's Four Plays, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Baby Doll. *The Observer* .

[276] Ibid.

[277] Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind: Collected Essays in Antropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology.* New York: Paladin Granada. The coinage "family interactionism" is Peter Sedgwick's, used in his review "Laing's Clangs", New Society 15 January 1970.

John Osborne: A Casebook, published by P. D. Denison[278] includes a chapter by Gilleman in which he approaches *Look Back* from a pragmatic point of view. Thus, Gilleman's pragmatic approach to *Look Back* is based on Bateson's study of human relations. In this way, from non mechanistic cybernetics and systems theory, Bateson's approach derives the belief that human relationships are circularly patterned, making the durability of apparently unendurable relationships more intelligible. The withdrawal-provocation pattern established in *Look Back* between Alison and Jimmy is not a linear but a dynamic cyclic structure. Both are trapped up in a marital relation and are unable to escape. In the field of pragmatics the play does not make sense if we listen to what the characters say and fail to take into account how and why they say it, what goes on between people and how that affects their behavior.

Jimmy is not satisfied with anything less than total allegiance to his being and his verbal attacks are targeted against his wife especially in those aspects in which he does not recognize his own being. He feels particular vicious toward people that could reasonably be expected to lay some other claim on her; Alison's own family, for instance, and Helena, a friend of hers whom he disapproves of. Betrayal becomes under these conditions the natural corollary of love and the central theme of the play, embodied in the uneasy relationship between the characters in the play. According to Gilleman,[279]Osborne's notebooks include references to the Biblical story of Judas, which he always hoped to turn into a play. It was never written, but its dramatic possibilities and relevance to Osborne's thinking are obvious. Apart from featuring a love kiss that spells betrayal, it equates love with assimilation or devouring (Judas is present at the Last Supper when Jesus offers his body and blood to his disciples) and assimilation, in turn, with betrayal (in John 13:27, it is Christ's offer of his body that effectively turns Judas into a traitor). Jimmy's conviction that he is being betrayed makes him search his wife's belongings "to see if there is something of me somewhere, a reference to me." He furiously rifles her handbag, remarks "I want to know if I'm being betrayed"[280] and reads her letters in search of himself: "she writes long letters

[278] Gilleman, L. (1997). The Logic of Anger and Despair: A Pragmatic Appoach to Look Back in Anger. In P. D. Denison, *John Osborne: A Casebook* (p.p.71-90). New York and London.
[279] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge.
[280] *L.B.*, p.36.

back to Mummy, and never mentions me at all, because I am just a dirty word to her too."[281]

It is worthwhile considering for stylistic reasons of analysis that *Look Back* shares many characteristics both in terms of content and form with a conventional "well made play" such as *Table by the Window,* the first of the two plays by Terence Rattigan's *Separate Tables* (1954). First of all, the action of both *Look Back* and *Table by the Window,* requires that characters be isolated from the outside world in an entrapping room. They both share the characteristic of dealing with a troublesome marriage across class barriers, but with two kinds of love, one comfortable but emotionally dissatisfied, the other intense yet requiring perhaps more "muscle and guts" than the characters can endure. The passionate dialogues found in both plays are "full of tenderness and pain", i.e., in accordance with the established literary convention of a love-hate relationship. All these similarities with conventional realism would more than justify a content-oriented approach.

But, what we want to reveal is the fact that both plays are based on a distinctly different vraisemblance or logic of realistic representation. In *Table by the Window* (1955) the pattern is distinct: characters are introduced with their past and present idiosyncrasies, a secret is hinted at and a conflict emerges. From that moment on, the scene is set out like an alarm clock and the action ticks off toward its resolution with a sense of logicality. Most important, this process of reordering an initial conflagration of characters and tensions is established and clarified through dialogue, even to the extent that we are literally given the rationale behind the couple's constant bickering and fighting by having one of them proclaiming that "marriage is a kind of war."[282] An analysis of that kind of play asks for a sorting out of the information and a fitting together of character, action and language so that, as in a puzzle, a complex unified image emerges as a work in progress where all elements contribute to its development. The use of harsh language and invectives characterise the relation between Jimmy and Alison, two individuals coming from different social classes who remain together in a marital relationship. Jimmy humiliates, provokes, abuses and torments Alison, all in bid to get her to respond physically to him. In Rattigan's *Separate Tables* (1954) characters exemplified the civic virtues in a widely unified and steadily expanding country, where everyone was expected to do his/her social duty and to cope with problems in difficult

[281] *L.B.*, pp.36-7.
[282] Rattigan, T. (1955). *Separate Tables.* Hamish Hamilton, p.46.

circumstances. Nevertheless, for critics to put together character, action and language in *Look Back* becomes a harder task, considering the bravura of Jimmy's anger, which cannot disguise the unreasonableness of his attacks. The lack of physical action in this room-play is compensated by Jimmy's acts of verbal virtuosity which, as Kenneth Tynan wrote, exemplify the effervescence of rebellious youth that "lashes out at all and sundry."[283]

John Osborne's *Look Back* is a language-oriented play sharing a tendency to use language "intransitively" i.e. often apparently for its own sake. At the same time, it seeks a 'truthful' rendition of the rhythm, sound, and structure of communication. Thus, the literary conventions of coherence and consequentiality are less taken into account that a more didactic realism prescribes for the presentation of character, action or ideas. These realistic plays possess a *vraisemblance* that demands from the critic a different analytic approach to articulate the theatrical experience received by the reader/spectator.

A pragmatic rather than content-oriented approach to *Look Back* is based on ideas derived from the concept of "family interactionism" grounded in Gregory Bateson's early work on schizophrenia mentioned before. Bateson's pragmatic approach derives from the belief that human relationships are circularly patterned, a view which makes the durability of apparently unendurable relationships more intelligible, yet, as pointed out before, in a way that some find ideologically objectionable. From this approach, the behaviour of one person can only be understood in terms of the behaviour of the significant others around him, of their reactions, and of the context in which the situation takes place.

Systems theory holds that various "negative feedback" or regulating mechanisms counteract behaviour that threatens the status quo. Family interactionism, for instance, sees mythmaking as a powerful regulating mechanism: people often put up with a troublesome relationship because its continuation is necessary for the preservation of their self-image. Paradox is another "negative feedback" mechanism. When it forms the dominant characteristic of an interaction, partners can be entrapped in a stalemate relationship, a double-bind (a kind of conflict without solution) that prevents them from making any move that could bring about change.

The provocation (on the part of Jimmy) and withdrawal (on the part of Alison) interaction pattern in *Look Back* is such that when one of the partner's reacts

[283] Tynan, K. (1956, May 3). "The Voice of the Young" Review of Look Back in Anger. *London Observer*, p. 8.

submissively, their behaviour is a disguised form of aggression and its effect is such that aggression is matched by aggression and escalation follows. In the play, Alison, hurt by her husband's relentless verbal aggression, retreats furthermore into herself. Osborne claims in his autobiography *Almost a Gentlemen* (1981) to have created the role of Alison as a "study of the tyranny of negation", adding about the fact that "Alison's brutal power lay in the puny crackle of her iron." Both behave like chained prisoners who have to coordinate their movements to avoid tumbling down. Osborne might have thought of Strindberg's *The Stronger* (1889)[284], a play in which a bold character loses her footing and finally stumbles because the woman she addresses maintains an icy silence. This character resembles Alison's, whose icy silence is her weapon against her husband:

> ALISON: I keep looking back as far as I remember and I can't think what it was to feel young, really young. Jimmy said the same to me the other day. *I pretended not to be listening – because I knew that would hurt him, I suppose.* And of course he got savage, like tonight. But I knew just what he meant. I suppose it would have been so easy to say 'Yes, darling, I know what you mean. I know what you're feeling.' (Shrugs). *It's those easy things that seem to be so impossible to us.* [my emphases].[285]

Her words reveal her own invulnerability (imperviousness) and become an unavoidable strategy of provocation. This cruel game doesn't stop because of the impossibility to say the saving words that could prevent a fight between them. It thus gives as a result an inability or impossibility to "meta communicate", that is to comment on the ongoing communication, because in the absence of mutual trust, remarks on the formal aspects of a problematic communication pattern undertaken by one of the participants in that interaction are easily drawn into the dispute they try to solve. An evocative title which Osborne had in mind for this play was *Close the Cage behind Me*, connoting the steel kind of trap life can represent. On several occasions, Alison tries to prevent the interaction from deteriorating. But each time this happens, these attempts are caught up in the quarrel, as further evidence of Alison's loathsome habit of withdrawing from involvement. Therefore, instead of alleviating the tension, "meta communication" in this relationship further increases the conflagration.

The following quotations are statements "between" individuals (Jimmy and Alison) born in the heat of a battle between warring factions (characters on stage):

---

[284] Strindberg, A. (1970). *Scandinavian Studies* (Vol. 42 nº3). Published by University of Illinois Press.
[285] *L.B.*, p.28.

> ALISON: God help me, if he doesn't stop, I'll go out of my mind in a minute.
> JIMMY: Why don't you? That would be something, anyway.[286]
>
> ALISON: Really, Jimmy you're like a child.
> JIMMY: Don't try and patronise me.[287]
>
> ALISON: (Starting to break). Why, why, why, why! (Putting her hand over her ears).
> That word's pulling my head off!
> JIMMY: And as long as you're around, I'll go on using it.[288]
>
> JIMMY: You Judas! You phlegm! She's taking you with her, and you're so bloody feeble, you'll let her do it!
> Alison suddenly takes hold of her cup, and hurls it on the floor. He's drawn blood at last. She looks down at the pieces on the floor, and then at him…
> ALISON: (Softly). All I want is a little peace.
> JIMMY: Peace! God! She wants peace! (Hardly able to get his words out) My heart is so full, I feel ill – and she wants peace![289]

Jimmy's "blocking of meta communication" is at work in response to Cliff's following remark: "You've gone too far Jimmy. Now dry up!"[290] In their struggle to convince each other of their definition of the relational reality, Jimmy and Alison are engaged in a battle that is fought rather than discussed because every attempt to discuss it immediately becomes part of the battle. When Alison finally leaves Jimmy, this is an explicit manifestation of her desire to put an end to an impossible situation. But in *Look Back* no move is made unambiguously, as Alison's farewell letter shows:

> JIMMY: (to Helena).Well, listen to this. (Reading) My dear – I must get away. I don't suppose you will understand, but please try. I need peace so desperately, and, at the moment, I am willing to sacrifice everything just for that…I know you will be feeling wretched and bitter, but try to be patient with me. I shall always have a deep loving need for you – Alison.[291]

The letter defines her moving out paradoxically. She is leaving him because she needs him.

Osborne writes in 1993 about Judy Denche's 1989 revival of *Look Back*:

> It took thirty years for the piece to achieve a production which I found satisfying and fulfilled my intentions, dispelling the misunderstandings which had blurred its impact over the decades. None of the interim revivals had done much to challenge the nonsense about the play being a monologue. It still seemed to induce a

[286] *L.B.*, p.22.
[287] *L.B.*, p.24.
[288] *L.B.*, p.54.
[289] *L.B.*, p.59.
[290] *L.B.*, p.55.
[291] Ibid.

> benighted myopia. Where there were five clearly defined characters on stage, only one was acknowledged as visible.
>
> I am mystified by the myth. Indifference is the most blithely cruel and effective of weaponry. When Emma Thompson played Judy Denche's 1989 revival, I tried to explain that it was she, not her husband who was the most deadly bully. Her silence and her obdurate withdrawal were impregnable. The ironing board was not the plaything of her submission but the bludgeon and shield, which were impenetrable to all Jimmy's appeal to desperate oratory.[292]

Look Back is a play which can't be read simply as a sustained monologue or a personal diatribe delivered by Jimmy Porter. For Osborne, Judy Denche's 1989 production was the first in over 30 years to get the play right. "Kenneth Branagh", wrote Osborne in the introduction to his *Collected Plays* (1996b: xii), "succeeded in taking the rant out of Jimmy Porter. He tried to take it trippingly on the tongue. And, in so doing, he made Jimmy very funny", echoing the words from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act III, Scene ii).[293] Emma Thompson's role as Alison was not the usual martyred punch bag which she appears to represent, but a genuine combatant who used silence and obdurate withdrawal as weapons of retaliation against Jimmy and which became impregnable in the production. Thus, in the language of pragmatics, the self-perpetuating pattern of Alison's withdrawal and Jimmy's provocative behaviour would be explained as resulting from a failure of metacommunication in their marital relation. It thus took Judy Denche's astonishing production to give us the play which Osborne actually wrote.

Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* opened in London in 1955. Osborne admired Beckett's work which, according to biographer John Heilpern (2008), "related to the dark, heroic soul of the man."[294] One of the great themes of modern drama, the dilemma of waiting, is explored both in *Look Back* and *Godot.* Beckett's tramps behave in a similar way to that of Jimmy, awaiting and yearning for something that will make sense of their existence. "Why do I do this every Sunday?" says Jimmy hurling aside the papers in that extraordinary first scene of *Look Back.* "Nothing to be done", is the opening line of Godot, as Vladimir exasperatedly tries to pull off his boot. Both plays deal with the agony of hope endlessly deferred in the act of waiting.

A central concept to the understanding of human relations is the study of 'anger' which needs to be properly conceptualized. It is generally believed to be a destructive, unpleasant, immature, aggressive, hostile, anti-social, impulsive, abominable and indecent emotion. Thus, it is a much seemingly ignoble and malign behavior uprising by

---

[292] Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber, p.47.
[293] Shakespeare, W. (1992). *Hamlet.* (S. Weller, Ed.) Dover-Thrift-Editions.
[294] Heilpern, J. (2006). *John Osborne: a Patriot for Me.* London: Chatto & Windus.

a sense of wrong and used as a weapon of self-assertion, considering its aspect as an unavoidable fact of life and a feature of human interaction. People are bound to be angry when mistreated or when others refuse to obey social laws. Anger is thus an emotion (thus psychological) that can flourish by social injustice such as anger at racism or sexism, falling into what Grasso regards as "vital political too! It enables new perspectives, new understanding of oppressive conditions that had previously remained unquestioned."[295] Harriet Lerner's gives a definition of anger in her book, *A Dance of Anger*, in the following terms: "Anger is a signal… It may be a message that we are being hurt; that our rights are being violated; that our needs or wants are not being adequately met or simply that something is not right."[296]

In journalist Harry Ritchie's account about the young group of writers labelled "Angry Young Men" he points out that it was a hype "invented by the media."[297] It grew as 'the great publicity of the myth of the Angry Young Men which actually created the reality that were supposed to be reflecting'. From his point of view, much of the debate about anger "could have been avoided if Osborne had chosen a different title for his play. The inspiration is what is given in the grim clinch of the title." Considering that Christian apologist Leslie Paul had used the label Angry Young Man as the title of his autobiography in 1951, it is clear that the idea of anger was not Osborne's alone but that it was a sign of the times. For him, the play's central theme was anger, as the title page of the manuscript shows; out of the seven titles he wrote down, six are variations on this theme. They include: *Farewell to Anger, Angry Man, Man in a Rage, Close the Cage behind You, My Blood is a Mile High* and *Look Back in Anger*. As Maschler pointed out "anger has become a highly saleable commodity."[298]

The first standard text about the new wave in post-war British theatre is *Anger and After* which includes a review of John Russell Taylor about the première of *Look Back* thus turning what for others seemed a quiet night at the theatre into an explosive occasion: "If ever a revolution began with one explosion it was this." Taylor's enthusiasm, expressed through an instant use of the metaphor of revolution, reminds the reader that myths are an answer to emotional needs. While those who were undoubtedly

[295] Grasso, L. M. (2002). *The Artistry of Anger. Black and White Women's Literature in America 1820-1860.* North Carolina Press.
[296] Lerner, H. (1989). *The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Courageous Acts of Change in Key Relationships.* William Morrow Paperbacks, p.1.
[297] Ritchie, H. (1988). *Success Stories: Literature and the Media in England 1950-1959.* London and Boston: Faber, p.35.
[298] Maschler, T. (1957). *Declaration.* London: Mac Gibbon & Kee, p.8.

there at the première remember the opening night as quiet, the many hundreds who claim to have attended describe it as a momentous occasion. Yet few have asked the following question: Why was the metaphor of revolution a vital ingredient in the myth of anger?

A systemic pragmatic analysis of the play, gives as a result an understanding of the characters that goes beyond the way in which they define themselves or are defined by others. Going back to the role of gender and of how Alison's role has been qualified, we can say that she not only silently endures but also plays an important role in sustaining the interaction by withdrawal and imperviousness, which are now seen not as absence of communication but as active responses. Emphasising the effect rather than the content of language has prevented us from being led astray by appearances (a man is tyrannizing his wife) and has produced insight into what critics have called "the emotional substructure" of the play. The couple's despair and their paranoid feeling of entrapment result from a double-binding relationship that is resolved by a counter-double bind at the end of the play. The final reconciliation scene between the warring couple is highlighted by symbols indicating hope and an allegory of love, while leaving a certain degree of ambiguity, so that discussion after the play is guaranteed.

There is a poignant moment at the end of John Osborne's play, *Look Back*, when the unhappy heroine, Alison, stripped of all her defences, cries out: "I don't want to be neutral. I don't want to be a saint. I want to be a lost cause. I want to be corrupt and futile." Like Ibsen's famous Nora, she voices a point of view that in her case is symptomatic of an emerging generation in England and transformed from a mere character in a play into a social reality. Nora is a character from *The Doll's House*[299] (1879) by Henrik Ibsen. Alison's revolt, if such it may be called, is directed inward. Like Nora, she has given up miracles in favour of life. But it is not on to her doll's house that she expects to shut the door; it is on her old self, that is, on her romantic faith in her own innocence.

The couple's game of bears and squirrels is used as a symbolic device, a trivial evasion of the complexities found in any marriage. Language here is the only weapon of protest, providing a field of imagery of animal life, which breaks new ground by the use of elements of artificiality and obvious symbols. At the end of the play it becomes a statement of the nature of human love in a desire to become completely involved in

[299] Ibsen, H. (2014). *A Doll's House.* New York: Global Classics.

creativeness and to share the pain and the pleasure of the limited animal. While Jimmy's targets are his wife's upper-class, patriarchal father, the characters of *Shopping and Fucking* (1996)[300] acknowledge no authority and thus have no starting point for rebellion. Instead they all seem to be looking for a father or an authority figure. In the audience of authority, they live without rules or expectations. According to A. Sierz[301] the parallels to Osborne's *Look Back* suggest a conscious attempt at a new generational manifesto although the social rage and newness of John Osborne's 1956 play made a bigger impact at the time of its première than did this one, in spite of the outcry its explicit scenes provoked. Like Jimmy Porter, Alison, and Cliff in the 1956 play *Look Back*, the characters of *Shopping and Fucking*, Mark, Robbie and Lulu, play their quest in the form of games and stories. The cultural context of their relationships, however, differs markedly. The games they play use the vocabulary of commerce rather than the animal metaphors of Jimmy and Alison, suggesting an economic rather than a natural frame of reference.

It is true that *Look Back* asks the reader/spectator to believe that men and women are living in inextricable bonded relationships, that Alison can be humiliated all along, and yet that humiliating men can also truly suffer. Alison can wish to come back and reconciliation between them may then follow. At the end of the play she emerges as a paradoxical winner having managed to take up the challenge:

> Alison: Don't you understand? It's gone! That – that helpless human being inside my body. I thought it was so safe, and secure in there. Nothing could take it from. It was mine, my responsibility…Don't you see! I'm in the mud at last! I'm grovelling![302]

Paradoxical, because she can only win by losing in the same way as Jimmy's triumph takes the form of an admission of defeat. Plays such as Edward Albees's *Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962), James Goldman's *The Lion in Winter* (1964), Edward Bond's *Saved* (1965) and *Look Back* (1956) have a *wraisemblance* that is based on a systemic functionalist convention of the real. It thus heightens our awareness, as readers or spectators, of the reciprocal dependence, the hubris, and the self-enslavement that makes the dominant-submissive, sadomasochistic relationships of the *folie a deux* so durable, despite the pain and despair it generates and makes them suffer from.

---

[300] Ravenhill, M. (1996). *Shopping and Fucking*. London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

[301] Sierz, A. (n.d.). *In-Yer-Face Theatre.* Retrieved 12 03, 2010, from http://www.inyerfacetheatre.com/archive2.html

[302] *L.B.*, p.95.

In conclusion, this chapter consists in a critical appreciation of *Look Back* about the ways in which both men and women are made responsible for creating the interactional micro and macro environment of family and society that double-bind them, instead of empathizing with just a single character's "punctuation of events."[303] In this context either protest or acquiescence is a device which strengthens the chains that tie them together. In this way conflicts of class and gender nature are made secondary to the portrayal of the centripetal mechanisms of the interactional machine. It is with the latter however that *Look Back* is mainly concerned, displaying these complex processes with a profound experiential knowledge. *Look Back*, we can now conclude, is not a play about paradox, however, but about passion. Its dynamic depends on a central paradox and the resolution of the play is equally paradoxical. As driving principle of the play the central paradox remains hidden, and it is this fact the one which triggers the violent emotions making the play so effectively realistic. It is through the empathetic feeling with the characters' distress that the audience experiences the paradox, though it had not been given insight into it. Indeed, the theatre, according to Osborne, is not a schoolroom. Utterances cannot be isolated and insight has to be acquired on one's own and at one's own risk by threading up a woof as part of "a dynamic that is created between characters on stage." As we have acknowledged, critics have occasionally dismissed the play on grounds of alleged unreasonableness on the part of the leading character, Jimmy. Nevertheless, a pragmatic analysis of the play provides the logic behind this character's impotent anger.

[303] Watzlawick, P., H. Beavin, J., & Don D., J. (1968). *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of International Patterns, Pathologies and Paradoxes.* London: Faber and Faber.

Chapter 4

Theatre Language in Osborne's Plays: Revitalization of Drama Through Language

> "All art is organized evasion", Osborne declares.
> (Gilleman, *Vituperative,* p.21)

An important element in drama studies is in establishing characters by the kind of language they use to express themselves, that is, diction, since what we know from a play is usually limited to dialogue and action. In this way, diction is particularly important in the naturalistic speech of modern drama since it conveys a great deal about class and cultural differences.

In this chapter we will bear in mind the following questions and relate them to Osborne's use of language: Is the language used in the plays formal or informal? What does the nature of their language use tell the reader or spectator about the characters of the plays discussed?

It is the study of the innovative use of language found in the work of Osborne the main purpose of this chapter. It is also through the different characters' verbal intercourse how they grow and develop along the play. At the same time, the reader/spectator's knowledge of British culture and society widens up through their comments and speeches.

A symbol is something that represents more than just itself and is an important element used in drama. The set, costumes and props are often used symbolically. In theatre, design (scenic, costume, lighting, sound) is also a language. In this way, the texts of modern plays like *A Doll's House* (1879)[304] *The Glass Menagerie* (1965)[305] and *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)[306] contain specific details about the nature of the set and setting. In drama, the immediate setting is the set itself. The set (the furniture, the size of the room, the light, the colour, etc) often reflects the content of the play itself. The props (the objects onstage and those used by the characters) often reflect the conflict, the characters' attitude and the theme of the play. The costumes used by the characters tell us a great deal about other elements, such as the time and place of play's action. The following questions are addressed in this chapter to explore the language of the plays studied: Are there any symbols? Is the set symbolic? Are the props or the costumes symbolic? If so, how do they connect to or support the story?

Irony is the contrast between appearance, expectation and reality. Verbal irony and situational irony are, as in fiction and poetry, the two most popular forms of irony in drama. Verbal irony results from the contrast found in the plays between what is said by characters and what is meant. Irony of situation results from the contrast between

[304] Ibsen, H. (2014). *A Doll's House.* New York: Global Classics.
[305] Williams, T. (2007). *A Glass Menagerie.* Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations.
[306] Hansberry, L. (1995). *A Raisin in the Sun.* Modern Library.

what is expected and what actually happens. Are there instances of verbal or situational irony? An example of satire is to be found in Osborne's *The Blood of the Bambergs* (a satire on royalty).[307]

4.1 Style and Meaning Through the use of Language: Beyond Anger

The following remark is one of Osborne's rare judgements on his own work: "Although *Look Back in Anger* was a formal, rather old fashioned play, I think it broke out by its use of language – Harold Pinter does that now."[308] It links up with two key ideas in this study, the renewal of drama through language, and the increase of self-consciousness, precisely about language of an intuitive dramatist such as Osborne. It is also interesting to consider the cultural context in which his work developed. The theatre of the late sixties and seventies was in constant upheaval and was more allied to comic strips, newspapers and political tracts than to traditional literature. Osborne was concerned with the fact that, in doing so, theatre became more interested in performance and less in language. He was an intuitive playwright who filled the old naturalistic form with a new one that was highly theatrical and rhetorically ego-charged; a linguistic variant of "pouring new ideas into old forms", the formula that was found inadequate by Strindberg."[309] In this way, *Look Back* "broke out by its use of language" creating the appearance of newness in 1956. Language has remained an interesting element in Osborne's plays, even in those that, according to critics, are flawed in structure or erratic in their flow of imaginative life. Delvin, for example, makes the following comment after watching a revival of *Look Back* in 1964:

> The play *Look Back* seemed an old-fashioned three-acter, with rather forced entrances and exits and a dramatic curtain. In many ways it harked back to the conventions of the well-made play, although it seemed imbalanced because of one character's dominance.[310]

Osborne's innovative use of the language has been claimed as a break with the whole literary drama, including Shaw and Eliot. His texts achieve literariness; at any rate, the language used often parodies the literary and is to that extent, stylistically self-

[307] Osborne, J. (1963). *Plays for England:The Blood of the Bambergs and Under Plain Cover.* London: Evans Brothers Limited.
[308] Russell Taylor, J. (1968). *John Osborne: Look Back in Anger: A Casebook.* London: Macmillan, p.66.
[309] Strindberg, A. (1967). *Miss Julie.* (M. Meyer, Trans.) London, p.19.
[310] Devlin, P. (June 1964). John Osborne. *Vogue*.

conscious, becoming a wordsmith of the English language. For example, Jimmy Porter, when expressing his most violent tirades, speaks of his skit ('a poem'), "which is soaked in the theology of Dante, with a good slosh of Eliot as well."[311] And his words parodying Oscar Wilde on the opening round in the onslaught on Helena are: "Pass Lady Bracknell the cucumber sandwiches, will you?"[312]

Osborne makes a self-conscious critical comparison with Pinter's language, accepting that there is some intrinsic value in "making it new" through the use of language. According to Gersh, we may link this with his eclecticism and restless search for a style.[313] Among his published plays, only *Look Back in Anger* and *Epitaph for George Dillon* (1958, but written earlier, in collaboration with Anthony Creighton) exhibit the relatively simple formula we can put forward as "histrionic rhetoric thrust into conventional naturalism" and which is illustrated with examples depicted from these plays in epigraph 4.3. in this dissertation.

In a suppressed early play, *The Devil inside Him* (1950),[314] the central character, Huw, the would-be-poet, speaks in singsong cadences, which set him apart from others. It is a linguistic style partly used as a direct vehicle for self-expression, in some way because "it was there" at the time, as a dominant mode for a writer who admired the energies of neurosis found in the plays of Tennessee Williams and seemed to accept that there was some similarity between naturalism and social concern. Thus, in "Sex and Failure", Osborne's review of Tennessee Williams, he attacks the "adjustment school", referring to those writers "who smooth out the facts of human failure"; and the "emotion snobs who believe that protest is vulgar and to be articulate is to be sorry for oneself."[315] This remark has to be contextualized in the "new" world of The Fifties, where new writers, such as John Osborne, made their appearance on stage. But that period of time proved to be not quite such a splendid one for the British as they had supposed it would be. Those writers of the thirties and forties, for the most part, had not been close enough to social reality than to make much of a job of grasping it. The public-school writers of the thirties, the dreamers and fantasists of the forties, needed time to "adjust."

---

[311] *L.B.*, Act II, i, p.50.
[312] *L.B.*, p. 51.
[313] Gersh, G. (1967). The Theatre of John Osborne. *Modern Drama , 10* (10), p.137.
[314] Osborne, J. (2009). *Before Anger-Two Early Plays: The "Devil Inside Him" and "Personal Enemy.* (J. Andrews, Ed.) Osborne Modern Play Wrights.
[315] Osborne, J. (n.d.). Sex and Failure. Review of Tennesse Willians's Four Plays, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Baby Doll. *The Observer*, p.11.

With Osborne's next outstanding play, *The Entertainer*,[316] came a series of experiments in literature. The "folk art" of the music hall, intended to "cut across the restrictions of the so-called naturalistic stage." Osborne's prefatory note to *The Entertainer* reads as follows:

> The music hall is dying, and, with it, a significant part of England. Some of the heart of England has gone; something that once belonged to everyone, for this was truly a folk art. In writing these plays, I have not used some of the techniques of the music hall in order to exploit an effective trick, but because I believe that these can solve some of the eternal problems of time and space that face the dramatist, and, also, it has been relevant to the story and setting. Not only has this technique its own traditions, its own convention and symbol, its own mystique, it cuts right across the restrictions of the so-called naturalistic stage. Its contact is immediate, vital and direct.[317]

Bereits in der Vorbemerkung zu seinem Stuck The Entertainer assoziiert John Osborne die Music Hall mit England.[318] Already, in the preliminary remark to his play *The Entertainer,* John Osborne associates the Music Hall with England. [my translation]

Attempts at innovation are also to be found in the plays which follow, which are examples of a more interesting stage which Gilleman labels "At the Top" (1964-1971) and gives name to the second section of his book (Part II) *Vituperative*.[319] It includes *Luther*, *Inadmissible* and *The Hotel in Amsterdam*. In *Luther* (1961) we thus perceive the infusion of Martin Luther's own prose into the dialogue, along with the epic/chronicle material. The subtly textured monologue delivered by the main character, Bill Maitland, absorbs all dialogue in *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964). In *The Hotel in Amsterdam* (1968), the dialogue which forms part of a cross-talk in a group, attains a poetic beauty or intensity not unlike that of Chekhov. It is also worthwhile mentioning Osborne's attempt to move into other styles, the costume language of the period of declining Austria-Hungary in *A Patriot for Me* (1965) and the attempt to intensify the voice of vituperation through *A Bond Honoured* (1966), based on Lope de Vega's violent world in his play *La Fianza Satisfecha*, written between the years 1612-1615.

Osborne has tried not to repeat the formula naturalism-and-rhetoric used initially. We recognize in the succession of plays idiosyncratically domesticated models

---

316 Laurence Oliver as Archie Rice in *The Entertainer*, 1957. Fig.7, p.266 in this dissertation.

317 Osborne, J. (1957). Prefatory Note, *The Entertainer*. London: Faber and Faber.

318 Pfister, M. (1981). Music Hall und Modernes Drama: Populäre Komik als Mediun und Thema im Zeitgenössischen englischen Theater. *Anglistendag 1980* , p.127.

319 Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.109.

from what Osborne calls an "imaginary museum."[320] His will to extend his resources of form and language has created a tension between the "naïve" dramatist and the conscious explorer of styles: The scope of modern drama tugging against Osborne's personal limitations.

There appears to be something improvised in the way Osborne moves from one play-style to another, an irregular line of development. A glance at the chronology of the plays reinforces one's perception of the zigzags in his development. There are two main play-forms in Osborne's work, the room based and the open-stage play, and two distinct stage languages found in them. The tension between these two modes of language keeps coming up in both styles of plays, and sometimes Osborne tries to create an interaction between them (histrionic self-expressions and the dialogue of characters intended to be socially, or historically, representative), within a double or shifting structure. In *The Entertainer*, for example, Osborne connects Archie Rice's domestic talk with his music hall "turns." Thus, though the front scenes of this play are more shocking, more obviously containing social comments, they are in fact brief interludes in what is essentially a domestic play about a family in a particular situation; this encouraged some critics to compare it with Chekhov or *Heartbreak House* (1919).[321] In *Luther*, through the change from the private interior of Act I to the "epic" inclination of the other two Acts. In the same way, the histrionic monologues keep re-entering the large-scale "open" plays and the dialogue of more or less monologue-centred plays keeps expanding (or thinning out) to catch, in almost gratuitous sketch-like scenes, the language, the up-to date idiom, of this or that contemporary cartoon type. In *Time Present* an example is to be found in the Castro-loving hippie actress (film star Abigail), who is Pamela's friend and modelled in the actress Vanesa Redgave. Abigail: "You know there's a picture of me in every paper today. So we dropped in at Wig Creations for the moustache, then got a taxi to Carnaby Street."[322]

From the language of the "posh" Sunday papers found in *Look Back*, to the Hippie jargon in *Time Present,* Osborne obsessively parodies this or that contemporary jargon. We thus perceive in *The Entertainer* a linguistically conservative impulse behind Osborne's way with what appears to be "new words", which is that of instant

[320] Osborne, J. (1961). That Awful Museum. *Twentieth Century* , *169*, pp.212-16.
[321] Shaw, B. (2007). *Heartbreak House.* Bibliobazaar.
[322] Osborne, J. (1973). *West of Suez, A Patriot for Me, Time Present, The Hotel in Amsterdam.* New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company. Act II, p.242.

absorption and rejection, and which seems to be epitomized in Bill Rice's evocative remark: "We all had our own style, our own songs – and we were all English. What's more, we spoke English."[323] This is stated in the context of talking about Eddie Drummer, a musician. A sense of versatile invectiveness in the use of verbal terms of abuse is assailed at the cost of imperfect artistic control. Osborne's urge towards wholeness is expressed by embodying both an inner and an outer world, that is, by expressing troubled psychic states and representing all kinds of outer contexts: voices, social movements and scenes.

4.2 The Personal and the Social in the Dialogue

Osborne has been least able to develop a language that matches his ideal conception of a drama that is at once both personal and social or communal. There is a recurrent loss of "felt life" in his dialogue of relationship, group, and large scale public events, both in the contemporary and the historical or quasi-historical plays. In the latter ones, the quasi-historical plays, Osborne has found it particularly difficult to give life to "the potentially fascinating dialectic." In this way, he writes: "What did interest me was the Christian framework of the play and the potentially fascinating dialect with the principal character. So I concentrated in his development..."[324] This quoted phrase is from the Author's Note to *A Bond Honoured* and could also be applied to *Luther* and *A Patriot for Me*, between an ideology or an institution and the principal character, the potential Brechtian direction. In the case of *Luther*, between The Church and Martin Luther, and in *A Patriot for Me* between The Army and Redl. Osborne has thus given a new voice to the isolated or wounded character, the play "seen through a temperament", the line from Strindberg and Zola.

There is to be found critical consensus among critics about the existence of a "voice"[325], which Alan Carter oddly calls the "public voice" in a chapter under that same heading of his monograph on Osborne. In a witty simplification, Mary McCarthy wrote that Osborne "like a coloratura or countertenor, finds that he is limited to parts of

[323] Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer.* London: Faber and Faber, p.81.
[324] Osborne, J. (1966). *A Bond Honoured. A Play. From Lope de Vega.* Faber&Faber. Arthor's Note.
[325] Williams, R. (1968). *Drama Fron Ibsen to Brecht.* London, p.319 and Carter, Alan. *John Osborne.* Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1969.

experience, as it were already written for his voice's range and timbre."[326] Later on, Osborne wrote an article where he named his speeches "arias."[327] Osborne recurs to musical terminology to explain the different personalities of the characters of *Look Back*. The opening stage directions of the play describe Alison by the use of musical terminology, as having "the most elusive personality to catch in the uneasy polyphony of these three people" and her "well-bred malaise… is often drowned in the robust orchestration of the other two."[328] In other words, Osborne cannot extend the range of his dramatic language, though he keeps straining to do so, through a personal creative limitation, so the question we posit is the following: Is it not possible that such a strain is increased by the difficulty of creating a language that has dramatic life both on the personal and on the communal plane?

Osborne writes down two different and at the same time interesting statements on drama, spanning over a decade. The first one is made in his confident manifesto-like contribution to *Declaration* (1957) in which he formulates a number of questions which have been considered as the dramatist's approach to socialism, but which are necessarily related to language. But, as he states, they are questions, experiment and not dogma:

> What is their relationship with one another, and with their children, with their neighbours and people across the street, or on the floor above? What are the things that are important to them that make them care, give them hope and anxiety? What kind of language do they use to one another? What is the meaning of the work they do? Where does the pain lie? What are their expectations? What moves them, brings them together, makes them speak out?[329]

Critics became aware of the fact that there was "a problem of language" in his plays from the very start of his creative career. In this way, we can find examples where the dialogue of relationship turns out to be perfunctory or inert "satellite", moving around the central rhetorician, who as if it were incorporated in his own speech-flow, answers to questions like the one Osborne formulates: "What is their relationship?"[330]

In his article on Tennessee Williams, Osborne targets critics saying that they were "incapable of recognizing the texture of ordinary despair, the way it expresses

---

[326] McCarthy, M. (1965, July 4). Verdict on Osborne. *The Observer* , p.17.
[327] Osborne, J. (1968, June 30). Interview with John Osborne. (K. Tynan, Interviewer) p.21.
[328] *L.B.,* Act. I, p.10.
[329] Osborne, J. (1957). They Call it Cricket. *Declaration,* pp. 61-84.
[330] Ibid. p.65.

itself in rhetoric and gestures that may perhaps look shabby, but are seldom simple." He adds, in this same article, how they engage in "pedantic, literal-minded flap over inessentials."[331] Osborne's main characters move on a higher plane of consciousness and expressiveness which recalls Eliot's method of "two planes" as defined at the end of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism.*[332]

The illustration[333] is a remarkable one and helps to show what Osborne thought about critics. It depicts an uncharitable and unjust picture of one that surely looked right to Osborne on whom critical reviews had a dispiriting effect, since for him art means affirmation and criticism, negation; art is seduction, whereas criticism's first impulse is refusal. According to him, critics who are unable to grasp that art requires a wide vision, broad gestures, sweeping emotions, and who instead insist on the rules of good composition or narrow morality, suffer from a form of small-mindedness, carrying thus negative semantic connotations.

In 1967, a decade after, Osborne made a second statement on drama and spoke of the fragmentation of society, of the anti-verbal theatre and the "verbal breakdown" as matters increasingly threatening to the dramatist, who really only wants to write for the theatre. In the context of seemingly defending (against that old-bogey form) the well-made play, he writes down:

> Landseer, ok: so. But Bacon si, Picasso si also. We live in a society of such lurking flexibility that it is no longer possible to construct a dramatic method based on a shared social and ethical system. The inexorable process of fragmentation is inimical to all public assumptions or indeed ultimately to anything shared at all. A theatre audience is no longer linked by anything but the climate of dissociation in which it tries to live its baffled lives. A dramatist can no longer expect to draw many common references, be they social, sexual or emotional. He can't generalize in the old way. He must be specific to himself and his own particular, concrete experience.[334]

Osborne makes this diagnosis, dedicated to some form of participatory drama, yet pointing to his own difficulty in creating a drama of shared values using a language of common reference. Elsewhere, he names the discouragement that made him abandon a projected play, *Coriolanus*, set in an African republic, Brecht's territory presumably

---

[331] Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber, pp.66-68.

[332] Eliot, T. S. (1961). *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism.* USA: President and Fellows of Harvard College.

[333] Pieter Brueghel The Elder, "The Painter and The Buyer", c1565, pen and ink on brown paper," Fig:8, p.267 in this dissertation.

[334] Osborne, J. (1967, October 14). On the Thesis Business and the Seekers after the Bare Approximate... *The Times*, p.20.

involving experience mediated by newspapers: "I didn't know whether I wanted to write a play about public feeling when all my instincts were focussing down on interior things and people's inner self."[335] At the same time, he condemned the new non-verbal researches, happenings and mixed media which in his opinion were replacing and corrupting verbal drama, his art: "We have managed to revive traditional theatre for awhile and now it is a corrupt art." He affirms his own "allegiance to words" in an age when "the verbal breakdown is getting to the point where it's dangerous and nonsensical." His plays are wordy articulate pieces, for he sees words as our only hope:

> This is why words are important. They may be dispensed with, but it seems to me that they're the last link with God. When millions of people seem unable to communicate with one another, it's vitally important that words are made to work. It may be very old fashioned, but they're the only things we have left. When I turn that electric light on, I don't know why it works, and I don't want to. It's a mystery I'm delighted to preserve. But the verbal breakdown is getting to the point where it's dangerous and nonsensical. I have a great allegiance to words.[336]

He makes the following statement about the theatrical experience: "Think of the theatre… as one of the few acts of communion left to us. Imagine that this may be the last time the Host is raised before your eyes."[337] This statement is a creed reminiscent of Shaw on the theatre as a temple and indicates the way in which Osborne's personal limitations are crossed by "the frightening limitations of a one-sided existence"– in Hebbel's phrase, which Lukács uses to sum up the condition of the modern *theatre of environment*. In that kind of theatre, dialogue is split off from environment becoming less and less able to express the being and destiny of the characters, while the social and historical world appears merely as an increasingly hostile environment.[338] Osborne's drama, which keeps striving towards some balance of the personal and social in the dialogue itself, repeatedly makes oneself conscious of an acute imbalance. His plea for communication is heard in the heroes' desperate captivating rhetoric. Frequently, the imbalance is exactly that which is being dramatised. Thus, George Dillon and Jimmy Porter are examples of hyper-articulated characters who, with ribald contempt, define themselves by rejecting the language as much as the values of a group: the clichés of the Eliot family in the first case, the genteelism of Alison and her sort in the second. Gilleman's *Vituperative* includes an epigraph entitled "The Ruse of Anti-Theatre" as

---

[335] Osborne, J. (1968, June 30). Interview with John Osborne. (K. Tynan, Interviewer).
[336] Osborne, J. (1966). On Critics and Criticism. *The Sunday Telegraph*.
[337] Ibid.
[338] Lukács, G. (1964). "Theatre and Environment". *The Times Literary Supplement* (23), p.347.

part of a chapter devoted to the study of *A Sense of Detachment* (1972).[339] This play illustrates the kind of drama which refuses to be dramatic in the accepted meaning of the term. In this way, *A Sense of Detachment* immediately inscribes itself into a tradition of anti-theatre, which means, of plays that take as their subject matter the theatre itself, while refusing to obey well-accepted theatrical conventions.

Inadmissible Evidence begins with a Kafkaesque nightmare scene and with Bill Maitland standing in his office, which has been transformed into a court of law. In it, Osborne advances towards a curiously externalised form of solipsism in the form of a self-alienated monologue delivered by Bill Maitland. Semantically dealing, the monologue deals with the cornucopia of neo-capitalism which absorbs solid clusters of vocabulary from the social world – technology, legal jargon and so on – only to spit them out again as alien stuff. The intensified language used by Jimmy Porter in *Look Back* and Bill Maitland in *Inadmissible* is both histrionic and ambivalent enough to justify Osborne's self-defence against those whom he describes as "shallow heads with their savage thirst for trimmed-off explanations" and who took dramatic statements, like Jimmy's famous speech near the end of the play "There aren't any good brave causes left"[340] literally. That kind of rhetoric used by the protagonists exploits the energy of self-dissociation of the character from communal life and asserts itself against "the kind of language they use."

In *Inadmissible*, Maitland has always expected this trial, but now that it has arrived, he finds it difficult to defend himself and this is made evident in his use of the language. He feels disoriented and has trouble understanding the judge in spite of the fact that the law is his profession and the trial takes place on his territory. However, it soon becomes clear that the denunciation stands for the broader charge of indecency being Maitland's habit of spilling out in words the contents of his troubled soul about what is found to be particularly indecent. Nevertheless, the world in which he felt comfortable has now been reduced to the "bones and dead objects" of his old office place. On the other hand, the larger world that judges him functions according to assumptions which he does not well understand. His words reveal his anxiety to please the judge and, in the same gesture, to expose the inanity of the conventions by which he will be judged. Maitland affirms his belief in progress and technology but the string of

[339] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.178.
[340] *L.B.*, p.84.

ill-assorted clichés he delivers is soon exhausted, and finally he can only convince the court of what it already knows about, his personal inadequacy and insufficiency.

The following passage, part of the nightmare trial, illustrates Maitland's self indictment and carries a texture of despair:

> BILL MAITLAND… I hereby swear and affirm. Affirm. On my …Honour?
> By my belief. My belief in …in… the technological revolution, the pressing, growing, pressing, urgent need for more and more scientists, for more and more scientists, and more scientists, for more and more schools and universities and schools, the theme of change, realistic decisions based on a highly developed and professional study of society by people who really know their subject...(flails, the Judge looks at him reassuringly and he picks up again). In the ninety seven per cent ninety-seven, of all the scientists who have ever lived in the history of the world since the days of Euclid, Pythagoras and Archimedes. Who, who are alive and at work today, today, now, at this time, in the inevitability of automation and the ever increasing need, need, oh, need for, the stable ties of modern family life, rethinking, reliving, making way for the motor car, forty million by nineteen.[341]

As readers/spectators of *Inadmissibl*e, we have the opportunity to witness for more than three hours, the damage which self-loathing can inflict upon others as well as on ourselves and understand the correctness of Maitland's self-incriminating defence, when he says:

> MAITLAND: I never hoped or wished for anything more than to have the good fortune of friendship and the excitement and comfort of love… With the first with friendship, I hardly succeeded at all […] with the second, with love, I succeeded … in inflicting … more pain than pleasure. I am not equal to any of it.[342]

Osborne gives Maitland, the isolated speaker or "disengaged man"[343] a broken syntax containing abrupt rhythms, creating the feeling of some yet un-diagnosed malaise. It is well considering for stylistic reasons of analysis, how Maitland's speech can be placed in time between Shaw's automata in *Back to Methuselah* (1921)[344] with the monstrous reflex-language used by the still confident parodist, to "debunk" mechanistic thought, and Lucky's speech in *Waiting for Godot* (1953)[345] where the fragmented syntax is only one element in a precisely tiresome language which reduces all thought to a broken machine. *Inadmissible* ends with Maitland, alone in his office,

---

[341] Osborne, J. (1965). *Inadmissible Evidence.* New York: Grove Press, pp.10-11.
[342] Ibíd. p.16.
[343] Corrigan, R. W. (1968). *The New Theatre Europe 3.* New York: Dell Publishing Company.
[344] Shaw, B. (1921). Back to Methuselah. A Metabiological Pentateuch. *The Project Gutemberg eBook.*
[345] Beckett, S. (2011). *Wating for Godot.* Grove Press.

abandoned by everyone, convinced that he has been disclosed to the Law Society and that his arrest is forthcomming. How do we, then, as readers or spectators, pass so quickly from the presentiment of failure to its realization, just two days later?

The following speeches are examples of Osborne's use of the language in which the mechanism of language itself is used to parody some meaningless "mechanical" process. The texture of Maitland's speech seems coarse-grained, vulgar, when set beside Lucky's speech. In *Inadmissible* Osborne gives his character a broken syntax, with its repetitions and word-piles. At the same time Osborne distances himself from the clearly and ideologically targeted Shavian parody. The emphasis shifts from the "target", in this case the trivial-sounding rejection of modern science, to the "personal" voice of a mediocre but intensely despairing man who is "caught up in the mechanics of a half-understood jargon." Trussler makes a critical comment about *Inadmissible* pointing to the fact that this Lucky-like speech is less typical of Bill's "abrupt, egocentric, strongly associative idiom" than a later speech in the same scene.[346]All these personal traits are clustered into an ironic verbal collage. In her comparative study of Shaw and Osborne, Katherine J. Worth puts the stress firmly on the resemblance between the two dramatists but without focussing on their language, and remarks that in his more pessimistic sensibility "Osborne seems to begin at about the point reached by Shaw during the First World War."[347]Nevertheless, one can go further than that and say that the difference in sensibility corresponds to a shift in style. In Osborne's plays even the rhetoric of verbal theatricality gets gradually introverted and loses both the reassuring syntax of witty discourse (the "euphemistic grace" of the old rhetoric) and the operatic propensities of "verbal music." According to Wilson Knight, dramatic vitality comes as it were, from below. In this same way, Osborne shifts rhetoric away from abstraction and dips it into that idiomatic, half-slangy un-inhibited "vernacular" use of language which at times becomes Wilson Knight's "Dionysian" speech from below.[348]

Modern dramas have been breaking new ground and *Look Back* as such can be described as a strong study in ferocity. It is a self-generated, unconditioned, causeless and motiveless fury arising from the mysterious inner dynamisms of the human soul. Jimmy delivers his attack by way of an amazing resource of half-slangy and intensely

---

[346] Trussler, S. (1969). *The Plays of John Osborne: An Assessment.* London: Gollancz, p.114.

[347] Worth, K. J. (1964). Shaw and John Osborne. *The Shavian: The Journal of the Shaw Society , 2* (10), pp.29-35.

[348] Knight, W. G. (1963). The Kitchen Sink; On Recent Developments in Drama. *Encounter: Literature, Arts Current Affairs , 22* (6), pp.48-54.

modern phrases for that period of time. It is a kind of poetry coming naturally from an educated young man of low birth, blending a rebellious kind of proletarian-like style with the academic tradition. Jimmy Porter's rage is wide and on occasions it can rise to the compact brilliance of "a kind of female Emily Bronte." According to Carter's monograph on Osborne (1969), Porter uses an urban, lumped kind of proletarian dialect, non-literary in style, and drawing on the imagery, often hyperbole, of emotional disturbance. Hence, Osborne has acted out a recognition of one of Shaw's characters who remarks: "Since the war, the lower centres have become vocal."[349]

Examples of Osborne's dramatic language can be found in those plays that recall Shaw. For example, there is a similarity between the rhetoric of hate turned on multiple objects by John Tanner in *Man and Superman*[350] also to be delivered by Jimmy Porter in *Look Back.* Tanner's tirade on the upper class daughter and her mother has an euphemistic undertone. Thus, it parodies itself, both by being mounted on an ironical platform and by exhibiting the "comic pathology of verbal excess" so common in the style of Osborne. The similarities can be found in the balanced syntax, which carries a litany of negative generic epithets: "A horrible procession of wretched girls, each in the claws of a cynical, cunning, avaricious, disillusioned, ignorantly experienced foul-minded old woman whom she calls mother and whose duty is to corrupt her mind to the highest bidder."[351]

Jimmy Porter's pointedly domestic tirade on the middle-class daughter (his wife, Alison) reaches a climax in the quick beat of colloquial picture-language:

> Did you ever see some dirty old Arab, sticking his fingers into some mess of lamb and gristle? Well, she's just like that. Thank God they don't have many women surgeons! Those primitive hands would have your guts out in no time. Flip! Out it comes, like the powder out of this box. Flop! Back it goes, like the powder puff on the table… She'd drop your guts like hair clips and fluff all over the floor.[352]

The tirade against the mother – who is cast, as in Shaw, in the role of the unscrupulously class-conscious protector – throws up a gradual increase of ribald, person-directed similes: "she'd bellow like a rhinoceros in labour"… "She's as rough as

[349] Carter, A. (1969). *John Osborne.* Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd.
[350] Shaw, G. B. (1956). *Man and Superman: a comedy and a philosophy.* London: Longman.
[351] Ibíd., p.111.
[352] *L.B.*, p.24.

a night in a Bombay brothel" and culminates in a maniac hyperbole as Jimmy elaborates his image of worms feasting on the mother.[353]

It is not simply that Osborne's language is more violent, an image of reality and more vernacular than anything found in Shaw. The fact is that the over-charged invective is closing in on the personal conflict, drawing attention away from the supposed personal target, towards the speaker's personal condition. Jimmy's misogyny is made evident in his personal need to use words as instruments of torture. At the same time, the ironic platform is being undercut. Both the context of these tirades and the tone used by the characters are as relevant as the texture of their words. In this way, Osborne's Shavian-sounding stage directions call for the climax of the "worms" speech to be spoken in the way "in what he intends to be a comic declamatory voice."[354] But Osborne's humorous intention is being outstripped by its maniac intensity so that the pathological element in the comic verbal excess is thus intensified.

In Shaw's play, Tanner's tirade establishes an ironic complicity between Ann and Tanner:

> Ann: "You talk so well.
> Tanner: Talk! Talk!"[355]

And which leads on to the comic denouement of the shared motor cruise.

In *Luther,*[356] Osborne clearly wanted to move towards epic drama. Nevertheless, *Luther* is not epic theatre in the Brechtian sense of the expression and this is argued in a convincing way by Simon Trussler.[357] There are signs in this play that he wanted the distancing (or "alienation") effect this form requires, with the dialectic of a theological/cultural revolution drawn into the open structure and the outward-reaching dialogue of the play. The shift in style becomes theatrically more evident with the change from the private interior of Act One, "with its outer darkness and rich personal objects", to the second and third Acts, "sweeping, concerned with men in time rather than particular man in the unconscious; caricature not portraiture", as Osborne writes down in a Décor Note:

---

[353] *L.B.*, pp.51-3.
[354] *L.B.*,p.53.
[355] Shaw, G. B. (1956). *Man and Superman: a comedy and a philosophy.* London: Longman, p.85.
[356] The young actor Albert Finney plays Martin, *Luther*, 1961. A heavily carved pulpit at the front. Fig.9, p.268 in this dissertation.
[357] Trussler, S. (1966). Brecht and the English Theatre. *Tulane Drama Review*, 69.

> After the intense interior of Act One, with its outer darkness and rich, personal objects, the physical effect from now on should be more intricate, general, less personal; sweeping, concerned with men in time rather than particular man in the unconscious; caricature not portraiture, like the popular woodcuts of the period, like DURER. Down by the apron in the corner there is a heavily carved pulpit.[358]

It is the language coming from the "private interior" of the characters that has most life, both in performance and in the text. The open scenes, partly through Osborne's relative failure to capture the language of ideas, seem to be frequently empty. Act II, scene iv is set in The Fugger Palace, Augsburg, October 1518. The sustained discussion scene between Martin (Dr. Luther for Cajetan) and Cajetan on the fear of an intellectually torn world[359] lacks the dialectical and verbal force of Shaw's debates on heresy in the tent and trial scenes of *Saint Joan* (1924).[360] Yet Osborne, in his intuitive way of working, reaches the language of inner conflict which Shaw hardly accepted. It is enough to recall that Joan in her first moments of isolation is given a long speech on the triumph of being alone, when she says: "I am alone. France is alone. God is alone", contextualized in the rhetoric of affirmation.[361]

By contrast, in *Luther's* First Act, Osborne succeeds in transmuting thought into drama, through Martin's broken confession in the use of concrete imagery of the tormented body-mind-flesh, bones and bowels, which is interwoven with the communal confession of trivia by other monks.[362] The language in *Luther* is natural in its context though at the same time stylised, re-creating the experience of isolation and spiritual despair. His bare statement, "I am alone. I am alone, and against myself"[363] becomes "embodied" in between Martin's telling of the nightmare about the crushing pile of people, in speech rhythms that communicate anxiety, and in the following fragmented lament: "My bones fail. My bones fail, my bones are shattered and fall away, my bones fail and all that's left of me is a scraped marrow and a dying jelly."[364] Although Osborne used Erik H. Erikson's *Young Man Luther* (New York, 1958)[365] as source book for his play, according to Professor Gilleman the debt owed to the historical figure of

---

[358] Osborne, J. (1961). Décor Note. *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber, p.46.
[359] Ibid. Act II, iv, p.65.
[360] Shaw, B. (2001). *Saint Joan.* Penguin Classics.
[361] Ibid. end of scene v.
[362] Osborne, J. (1961). *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber, Act I, scene I.
[363] Ibid. I, ii, p.20.
[364] Ibid. I, i, p.21.
[365] Erikson, E. H. (1958). *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History.* New York: The Norton Library, United States.

Luther and to the psychoanalytic studies about the "excremental vision" become, for questions of analysis, a matter of secondary importance. The imagery found in the previous passage recalls Psalm 22 (Psalm, 22.14): "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; and it is melted in the midst of my bowels."[366] The corporeal imagery and the dramatic gesture of self-rejection are both personal and universal. There is a similarity between Martin's "If my flesh would leak and dissolve…" and "O that this too sullied flesh would melt" by Hamlet.[367] Here, the rhythms of auto-hypnotic repetition express a personal trauma, controlled and counterpointed by the confessional ritual.

In this same play and as one of the repeated motifs found in Martin's inner conflict, Osborne emphatically dramatises the young monk's constant fear of the use of the wrong word which he equates with sin, leading him to an obsessive wrestle with them. Martin Luther says: "It's the single word that troubles me."

> MARTIN: What's the use of all this talk of penitence if I can't feel it.
> BRO. WEINAND: Father Nathin told me he had to punish you only the day before yesterday because you were in some ridiculous state of Hysteria, all over some verse in Proverbs or something.
> MARTIN: "Know thou the state of thy flocks."
> BRO.WEINAND: And all over the interpretation of one word apparently. When will you ever learn? You must know what you're doing. Some of the brothers laugh quite openly at you, you and your over-stimulated conscious. Which is wrong of them, I know, but you must be able to see why.
> MARTIN: It's the single words that trouble. [368]

Martin can feel the alternate sense of shock and release when he is able to speak the words of a text as if it were for the first time. The persistence of doubt is made evident in the following lines:

> MARTIN: Father, I'm never sure of the words till I hear them out loud.
> STAUPITZ: Well that's probably the meaning of the Word. The Word is me, and I am the Word. Anyway, try and be a little prudent. Look at Erasmus: he never really gets into any serious trouble, but he still manages to make his point.[369]

Thus, the word-motif recurs throughout this work. Here the issue of language is just one, seemingly unproblematic, and interlinked, as in classical naturalism, with the

---

[366] *The Official King James Bible.* (n.d.). Retrieved June 25, 2011, from http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/

[367] Shakespeare, W. (1992). *Hamlet.* (S. Weller, Ed.) Dover-Thrift-Editions. I, ii, p.129.

[368] Osborne, J. (1961). *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber, pp.26-27.

[369] Ibid. II, i, p.60.

dramatist's questions about the meaning of individual lives. Such an almost Chekhovian ideal of embodying lived meaning in "the kind of language they use to one another" keeps, in practice, evading Osborne.

As Mary McCarthy suggests, there is much in Osborne's dramatic language that seems to connect with the desire to "hear the words out aloud"[370] in order to reach some certainty, if only by the reassurance of saying "I talk, therefore I am."[371] Histrionic rhetoric in particular is inseparable from the feeling that words are self-authenticating. Furthermore, Osborne is essentially a verbal dramatist and this fact is reflected in his following remark, related to a creed reminiscent of Shaw on the theatre as a temple and as one of the few acts of communion left to us:

> Words are important. They may be dispensed with, but it seems they're our last link with God. When millions of people seem unable to communicate with one another, its vitally important that words are made to work. It may be old-fashioned, but there're the only things we have left…[372]

Perhaps it is no accident that the term "old-fashioned", applied by Osborne about the form of his first play *Look Back*, is now used to refer to his "allegiance to words", in a context that makes clear that Osborne is aware of the shrinking area of meaning through words. The power of language is asserted against its felt decline. The texture of Osborne's rhetoric itself embodies this tension in an attempt to gain new theatrical vitality for what is, after all, an "old-fashioned play" language.

4.3 The Rhetoric of Self-Dramatisation

"Gifted people are always dramatising themselves. It provides its own experience, I suppose"[373] (*Epitaph for George Dillon*, Act II). It will be helpful, for a question of analysis, to recall Eliot's early essay "'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama" (1919)[374] for a number of reasons. First of all, this essay contains the clearest short definition of any kind of rhetoric: "where a character in the play *sees himself* in a dramatic light." One of Othello's speeches: "And say, besides, that in Aleppo once…"

---

[370] Osborne, J. (1968, June 30). Interview with John Osborne. (K. Tynan, Interviewer)
[371] McCarthy, M. (1965, July 4). Verdict on Osborne. *The Observer*, p.17.
[372] Osborne, J. (1966). On Critics and Criticism. *The Sunday Telegraph*.
[373] Osborne, J. (1963). *Plays for England:The Blood of the Bambergs and Under Plain Cover*. London: Evans Brothers Limited.
[374] Eliot, T. S. (1991). *Selected Essays 1917-1932*. Londres: Faber and Faber, pp.37-42.

is an example of this. According to Eliot, through such a speech we gain a "a new clue to the character, in noting the angle from which he views himself"[375], quite different from the "vicious rhetoric" we get "when a character in a play makes a direct appeal to us." Furthermore, Eliot makes a significant connection between the first kind of rhetoric, in which a lead character sees itself in a dramatic light, and people's awareness of themselves in actual life as actors. He rightly defends the half-humorous tirades in Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac, as successfully exploiting this self-conscious dramatic rhetoric. Finally, Eliot offers the reader some criteria for judging the quality of rhetoric: "partly an improvement in language and …partly progressive variation in feeling."[376]

Osborne's revival of the tirade has the most vital part in some of his plays, by the use of the self-dramatized rhetoric, through an essentially histrionic self-projection which nourishes various kinds of verbal theatricality. At a certain emotional climax of the play, the central character is made to verbalise his feelings and dramatise his usually ambivalent awareness of his own self. It is worth remembering that Osborne was himself an actor, so he uses as a resort the actor-character in some of his plays, examples of which are George Dillon, Archie Rice and Pamela. At the same time, it is a simple device the way a character views himself through such a speech (timing it and watching its effects on his audience) by offering a naturalistic pretext for both the verbal excess and the self-conscious address. Theatrical clichés are thus incorporated into the dialogue. Hence, George Dillon, the failed actor, not only sees and mocks himself theatrically as actor *agonistes* (engaged in a struggle): "I know I've got to fight every one of those people in the auditorium. Right from the stalls to the gallery, to the Vestal Virgins in the boxes! My God, it's a gladiatorial combat. Me against them! Me and mighty them!" But he is also "permitted" to denounce the family that has offered him hospitality in terms of a cheap play analogy: "Like living in one of those really bad suitable for all family comedies they do all the year round in weekly rep. in Wigan."[377] In the end he can only express himself through histrionic rhetoric, thus turning the personal duologue with Ruth – a potentially "real relatedness" – into verbal posturing.

In *The Entertainer,* Archie Rice imports the clichés, the tone and rhythms of his jejune music hall "turns" into his domestic talk. For example, the refrain of his song in

[375] Ibid., p.40.
[376] Ibid., p.39.
[377] Osborne, J. (1963). *Plays for England:The Blood of the Bambergs and Under Plain Cover.* London: Evans Brothers Limited. (*Epitaph for George Dillon*, Act II, pp.49-65).

Number Five – Thank God I'm Normal – reappears in the drunken but authentic piece of self-exposure at the climax of Act II and starts off a new refrain in the same style:

> "Say, aren't you glad you're normal? I've always been a seven day a week man myself, haven't I Phoebe? A seven-day a week man… I'm a seven day a week man myself, twice a day."[378]

It's also well considering the refrain found in Archie's song, "Number one's the only one for me!"[379] and "You'd better start thinking about number one, Jennie."[380]As if apologising for his now habitual manner of speaking, Archie is earlier in the play made to say: "If you can dodge all the clichés dropping like bats from the ceiling, you might pick up something from me."[381] Archie's relationship with his family can be interpreted as an "extension of that with his audience, treating them to a string of unfunny and inconsequential remarks, talking all the time to avoid the pain of silence and smiling to cover the despair."[382] In sum, his talk resembles that of an extended revue sketch, underscoring the "low theatricality" of his own private world.

Pamela, the actress-heroine of *Time Present*, projects herself in terms of two opposed theatrical styles. One of them is the twittering world of "Show-business", which now embraces "everybody" as she says, "You're all of you in Show Business now. Everybody"[383], in the same way as she embraces the second one, the moribund theatre and life-style of her dying father. The verbal vitality in this play comes from the way Pamela sees the world as a stage and dramatises her negatives, in the same way as she parodies the vocabulary and gestures of a "mean time." Critic Alan Carter explains in his monograph on Osborne that the climax of *The Hotel in Amsterdam* was written in 1968 as a companion 'Play for the Mean Time' to *Time Present*. He explains that the expression "For the Mean Time" suggests both "a temporary stage in Osborne's own development and his sour comment upon the time in which we live"[384], referring to the decade of 1960's. As epigraph to *Time Present* Osborne includes the following passage

---

[378] Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer.* London: Faber and Faber, Act. II, p.73.
[379] Ibid., pp.32-3.
[380] Ibid., p.68.
[381] Ibid., Act. II. Intermission, Number Eight, p.62.
[382] Banham, M. (1969). *Osborne.* Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd Ltd, p.32.
[383] Osborne, J. (1973). *West of Suez, A Patriot for Me, Time Present, The Hotel in Amsterdam.*. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company. Act II, p.212.
[384] Carter, A. (1969). *John Osborne.* Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd. p.45.

from the Ecclesiastes: "A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. A time to get and a time to lose: a time to keep and a time to cast away."

Another example in the play is a political slogan picked-up at random, as the title of a pamphlet, and introverted with the following comic–dramatic negative remark: "Striding into the Seventies yet. I haven't got used to hobbling about in the Sixties yet."[385] A fuller self-dramatising speech follows on:

> PAMELA. But what about the mean time? We've got to get through that, haven't we? I don't know about striding off anywhere. I seem to be stuck here for the moment…that's not being glib. We have to wait up…not be able to get to sleep…always before you…off…and you wake.[386]

Against the "mean" contemporary scene, Pamela sets the old style, like a mundane version of Beckett's Winnie, hanging on to fragments from the past. In *Time Present*, the verbal legacy of this style turns out to be a collection of stale captions, with bits of cliché-dialogue from back plays, as an elegy for Pamela's father, Orme, and the age of elegance he is supposed to represent. The following dialogue illustrates this idea:

> Edward:…I never saw Orme in *Macbeth.* What was he like?
> Pamela: The best.
> Edward: So they tell me. Bit before my time.
> Pamela: Too bored to bother, you mean.
> He picks up cutting book
> Edward: Here he is. Playing Arthur Bellenden. Of the Twenty-first London Regiment. Act I. Nutley Towers. A Friday Evening. He looks quite something.
> Pamela: Act I.i. The Conservatory, Nutley, Sunday evening. Act III. The Marsk by Drawing Room. Fitzroy Square, Monday evening. What's it called?
> Pamela: *The Call of Duty.*[387]

Pamela's tendency to make a collage of contemporary voices resembles the attitude of the proper writer Osborne, who claimed to admire collage art, at least, as he says, in Picasso: "Who can play with bits of newspapers and bottles."[388]

We may also find more extended, although less directly histrionic examples of the rhetoric of self-dramatisation. In them, the character creates a theatrical platform even if he is not formally, only instinctively, an actor (Jimmy Porter, Bill Maitland) and even if his rhetoric is not placed in a formal theatrical framework, with explicit play-metaphors in its texture. A dramatic view of the self – a broadly externalised inner

---

385 Osborne, J. (1973). *Four Plays: West of Suez; A Patriot for Me; Time Present; The Hotel in Amsterdam.* New York: Dold, Mead. (*Time Present,* Act I, p.197).
386 Ibíd.
387 Ibíd., p.216.
388 Osborne, J. (1961). That Awful Museum. *Twentieth Century , 169*.p.212-216.

conflict – remains a constant element. In the following passages, Osborne seems to insist on asking whether we do not find in the texture of the verbal rhetoric a progressive variation in language and feeling. Does the theatrical posture permit nuances of self-expression? Hence, in the discussion of the following passages given as examples, both the context and their length have been accounted for. The immediate context is also indicated and explained.

In the first one, taken from *Epitaph*, a quasi-soliloquy turns into formal soliloquy. George Dillon addresses Ruth, who leaves before the speech ends. The device of the third-person "epitaph", "Here lies the body of George Dillon", provides an instant platform for self-dramatisation:

> GEORGE DILLON. No, wait. Shall I recite my epitaph to you? Yes, do recite my epitaph to me. 'Here lies the body of George Dillon, aged thirty-four – or thereabouts – who thought, who hoped, he was that mysterious, ridiculous being called an artist. He never allowed himself one day of peace…He made no one happy, no one look up with excitement when he entered the room. He was always troubled with wind round his heart, but he loved no one successfully. He was a bit of a bore, and, frankly, rather useless. But the germs loved him. – Even his sentimental epitaph is probably a pastiche of someone or other, but he doesn't quite know who. And, in the end, it doesn't really matter (*Epitaph for George Dillon*, III).[389]

The speaker lifts his voice above the surrounding dialogue justifying in naturalistic terms a virtual soliloquy. The epitaph offers partial self-parody in the form of a self-mocking judgement on his own style: "sentimental…probably a pastiche of someone or other."[390]

In the second passage, Jimmy Porter addresses both Alison and Cliff:

> JIMMY: I rage, and shout my head off, and everyone thinks "poor chap" or "what an objectionable man!" But that girl there can twist your arm off with her silence… One of us is crazy. One of us is mean and stupid and crazy. What is it? Is it me, standing here like a hysterical girl, hardly able to get my words out? Or is it her? ... I want to stand up in your tears, and splash about in them, and sing. I want to be there when you grovel. I want to be there. I want to be there. I want the front seat.[391]

In the following one, Archie Rice, in addressing his daughter, places the following tirade as a remaining duologue:

---

[389] Osborne, J. (1996). *Plays One: Look Back in Anger, Epitaph for George Dillon, The World of Paul Slickey, Déjà vu.* London: Faber, p.87.
[390] Ibid.
[391] *L.B.*, p.59.

> I never even liked that kind of music, but to see that old black whore singing her heart out to the whole world, you knew somehow in your heart that it didn't matter how much you kick people, how much you despise them, if they can stand and make a pure, just natural noise like that, there's nothing wrong with them, only with everybody else. I've never heard anything like that since. I've never heard it here. Oh, I've heard whispers of it on a Saturday night somewhere…But you won't hear it anywhere now. I don't suppose we'll ever hear it again. There's nobody who can feel like that. I wish to God I could, I wish to God I could feel like that old black bitch with her fat cheeks, and sing…[392]

The last passage is formally a monologue delivered by Maitland, though Maitland's daughter is mutely present:

> But, and this is the but, I still don't think what you're doing ill ever, even, even, even approach the fibbing, mumping little worm of energy eating away in this me, of mine, I mean. That is: which is that of being slowly munched and then diminished altogether. That worm, thank heaven, is not in your cherry rose. You are unselfconscious, which I am not. You are without guilt, which I am not. Quite rightly...[393]

The context of the previous extract from the play *Inadmissible* is that of a man involved in the process of transforming the potential love for his daughter into an act of aggression, which in turn results self-destructive. The syntax and punctuation are distorted for a question of emphasis. This is an example of rhetoric with a resulting rhythm, where function words (but-but; still-will; the "even" cluster; the odd pronoun paradigms; "that is: which is that"; "this me of mine") are as much carriers of intense self-dramatisation as the highly coloured content words.

4.4 How Osborne's Characters Communicate

The British Mass Education Act of 1944 produced a generation of young graduates who were too educated for the working classes, yet not aristocratic enough for the upper crust of society and who were represented in fiction by the Jimmy Porter's, Jim Dixon's, and Charles Lumley's of that era. But as Angela Hague has pointed out in "The Angry Young Novel"[394], not every voice from that era fits the stereotype and many of the concerns are more philosophical and further-reaching. If T.S. Eliot in the

[392] Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer.* London: Faber and Faber. Act. II. p.71.
[393] Osborne, J. (1965). *Inadmissible Evidence.* New York: Grove Press, Act. II, p.105-6.
[394] Hague, A. (1986). Picaresque Structure and the Angry Young Novel. In A. Hague, *Twentieth-Century Literature* (Vol. 4, pp.209-220). IIUC Studies.

1940's complained of "the intolerable wrestle/With words and meanings,"[395] the generation of British writers in the 50's felt the disruption even more keenly, and it was assumed by many that they were on the wrong side of the cultural divide. In the same way, characters in an Osborne play sometimes try to communicate to the audience that they cannot communicate. Osborne points at philosophical issues in his autobiography: "Existentialism was the macro-biotic food of the day and Mickey Wall and I were 'into' the impenetrable brown rice of Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Jaspers and, of course, Sartre."[396] Rebellion against language was part of the Zeitgeist; Wittgenstein and Beckett were publishing at that time some of their most important work, taking the categories of semantics and epistemology and dislodging them beyond recovery.

The art of Wittgenstein's own career suggests a rebellious turn. In his *Tractatus*, he states, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."[397] He took the limits of language as far as they could go in the *Tractatus* and grouped them in what would eventually result in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Allen Thiher has noted in his work on Beckett and Wittgenstein that "Much of modern language theory is concerned with setting the bounds of the sayable,"[398] while many postmodern writers such as Beckett both explore and deny those bounds. Osborne fits this last pattern of a writer who creates lead characters, who are continually trying to say what they mean.

In *Investigations* and in other works published posthumously, Wittgenstein suggests three steps in the study of language in order to explain this fact. The first one involves recognizing the randomness of ordinary meaning: "When we say: 'Every word in language signifies something' we have so far said nothing whatever…"[399] The second step is that of questioning whether one can share meaning with others, in Wittgenstein's arguments about private language and experience expressed thus: "The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people also have this or something

---

[395] Eliot, T. S. (1961). *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism.* USA: President and Fellows of Harvard College.

[396] Osborne, J. (1994). *Almost a Gentleman: An Autobiography 1955-1966.* London and Boston: Faber, Chapter 12: "Kindly Leave the Stage" p.171.

[397] Wittgenstein, L. (1933). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* (C. Orgden, Trans.) London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner. p.149.

[398] Thiher, Allen. «Wittgenstein, Heidegger, The Unnamable, and Some Thoughts on the Status of Voice in Fiction.» Gontarski, S. E., Pierre Astier y Beja Morris. *Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives.* Ed. S. E. Gontarski, Pierre Astier y Beja Morris. Ohio, 1983. pp.80-90.

[399] Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations.* (G. Anscombe, Trans.) New York: Macmillan. p.7.

else."[400] The third and final step is asking oneself whether even one's own meanings can remain something consistent to oneself: "Imagine a person whose memory could not retain what the word "pain" meant, so that he constantly called different things by that name, but nevertheless used the word in a way fitting in with the usual symptoms and presuppositions of "pain"; in short he uses it as we all do."[401] Considering these philosophical arguments for the purpose of our analysis, some of Osborne's characters remain occupied with the first step which consists in deconstructing meaning, but what the majority of them are painfully involved in is in trying to communicate the meaning of their own experience to others. Only just a rare few break through to the final step of uncertainty of meaning in themselves. The plays, as Georg Henrik von Wright said of Wittgenstein's writings, are a "*Form der Betrachtung*."[402][a way of looking at writing] my own translation.

Many of the situations in Osborne's plays reflect a gap of meaning. The opening scene of *Look Back* significantly shows a jungle of newspapers and weeklies, a cover of ostensible meaning, which hides away behind it two characters, Jimmy and Cliff. For Jimmy Porter, the senseless conflation of meaning in society had become a point of agreement. As he remarks of what he is reading, "Different books, same reviews," and the clergyman's address he looks at next amounts to "Dundidumdidumdidum"[403], in the style of the well known "Humpty Dumpty's riddle." Concomitantly, words in themselves become objects of curiosity, such as "pusillanimous" which he considers as "one of those words I've never been quite sure of, but always thought I knew."[404]

Rejecting conventional meaning, Jimmy is naturally a prey to worries about communicating. Alison's father, Colonel Redfern, makes an oddly sympathetic remark about Jimmy: "As for Jimmy, he just speaks a different language from any of us."[405] Jimmy's reply to Alison's earlier comments about his acquaintance Webster (maybe Osborne's nod to language, a reference to Webster's Dictionary of Lexicography) is the following: "So he is. Different dialect but same language"[406] showing the real gap between them. In this way, Jimmy speaks in what Wittgenstein terms as 'private

[400] Ibid., p.95.
[401] Ibid., p.95.
[402] Wright, G. H. (1982). *Wittgenstein.* Minneapolis: U.of Minneapolis p.216.
[403] *L.B.*, pp.10-13.
[404] *L.B.*, p.21.
[405] *L.B.*, p.64.
[406] *L.B.*, p.18.

language': "The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking which are his immediate private sensations. So, another person cannot understand the language."[407] The alienation effect becomes, in this case, something more than a cultural phenomenon since it is intrinsic to the individual.

Osborne's primary concern is about "how people relate to each other and to themselves"[408] but which, reflected in his work means the opposite idea, how they fail to relate to one another. We must not forget about the fact that he does not consider himself a social critic. This Wittgensteinian or, to coin a term, Osbornean idea is the extension of non-communication back into the individual: A whole that finds it doesn't agree even with itself. On the simplest level, this is just a confrontation of parts, as with Jimmy's "disconcerting mixture" of personality qualities.[409] But the disjunctions go deeper, to form part of a real epistemological 'crevice'. Cliff, talking to Helena, comments about Jimmy in the following terms: "Don't think he knows himself half the time."[410] Critics have for so long seen Jimmy as a creature of intense certainty that this lack of conviction may come to them as a surprise. This uncertainty, once more, reflects a universal rather than an idiosyncratic tendency, as Wittgenstein proposes in a paradigm that has become famous: Every time one feels a certain sensation, one jots down an "E" to record it, but how can one ever be sure that one "E" is the same as another? [411]

The self-struggle can even infuriate Jimmy, and this is made evident when he exclaims: "Is it me, standing here like a hysterical girl, hardly able to get my words out?"[412], so it is no wonder that he questions about whether he or Alison are both crazy. It is a difficulty he finds in thinking univocally and not just a feeling of powerless rage. Wittgenstein's words reinforce his idea, "I never more than half succeed in expressing what I want to express."[413] Intention and expectation are also problematic in their

[407]Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations.* (G. Anscombe, Trans.) New York: Macmillan, pp.88-89.
[408] Wager, W. (1967). John Osborne. (G. Longmans, Ed.) *The Playwrights Speak* , pp. 71-86, pp.71-86.
[409] *L.B.*, p.10.
[410] *L.B.*, p.78.
[411] Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations.* (G. Anscombe, Trans.) New York: Macmillan, pp.92-3.
[412] *L.B.*, p.59.
[413] Wittgenstein, L. (1980). *Culture and Value* (2 ed.). (G. v. Nyman, Ed., & P. Winch, Trans.) Chicago: U.of Chicago P.

attempt to connect thought and reality.[414] In this way, the problem is totally bound up with the untrustworthy self. Similarly, Jimmy tells Helena that he may write a book about his suffering: "Written in flames a mile high," he claims, "It's all here" and slaps his forehead.[415] The wrestle with meaning begins – and sometimes dies – in the mind. Osborne writes of Tennessee William's work: "These are plays about failure. That is what makes human beings interesting."[416]

The stage directions in the play *Look Back* express in themselves the scene's meaning. This is choreographed emotion, not so much in imitation as in excess of Osborne's model of Tennessee Williams. What we need to know about the scene is already imparted through movement, intensity, and intonation. In other words, the *how* and *to whom* of the dialogue are more important that the *what*:

> Silence. His rage mounting within.
> Alison recognising an onslaught on the way starts to panic. But the wild note in her voice has reassured him. His anger cools and hardens. He clutches wildly for something to shock Helena with. He kicks the cistern. Sits on it, beats it like bongo drums. He is capable of anything now. Cliff and Helena look at Alison tensely, but she just gazes at her plate.[417]

In Osborne's drama it is the context of the play and not the content that which dominates exchange between two characters. Like "negative space", meaning has to be excavated from in between stage directions. The American visual artist Bruce Nauman popularized in the mid-sixties the concept of 'negative space' by which the artist gave a different meaning to an object: "He intimated an object's presence by filling in the space around it."[418] Words outline an emotion rather than articulate it, drawing a space around it occupied usually by feelings of longing or regret. Therefore, Osborne mocks literal-minded critics who take a character's most salient utterance, such as Jimmy's famous "there aren't any good brave causes left"[419], as a key element to his personality: "They were incapable of recognizing the texture of ordinary despair, the way it expresses itself in rhetoric and gestures that may perhaps look shabby, but are seldom

---

[414] Wittgenstein, L. (1967). *Zettel.* (G. A. Wright, Ed., & G. Anscombe, Trans.) Berkeley:U.of California, pp.10-12.
[415] *L.B.*, p.54.
[416] Osborne, J. (n.d.). Sex and Failure. Review of Tennesse Willians's Four Plays, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Baby Doll. *The Observer*, p.317.
[417] *L.B.* stage directions II, i, pp.51-53.
[418] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge. p.241.Note 27.
[419] *L.B.* III, i, p.84.

simple."[420] This of course annoyed critics who, led astray by the "well made" aspect of the play, could not be expected to regard language with such reservations.

Moreover, Osborne adopts this same technique in the stage directions of *Look Back* to create a sense of character. He presents a character mainly in terms of an emotional scope of different terms, which, in Osborne's case, is unhelpfully wide: "he is a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty, restless, importunate, full of pride, a combination which combines the sensitive and insensitive alike."[421] This does not help the critic understand the logic of that character's behaviour. The character's reality immaterializes, so to speak, within a cloud of other names. Coleman writes that Osborne is said to have possessed a drawing with the twenty-six or so characters that never appear but are constantly referred to in *Look Back*, serving as the imaginary coordinates of Jimmy and Alison's existences.[422] He establishes character mainly negatively. General audiences, scholars on the subject, critics, and readers in general have worked to force the play into the traditionalist/ naturalist category. Osborne has encouraged and confirmed such thought by stating in 1961: "I thought *Look Back in Anger* was a rather old-fashioned play."[423] He was not aware of what he had created until much later, when he confessed in 1974: "I took a lot of daring risks"[424], significantly including multiple referents to characters who are mentioned but never appear in the play, a practice not accepted by the naturalist/modernist theatre of 1956.

From the point of view of its structure, *Look Back* is a rather old-fashioned play. A three-act format which traces on the separation and reconciliation of Jimmy and his wife Alison, focusing on Alison's pregnancy and Jimmy's wrath. Nevertheless, to describe the pattern of events in that way is to draw attention to the fact that Jimmy's wrath has little to do with Alison's pregnancy, and that the old fashioned line of separation and reconciliation contributes more to the scaffolding than to the substance of the play. The difficulties which emerge between them are a consequence of much wider problems that are neither fully summarized in nor adequately exemplified by the strain and stress of that particular relationship. But, as the action of the play unfolds,

---

[420] Osborne, J. (n.d.). Sex and Failure. Review of Tennesse Willians's Four Plays, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Baby Doll. *The Observer*, p.317.
[421] *L.B.* I, pp.9-10.
[422] Coleman, T. (1971, August). Osborne Without Anger. *The Guardian*.
[423] Osborne, J. (1961). That Awful Museum. *Twentieth Century , 169*, pp.212-16.
[424] Amory, M. (1974). Jester Flees the Court. *Sunday Times Magazine*, p.34.

neither a name nor a place in the story is enough to gain characters an influential voice since Jimmy's voice dominates everyone else's throughout the play. This makes more evident the disjunction between the scope of the issues raised and the restricted nature of the central relationship within which they are dramatically explored. At the same time, one of the oddities of a play that focuses upon a relationship as that between a couple is that so many other characters are in one way or another caught up in the action, but never appear on stage. Cliff, Helena and Colonel Redfern, all appear in minor roles, but there are others who never appear as is the case of Jimmy's best friend Hugh and his mother, Mrs Tanner; Jimmy's ex-girlfriend, Madeline; his dying father and his disapproving mother; Alison's brother, Nigel; their ferocious mother; their outraged family friends; a radical gay; a rabid bishop; and various other people who earn a name but not a place in the story.

For critic Simon Trussler, Jimmy is neither adjusted to his era nor a spokesman for it.[425] His young voice, angrily disapproved with great conviction against language, while using the same tool of expression, language itself, to do so. This is Beckett's territory, as Thiler has observed. It is the postmodern protest against a self who is limited by language, a voice that ironically affirms what it speaks against.[426] We should take care not to conflate Osborne and his protagonist, although Jimmy's concerns about language seem as much the playwrights as the *Unnamable* echoes Beckett's frustrations. Curiously, there is no solution suggested, no program for relief. As von Wright has described Wittgenstein, his attitude toward language was a fighting one but not a reformist one,[427] and this description seems, we can say, to fit Osborne. The language used in the play is peculiar because it is an angry language. The emotive force and the vehemence with which Jimmy Porter speaks out makes it significant. Not only is his everyday language repetitive; his speech builds up most of the dialogue in the play. A study of the content of Jimmy's language reveals the use of invectives, vituperation, insults and metaphors of abuse and provides an interesting corpus for further studies.

In *The Entertainer*, we find Archie Rice and his family suffering about the same problem, this theme *passim*, the impossibility of shared meaning already found in *Look*

[425] Trussler, S. (1969). *The Plays of John Osborne: An Assessment.* London: Gollancz, p.11.
[426] Ibid., p.90.
[427] Wright, G. H. (1982). *Wittgenstein.* Minneapolis: U.of Minneapolis, p.208.

Back.[428] Situated in a domestic setting they are astride a generational divide; the rift between them at times seems more universal, tracing the limits of what we can know about others' experience. One of Wittgenstein's most noted examples is that of a person suffering from a toothache. How can it be compared to the sensation of someone else's toothache?[429] Archie claims, in a similar way, that he cannot connect with others experience "Simply because we're not like anybody who ever lived."[430] This lack of understanding can lead oneself to a sense of uncertainty of what others are feeling. About Jean's mother, Archie says, "Yes, I loved her. I was in love with her, whatever that may mean, I don't know."[431] Nevertheless, Jean is a good deal more vocal on the subject, having just broken up with her boyfriend Graham, she says: "You know, I hadn't realized – it just hadn't occurred to me that you could love somebody, that you could want them twenty-four hours of a day and then suddenly find that you're neither of you even living in the same world. I don't understand that. I just don't understand that. I wish I could understand that. It's frightening."[432] Osborne writes in his notebook in 1955: "He suffers the realization that there is no real communication with those we love most"[433], making the reader aware of the fact that we live in a world where one cannot know what another person is feeling since that presumed connection between people has proven to be an illusion. In a more general vein, Archie, in *The Entertainer*, tells Jean, his daughter: "My dear, nobody can tell you what they mean."[434]

If these problems in meaning were simply Osborne's perception of post-World War II England, his history plays should inhibit these concerns. For him, the past is simply a paradigm for the future and therefore semantic slippage and faulty communication are part of the human condition. Martin Luther lives along the same isolating continuum as Jimmy Porter does. In this way, *Luther* begins with the same questioning of accepted vocabulary and ritual as that found in *Look Back*, in an era which is specifically religious. We find Brother Weinand quibbling over matters of confession with Martin: "What do you mean?" "How do you know?" "Tell me what

[428] *The Entertainer* at the Royal Court Theatre, 1957, *left to right*, Dorothy Tutin, Richard Pasco, Brenda de Banzie, Lawrence Olivier. Fig.10, p.268 in this dissertation.
[429] Wittgenstein, L. (1982). *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1932-1935.* (A. Ambrose, Ed.) Chicago: U. of Chicago P., p.17.
[430] Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer.* London: Faber and Faber, p.54.
[431] Ibid., p.70.
[432] Ibid., p.29.
[433] Osborne, J. (1981). *A Better Class of Person: An Autobiography. 1929-1956.* London and Boston: Faber, p.272.
[434] Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer.* London: Faber and Faber, p.51.

you meant?"[435] His precarious state of mind stems partly from trying to pin down the interpretation of a verse from Proverbs: "It's the single words that trouble me." [436] He is approaching apodictic doubt. Wittgenstein writes: "If you are not certain of any fact, you cannot be certain of the meaning of your words either."[437] Cardinal Cajetan says that Martin's sermons imply those of "a man struggling for certainty, struggling insanely like a man in a fit, an animal trapped to the bone with doubt."[438] But, since one individual cannot exactly interpret another's experience, Cajetan has misinterpreted Martin's doctrinal doubt as spiritual doubt. Martin's quarrel is not so much with the Word as with words. It is worth pointing to the fact that Wittgenstein did not at all deny spirituality. He did believe in something awe-inspiring and mysterious, ineffable, which neatly fits in with his philosophy: "Only the supernatural can express the Supernatural."[439] He tells Vicar General Staupitz: "Only you could live *your* live."[440] Unable to communicate his experience, Martin turns towards his inner self, and it is there where he finds his own instability. As he says to Staupitz later, "They're trying to turn me into a fixed star, father, but I'm a shifting planet."[441] This comment is akin to the most unsettling prospect of Wittgenstein's tenets taken to its logical conclusion, which is that man is an unstable amalgam. In *Luther* Martin begins with the statement: "I'm alone. I am alone and against myself."[442] By the end of the play and despite his doctrinal victories, he has mostly confirmed this status of isolation.

Of all Osborne's plays, *Luther* (1961) deserves a particular close attention. It has enjoyed significant popular and critical success and works with themes and forms unusual for Osborne, where we can measure both the range of Osborne's expressive talents as well as his own limits. *Luther* is one of the only three historical dramas written by Osborne and, by all accounts, the play in which he comes closest to the epic style of Bertolt Brecht. The play traces the life of Martin Luther (1483-1546) from his youthful entry into an Augustinian monastery in 1506 to his settled, middle-aged family life in 1530. The play's twelve tableaux pick out key moments in Luther's life or in the

[435] Osborne, J. (1961). *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber, p.26.
[436] Ibid., p.27.
[437] Wittgenstein, L. (1972). *On Certainty.* (A. G.E.M., v. W. G.H., Eds., P. Denis, & A. 1. G.E.M., Trans.) New Yourk: Harper, p.17.
[438] Osborne, J. (1961). *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber, p.73.
[439] Wittgenstein, L. (1980). *Culture and Value* (2 ed.). (G. v. Nyman, Ed., & P. Winch, Trans.) Chicago: U.of Chicago P., p.3.
[440] Osborne, J. (1961). *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber, 1961, p.58.
[441] Ibid., p.99.
[442] Ibid., p.20.

world that changed his life: (I, i) monastic rituals, (I,ii) preparation for first communion service, (I,iii) confrontation with father, (II,i) Tetzel selling indulgences, (II,ii) sermon and Ninety-five Theses, (II,iv) Luther summoned before papal legate Cajetan, (II, v) Pope Leo issuing orders against Luther, (II,vi) Luther defying Rome,(III,i) Diet of Worms, (III,ii) Knight discussing Luther and Peasant's Revolt, (III,ii) reminiscences and new family.

It would be misleading to say that the play traces the development of Luther's character through the strains of his religious training, the intellectual manoeuvring in his disagreements with Rome, and the fiery conflicts of the Reformation, because in spite of this, he seems to change very little. By the end of the second scene Osborne has told us everything about Luther that may seem to be subject of his interest. Subsequent vignettes just reiterate the points already established. Martin is described as a serious young man with a powerful intellect whose self-doubt leads him to feel uncertain about God's mercy and the efficacy of all human endeavours, and induces dire physical ailments ranging from occasional epileptic fits to persistent constipation. Reference is made in the play to Luther's intellectual gifts and interests, even though Osborne avoids portraying Luther's intellectual powers and thus rarely carries an argument very far in the words he actually speaks. He grumbles about the sale of indulgences and the authority of the Pope (issues that are given theatrical prominence in II,i and II,v), but only presents an argument against the adoration of relics (a marginal issue in the play). Where Osborne might have shown Martin Luther constructing arguments, he settles on showing him posturing authoritatively or delivering invective expressions. The play avoids a systematic analysis of intellectual issues and concentrates on the physical and emotional aspects of Luther's life. For instance, in the play's scene concerning the Ninety-five Theses, Osborne eschews a précis of these theses in favour of an account of Luther's constipation and how it is relieved when he realizes that faith is more important than good works. The sermon is certainly engaging and powerful, but it is more a confession than an argument. We do get snippets of Luther's theories, his stress on faith, his suspicion of any authority other than the Bible, his hatred of relics and indulgencies, but these snippets are never linked into long, logical sequences. They are attached instead to the emotional and physical obsessions fixed in the first few scenes. (For examples of characters who do articulate and live by coherent arguments about morality and social realities, one might look to the plays of John Arden and Arnold

Wesker, say, *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*, *Armstrong's Last Good Night*, *Left-Handed Liberty*, Or the "*Wesker Trilogy*").

Osborne introduces a fragile community in his next play, *West of Suez*. First performed at the Royal Court Theatre on 17 August 1971, the setting is an island in the Mediterranean, once part of the Empire but now a tax haven for American and British citizens. Wyatt Gillman represents a seventy year old second rate writer whose fame is built on a carefully staged mediagenic eccentricity, first played by a star-actor, Ralph Richardson. Surrounded by his four daughters, their husbands and friends, he whiles away the time, savouring the island's comfortless 'comforts' of sun, water, sand, drinks, boredom, obnoxious tourists and sullen servants.

In the words of a reviewer, *West of Suez* is a bleak and cheerless play, but at its best it is also a moving study in incoherence, at least in what language represents. The following example is a dialogue between Frederica and Edward, a couple closed in by the boredom and despair of marriage. Not only do they fail to understand others, but also fail to understand themselves. It is the absolute audacity of presuming to know what another means that is, to some extent, that which sets off Osborne's characters, as is illustrated in the following example:

> FRED. […] Why do you get cross when I ask questions?
> ED. I don't. Only when you expect answers.
> FRED. Friends? [*She puts out her hand to him*]
> ED. Yes. I know. First.
> FRED. Don't say anything… I try to be detached.
> ED. Why not? If it makes you feel more real?
> FRED. Real? What's that, for God's sake?
> ED. You can produce effects in real people. Including me, even. As if you were them. Or me.
> FRED. I'm afraid I don't understand that. And I shouldn't think you can.[443]

From the mid-seventies onward, Osborne's career is of a growing artistic isolation and irrelevance. His private obsessions once recognized with the stamp of public recognition, now shrivels around an increasing isolated and often rather nasty self. His work is best described as having a mixture of excess and economy; this was made more pronounced along his career and sometimes became truly baffling. In this way, he seemed to be saying at once, too much and too little. There are too many references to a reality extrinsic to the play which remain undeveloped or are

[443]Osborne, J. (1973). *Four Plays: West of Suez; A Patriot for Me; Time Present; The Hotel in Amsterdam.* New York: Dold, Mead. Act I, p.19.

inadequately pulled back into the narrative, so that the work seems not sufficiently rounded or finished. Published in 1975 before its production, *Watch it Come* (1976) is now merely one among many of Osborne's neglected plays – little known, little discussed and certainly rarely performed. Chronicling the destruction of the well-to-do Prosser household, the play premièred at the Old Vic on 24 February 1976, and after a short run was transferred to the National Theatre's new location on the South Bank. 1976 was a watershed year in Osborne's life with *Watch It Come Down* in an equally spectacular way, announcing the beginning of Osborne's decline. Its production was planned as a celebration of the reopening of The National Theatre and the twentieth anniversary of Osborne's first great success, *Look Back.*

It is interesting to point out that as linguistic beings our self is rooted in language. Osborne's last play, *Déjàvu*, is an example of this. The complexity of J.P.'s own use of language is consciously complex and dense. In this way, the audience is left struggling for meaning. It is a play where Osborne indulges in the language game of modern drama. We find examples of the use of alliteration and other verbal uses, a display of verbal aptitude, to which J. P. refers as "wordmanship."[444] The play is full of examples of situations and local figures of the British culture only well understood by someone who is a pure-bred Englishman. Osborne constantly draws attention to his ability as a writer to parody every possible immigrant idiom. It can either be West-Indian, Australian English and even Welsh. But his aim is that of mocking its incapacity of grammatically working as a modern and complete language. The use of humour alleviates the possible tension which such intention may provoke in the reader/spectator, in the use of meanness of such parodies. A reference from the play which best illustrates this idea is the following one:

> J.P. Well, I know the Welsh for "May I please have a packet of Daz?
> ALISON. What is it then?
> J.P. (Precisely) An own amwrn dai llangollen barra kowse-packet of Daz!-There.[445]

An Author's Note in the play informs the reader about the kind of person J.P. is: "A man of gentle susceptibilities constantly goaded by a brutal and coercive world."[446] It should not be forgotten the element of comicality about his intention, which in spite

[444] Osborne, J. (1991). *Déjàvu.* London: Faber, Act I, p.30.
[445] Ibid. Act I, p.7.
[446] Ibid. (vii).

of his wilful spirit of contrariety points out to a wide range of different targets. Osborne insists about the fact of delivering speeches in a mild tone: "In other words, it is not necessary or advisable to express bitterness bitterly or anger angrily."[447]

[447] Ibid. (vii-viii).

Chapter 5

Cultural Identity in John Osborne's Drama: What it Can Teach Us About Britain

> In British identity, power and territory are expressed in hierarchies of race and class. It is a little too glib to argue that British identity had the luxury of seeing race as external, the definition of difference beyond its shores. But the exercise of power that created an empire on which the sun never set, and a notion of class that defined and shaped modernity and was not a stranger anywhere in the world, are essential attributes of what it is to be British. Without it the British could be simultaneously xenophobic, internationalist and parochial – the sort of people who go on Spanish holidays to eat fish and drink bitter ale. British identity is based on an assumption of authority that makes the world a familiar place, a proper theatre in which to continue being British. Ziauddin Sardar, *The A to Z of Postmodern Life: Essays on Global Culture in the Noughties* (London: Vision, 2002 p.97).

> "Problems which will arise if many coloured people settle here", was how Winston Churchill introduced (in the paraphrasing words of the minutes) the Conservative government's discussion of "Coloured Workers" on Wednesday, 3 February 1954 (Kynaston, Vol 2, p.367).

The problematic of cultural identity is related to a question of cross-cultural interactions. Considered this way, it is a concept which belongs to the field of comparative literature. Literary works belonging to different genres and periods of artistic orientation cannot exist in isolation, but form part of the history of the nation. And this is the case of John Osborne's work, which cannot be understood only as part of the closed national existence of British cultural history, in the same way as his work must be understood in contact with literary phenomena of other national cultures. No cultural identity can be either analyzed or identified only on its national grounds in as much as Literature cannot be just an intercultural historical phenomenon of influences from many fields, including the artistic, produced in different cultural circumstances, and thus of mutual reception of Otherness.

5.1. Gender Identity: The New Left and Masculinity

The New Left's social criticism was framed in terms inherited from F.R.Leavis, and this became manifest in their appreciation of the new literature of the 1950's which managed to embody life, experience and moral intensity. Dan Rebellato has pointed out that both the New Left and the new dramatists and novelists in postwar Britain, show the influence of Leavis in the value they give to the notion of life. He argues about how Leavis's influence has helped to explain the link between the New Left and "angry" writing in the use of the word "life" as evidence of vitality, and represented in the new form of literature at that time.[448]Therefore, the notion of masculinity has enabled contemporary readers to transform into left-wing rebellion the Leavisite cultural criticism of these texts. Rebellious masculinity has been romanticized in films by directors sympathetic to the New Left and has also been associated with the "Free Cinema" movement of the early and mid-1950's represented by Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson. This last one, T. Richardson, directed the film version of *Look Back*. This type of cinema, Free Cinema, which was intended to dignify ordinary experience, also romanticized it, especially by doing so with the notion of masculinity. An example of this is illustrated by the film and play versions of *Look Back*, both of which introduce romantic notes about the notion of masculinity. It is interesting to consider the critical angle given in J. V. Zyl's article when he states, "As semioticians of film and theatre, we are warned to expect a film adaptation to be a

[448] Rebellato, D. (1999). *1956 and All That.* London: Routledge, pp.21-25.

physically identical replication of the play is an unreasonable and deceptive undertaking. We should rather see each adaptation or interpretation of the play text, and not as a faithful recording of some ideal stage production. Even the most immobile and slavish recording of a stage production can be called a 'reading'."[449]

When Alison talks of her first encounter with Jimmy, she descibes it in the following personal way: "Everything about him seemed to burn, his face, the edges of his hair glistened and seemed to spring off his head, and his eyes were so blue and full of the sun."[450] She realized how much Jimmy resembled a Knight in shining armour. This is an instance of how, the New Left of the fifties, inherited and perpetuated a long tradition which had consisted in romanticizing working class men as the subjects of politics. Lisa Jardine and Julia Swindells argue in *What's left* (1990) about the left intellectual in Britain who had historically tended to rely on literature and fiction to provide evidence of class consciousness, in the following terms:

> As soon as we turn our attention as feminists to class politics, we find ourselves negotiating texts steeped in the traditions of the English novel, in versions of authentic working-class experience formed within the dominant culture by an intelligentsia immersed in a late-nineteenth century ideology of work and (in particular) of the domestic/the family.[451]

This tendency comes up throughout the work of William Morris and George Orwell. Men were shown as bearers of class-consciousness and instead women's lived experience of their class positions was erased, becoming associated with the notion of home instead of with labour. It is interesting to notice how the angry writers' romantic vision of young alienated men fitted well into the New Left's framing of class and culture. Thus, both this vision of the angry young man, and the critical reception with which the Left received the angry texts, helped to reinforce a discourse about cultural politics where women were absent from the political sphere as subjects in their own right. Literature, which either focused on women or was written by them, was not seen as dealing with political concerns. For example, Doris Lessing, member of the editorial board of *New Left Review*, was not read as a political writer. Key works which formed part of the cultural studies work and produced in The Birmingham Centre for

---

[449] Zyl, J. V. (1989). Film Adaptation as an Interpretation of a Play: The Case of "Look Back in Anger". *South African Theatre Journal* (2), p.5.

[450] *L.B.*, p.45.

[451] Swindells, J., & Jardine, L. (1990). *What's Left: Women in Culture and the Labour Movement.* Routledge.

Contemporary Cultural Studies during the 1960's and 1970's were those of Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1977) and Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979).[452] In this respect, we can argue about how masculinity reveals gender structures, which may apparently lack gender interests of left wing critics but are nevertheless related to issues such as class and the State.

Professor Gilleman starts his chapter on *Déjàvu* by remarking on what Osborne said in an Author's Note about this play: "*Déjàvu* may be considered a *Look Back II.*"[453] Both *Look Back* and *Déjàvu* were written within a background, in this case, a set of cultural expectations for masculine identity building. Hence, there are two questions we posit as starting point of the argument. The first has to do with the way in which post-war Britain perceived angry masculinity interpreting it as left-wing rebellion. Secondly, it must be understood why the New Left people, who placed such emphasis on collectivity and the need for social transformation, felt so enthralled by texts such as *Look Back* and their leading characters. According to Alan Sinfield, writers such as Kenneth Tynan tended to improve on the politics of plays such as *Look Back.* Tynan wrote the following: "one cannot imagine Jimmy Porter listening with a straight face to speeches about our inalienable right to flog Cyprot schoolboys. You could never mobilize him and his kind into a lynching mob, since the art he lives for, jazz, was invented by Negroes."[454]

Nevertheless, this credits the play *Look Back* with more than it says, and although Jimmy doesn't talk about Civil Rights or the British invasion of Cyprus, he could have been concerned about these same matters. It can also be deduced from the sequel to *Look Back*, *Déjàvu*, the extent to which Jimmy's rebellion was unrelated to an explicitly left-wing politics. The play's stage directions build up a different image for J.P. from that of Jimmy Porter back in time. He is now dressed with expensive garments and lives in a tastefully furnished country house. In contrast to the urban dreary setting of *Look Back*, the protagonist of *Déjàvu*, J.P., has now made way for the peace and comfort of a large cozy kitchen in a renovated farm house living off accumulated wealth. Jimmy Porter's attic room in a Victorian building in the Midlands had come to symbolize the ascent and simultaneous marginalization of a new class. But in *Déjàvu*,

[452] Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture, the Meaning of Style.* London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.
[453] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.213.
[454] Tynan, K. (1984). *A View of the English Stage.* London: Methuen, p.56.

Osborne creates another leading character, J.P., thirty-five years on and enjoying all the comforts of the type of social class he so much seemed to loath when a young man, that of Alison's friends. J.P. has been twice divorced, is now left with a son named Jim and a daughter from his second marriage, and is living off capital bequeathed to him by his ex-father-in-law, Colonel Redfern. Having changed his eating habits, he has replaced tea for expensive wines and instead of beer and cheese he sups on succulent little quails. His success in life is interpreted as a kind of triumph and not as a result of some inauthentic return to the status quo. In *Déjàvu*, the meritocratic minority (we can use the word talentocratic instead) has succeeded and Jimmy can now rest comfortably in front of an Aga. His anger can no longer be seen as a form of social criticism. For the ageing Jimmy, lack of authenticity rests no longer with the upper classes but with political correctness (newspeak).[455]

Thus, *Déjàvu* must be contextualized in its social and cultural context to fully understand the literary dimension. Around the year 1987 a diverse and multicultural work force came into being and political correctness became a form of self-censorship, advocated to attune speech to the varied reality of modern society. Political correctness coincided with the end of communist threat and with the Cold War. It came up as an object of public debate coinciding in time with Gorbachev's policy of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (reconstruction). Workers, basically in American corporations, would adapt their speech to the requirements of the workplace, diminishing the importance of race, gender, and class-based tensions and creating a "harassment free environment" which, in the long term, benefited productivity.

Cliff represents a better off person in *Déjàvu* than he did in *Look Back*. He is now married, has two sons and works in an executive position at the BBC. Teddy, the character represented by a teddy bear on stage, has remained on in spite of the years, mainly to serve as the butt of Cliff and JP's jokes bringing back memories of the teddy bear in *Look Back* and of the bear-and-squirrel game played by the leading characters. Jimmy and Cliff refer to him as the "creepy little cuddle conformist" (III ii 63) and have turned him into any modern social stereotype. The social implications come up in the play because Teddy may either represent an immigrant, a worker, a yuppie, an adolescent, a gay activist, or concerned citizen, and at the same time, all of them united,

[455] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.221.

in Osborne's mind, by a narcissistic devotion to their own needs, which are the same as those of the ordinary people:

> Cliff: He's very vulnerable
> J.P. Aren't we all? Thin-skinned, I think you mean. Like all dissemblers, he shrinks from hard words. Think he's cuddlesome, I suppose.
> Cliff: He is.
> J.P: So are lion cubs. But they like raw meat.
> Cliff: Teddy's aware that to survive he must become increasingly competitive.
> J.P: So he should.[456]

Teddy bears also come up in more other plays. For example, in Mike Batlett's *Cock*, John gives his lover a present which involves teddy bears. "Very English, remarks the lover."[457] In this instance, it is a present made to distract from an infidelity. *Cock* is a play full of typical examples of awkward social interactions. The tone of voice that articulates the tension between traditional and contemporary notions of identity is that of self-mockery, social unrest and quiet evasiveness, part of a contested and contradictory territory. For critic A. Sierz, a truly born Englishman feels a self-confidence which leads him not to question the issue of identity and which he expresses as follows: The God-blessed confidence of being born in England has traditionally meant that everyone has their own idea of what being British means and that you didn't have to define this notion.[458] In this same matter, Sierz points out that some people even went on to remark that to be British meant to be very un-British. In Ronald Harwood's *An English Tragedy* (2008), an outsider makes the following definition inserted in an entire speech which runs for more than a page: "The English have never understood why anyone should be concerned with the mystery of identity. That's because they are so certain of their own. The notion of belonging or not belonging is alien to them because they belong."[459] It evokes old certainties of an Imperial self-image which is both internationalist and parochial. A nostalgic past felt in *Look Back* and in *The Entertainer* and which looks back to Edwardian times. By the 1990´s, in the postwar, post-Empire and edge-of-the European Union era, these notions had been transformed into notes of doubt, guilt and embarrassment which have crept into the British national psyche. There is a blending feeling of being blessed for being British but, at the same time, a sense of awareness of national decline.

---

[456] *L.B.*, I, p.23.
[457] Barlett, Mike. *Cock*. London: Methuen Drama, 2009, p.10.
[458] Sierz, A. (2011). *Rewriting The Nation. British Theatre Today*. London: Methuen Drama, p.225.
[459] Harwood, Ronald. *An English Tragedy*. London: Faber, 2008, p.62-3.

The question we posit is the following one: Why at a time when contemporary Britain was changing at such a quick pace, so many dramatists used the past as a metaphor for the present? The reason which led three leading British dramatists, Robert Bolt, John Osborne and John Whiting, more or less simultaneously, to write plays about intransigent, spiritually driven protagonists, was a shared feeling of disillusion with the moral vacancy of the Sixties. This was a time which saw rapid gains in social liberation and material comfort for the majority of the individuals. It thus came to be a period when identity became increasingly related to acquisition, and these plays reflected a force against that kind of steady erosion of the self which these dramatists were to rebel against.

One of the most frequently produced plays of the post-war period, Robert Bolt's Sir Thomas More biography, *A Man for all Seasons*, (radio, 1954; stage production, 1960)[460] demonstrated a capacity to represent the process of politics which stood Bolt in excellent stead for his screenplay *Lawrence of Arabia* and his underestimated history of the Bolshevik experiment *State of Revolution* (presented at the National Theatre, 1977). Christian Law had been twisted to serve political interests between England and Spain.

In *A Man for all Seasons*, we find a picture of Thomas More as a man with a strong sense of his own self. He was a clever man and a great lawyer, able to retreat from these areas without difficulty; nevertheless, at length, he was asked to abandon that final area where he located himself and without which life became valueless, and when that was denied to him he was able to affront death. He tried to shelter himself beneath the forms of the law, but they were twisted by men like Cromwell whose only job was to obey the King, using whatever methods they knew to lay a trap on More. There were other men like Richard Rich who believed that "every man has his price", that is, there is no one who is able to remain under his own principles, not because they are true, but because they are his own, without being able to bribe him. The family is the most important feature because the whole play is viewed through a domestic filter showing how a man like More is capable of leaving his own family (his wife Alice, his daughter Margaret and his son in law Roper) in favour of his principles. His daughter understands why he does it, mainly because she has been educated by him, in contrast to his wife, who although loves him, is incapable of understanding that the most important thing for him are his own principles.

[460] Bolt, R. (1960). *A Man for all Seasons.* London: Heinemann.

Plays like Robert Bolt's *A Man For All Seasons* (1960), John Osborne's *Luther* (1961) and John Whiting's *The Devils* (1961), all turned to history in search of some clue to the dilemmas of modern man and at the same time represented the drama of a state of mind. Tom Milne in his article "Luther and The Devils"[461]points to the fact that "the new work undergone by young dramatists had less to do with the drama of social description and probability than with the drama of a state of mind." According to Williams, naturalism has been used, consciously or unconsciously in Literature, mainly as a means of expressing this state of mind. He goes on to say: "This is why it is so stupid to call it kitchen sink drama." The real influences, he points out, were Anouilh, Sartre, Brecht, Beckett, Giraudoux, Ionesco. Arden is right when he says that "much of the work of these writers realized in practice what the revival of verse drama had originally been about: the expansion of dramatic action and speech to a more vital and more extended human range."[462]From this point of view, the theatre at that time became aware that, as Kenneth Tynan put it, "art is an influence on life, not a refuge from it or an alternative to it" and that naturalism, detailed realism, simply records and does not allow the creative and imaginative experience of life which is the real keynote of art. John Arden defined it admirably when writing about his aim: "What I am deeply concerned with is the problem of translating the concrete life of today into terms of poetry that shall at once both illustrate that life and set it within the historical and legendary tradition of our culture."

In his eloquent introduction to *A Man for all Seasons* (1960) Bolt portrays a vivid, Sartre-like picture of the existential helplessness of the modern man:

> We no longer have, as past societies have had, any picture of Individual Man (Stoic Philosopher, Christian Religious, Rational Gentleman) by which to recognize ourselves and against which to measure ourselves; we are anything. But if anything, then nothing and it is not everyone who can live with that.[463]

Then he brings the argument closer in time by describing the difficulties which the individual undergoes living in a modern western democracy and being defined only by his wants and needs. He continues:

> The individual who tries to plot his position by reference to our society finds no fixed point but only the vaunted absence of them, "freedom" and "opportunity";

[461] Milne, T. (1966, Nov/Dic). Luther and The Devils. *New Left Review*, pp.55-58.
[462] John Arden qtd., in Kennedy, A. K. (1975). *Six Dramatists in Seach of a Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., p.216.
[463] Ibid. Preface xi.

> freedom for what, opportunity to do what is nowhere indicated. The only positive he is given is "get and spend" ("get and spend-if you can, from the Right, "get and spend" -you deserve it" from the Left) and he did not need society to tell him that. In other words, we are thrown back by our society upon ourselves at our lowest, that is at our least satisfactory to ourselves.[464]

It then becomes clear that what drew Bolt to the subject of Sir Thomas More was the figure of the man and what he had meant in history. Thomas More possessed a great capacity for life, an "adamantine sense of his own self"[465] and trusted in forces greater than the solitary individual: the efficacy of the law and the Church of Christ ruled from Heaven. An ex-communist himself, he seems to be almost pining for a world of fixed values and certainties.

A very fruitful comparison is to be made with Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, dating from 1953 and part of the Royal Court's opening season. Like Miller, Bolt uses history as a metaphor for the present. He deals with a hero who believes that a compromised life in which he sacrifices his name – his essential core of identity – is not worth living. A clear influence is the prototypical *Sir Thomas More* which had been written in 1592 by Anthony Munday and later revised by a syndicate possibly including Shakespeare. Nevertheless, for fear of censorship, he skates over More's opposition to the Act of Succession, making clear the reasons for More not signing an Act that would acknowledge the King's presence over secular law and divine law authority, as manifested in the Pope. The play even offers a prophetic comment on Bolt's own fluctuating sense of identity; in September 1961, as part of the Committee of 100 which extended anti-nuclear protest to acts of civil disobedience, Bolt was arrested along with a third of the Committee's membership and charged with incitement to commit a breach of the peace.

If there is any error to appear in Bolt's portrayal of More it is that of being almost too hero-worshipping. It omits the scatological venom that enabled More to say of the radical religious reformer, Martin Luther, that he farts anathema, that someone should piss and shit into his mouth and that he was filled with excrement, acknowledging the bodily functions on stage. More even suggested that Luther celebrated Mass "*super foricam*" (upon the toilet).

---

[464] Ibid.

[465] Bolt, R. (1960). *A Man for all Seasons.* London: Heinemann. Introduction.

5.2. Meta-Fictionality in *Déjàvu*

Look Back can partly be considered as "a piece of straightforward dramatic realism, but with emphasis on people rather than plot."[466] With his protagonist Jimmy being acclaimed by his own generation as a truth, he was clearly recognized by his parents' one, who were shocked by him. Though *Look Back* may now appear less revolutionary than in 1956 and Osbone may seem to lack the clearly defined political agenda of other writers, we can argue here that the play brought with it a new attitude toward the contemporary, thus helping bring to the theatre a revitalized discourse on Empire and national identity.

The kind of society which existed in 1956 can be said to have been divided into two worlds. This was, to a great extent, the natural result of the impact of World War II and its particular significance for Britain as the turning point from the great Imperial power to the nation that, in the words of an American statesman, had lost an Empire and not found a role. Labour's victory at the polls in 1945, with a substantial majority and the definite prospect of five years in office, was in the main the victory of the younger intelligentsia supporting the traditional working-class vote.

The great traditional strength of the British character represented by the enduring values of British society was exemplified by the romantic leveler of the war, through pictures of Cockney families, grinning cheerfully from blazed house, comforted by the presence of members of the Cabinet. In the 1950's good culture and a sense of Britishness, as against the imperialist influence of a debased U.S. commercial Culture, was being promoted by the Communist Party.[467] *Arena*, the Party's literary journal, stated its belief in 'human values' and the 'artist's prophetic function' and lamented the undermining of national cultural standards because of the influence of existentialism and Hollywood. For obvious reasons, the name 'Left-culturism' was given to this attitude among the young intellectuals of that time. Sam Aaronovitch, fulltime party worker on cultural matters, said there to be "a British cultural heritage which we Communists should unite to defend along with millions of people of the most varied political and social opinions" Osborne defines himself as a worker, belonging to that section of society formed by workers:

---

[466] Trussler, S. (1969). *The Plays of John Osborne: An Assessment.* London: Gollancz, p.12.

[467] J. Taylor qtd. in Sinfield, A. (2004). *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain.* London and New York: The Athlone Press, p.243.

A Working Man:

…I am also a worker.
I am not a City financer, nor an habitué of privileged London clubs ….I have no colonial businesses, and, far from being either provincial or noble, I am an upstart from the London borough of Fulham and the son of a lifelong barmaid and an unemployed commercial artist.
My mother went out to work at the age of twelve. My father at fourteen, myself at fifteen. I am also a writer, and, although at times I have been well paid for it, I have little security for the future and the wheels of the British tax man are almost as crushing as those of the Russian tankmen. I own very little that is properly my own. What there is I have acquired by ordinary toil.[468]

Critics found it difficult to evaluate from *Déjàvu* (1992) what seemed Osborne's attempt to feed off from his previous plays. He returns to *Look Back*, although anyone familiar with Osborne's work will hear echoes in it from other plays such as *The Entertainer*, *Inadmissible Evidence*, and *A Sense of Detachment*. There are also references from all major Shakespearean plays, the most outstanding of them from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Henry IV*. Thus, JP's call to Cliff in *Déjàvu* "What ho, Barnardo!" recalls the character Barnardo, 2nd sailor in *Hamlet.* It also borrows from Osborne's weekly columns for the *Spectator* and other published articles and letters. There is a reference in *Déjàvu* to John Newman's poem "The Pillar of The Cloud." The dialogue also contains references to the critical reception of Osborne's plays and sometimes to their production history. Nevertheless, the cultural background of the audience differed from that of the 1950's. Thus, it's difficult to imagine that anyone in the audience, for instance, could be expected to know that JP's mention of "some cunning French play" entitled *La paix du dimanche* would refer to *Look Back's* French title?[469]

The play's director, Tony Palmer, presented "the multiplicity of references to other literature" as the strongest point of the play, adding that "he would be distressed if such an amazing piece of writing totally escapes [the critics'] cloth ears."[470] Michael Billington praised the play's postmodern aspect, its self-parodying wit, and called it "a piece of discursive armchair theatre."[471]

Déjàvu's difficulties and lukewarm reception illustrated the extent to which Osborne had become a marginal figure in the theatre by the time of its production. It

[468] Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber, p.219.
[469] *L.B.*, I, 3.
[470] Brown, G. (10 de June de 1992). Beside Himself. *Independent* .
[471] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.217.

played to half empty houses to become less frequently produced after only a short run. From an early media success and notoriety to virtual public neglect and ridicule, Osborne had nevertheless not remained silent during the span of seventeen years since *Watch It Come Down* (1976). In 1989, the National had produced his adaptation of Strindberg's *The Father* (1887) and Osborne had written three television plays (*You're not Watching Me, Mummy* and *Try a Little Tenderness* in 1978; *God Rot Tunbridge Wells!* in 1985). Due to his disappointment with current developments in the theatre, he had changed his talents to prose writing which proved a better medium for that density of language so natural to him. The first part of his insightful autobiography, *A Better Class of Person* (1981), was considered a masterwork in its gender and reached a wide audience after Osborne dramatized it for television in 1985. A second less skillful volume, *Almost a Gentleman*, appeared in 1992, the year *Déjàvu* was produced.

Having been made responsible for a weekly column for the *Spectator*, Osborne had been writing minor work, and in an amusing way giving vent to his ever-growing list of prejudices. He wrote some book reviews for the *New York Review of Books* and a column "Looking Back on the Week's TV" for *Mail on Sunday*. In the latter he exposed his increasingly reactionary views on every current issue. He had also sent off a series of angry letters to the press taking on everyone who infringed upon his peace and comfort: "unfairly" sued by two of his former servants, he expressed outrage at the intolerable arrogance of the modern working class who held the slogan: "Up the workers." Fearing that an EEC (European Economic Community) regulation was going to deprive him of beloved untipped Turkish cigarettes, he protested about the insolence of Brussels; and angry at low-flying airplanes over his magnificent country estate in Kent, he complained about other people's materialism. His blunt views on homosexuals, immigrants, workers and women resonated most uneasily in the political climate of the 80's and 90's. It must never be forgotten the utmost humorous and amusing tone Osborne was always trying to achieve in his writing. In spite of the words of critics about the play this comicality is made evident in his portrayal of J.P. in *Déjàvu* as a comic character:

> Wearisome theories about JP.s sadism, anti-feminism, even closet homosexuality are still peddled to gullible students by dubious and partisan academics. They continue to proliferate and perpetuate themselves among those who should know better. JP is a comic character.[472]

[472] Osborne, J. (1991). *Déjàvu.* London: Faber, Stage Directions.

When *Dejávù* was published in 1991, a year before production, eleven years of Thatcherism (1979-1990) had just come to an end. They had been years associated with an impatient individualism and contempt, best expressed in Thatcher's leadership style. "She doesn't have discussions; she states her opinion," one member of her cabinet said, "She is almost totally impervious to how much she offends other people." What had apparently disappeared was the idea of the just society, perhaps of society itself and of the fact that "there is no such thing as people: there are individual men and women, and there are families."[473] Publicly owned industries and properties were sold often at profitable prices for the purchasers. The idea of adjusting incomes through taxation was abandoned, public services and subsidies for education and the arts, restricted. The moment Thatcher's government abolished welfare state collectivism a substantial underclass came into being many of whom were seen roaming London's streets. Osborne claimed he had never been a Thatcherite, yet eleven years of Thatcherism had promoted the kind of reactionary individualism that Osborne and his new hero J.P. seemed to embody. By 1991, Jimmy's curt reply in *Look Back*, "try washing your socks", in answer to Cliff's complaint that his feet hurt, had already lost its innocence, yet Osborne chose it as one of the two epigraphs to this new play, *Déjàvu*. He wanted his audience to remember that Jimmy, whose philosophy had been codified in the welfare state, had been an individualist and at the same time had felt impatient with the grumbling and moaning of the lower-middle class. In contrast to the figure of Jimmy in *Look Back* who had expressed his disdain against the upper-middle class members, including the likes of his wife Alison and brother-in-law Nigel, the J.P. of *Déjàvu* drastically readjusts allegiances:

> J.P.: No, it was the people I'd thought of as being oppressed or ignored by Nigel or Alison, who were unteachable. They were avid and malign. Like those Ministry of Food women who used to preside over their trestle tables in provincial town halls, allocating ration books, if they felt like it, puffed up with power and illiteracy. They felt so secure behind their trestle barricades and ministerial stamps. 'You'll have to fill in Form NF72. Why haven't you got one?' They were the post-war sappers for all the rolling army of fanatics that have followed them ever since.[474]

Nevertheless, the world that Thatcher sought to erect on the ruins of the welfare state was hardly more appealing to Osborne. In 1982 Britain went to war against Argentina over the Falkland Islands. The British victory was by many regarded as

[473] Thatcher, M. (1987, September 23). No such thing as society. (D. Keay, Interviewer).
[474] Osborne, J. (1991). *Déjàvu.* London: Faber, I, p.31.

restitution for the humiliating 1956 Suez debacle. In *Déjàvu*, Suez, therefore, had become an event the young no longer cared to remember. Although for J.P., "Its mere history," as he says sarcastically, it all too clearly is not so.[475] Osborne's artistic carrier had unfolded in an impoverished England that, after the loss of its empire and its mismanagement of the Suez crisis, had anxiously turned inward. In *Déjàvu*, J.P. prays for strength to endure "the noise and clamour of those who would impose their certainties upon us. God rot their certainties… Endow us with the courage of uncertainty."[476] These words recall those written for the script of the televised play *England my England!*[477] The last and posthumous televised play, it is a product of Osborne's passion for music. It deals with the composer Henry Purcell (1658-1695), known for writing splendid music of state and whose fame is consequently thoroughly entangled with the glory of old England. Osborne emphasizes the energy and splendor of Purcell's Restoration England in order to contrast it with the dreary present at the time of writing about the following:

> What Charles wanted and what Purcell wrote about so gloriously, was a country of tolerance, irony, kindliness. Not like today, where the modesty of heroes is dispatched with derision; dispatched by malignant opinion-formers who bamboozle the tabloid conscience of a sullen democracy, and have thus thrown up a generation for whom Honour is a meaningless currency. May God rot the tyranny of equality, streamlining, classlessness and, most of all, absurd, irrelevant "correctness"[478]

It was directed by Tony Palmer, known for operas and bio-documentaries and who was also to direct Osborne's last stage play, *Déjàvu* (1992).

In the decade of the 1990's, the leading sensibility was clearly no longer in tune with the tragic thrust of Osborne's plays. Although new wealth was streaming into the country, it was of a short-lived risky kind and did little to alleviate the soaring unemployment rate. North Sea oil drilling was an answer to the OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) oil crisis of 1974, turning Britain into a major oil producer. This adventurous and sometimes careless finance capitalism had created a new affluent class of young upwardly mobile professionals in England, the so called

---

[475] Ibid. II, ii p.59.
[476] Ibid. III, ii, p.101.
[477] Osborne, J., Wood, C. (Writers), & Palmer, T. (Director). (1995). *England, My England* [Motion Picture]. Reino Unido.
[478] Morrison, R. (1994, Decenber 31). Obituary: John Osborne. *Times*.

"yuppies". Nevertheless, this moment was not much more than a temporarily advantageous position in the global flow of capital. They were precisely the people whose attendance ensured a long and successful West End run for Caryl Churchill's *Easy Money* (1987), either not noticing or not caring about the fact that the play was an indictment of their lifestyle.

5.3. Cultural Hybrids on Stage

Theatre comes to be part of a far-reaching conversation about the kind of people British people are as a nation and, at the same time, of where they (or 'we') might be going (clearly, that word 'we' is contentious). Nowadays, a time when signs of dissent are unmistakable in the British stage, the culture of Black and Asian Britons is asserted and reasserted in their plays, often in defiance of criticism. For example, playwrights such as Roy Williams, Kwei-Armah or Agbaje have sometimes been attacked by black critics for their negative pattern of violent young black men.

Considering that one of the changes in the way we imagine Britain comes from the notion of new hybrid identities, this chapter's central aim is to define the contribution of playwrights from the margin, whether Scottish or black, Irish or Asian. A good example is Roy Williams' play *The No Boys Cricket Club* (Theatre Royal, Stratford East, 1996). [479] The 1990's came to be the decade of the so called In-yer-Face Theatre described by Aleks Sierz as "a theatre of sensation: it jolts both actors and spectators out of conventional responses, touching nerves and provoking alarm," showing a remarkable resemblance with the drama of John Osborne. In this way, the gradual emergence of hyphenated Britons (Anglo-Scottish, black-British, British-Asian) is just one step on the way to new ideas about the nation making a good job at imagining cultural hybrids. Instead, white English writers felt satisfied to express with ironic asides or satirical blows at traditional ideas of Englishness or Britishness.

We use the word hybrid with the meaning of a model, an ideal which can both be aspired to and used to question the ownership, legitimacy and authenticity of received ideas of national identity.Thus, in opposition to the traditional English stiff upper lip, the new Britishness is not an established identity but a state of enduring tension. In this globalized context, they are the result of decades of migration and the

[479] Williams, R. (2004). *Plays: 1 The No Boys Cricket Club, Starstruck, Lift Off*. London: Methuen Drama.

heritage of Empire. While genuine hybrid identities are rare, there are many examples of unstable mixed identities where different elements are in tension or contradiction. For example, Kofi Agyemang and Patricia Elcock's *Urban Afro Saxons* (Statford/Talawa 2003) explored the relationship which existed between skin colour, place of birth and cultural heritage.

Globalization has resulted in a world market for human beings, a phenomenon explored through plays about migration, one of the most hotly debated issues of the decade. Culture defines who we are as a nation. According to Jowell, "England has a tradition of importing and exporting culture from Beowulf, via Handel, to Vaughan Williams (whose tonality derives from his teaching by Ravel)." She goes on to state about how today we "have the new melding of cultural traditions which is the result of population transfer and the acceptable face of globalization."[480] New forms of dance, music and drama transcend traditional boundaries and help give us a national identity uniquely our own.

With the aim of encouraging a multidisciplinary discussion among the readers of this dissertation, we find it of interest to think for an answer to the following questions: What does it mean today to be part of a culture, to be part of multiple cultures? And, what effect does this have on the arts in general, and on drama in particular? National identity is one of those things that firmly resist definition. In a world of multiple identities, different communities and conflicted individuals, the diversity of national and ethnic distinctions undermines a one-size-fits all national identity. The similarity between Osborne and Roy Williams is due to the fact that both belong to New Writing, which at the same time embodies national identity showing us through their plays the world we experience everyday, the same subjects and the same language. In this way this type of drama becomes more a recognition of the 'now' than a shock of the 'new'. Several playwrights have already explored this question, being national identity very suitable for fictional treatment. In British drama, the garden, for example, is often a symbol of Englishness, so the set of Tanika Gupta's *Sanctuary* (National, 2002),[481] with its lush for foreign plants, immediately suggests a world that has moved on from the tradition of roses and manicured lawns to other landscapes. Aptly enough, in *England People Very Nice* Richard Bean alludes to Daniel Defoe (14), who in his poem "The True-Born Englishman" (1701) about eighteenth century national identity, concludes

[480] Jowell, T. (2004). *Government and the Value of Culture.* IFACCA. United Kingdom.
[481] Gupta, T. (2002). *Sanctuary.* London: Oberon.

by remarking: "A true-born Englishman's a contradiction, / in speech an irony, in fact a fiction."

For Professor S. E. Wilner, the theatre is a public forum which offers a "particularly effective means of conveying notions of what is national and what is alien."[482] In the 2000's, British new writing took a variety of forms and grasped the opportunity to stage an ongoing conversation, often a debate, sometimes a polemic, about who British people are and what they might become in the future. All in all, playwrights didn't always agree on either the problem or the solution.

Victory of New Labour in the general election of May 1997 proclaimed the arrival of a New Britain. In a couple of years this was realized by means of a constitutional settlement involving devolution of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. New regional assemblies, each with different powers, were set up for these nations. The resulting decade of devolution had an impact on theatre outside London. New Labour's financial generosity meant that all cultural institutions, including theatres, had to deliver on social policies. Their mission was to create wider audience access, greater ethnic diversity and a more innovative product.

In May 2004, Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell published an interesting essay 'Government and the value of Culture.' In it she argues about how "Culture has an important part to play in defining and preserving cultural identity – of the individual, of communities, and of the nation as a whole"[483] and which must be accounted for in this study, since drama forms part of the undefined, but ever encompassing global culture. Culture as a whole inscribed itself in the wider context of The Arts dealing at the same time with the topic of national identity.

An example of this is to be found in the plays of Roy Williams, one of the most prolific and most lauded British playwrighter. Born in Fulham, south-west London, in 1968, he had by his mid-30's already won a shelf-full of awards, to which he added an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) in 2008. He made his first appearance in 1996 with a play he had written while a student, *The No Boys Cricket Club*,[484] produced by the Theatre Royal Stratford East, which has developed a strong Afro-Caribbean constituency in the community surrounding the theatre. The theme of this

---

[482] Wilner, S. (2002). *Theatre, Society and the Nation: Staging American Identities.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.1.

[483] Jowell, T. (2004). *Government and the Value of Culture.* IFACCA. United Kingdom, pp.16-17.

[484] Williams, R. (2004). *Plays: 1 The No Boys Cricket Club, Starstruck, Lift Off.* London: Methuen Drama.

play is national identity and it deals particularly about the concept of belonging and the notion of home. In *The No Boys Cricket* he contextualizes social change within the lives of British Afro-Caribbeans. It is an example of a generational play written by a dramatist of Afro-Caribbean background. The play interprets recent developments in British society against a background of immigration, aspirations for better lives, and generational difference, as the immigrants struggle to adapt while they grow up with a set of assumptions and expectations derived from the new environment. It recalls the Dick Whittington myth – the lesson that the streets are not always paved with gold. This fairy tale, retold by Anne Hope, starts as follows:

> There was once an orphan boy called Dick Whittington who went to London to seek his fortune, for he had heard that everyone there was rich and that even the streets were paved with gold. Dick gazed in wonder at the fine buildings, but although he trudged many streets, none were paved with gold and nobody could give him work.[485]

In an interview to Roy Williams by Aleks Sierz on the 24th of October 2009 he talks about his play:

> *The No Boys Cricket Club* was written for the course. I didn't quite know what kind of writer I wanted to be, so I chose to write about my mum's past, rather than about my own life. I don't think I was ready to write about me, or my generation, black British living in today's society. I thought, "You've got to look back before you can go forwards." And I felt I wanted to understand my mother's generation.
>
> Well, it's set in two different time zone, 1950's Jamaica and 1990's England, and its about a middle-aged woman called Abigail, who I loosely based on my mother. You see her as a 15 year old and with her female friends they have a club, they play cricket. No Boys allowed. And they talk about their dreams, aspirations, and what they want to be doing in 20 years time. Then you see her in London and you realize her life hasn't panned out how she wanted to. And she finds a way, don't ask me how, to go.[486]

This story becomes a metaphor of the journey we all make when the dreams of our youth crumble down to reach the point where they completely disappear – the growing strains of life. These are instances of universal stories told through a specific context. Roy's vision gives the reader a cultural and racial insight lending itself at the same time to a unique theatricality, which develops through cultural contrast. In *No*

[485] Hope, A. (1968). *Favourite Fairy Tales.* J Salmon, n.p.

[486] Sierz, A. (2009, October 24). *www.theartsdesk.com Theartsdesk Q&A:Playwright Roy Williams.* Retrieved November 10, 2012.

Boys Cricket Club it is fascinating to perceive the contrast between contemporary London and Jamaica in the fifties.

In the same way, *No Boys Cricket Club* deals with the theme of the past and the sense of failed dreams. The landscape has suffered a radical change within a couple of generations and those young ones with parents who migrated to London now have a completely different experience of Britain. Their parents are foreigners but they do not feel as being such.

Roy's melancholic view of the past is reflected in his awareness about multicultural Britain today. We can formulate the following question so as to think for an answer about society as a whole and the British one in particular: How inclusive and equal is our society?

> It was staged in 1996, two years before the celebration of the "Windrush" generation, (named after) the first boat that left the West Indies to come to England in 1948. There was all that going on, and I tapped into that. I also remember talking to my mum and seeing how her body and her voice changes whenever she talks about home. And one day I just asked her, "Why don't you go back to Jamaica?" and she said, "No, I don't want to do that, I want to stay here". And I said, "When you talk about it your face lights up", and she said, "Well that's the past, that's what it is the past." And years ago, she did actually go home and she said, "That's not the Jamaica I know, it's more troubled now, very violent now." So I incorporated that into the play as well. It's about belonging, which seems, to be a common theme in all my plays, a central character who is lost, looking for that sense of belonging.[487]

The play's vaguely linear narrative is disturbed by scenes, which shift back and forth between past and present, childhood and adulthood, youth and middle age, England and Jamaica. Hence, the illustration depicts an instance of the migration movement which took place in Britain during the 1950's.[488] Similarly the dialogues, both between the characters and between the characters and the audience, shift between past and present, appearance and inner psychological reality, as well as between the reality the characters inhabit and the dreams, the repressions and traumas they truly suffer. They build up rigid mental boundaries between past and present, belonging and exile, parent culture and adopted culture, nationality and naturalization. The playwright evidently engages with historical and contemporary social and political issues that clash in their community in particular ways, not only in Britain but also in their motherland

[487] Ibid.

[488] Photograph taken in Victoria Station during the 1950's. The New Commonwealth were now coming home to the British in more senses than one. Fig.11, p. 269 in this dissertation.

from where they migrated. Migration thus features both as a historic and as a contemporary phenomenon. In the play, it takes the form of the contemplation of migration back home, in this case to Jamaica, for those migrants who came to the UK in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

In contrast to the metaphorical playgrounds of early in-yer-face drama, the play *No Boys Cricket Club* has two settings: one is the garden of a council house in present day London and the other one is Kingston Town, Jamaica, 1958.

> Opening scene: Act One, Scene I:
> Abi enters from the house, carrying a bag of washing. She hangs the clothes on the washing line, she looks up when she hears voices somewhere. Voices of young girls playing cricket. She looks around and can see something.

Traditionally, the most common way of representing the more alienated people in society, migrant people, was by way of the council-estate, in the form of a dirty realist type of play. Therefore, in this play, Roy questions the reality of the immigration experience in this country. He shows how for many of their parents' generation the immigration experience was not what they had hoped for:

> Yeah, the set was very deceiving because at first it was just background, grey skies, and then the backdrop opened and you saw a beautiful sunny beach. The time travel suited the story because I remember writing the play and thinking, oh, it just keeps going back and forth, and then it hit me…[489]

Roy William's plays have since reached a broad range of audiences in theatres, as well as on BBC radio and television. *The No Boys Cricket Club* follows the lives of two middle-aged West Indian women, Abigail and Masie, living in London. Their lives are full of disappointment and disillusion. They look back at a time when they were filled with excitement and hope about their future. It was when as teenagers in Kingston, Jamaica, they formed a girl's cricket club, which gives title to the play *The No Boys Cricket Club*. In dramatic terms, the opportunity arises for them in present day London to recall their youth and meet their younger self. A remembered world of the past is being brought together with the grittier present-day London, so that two characters, one younger and the other much older, could meet on stage. Playing cricket is here a powerful metaphor: the game of cricket being used as a metaphor for dreams, strength and the rediscovery of the self. It is no longer a symbol of national unity. It

[489] Sierz, A. (2009, October 24). *www.theartsdesk.com Theartsdesk Q&A:Playwright Roy Williams.* Retrieved November 10, 2012.

questions the reality of the immigration experience in Britain. Passages are to be found in the style of magical realism in which Abi and her friend Masie return back to Jamaica and to their childhood years. Abi dreams about becoming a nurse and going to England to achieve this, but what we see on stage is a disappointed Abi in Britain. The imagined but discernible theatrical visit back to her country reunites Abi with the sense of inclusion she lost when she left Jamaica and regenerates the pride she felt when she was the star batter for an all-girl cricket club. It also forces her to admit that she sacrificed her youthful dreams for the sake of others. Ultimately, Abi chooses to remain in London but returns to her present day reality, determined to make changes. Her final moment of connection with her youthful self suggests that she has indeed found a source of strength.

In this play we find evidence of the pre-Thatcher immigration generation, which broke with familiar identities and started new ones. The protagonists, Abi and Masie, whose parents were either absent or dead, coped both with poverty and abandonment and relied on each other. Though their environment offered few opportunities, these two realistically created characters found an activity that enabled them to gain strength and confidence, display skill and nourish hope for future accomplishment. For a time, the cricket team was the centre of the girls' lives, broken apart after a decisive defeat by an all-boy team, just as they recognized their imminent adulthood. Marriage and womanhood, which followed later on, demanded the abandonment of their personal interests and pleasures, and the two have been living for their children. They rediscover the past for their children as well as for themselves. Ignorant of family history and Jamaican culture, the children have since defied norms of family respect which were central to Jamaican life. Abi's daughter, Danni, has refused to eat at home, and her son Michael struck her when she flushed his drug cache down the toilet. Disrespect and defiance towards the mother who they perceive as powerless has increased the difficulty Michael and Danni have in valuing themselves.

In the Jamaica episodes, Abi recovers self-confidence and hope for the future. When she meets her younger self, the girl does most of the talking. Young Abi cautions her not to romanticize life in Jamaica, reminding her of the guilt she felt when her mother died and the pain she endured when her father abandoned her. When young Abi bowls and mature Abi demonstrates an undiminished batting skill, she realizes that she still has the power to accomplish things. Abi uses this renewed sense of personal power to re-establish authority as a parent. Danni questions her mother's capacity for

perseverance and in reply to this Abi suggests a game of cricket. In the final scene the playwright brings young Abi into the London scene for the first time. The style of magic realism that makes visible the imaginary trip to Jamaica and its subsequent effects, suggests that magic and mythology are inseparable elements of history and a basic power to influence the future.

The immigrant experience frames the generational transition in this play. Abi has ties to a homeland unknown to her British-born children. Coming to England was a choice she made that has since dictated others. Struggling with a strange culture and limited in her employment opportunities, she has been unable to communicate the experience of personal authority and choice. The children, who have grown up watching their parents as outsiders and low-wage workers, do not understand the hopes that impelled them to emigrate, yet are expected to vindicate their parents' choice. She has been coping with disappointments and disillusioned children, who have instead sought status and belonging in gangs and drug dealing. The play's antidote to hopelessness and anger lies in the realm of art, with stories and recollections that connect children with the dreams and strengths of their parents.

Another interesting play is Roy Williams' *Advice for the Young at Heart*[490] which uses two simultaneous plots, one taking place during the 1958 Notting Hill race riots and the other during the riots of 2011. He explores how a new generation of teenagers can learn from the mistakes made by a previous one. No matter what the excuse or provocation, the message reads in the following way: don't be like that. The plot is as follows. It's 2011 and 1958, and London is rioting. Candice is ordered by her gang-leading boyfriend to lure Clint into a honey trap. Haunted by her grandfather's mistakes, she stands at a crossroad. Will she do as she's told, or will she learn to be true to herself before history repeats itself? This modern tale, which explores domestic and social issues such as race, family and mistaken loyalty, spans in time along three generations. The riots of 2011 provoked comment on the morality of youth and the codes by which they live. *Advice for the Young at Heart* deepens into the question of whether this is a new phenomenon or one with which young people have struggled with already for generations. In this way, by using two simultaneous plots taking place during the 1958 Notting Hill race riots and the riots of 2011, Roy Williams asks how a new generation of teenagers can learn from the mistakes made by a previous one. The

[490] Williams, R. (2013). *Advice for the Young at Heart.* London, New Delli, New York, Sidney: Blomsbury Publishing.

story centre's on Sam, a white Teddy boy in 1958 who falls in love with a black girl, and modern day Candice, who is ordered by gang leader boyfriend to lure a honey trap during the 2011 riots. According to Roy "It's about one generation learning from another. We all make huge decisions in our lives and somehow they are even bigger."

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Results

I believe John Osborne was a true artist – that is, a man whose very flaws are interesting. As a human being, he clearly had an unpleasant side. So do most of us; the difference is that we will remember his – and even with some fondness. The struggle with himself, he exposed in his plays and was therefore deeply hurt by the mockery of critics. If this is a sin it is shared by many artists. Not all of his plays are a joy to watch or read, but none is without its rewards for the attentive reader or spectator (Gilleman, *Vituperative*)

The people I should like to contact - If I knew how - aren't likely to be reading this book anyway. If they have ever heard of me, it is only as a rather odd-looking angry young man.
(John Osborne "They Call it Cricket")

6.1 – Conclusion

John Osborne's work has been analysed in this dissertation both as text-based theatre (just the literary text) and as live performance. Although we recognize that theatre is a collaborative art, this dissertation pays more attention to the writer than to actors, directors, designers, producers or composers. This is in part due to a self-reflection bias towards text, which itself stems from an education in this field that was geared more to an analysis of language than to an exploration of sound or music. At the same time and in spite of a recent shift toward collectively devised art, we believe the dramatist to be a key creative figure in theatre, considering the fact that the interpretative arts of acting and directing depend upon the existence of an author's words. This dissertation argues that it has been predominantly, although not exclusively, through the work of dramatists such as John Osborne, that drama critics have been able to trace the socio-political fluctuations affecting British society, from the post-war period throughout the decade of the 1990's with New Writing, to the present time.

Text based theatre is itself a good example of the Englishness of British theatre, being one of this culture's characteristics its love of words. But the text, as playwright Moira Buffini reminds us,[491]is only the half part of it. In the study of British theatre as a form of performance, the contribution of the director, the designer and the actors is as relevant to the creation of a production's meaning as that of the writer. We thus consider that this dissertation, which has resulted in a very informative study of the sociological and cultural aspects of Osborne's work, to be a good reference and to be accounted for in future researches in the field of drama.

"According to most accounts", states Aleks Sierz in *Rewriting the Nation*, "the story begins with the arrival of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*."[492] Osborne's work varies widely in topic and in tone. However, it unites in presenting an exposé of contemporary topics against a backdrop of the moral failure of the times. Nevertheless, we find in it the beleaguered, rueful, often inadequate, but stubbornly truth-telling and ultimately great prolific and talented dramatist.

Osborne is as much an anomaly today (2015) as he was in 1956 as an upstart playwright. He then received answers from reviewers filled either with enthusiasm or

[491] Buffini, M. (2006). "Introduction", *Plays One: Blavatsky's Tower; Gabriel; Silence; Loveplay.* London: Faber, p.ix.
[492] Sierz, A. (2011). *Rewriting The Nation. British Theatre Today.* London: Methuen Drama, p.16.

with distrust, highlighting his unique voice while at the same time regretting his refusal to accommodate to customary aesthetic constraints. Recent anthologies rarely contain any of his plays even though *Look Back* still stands today (2015) as a milepost in the history of drama. It is a powerful restatement to the importance of *Look Back* that the meaning of the play remains today controversial among theatre makers and academic commentators. *Look Back* is still mentioned the very moment the discussion turns to any other "angry" work of the period, such as John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Brain's *Room at the Top* (1957), or David Storey's *This Sporting Life* (1960). Although a distinctly British movement, it was also vaguely international, easily associated with the American "rebel without a cause" phenomenon (James Dean and Marlon Brandon) and later with the beatnik generation (Jack Kerouac).[493] Nevertheless, and according to Fiedler, "the situation of our new young is completely different from that of their opposite numbers in England." He goes on to describe the characteristics to be found among the English youth group: "He is able to define himself against the class he replaces, against the ideal of 'Bloomsbury', which is to say, against a blend of homosexual sensibility, upper class aloofness, liberal politics, and avant-garde liberal devices."[494]

Osborne's work is so vexing, disturbing, that it invites the reader/audience to deliver an almost instant and vehement response. His plays abound with characters representing ordinary people who muddle on in life, who hurt others and are often hurt in return, although for the writer there seems to be "no good brave causes" left to fight for.

We thus reiterate the importance of investigating Osborne during the period of postwar British Literature, since his start as a playwright and all through his artistic career, especially from the mid-sixties to the early seventies, a time when he was regarded as one of the most important playwrights alive. This was followed by the stage of his decline as a playwright and which lasted on to the time of his last play *Déjàvu*. In this way, from the mid-seventies on, he became a voice not of the present but of the past. Having been a playwright who had found his legitimate place in the annals of

[493] Gilleman, L. (2008). From Coward and Rattigan to Osborne: Or the Enduring Importance of Look Back in Anger. *Modern Drama , 51* (1), pp.104-25.
[494] Fiedler A, L. (1958, January). The Un-Angry Young Men. America's Post-War Generation, p.9.

theatrical history was later on to be encountered more often in university entrance exams, GCSE's and A'levels, than on stage.

It is interesting to highlight the importance which the dramatic creation of the character of Jimmy Porter represented in British drama and who was to revisit the stage thirty-five years later to become the J.P. in *Déjàvu*. The short correspondence between JP's past life and Osborne's autobiographies is there to make clear their relationship, as to what extent he was a mouthpiece for his creator. It is therefore easy to imagine his diatribes against the most imaginable targets: postal codes, ballet, trendy churchmen, antismoker, etc.

John Osborne's work has been analyzed in its original context, challenging and informing our perception. How the dialogue meshes with the plays' overall commentary on British society (especially the 1950's) has been a matter for exploration. Censorship was abolished in 1968, but this didn't stop people being censorious, it merely made them more ingenious, or crass, in their methods. British theatre, one of the most heavily controlled art forms, is at the present moment the least censored one. Nevertheless, the stage is still under a whole variety of restrictions. Even though the law on censorship was abolished, other legislations can act as the continuation of censorship by other means. An example is Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* [495] in which the play's director Michael Bogdanov was charged under Section 13 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956, a law usually used to charge people having sex in a public place. Another example of this is Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking.* [496] The law which banned part of its title was the Indecent Advertisements Act of 1981, which updated the original Indecent Advertisement Act of 1889, a Victorian law designed to stamp out the adverts which prostitutes used to put in shop windows.

Chapter one deals with the Education Act of 1944, which made access possible to 'a new aristocracy' based not on land or wealth, but on intelligence, to gain an education and to find careers suited to their talents; it is argued with examples taken from Osborne's plays. In this postwar period and in the sociological context of the new youth phenomenon which came into being, issues such as class and education became part of the social concerns of writers. According to Schlüssels's study of *Academic Youth in Postwar British Literature*, "Class consciousness has always been one of the

[495] Brenton, H. (1981). *Romans in Britain.* London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.
[496] Ravenhill, M. (1996). *Shopping and Fucking.* London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

major characteristics of British society."[497] Chapter two argues about how John Osborne did write along socialist lines and of how the type of socialism he reflected in his work was ethical and vital. His philosophy as a playwright is best expressed in his remark about the question of feeling and social concern. In chapter three, a pragmatic approach to *Look Back* has been undertaken as a way of understanding the role the protagonists (formed by the married couple) come to symbolize in the play. A study of the language of Osborne's drama has been accounted for in the critical analysis of chapter four, as well as of how the political system copes with different types of dissident ideologies outside the conventional and established ones. Chapter five is about the relationship between theatre and identity, considering Osborne's plays to be a form of political expression. There has been a tendency among politically minded theatre critics, to believe that theatre is political only when it is explicitly representing political situations, as well as characters and events related with the world of politics. Globalization requires a theatrical response which is different in kind from the political issues of earlier generations. Its power is so great, and its great scale so far outstripping our current government institutions, that we have to create new forms of international association, new forms of governance, new forms of global civil society, that will give force and shape to our humanity and our responsibility. In this matter, there is an ethical impulse in the theatre aesthetics, regardless of how globalization may fluctuate. Its singular moments of beauty are highlighted by Gilleman in his chapter section "Gender politics and aesthetics"[498]which is devoted to analyzing Osborne's work "from the strict dichotomy of values, feminine and masculine, which summarize a complementary number of positive and negative qualities that provide the necessary polarized tension around which an argument can be built."[499]

The issue of "Anger" is also to be focused upon in the light of what later came to be known as identity politics in the context of "New Writing" in British drama, which at the same time questioned the reality of the immigration experience in Britain.

In 1957, Osborne wrote the following about theatre and its relation with society:

---

[497]Schlüssel, A. (2005). Making a Political Statement or Refusing to Grow Up - Reflections on the Situation of the Academic Youth in Postwar British Literature. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 65* (4).

[498] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, pp.11-15.

[499] Ibid.

> I do not like the kind of society in which I find myself. I like it less and less. I love the theatre more than ever because I know that it is what I always dreamed it might be: a weapon.[500]

This comment,which was written more than half a century ago, still stands today as part of the new writing ideology, and as one of the modern playwrights' view of what the theatre is and its use as a weapon. The targets have obviously changed with the times, but they retain one constant factor; they represent those aspects of our society, either traditional or materialistic, which suffocate initiative, deny feeling and frustrate the individual. In Osborne's world, which was somehow adept at closing ranks, he represented the voice of those other playwrights who had followed his same posture of breaking out. It is precisely this outstanding quality of his that which has ensured for Osborne's work the continuing respect of Tynan's minority since 1957, having stamped his own image on his form as a playwright throughout his artistic career.

More than one critic has observed that Osborne's rhetoric creates its own driving force. The power of characters found in Osborne's plays, such as Jimmy Porter or Leonido (in *A Bond Honoured,* 1966), is not so much a consequence of the logic of their action in the play; it comes up from the fascination they provoke in the audience and the sense of power and presence that reaches the auditorium. It might be possible, if one wishes, to put the characters of non-Osborne plays out of one's mind if, for some reason or other, they appear objectionable or uninteresting, but it is not easy to do the same with the ones Osborne created, say, Archie Rice or Luther. Their speeches are bludgeoned into the audience and there is no way of evading their effect.

Osborne is a master of theatrical shock tactics, which arise from a highly developed and professional instinct for the finer details in drama, which are mainly those of stagecraft, brilliance with language, and the most recognisable of virtues, that of sincerity. These are qualities which override the critical failures, the occasional lapses, the moments of wildness and the missed targets in his writings. At the same time, this makes his theatrical experience not a matter of revelling in the niceties of construction or the clever creation of character, but of being totally confronted with passion and concern. Some of his contemporary playwrights, as Gersh[501] comments about Pinter, have "bred imitators", and others have experimented more successfully with dramatic style, or ranged over a wider field of interests. Few dramatists tried to

[500] Hobson, H. (1958). *"Introduction", International Theatre Annual.* (H. Hobson, Ed.) Garden City New York: Doubleday.
[501] Gersh, G. (1967). The Theatre of John Osborne. *Modern Drama , 10* (10), p.137ff.

mimic the style of Osborne in the way in which Pinter was imitated. There were other playwrights such as John Arden who made a lasting impression on the theatre. But even the recognised clumsiness of Osborne's plays was indirectly encouraging to other dramatists, containing both passion and dramatic substance, which seemed to matter more than obedience to the established rules. In this way, Osborne demonstrated that it was possible to write vivid passionate speeches without making them sound verbally narcissistic. His background as an actor gave him an instinctive knowledge as to what lines of a play would work on stage and which would not. Hence, in modern British theatre, he gave name to a new wave by representing on stage the theme of social alienation.

Osborne's contribution to the theatre cannot be seen simply in terms of his plays. He also wrote articles and television dramas. His influence, particularly during the late 1950's and early 1960's, became widespread although largely indirect. The success of *Look Back in Anger* was such that it demolished several inhibiting myths about plays: that the theatre had to be refined, that heroes were stoical and lofty creatures and that audiences wanted nice people with whom to identify. 8 May 1956, when the play was premièred at the Royal Court, is generally regarded as the date when English Theatre broke away from the middle-class, drawing room comedies of Coward and Rattigan, inaugurating the authentic drama of modern times. According to David Watt, Osborne's play had introduced into English Drama a newly-developed class of society, "a small, lower middle-class intelligentsia whose frustration and bayings were reflected in the play."[502]Alison Porter is referred to as the heroine of the play in an article published in 1957 and to which she is expressed in the following terms:

> Few more vulnerable heroines, and few more willing to be wounded, have ever been seen upon the stage than the almost wholly silent young wife in Mr John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, the play that made its mark so indelibly at the Royal Court Theatre last year…[503]

The three most outstanding qualities we want to highlight in this dissertation about John Osborne's work are those of sincerity, his use of an innovative language and a fine stagecraft, and which can be illustrated from countless examples found in his writing. He became a prolific writer, not only of plays, but also of letters to the press

[502] Banerjee, A. (1993). A Modern Hamlet: Jimmy Porter in Look Back in Anger. *Hamlet Studies* (15), p.81.
[503] Times, T. (1957, January 25). Swete Alisoun. *The Times*, p. Literary Supplement.

and articles, which almost always arose from some provocation such as an adverse review, outrage at the pretensions of others, etc. But the consistent theme he maintained throughout was to "be true to yourself", sincere.

The following passages, which have been taken from newspaper articles and written by Osborne illustrate, this point:

> There is room for many kinds of theatre, but the one that matters the most is the one that offers a vital, emotional dynamic to ordinary people, that breaks down class barriers, and all the many obstacles set in the way of feeling. What is most disastrous about the British way of life is the British Way of Feeling, and this is something the theatre can attack. We need a new feeling as much as a new language. Out of the feeling will come the language. (1957)[504]

> I think we should all be allowed …scope for a complete artistic freedom, so that something we don't have to please audiences or please critics or please anybody but ourselves. It's possible to write for yourself and to write for a few people at the same time. It's also possible to write for yourself and write for everybody. But it's not my job *as a dramatist* to worry about reaching a mass audience if there is one, to make the theatre a minority art… If you're going to do what other people think or say you ought to do, it's a waste of time. Ultimately, after all, the only satisfaction you can get out of doing all this is the satisfaction you give yourself. (1961)[505]

> A theatre audience is no longer linked by anything but the climate of dissociation in which it tries to live out its baffled lives. A dramatist can no longer expect to draw many common references, be they social, sexual, or emotional. He can't generalize in the old way. He must be specific to himself and to his own particular, concrete experience. (1967)[506]

Osborne is an autobiographical playwright who interprets his own concerns, beliefs and desires, making his plays range in time and country, being mostly centred on his own experience. This is a fact which has contributed to the passion and controversy aroused by his plays, because such an uncompromising stand on the part of the playwright tends to demand either total acceptance or total rejection from his audience. *Look Back in Anger* and *The World of Paul Slickey* are two instances of plays that seem to have made such demands, having noted the partisan response they evoked. In asserting the integrity of feeling, he defended himself against charges of sentimentality. In one particular instance and having been accused of this fact by a critic of *The Entertainer*, he answered saying that if it is sentimental to be moved by the experience of witnessing people who are desperate or bewildered, but who can still laugh at "jokes

[504] Hobson, H. (1958). *"Introduction", International Theatre Annual.* (H. Hobson, Ed.) Garden City New York: Doubleday.
[505] Osborne, J. (1961). That Awful Museum. *Twentieth Century, 169*, pp.212-16.
[506] Osborne, J. (1967, October 14). On the Thesis Business and the Seekers after the Bare Approximate... *The Times*, p.20.

directed at life", then, he states: "I shall go on working towards a sentimental theatre for the rest of my life." [507]

Kenneth Allsop, writing of Osborne under the general title of "The Emotionalist", remarks:

> Osborne is a romantic and a sentimental about the Ordinary People. When you close in on that phrase and try to specify who exactly of the population of Great Britain have the standards of decency and honesty which Osborne finds sickeningly lacking in the sections of society he has thrashed so often, difficulties arise.[508]

Osborne's 1957 prophecy, "out of the feeling will come the language", has been well borne-out by events. The character of Holyoake, in *A Subject of Scandal and Concern*, presents a good example of the clarity that arises from feeling. In this way, Holyoake, conducting his own defence, and hampered by a speech impediment, achieves on stage a new and impressive stature, as the passion of his defence grows within him. Osborne writes in the stage directions of this same play about the following: "Holyoake is beginning to find his way. When he does so he even attempts some lightness." For the playwright, "lightness" means wit of a very high order. Even in dreadful moments, his characters are capable of being extremely funny and very fluent. In *Look Back*, Jimmy Porter, with his harsh and scornful attacks on many targets, presents many instances with an emphasis on a cruel humour. Thus of Alison's mother he says:

> Threatened with me, a young man without money, background, or even looks, she'd bellow like a rhinoceros in labour-enough to make every male rhino for miles turn white, and pledge himself to celibacy.[509]

The example of Holyoake's lightness, where he pictures "men choked with their beef steaks on Friday", carries a gentler, more intellectual quality about, it in contrast to the sardonic utterances of Jimmy Porter. Holyoake resembles, in this respect, the characters of Luther and Redl.

Osborne's language has been described by Lumley as a non-stop outburst of meaningless verbiage "delivered with the brutality of the blackboard – jungle

---

[507] Hobson, H. (1958). *"Introduction", International Theatre Annual.* (H. Hobson, Ed.) Garden City New York: Doubleday.

[508] Allsop, K. (1958). The Emotionalist qtd. in K. Allsop, *The Angry Decade: A Survey of the Cultural Revolt of the Nineteen-Fifties* (pp. 96-147). London: Peter Owen.

[509] *L.B.*, p.52.

school."[510] Russell Taylor feels that portions of *Luther* demonstrate "Osborne's deficiencies when a conflict of equals rather than a tirade to an attentive audience is called for, since, though apparently engaging in a discussion, Luther and Cajetan never really interlock so that when one answers the other, their 'dialogue' turns out, in fact, to be two monologues skilfully intercut."[511] Both comments point quite fairly to the strength and relative weaknesses which are to be noticed in Osborne's use of dramatic language. The great "set" speeches of Jimmy Porter, Archie Rice, Luther, Bill Maitland, Leonido, represent the top of Osborne's achievement, injecting into the action impetus and energy. There are other plays, such as *Epitaph for George Dillon,* where an attempt at conversation often lacked conviction. Osborne's aim is to make the following point clear: that contact between characters is frequently impossible. Examples of this same kind abound in his plays: George Dillon is not speaking the same language as Mr Elliot does. Luther can't get the priest of the Church to dispute with him in terms he can comprehend. In the same way, Bill Maitland is outside reality and makes only a swift contact with the "real" people around him. In *The Entertainer,* Archie Rice has nothing to say; Holyoake in *A Subject of Scandal and Concern* faces a world that refuses to listen; Redl in *A Patriot for Me* is concerned only to maintain a façade. In these circumstances, lack of warm human contact inhibits a natural contact through dialogue, and the concentration is on the individual and his language rather than the group. Individually and as A. Alvarez has pointed out, the characters of many of the contemporary playwrights including Osborne "talk like living people."[512] The great rhetorical instances in Osborne's plays reach the audience/readers, when a character, out of despair, frustration, misery or anger, rises up against his tormentors with strength of wit and scorn, clearness, and a vividness of description, leaving an indelible impression on them.

Finally, the third element to account for is the fine stagecraft, by which we mean a detailed understanding on the playwright's part of those elements of construction and organisation that may best serve the purpose of his play. Osborne's attitude towards the form of the "well made play" is more a form of derision of it than a rejection of the

[510] Lumley, F. (1967). *New Trends in 20th Century Drama.* London, pp.260-267.
[511] Russell Taylor, J. (1969). *Anger and After: A Guide to the New British Drama.* London: Eyre Methuen.
[512] Alvarez, A. (1959). The Antiestablishment Drama. *Partisan Review*, p.26.

form.[513] *The Entertainer* is a play in which he shows the conscious influence of a traditional theatrical form, that of the music hall, demonstrating an ability, together with a willingness to exploit it, for the purpose of this drama. If we consider what Osborne has written about stage directions, stage design, acting style, set design, etc, we can reach the conclusion that he seems not to have written for any specific stage. His inclination seems to be mainly towards the proscenium arch stage:

> In my plays I like to establish a kind of remoteness between the actors and the audience, which I only like to break at certain times, and I can do that in the picture-frame… If I think of anything, I think of a theatre that doesn't exist, one that combines the intimacy of the Court with the grandeur of a circus. I'd love to write something for a circus, something enormous and immense, so that you might get a really big enlargement of life and people.[514]

These comments were written in 1961. But Osborne has illustrated on many other occasions, a sensitive judgement of the most advantageous methods of presentation for particular plays. The use of the brilliant and most effective use of the music-hall technique in *The Entertainer* must be reaffirmed as a most exciting experiment in dramatic form in the contemporary theatre, since it enables the form of the play to underline and point out its mood dominated by the times. Another example of this is illustrated by the way in which *Luther* is contrived to develop, in scenic moments when, at the time of its première, Luther's underlying attitude towards the Church was coming more into the open. The style of the play is built in such a way as to give support to a particular development in action or character, giving detailed account of the sense and the effect to be achieved. We have noted the suggestion of the use of a satirical blackcloth in Act II, Scene IV of *Luther*. For the opening of Act III, Osborne suggests:

> Devoid of depth, such scenes are stamped on a brilliant ground of gold. Movement is frozen, recession in space ignored and perspective served by the arrangement of figures, or scenes, one above the other. In this way, landscape is dramatically substituted by objects in layers.[515]

Once more, before the celebration of his first Mass, and in a state of terror at the significance of the deed, Osborne has Luther set under:

---

[513] Osborne, J. (1967, October 14). On the Thesis Business and the Seekers after the Bare Approximate... *The Times* , p.20.
[514] Osborne, J. (1961). That Awful Museum. *Twentieth Century , 169*, pp.212-16.
[515] Osborne, J. (1961). *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber, p.81.

> A knife, like a butcher's hanging aloft, the size of a garden fence. The cutting edge of the blade points upwards. Across it hangs the torso of a naked man, his head hanging down. Bellow it, an enormous round cone, like the inside of a vast barrel, surrounded by darkness. From the upstage entrance, seemingly far, far away, a dark figure appears against the blinding light inside as it grows brighter.[516]

The visual impact and the symbolic nature of such a setting, emphasizes the torment of Luther's mind and conscious, and contrasts with the following scene, where Luther, having emerged from his baptism of fire, meets his father in the simple setting of the Convent refectory. Such switches are to appear again in *Inadmissible Evidence,* between the fantasy world of Maitland's mind and the reality of the office.

They are similarly exploited in the very deliberate staging of *A Bond Honoured* in Act I, scene i:

> All the actors in the play sit immobile in a circle throughout most of the action. When those who are all in the same scene rise to take part in it, they all do so together. Long cloaks should be worn. I will just say: it must be extremely violent, pent-up, toppling on and over the edge of animal howlings and primitive rage. At the same time, it should have an easy, modern naturalness, even in the most extravagant or absurd moments. It requires actors like athletes who behave like conversationalists. It is not impossible or as difficult as it sounds. We English are more violent than we allow ourselves to know.[517] Act I, Scene 1

Osborne gave detailed instructions to his actors as to the manner of playing, advice that no doubt stems from the vicarious experience he records when he states: Of course, when I'm writing I see all the parts being played beautifully by me, to perfection![518]Though he adds the following comment: I've never taken myself seriously as an actor, and neither has anyone else.[519]

Undoubtedly, Osborne's own knowledge of the theatre, having been obtained by being a working part of this field's machinery, has added experience to his skill as a playwright. He thus acknowledges a sense of craftsmanship of what it is possible to do in this art form. As a result, Osborne can capture the attention of his audience, not only by the power of his language and by his sincerity, but also by visual domination.

In the first chapter (under the heading of Education) we have made three critical points, be they: Class and education, music and education, and literacy and education and which must be considered as the tenets of this chapter. Chapter two (Politics), looks

---

[516] Ibid., p.24.
[517] Osborne, J. (1966). *A Bond Honoured. A Play. From Lope de Vega.* Faber&Faber. Act I, Scene i.
[518] Osborne, J. (1961). That Awful Museum. *Twentieth Century , 169,* pp.212-16.
[519] Ibid.

at the intersection between politics, sociology, characters and John Osborne's philosophy. The link between behavior and communication is made clear in chapter three (Relationships). In chapter four (Language) we have considered that any critical appreciation of an Osborne play cannot separate form from content; in contrast to other realist plays, in Osborne's plays, ideas are bandied about but rarely fully developed, resulting in thematic inconsistency or vagueness. As often as possible, we have engaged with those critical questions that are most relevant today, notably, the relationship between the playwright's life and his work, rewriting politics, and the construction of gender.

The conclusion we draw is that the Arts speak to different times in different ways, and John Osborne's work is a good example of this. Cinema, television and literature can articulate the themes of an age. Uniquely, theatre engages in a live conversation with its audience/readers. Harold Ferrar, talking about *Look Back,* refers to it as "a virtual compendium of urgent mid-century concerns; isolation and alienation, non-communication, the death of ideals and the vanishing of heroism, the confrontation of nothingness and the uselessness of awareness for changing a cruel world."[520]

In a sense, all theatre is political and although it is not the only art form with political dimensions, it offers a unique forum for the political by involving audiences in a perceptible social reality through the operation of its dramatic conventions. Theatre form enjoys of free status which is always mediated by multiple economic and regulatory factors offering a medium for exposing problems, exploring issues and experimenting with changing relations of power. All this takes place within the context of its form which participates in the social in a variety of ways being John Osborne's plays a good example to account for. Osborne has been among others, a playwright who has narrated the history of the postwar period, identifying parallels between these interpretations and trends in postwar British historiography:

> This landmark production, *Look Back*, helped establish 1956 as the first in a series of seminal, symbolic and indeed contentious dates in post-war British theatre history….we wish to probe the theatrical complexion and legacy of the talismanic turning point of 1956.[521]

[520] Ferrar, H. (1973). *John Osborne.* New York and London: Columbia University Press, p.11.

[521] Lacey, S. (2006). The Moment of Look Back in Anger and Post-War Cultural History. *New Historiographies of Post-War British Theatre*. FIRT/IFTR-SIBMAS Bulletin 2006, Volume 1.

His success as a playwright helped the theatre in one highly practical way. At the end of its first season, the English Stage Company was in dire financial straits. Bretch's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (1943) had been a box-office disaster, partly because it coincided with the Russian invasion of Hungary which provoked more anti-communist feelings in Britain and luckily enough, the income from the first production of *Look Back in Anger* kept the English Stage Company solvent over the following years.

The following examples contain multiple cultural references to Osborne's iconic play *Look Back in Anger,* and this means that it still stands today clear in the memory of theatergoers who may thus find of interest the reading of weekly reviews which come up in the website 'The Arts Desk'. It includes up-to-date review coverage, in-depth interviews and features on other art forms apart from drama. The example given below is a review by Sierz of the play *Off the Endz*, described by him "as a new black morality play of rocking energy and acute perception" and which was performed at The Royal Court Theatre on the 21rst of February 2010.[522]

In it, Aleks Sierz refers to the well known play *Look Back* in the following terms:

> Thrillingly designed by Ultz, who bathes the stage with sickly fluorescent lighting evocative of urban graffiti during each scene change, *Off the Endz* is directed by Jeremy Herrin. Although it is only 75 minutes long, and thus strikes you as more of a rapid sketch than a deeply worked piece, this is a vivid report from the frontline. In one scene, the presence of an onstage ironing board (a nod to John *Osborne's Look Back in Anger)* is a reminder that, at this venue, domestic dramas are also state-of-the-nation plays.[523]

The second one is an extract from review coverage about Stefan Golaszewski's tragic-comedy *Sex with a Stranger*, also written by Aleks Sierz dating 8 February 2012:

> In this new play, Stefan Golaszewski - writer of the BBC Three sitcom Him & Her and star of BBC Four's Cowards - explores the situation of a young man who doesn't really know what he wants. Well, except for lots of sex of course. With lots of different women. Or so it might seem. But does he really?
>
> Twenty something Adam, who works in sales but has a really good idea for a new website, goes clubbing with his mates. During an evening of drinking and dancing, he manages to pick up Grace, who works in recruitment, and goes back with her to the flat she shares. The journey is a long one and, on the way, they stop to have something to eat. When they arrive at the flat, she struggles to find something alcoholic to drink, and then has trouble making out while the light is on.

---

[522] Agbaje, B. (2010). *off the endz.* London : Bloomsbury Methuen drama.

[523] Sierz, A. (2010, February 21). *the artsdesk.com*. Retrieved February 26, 2011, from http://www.theartsdesk.com/theatre/endz-royal-court-theatre

> The second half of the play is a flashback to earlier in the day. Before he prepares to go out, Adam spends his time with Ruth, the young woman he's living with. They go to a local supermarket, then they eat a salad, and then they watch some telly. She irons his shirt for the evening (shades of Alison in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger).* We see how they met as students, get a glimpse of their domestic routine, and even see an argument which shows how scared she is of him.[524]

In this dissertation, chapters are developed in a distinct way, through topics that have provided a framework to look at John Osborne through our own lens. He has proved to be one of the playwrights who has helped theatre take its right place within a broad range of other different performance, relating it with the broader forces of ritual and revolt that connects through so many areas of human culture. Since 1956, this has enabled critics the task of relating different fields of knowledge as part of their critical appreciation; thus, theatre and performance have been deployed as key metaphors and practices with which to rethink many issues such as gender, economics, language, human relations, culture and one's sense of self.

We have borne in mind, during the research process of this dissertation, the definition of the word "originality" given in the Spanish encyclopedia Espasa Calpe, in particular an entry of this word in the field of Literature. It indicates two paths which can be followed to write down something both original and creative. The first one consists in inventing new elements, but this can lead to extravagant ideas so we despise it. The second way is that of combining those elements already known in such a way that the result provided is something new, original in this sense; that is, metaphorically speaking: "of pouring old wine into new wineskins."[525] [my translation from Spanish] We have borne in mind and undergone this second way, reading and studying different reviews and monographs about Osborne given by different critics and writers, since *Look Back* was premièred in 1956. At the same time we have made a contextualized critical appreciation of them, by capturing the restless interdisciplinary energy between theatre and other aspects of the wider world. At the same time we have pointed out the contributions he made to the "new" playwrights and the impact on society as a whole.

With this statement in mind, the aim for a future research in the field of literary studies is to re-think some of the general questions raised in the detailed argument of the foregoing chapters, which does not mean a recapitulation, but a continuing inquiry into

---

[524] Sierz, A. (2012, February 8). *theartsdesk.com*. Retrieved from Sex with a Stranger, Trafalgar Studios: http://www.theartsdesk.com/theatre/sex-stranger-trafalgar-studios

[525] Espasa, C. (1919). *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (Vol. 40). Madrid: Espasa Calpe S.A.

the topics which have been discussed. We have also followed the indications given by Aleks Sierz which have been considered of great interest for a future research study in this field of knowledge, and which he expresses in the following terms:

> If you need to assess the change that he [John Osborne] made in theatre language, then I would suggest you compare Look Back in Anger with any Rattigan play or Coward play of the same era, and judge the difference for yourself. You might also find that his work has some linguistic affinities with that of Tennessee Williams. Likewise, you might also consider how his stage props and stage design compared to the typical "Loamshire play" of the mid-1950s (in theatre, design is also a language).[526]

Thus, and following his academic advice, the work currently underway is an assessment of the change Osborne made in theatre language through a comparison of the stage props and stage design of *Look Back* to the typical "Loamshire play" of the mid-1950's, and in particular between *Look Back* and Rattigan's two plays, *The Deep Blue Sea* (1952) and *Separate Tables* (1954, pub. 1955). It's also worth considering some of Noël Coward's for being all close in date., as for example *Blithe Spirit* (1941) and *Peace in our Time* (1946). Linguistic affinities are also to be drawn with Tennessee William's drama. Other writers such as Strindberg, Bernard Shaw, Chekhov, Beckett and Pinter share many stylistic affinities with Osborne, and thus a critical appreciation in terms of comparison would also mean an interesting topic for a future research in the field of drama studies.

Along the research of this doctoral dissertation access to international forums as contributor has opened up a door for future researches in the field of literary studies to attend Literature, Languages and Linguistics Conferences. The following contribution, organized as part of a number of conferences by Athens Institute for Education and Research Literature and Research Unit (July 2013), was much related to the question undergone through in this chapter, cultural identity. The title of the paper for an oral presentation is: Cultural Hybrids on stage. A solution to the puzzles of national identity in the 2000's?

[526] Sierz, A. (2011, March 22). Email to Maria del Mar Vega: Spanish Research Student on John Osborne. London.

6.2 - Results

Having accomplished the aims proposed in this dissertation, it has resulted in a very informative study undergone through a critical appreciation of Osborne's work in its social and cultural framework. The facts are given with their corresponding explanation. We have thus followed Professor Gilleman's recommendation about arguying in a coherent way, which he clearly expressed in the following terms: "When you give a fact, say why it is important."[527]Hence, this detailed study ensures that the scholar of ongoing researches on this same matter reaches a better understanding of both the writer and the work which he actually wrote down.

The central reflection which binds this study with previous monographs on this same author is that of coming up with a number of outstanding themes, the same ones with which playwrights have dealt with along the history of New Writing,[528] since its birth with *Look Back*. They consist of a set of topics ranging in scope and covering different issues which have remained the same along the years. Politics, Education, Culture, Language, Communication and Relationships are the main topics to be found in the plays and which give name to the chapters of this dissertation.

Aleks Sierz's *Rewriting the Nation* heads the themes of his book as follow: Global Roaming, Market Forces, Two Nations, Love Hurts, and Rival Realities. It is evident how economy, political issues, globalization, feelings and relations all form part of contemporary issues.[529] He includes topics about distant conflicts, soldier boys (the army still remains a potent symbol of Britishness), money problems at a time of compulsive consumerism, migrant moves, among others. It is well pointing out how their development along these decades has resulted in different interpretations on each of them. For example, the question of migration has been one of the most debated issues of this decade.

In post-war Britain, apathy in politics came up as a topic in different plays, although it did not stem from a feeling of discontent. It did so by coming up from the idea that the old political frame no longer corresponded to the living need. The New Left had in fact set out to take a long appraising look at the new post-war society. This

[527] Gilleman, L. (2011). *Review of a draft on chapter 1 of this dissertation.* academic advice, Department of English/ Smith College, Northampton MA.
[528] Sierz, A. (2011). *Rewriting The Nation. British Theatre Today.* London: Methuen Drama.
[529] Ibid., Contents, (no page).

political movement was formed up by a group of youngish intellectuals, university teachers, who were mainly established at provincial universities, and also sociologists, writers, architects, students, as well as some former Communists, for whom Hungary had been the end of the line. It set out to take a new look at post-war society and by starting up the history of new writing, which had been born in 1956 with the première of *Look Back*. In relation to the issue of language, there is something remarkably Thatcherite in Osborne's articulation of characters and about his concluding vision of individuals rather than community. Individuals pursue money, society fragments.

In this way we want to highlight the fact that the main topics discussed here about the question which gives title to this dissertation, "The Cultural and Social Dimensions of the works of John Osborne", are recurrent along the story of new writing in British drama. The theme of national identity is contextualized in the first decade of the new millennium, the New Labour political era, led by Prime ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. British theatre thus becomes a problematic concept in this increasingly globalized world, with many works comming from abroad.

This dissertation has well considered the theoretical/sociological approach given by Alan Sinfield's book[530], in an attempt to draw together the historical events which lead to a better understanding of the socio-political changes which took place in postwar Britain, and along the history of British theatre to the present. In this regard, the result is a socio-political approach to the literary production of Osborne, a writer who has greatly contributed as agent and vehicle of that social change and hence, we want to claim the importance of his figure in the history of British Theatre acknowledging that his work is a combination of both art and craft. According to Sierz,[531] the term new writing "was perhaps originally coined simply in imitation of the various waves of new writing in postwar prose and poetry." He points to the fact that it was widely accepted since the early 1970's. By 1975 the Arts Council Drama Department had set up a New Writing Committee and the term became widely used by theatre practitioners as well as by arts bureaucrats. Later on, in the 1980's and 1990's, new writing acquired its current identity as a particular type of new work. Today, there is even a national new writing system.

[530] Sinfield, A. (2004). *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain.* London and New York: The Athlone Press.
[531] Sierz, A. (2011). *Rewriting The Nation. British Theatre Today.* London: Methuen Drama.

Appendixes:

1- Contemporary British Dramatists

Without attempting a running commentary, we will be looking summarily through the history of new writing in British Theatre, which starts in 1956, with the arrival of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) and goes on to the first decade of this new millennium.

Since 1956, the British theatre (and more particularly, the British new play) has been the site of a rolling conversation about the nature of the post-war world. The play *Look Back* had an influence not so much in new forms, as in new subjects and new voices. One possible reaction to the failure in understanding what is happening to oneself is anger; and anger together with fear, was very much an emotion of the fifties. For the first wave of new playwrights, from John Osborne and Arnold Wesker to the early plays of Edward Bond, the primary questions raised were social and cultural. As Britain's rigid class system fell apart, so the new intellectuals (many of whom had working-class origins) debated the possibilities, consequences and limits of the new cultural democracy. In addition to Londoners like Osborne and Wesker, the Royal Court and the Theatre Workshop and Stratford East, gave a platform to young writers from the industrial North of England and from Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

In 1968, censorship was abolished, so the theatre of the late sixties and seventies was in constant confusion. It explored its own limits and signalled the emergence on the British stage of a theatre free from the demure and somewhat stifling literary atmosphere of the drama of the immediate post-war years challenging what "bourgeois" theatre had taken all too much for granted. Experiments in drama with audience participation deprived the audience of its position of safeness. Improvisation questioned what had been until then the author dominated theatre, the theatre of the single vision. Crudity and sexual explicitness were characteristics which challenged the last remnants of decorum. This new theatre was more closely linked to other forms of literature in the form of comic strips, newspapers and political tracts, a matter which alarmed Osborne in as much as the theatre became more interested in performance than in language. Osborne has been credited with having introduced contemporary themes to early post-war drama. Nevertheless, as a playwright, his romantic vision of creativity makes him distance himself from this idea. He believes both in inspiration, "in the dove that

appears, to me in the sky", and in language. Accordingly, he distances himself from late playwrights accusing them of having turned the stage into a laboratory for social research since he considered there was always the danger of writing becoming sociology or journalism. "All those plays on telly about labourers on building sites and Irishmen. They're journalistic pieces, very skilful but not A-R-T."[532]Osborne's characters are not inarticulate characters who explore the intricacies of miscommunication. Therefore, he retraces to an older tradition, combining earthy realism with a quasi-baroque enjoyment of word sculpture which goes on from Luther and Shakespeare to eighteenth century giants such as Dr Johnson and Henry Fielding.

From 1964 to 1971, Osborne's success was no longer based on innovation or youthful charm but on proven technical, stylistic, and intellectual ability. He was regarded as one of the most important British playwrights alive and both *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964) and *A Patriot for Me* (1965) are good examples of this. Irving Wardle (1965) concluded that "the last decade has been the most fertile period in British drama since the Restoration and no one has contributed more to it than Osborne."[533] Many of the so called "angries" profited from the media attention Osborne's success had ensured for their work but few of them made an impact as lasting as he had.

Even so the years of recognition already carried the signs of Osborne's decline, caused not so much by his falling out of favour with the public as by his growing irrelevance in the world of innovative theatre. During the late fifties and early sixties, formative years in Osborne's career, drama was shaped by the lingering reactionary attitudes it rebelled against.

For the next generation, forged in the fires of the youth revolt of the late 60's, the basic questions were more aggressively political, dealing with the limits of social democracy and the welfare state (in political terms, the debate between liberal reform and socialist revolution). In the early 60's, the energy of the first wave of new playwrights was beginning to wane. Many of the next generation saw their home in British television. Trail-blazed by Independent Television's Armchair Theatre, the BBC under Hugh Carlton Greene, became a crucible of exciting, muscular and realistic new drama, both in serial and single-play form.

---

[532] Weatherby, W. (1981). Middle Age of the Angry Young Men. *The Sunday Times Magazine*, pp.30-42.

[533] Wardle, I. (1965). Looking Back on Osborne's Anger. *New Society*.

Although much of the innovatory zeal of the late 50's had dissipated (or been diverted into television), the West End theatre of the early-to-mid 60's reflected the energy and zest that infected all aspects of life in London at that time, represented in the so called Swinging London in the 1960's. Edward Bond was the last of the first wave of The Royal Court dramatists. Tom Stoppard also came up as an outstanding playwright at that time.

The year 1968 (The Class of '68) saw the abolition of theatre censorship and the beginning of the great upsurge in state subsidy of the theatre that enabled the development of a network of small-scale, underground and touring companies that was to be collectively dubbed "The Fringe". It was also, of course, the annus mirabilis of the world-wide youth revolt against the Vietnam War and the emergence of a new generation of playwrights, keen to pose radical if not revolutionary alternatives to the limitations of the welfare state consensus.

The 70's Mainstream: The 70's was probably the last decade in which straight drama could be regularly premièred in London's West End theatre. Even when their plays were called comedies, the 'commercial' writers of the 70's were serious in intent and sometimes experimental in form.

Darker Visions: Although dominated by social realism and its outgrowths, the theatre of the 70's and 80's had an underside. A small but significant number of writers rejected the urge to explain and instead explored the darker and more intractable sides of the human experience.

Alan Ayckbourn was also a key dramatist.

Regional Accents: Despite the significance of non-metropolitan writers, and the importance of touring, the theatre of the 60's and 70's was dominated by London. As the national culture fractured and theatrical culture with it, so there emerged in the 80's a number of major writers who spoke defiantly, unambiguously and popularly for a world beyond the South East of England.

The Liverpool Sound:

Willy Russell. The two-hander *Educating Rita* (1980) was one of the most successful plays of the 80's. Like the single-handed *Shirley Valentine* (1986), it takes a firmly optimistic view of the possibility of working-class emancipation, and, like Wesker's *Roots* (1958), implies that liberation will come through women, often despite rather than because of their men.

Women Playwrights: Caryl Churchill was the major dramaturgical innovator of the 1980's. Genuinely post-modern, her mature plays are as much about fracture and contrast as they are about cohesion and consistency. In the first act of *Cloud Nine* (1978), first performed in 1979, the certainties of the British Empire are cruelly disrupted by the exposure of the sexual ambivalences churning beneath. Later, the same characters reappear, a century later but merely twenty-five years older, in the equally complex but more open sexual world of contemporary London. While in *Top Girls* (1982) two kinds of feminism are contrasted through the story of a Thatcherite businesswoman and her socialist sister, in a play which begins with a dinner party involving (among others) a Chaucerian wife, a 19th century female explorer, a Japanese imperial courtesan and Pope Joan, and ends with what is, chronologically speaking, its first scene.

By the early 80's, the ground had shifted once again. Following the failure of traditional socialist ideas to achieve mass appeal, playwrights became concerned with questions of identity and difference. The rise of black, gay, and (especially) women's theatre, the revival of a self-conscious theatre of the regions (and nations), and the development of community theatre were all examples of this phenomenon.

Like all artistic movements, there are major figures which stand outside the mainstream and pursue their own obsessions. The playwrights closest to the continental theatre of the absurd, Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard, turned to politics during the 90's. Earlier traditions of British comedy and drama have been celebrated in the work of popular playwrights like Joe Orton, Alan Bennett, Michael Frayn and Peter Shaffer. And although the following two are among the best known, neither Alan Ayckbourn nor Caryl Churchill are typical of movements with which they are associated. In the 1980's, there were two nationally known women playwrights, Caryl Churchill and Pam Gems. By 1990, there were at least two dozen. The emergence of the woman playwright was the major event of the intervening decade.

Social Observance: The 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher left many of the more conventionally political playwrights unsure of their role. The 80's was a decade in which English male playwrights were largely concerned not to change the world but to observe it.

Black writing: Since 1956 there have been a number of innovative black plays in Britain, by (among others) Errol John's *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*, (1956), Barry Reckord's *Skyvers* (1963), Michael Abbensetts's *Sweet Talk* (1973). But it was in the

80's that black theatre emerged as a coherent movement for the articulation of the particular experience of communities set on a number of geographical borderlines. Although they were often non-text based, the black theatre movement produced in the 90's an increasing number of significant new playwrights. It also included several other (like Harwant, S Bains and Meera Syal) of Asian origin.

The British theatre, thus, entered the 1990's in a mood of confusion. Pessimists pointed to a growing conservatism in theatre programming, a decline in the ambition of new plays, and a move towards performance-based theatre, that which excludes the literary text. Optimists saw first indications that playwrights and play-makers from an important but essentially insular theatre tradition were opening out in the world. "New writing" is plays that are written in the great tradition of British text-based theatre, which re-established itself in the brave new state-funded postwar world and depended crucially on state subsidy.

British theatre in the 2000's has been better off at showing the hierarchies of class and race and the cultural hybrids that already exist, or having visions of dystopia futures, than at suggesting practical new possibilities. It proved better at criticizing existing forms of identity rather than imagining different ones. But playwrights, after all, are not policy-makers. And if most of the Britons shown on stage have remained the same, despite all the changes going on around them, it is because the contradictions they live with are slow to change: tradition versus modernity, class divisions versus mobility, segregation versus assimilation, conservatism versus reform. The list could go on, but these are the tensions that writers have been so good at showing in the past decade. In 2002, one critic asked:

> Our playwrights, from time to time, may shock us, but where are the plays that will challenge us? When playwrights deal with serious themes, they do so in a manner that allows us to distance ourselves from the social evils they portray, committed by characters who are mentally ill or not our class dear.[534]

His perception was that most playwrights portrayed untypically extreme characters; curiously enough, the marginal poor were more central to the imagined picture of Britishness than ordinary citizens were. Representations of the well-hard loser implies that middle-class Britain is inauthentic, reminding us of class divisions and imprinting them even more strongly on our imagination. This blocks our fantasies of

[534] Koeniig, R. (2002, September 4). What's Not on Stage. *Independent* .

social change asserting a neat separation between "us" and "them"; what is national is pitched against what is alien.

Equally significant perhaps was Joan Littlewood's work with the Theatre Workshop at Stratford, East London which produced the polemical and popular musicals *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be* (1959), a musical comedy, and *Oh! What A Lovely War* (1964), as well as the plays of Brendan Behan and Shelagh Delaney.

2 - The Man and his Writing

Being one of Osborne's many enthusiastic readers I have had the opportunity to acknowledge that his work is a combination of both art and craft. John Osborne, playwright, screenplay writer, actor and theatre director, was born on the 12th of December 1929 in Fulham, London. He was the son of Thomas Godfrey Osborne, a lower-middle-class commercial artist and copywriter from Wales, and Nellie Beatrice Grove, whose working class family were publicans. Their marriage was an unhappy one. Firstly, I will deliver some relevant biographical information about him. He was born to Nellie Beatrice Grove who was a barmaid but regarded herself as a "victualler's assistant". His father was named Thomas Godfrey Osborne, a commercial copywriter who spent most of his brief life on sick leave. Class awareness will haunt him all along his life and this is made evident in his writing. In his autobiography, Part I, *A Better Class of Person,* Osborne describes his family background as upper-working class, though it was quite solidly lower-middle-class, considering his father's occupation and his family's aspirations to genteelness. Families on both sides had been publicans, and actors visiting their pubs had been their only connection with the stage. The boy John sympathizes neither with the hotheaded Groves nor with the chilly Osbornes, sensing a life-denying quality on both sides. He only locates authenticity in the memory of the gentle, Welsh modulations of his father.

After his father's death in 1941, John's education and health needs were taken care of by the company for which his father worked. Dependence on such charity instilled in John lasting resentment for the little indignities of cheap respectability. Sick with a debilitating form of rheumatic fever he spent most of his childhood years either in third rate sanatoria or at home. Later on he was sent to a minor public school (Belmont College, a boarding school in Devon) but he was expelled from it at the age of fifteen and a half after hitting the headmaster. "This would become a self-defining

anecdote, proof of a budding, bristling cockiness that later helped turn John into an icon of the "angry" post-war generation."[535]Like that of countless other minor actors and aspiring playwrights, Osborne's life could have continued its uncertain course if it were not for the foundation of the English Stage Company.

In his Autobiography, *A Better Class of Person* (1981), Osborne gives an extremely honest and often humorous account of his childhood, which becomes sometimes frightening and at the same time sad. In 1936, the family moved to Stoneleigh, Surrey, and, in 1938, to Ewell. In 1941, Thomas Godfrey died in a sanatorium after suffering from tuberculosis for many years, an event which was to leave a mark on his son's writing. Osborne began his education in state schools, but, in 1943, he transferred to a lesser public boarding school in Devon. He was later to describe the school in the following disparaging terms: "St Michael's was probably not much seedier or inefficient than many other schools of its kind, offering the merest trappings of a fake public school for the minimum expense" (*A Better Class of Person* 128). In 1945, his school carrier was cut short when he was expelled for hitting the headmaster. Many biographical details, a sense of not belonging to a single social class, problems of identity, loss of family, filtered into his writing.

In 1947, Osborne accepted his first job as junior journalist on trade papers, like *Gas World*, *Nursery World* and *The Miller*. He soon abandoned journalism, however, being already bent on a theatrical career. He entered the theatre as assistant stage manager touring with a repertory company, but immediately found himself on stage with a small part in *No Room at the Inn* at the Lyceum, Sheffield, in 1948. In 1950, Osborne's acting career flourished when he went on tour to Ilfracombe and the London area. He has continued to act occasionally, and undoubtlessly his stage experience has helped his play writing.[536] The influential critic Kenneth Tynan commented favourably on Osborne's outstanding talent as an actor in his review of Nigel Dennis' *Cards of Identity*: "... who should turn up, wearing false sabre teeth and hairless dome, but John Osborne, ruthlessly funny as the Custodian of Ancient Offices. The Royal Court's captive playwright stands out from an excellent cast" (*Tynan on Theatre* 49). For his part, Osborne has never taken himself seriously as an actor as his ironic description of his performance as Hamlet indicates: "It was a passable impersonation of Claudius after

[535] Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge, p.18.

[536] Osborne as an actor in film adaptation of Turguéniev's *First Love* (1860). Fig.12, p.270 in this dissertation.

a night's carousing" (*A Better Class of Person* 233). In 1950 he co-authored his first play, *The Devil Inside*, which was staged at Huddersfield.

In 1951, he married Pamela Lane the first of five wives, three of whom were actresses. In 1957 they were divorced and he married his second wife, Mary Ure, who played Alison in the first production of *Look Back in Anger*. In 1963, having divorced Mary Ure, he married Penelope Gilliatt, film critic of *The Observer*. In 1967 he and Gilliat were divorced, and in 1968 Jill Bennett became his wife. In 1977, he was divorced from Jill Bennett, and the following year he married drama critic Helen Dawson with whom he would spend the rest of his life.

The year 1956 proved a crucial one for Osborne, since he secured an acting job with the newly formed English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre, playing Antonio in *Don Juan*, and Lionel in *Death of Satan*, (a double-bill by Ronald Duncan). In October he played Lin To in Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. His new play, *Look Back in Anger* was accepted at the Royal Court. It was premièred in May and received mixed critical reviews. It was this play, moreover, that turned Osborne into one of the leaders of "The Angry Young Men".

In 1957, *The Entertainer* appeared at the Royal Court. In the play, Osborne starts his theme of Britain's decline and once again voices nostalgia for her glorious past, this time through the figures of Archie Rice, a third-rate music-hall comedian. As Osborne said in a note to *The Entertainer* "The music-hall is dying, and with it, a significant part of England has gone." The work was a huge stage success partly due to Sir Laurence Olivier's superb interpretation of the lead role of Archie Rice.

In 1958 *Epitaph for George Dillon*, an earlier play, co-authored with Anthony Creighton, made its debut at the Court, continuing Osborne's collaboration with this theatre. With his substantial earnings, particularly from *Look Back in Anger*, Osborne was able to buy a fine house in Chelsea. After being hailed by critics as a left-wing dramatist, along with John Arden and Arnold Wesker, who was politically militant early in his carrier, Osborne never took an active part in any political party. Only once did he engage in active politics by becoming a member of the Committee of 100, an organisation for unilateral disarmament through civil disobedience. In 1961 he was actually arrested in a Trafalgar Square sit-down and fined. Nor had he ever thought of himself as being a dramatist-teacher. Through his plays, he didn't seek to teach but to make people feel aware of crucial issues in modern-day society. He went beyond strictly political issues and, instead, was concerned with the isolation of the individual in

twentieth-century society, where self-expression and self-realization were hard to achieve.

Following Osborne's outstanding initial success, during the sixties he continued to write prolifically for the stage, and to a lesser degree for television and the cinema. The seventies and eighties saw him writing less and less, but at the same time engaged in his work as actor, director, screenplay writer and critic. The following account deals summarily with this period, while all works are included in the chronology below. Osborne's plays have frequently been criticised for their muddled structure and lack of focus and this was true of the musical play, *The World of Paul Slickey*. It was first staged in 1959 and proved a big commercial and critical failure. Osborne set out to write a social critique of the press by dramatising a day in the life of gossip column writer, Jack Oackham, but finished by attacking, often haphazardly, such wide-reaching subjects as popular newspapers and popular taste.

Luther, a more clearly focussed play, was successfully directed by Tony Richardson at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, in 1961. Its protagonist is the charismatic figure of Martin Luther who was splendidly played by Albert Finney. In *Luther* Osborne chooses not to recreate the historical and political background of the Reformation, but deals exclusively with one man's religious experience and his subsequent rebellion against the age into which he was born and his search for a personal understanding of life. Typical of Osborne's writing, and already apparent in his previous plays, is his notable ability to create a single lead role, surrounded by minor characters which might authentically interrelate with his protagonist.

Osborne has also written important screenplays like *Tom Jones* (1963) and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1968). The former was turned into a highly popular film directed by Tony Richardson, with Albert Finney as Tom Jones.

A Patriot for Me, which had its first performance in June 1965, dramatises the painful circumstances of a young, Jewish officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army who commits suicide after being blackmailed by the Russian Intelligence Service who have discovered he is a homosexual. The play caused a public scandal when the Lord Chamberlain censored long passages which Osborne refused to cut. The work was consequently staged at the Royal Court which was turned into a private club for the occasion. Once again Osborne created a central figure, Redl, who like his other anti-heroes, is wasted and destroyed because he is not allowed, or is unable to be himself.

Time Present and *Hotel in Amsterdam* are works dealing with the protagonists' struggle to keep going in a steadily more decadent world. *Time Present* opened at the Royal Court in May 1968, and starred Jill Bennett. While the protagonist's sex has changed, Pamela, an unmarried and unemployed actress, resembles other Osborne's anti-heroes, who are dissatisfied and frustrated. Like *Look Back*, the play has little action, pivoting on Pamela's tirades against everything and everybody around her: politicians, hippies, sex, drugs and education. The only person she really cares about is her father, an ageing actor, and when he dies she collapses, indulging in heavy drinking. This is a poignant description of a lonely, dissatisfied woman unable to find a purpose to life.

In the seventies and eighties, following his stage play, *West of Suez* (1971), Osborne wrote little for the theatre, dividing his time between television plays like *The Right Prospectus* (1970), *Jill and Jack* and *A Gift of Friendship* (both from 1973), and a new version of Strindberg's *The Father* (1988). He also resumed work as an actor and did some directing, including a production of *The Entertainer*, at the Greenwich Theatre in 1973. The illustration depicts actor David Schofield as Archie Rice in *The Entertainer* Royal Exchange, Manchester 2009. [537]

The first part of an autobiography, *A Better Class of Person* was published in 1981 and televised in 1985. In 1991, the second part *Almost a Gentleman* appeared.

His latest stage play *Déjàvu*, a sequel to *Look Back in Anger*, was premièred at the Comedy Theatre, London, in 1992. The work would seem to re-confirm Osborne's lack of original writing for the stage already apparent in the seventies and eighties. The protagonist is an ageing Jimmy Porter, whose middleclass surroundings reflect a more affluent life style than before, but sadly Jimmy is no different and is still hurling invective. What have changed are his targets such as Nicaragua'89, the environmentalists, and health-food freaks like his ex-wife Alison, who daintily sips Perrier water.

3 - Chronology of Osborne's Life and Works

1929 Born in December in Fulham, London.

1936 Family moved to Stoneleigh, Surrey.

[537] Photograph by Jonathan Keenan. Fig.13, p.270 in this dissertation.

1938 Family moved to Ewell.

1941 Death of his father.

1942 Sick for a year with rheumatic fever.

1943 To a boarding school in Devon, St Michael's. "St Michael's, was probably not much seedier or inefficient than many other schools of its kind, offering the merest timid trappings of a fake public school for the minimum expense" (Osborne, *A Better Class of Person* 128).

1945 Summer, expelled for hitting a teacher.

1946 Left school; worked as journalist for trade magazines such as *Gas World, Nursery World,* and the *Miller.*

1948 Drifted into the theatre as a tutor to juvenile actors in touring group. Acted for the first time in *No Room at the Inn,* at the Empire Theatre in Shefield "It was enough to get me the job of ASM, touring in Hamilton's production of *No Room at the Inn*" (Osborne, *A Better Class of Person* 173).

1950 Acting with companies in Ilfracombe, the London area, and Hayling Island, where he played Hamlet: "It was a passing impersonation of Claudius after a night's carousing." May: first play, *The Devil Inside,* (written in collaboration with Stella Linden) produced at Huddersfield.

1951 Acting in Bridgewater. June: married Pamela Elizabeth Lane, actress.

1955 Co-author of *Personal Enemy* staged at Harrogate.

1956 April: joined English Stage Company: 8 May: *Look Back in Anger*, 15 May: first appearance on London stage as Antonio in *Don Juan* and Lionel in *The Death of Satan* (double bill by Ronald Duncan). Evening Standard Award as Most Promising Playwright of the Year. June, three parts in *Cards of Identity*. Oct., Lin To in *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. *Look Back in Anger* a success at Royal Court.

1957 10 April: *The Entertainer*, directed by Tony Richardson, with Olivier in the title role. Marriage to Pamela Lane dissolved. Marry Mary Ure, 8 September. Played Commissionaire, in *Apollo de Belloc* and Donald Blake in *The Making of Moo* at the Royal Court.

1958 *Epitaph for George Dillon* (written earlier with Anthony Creighton) opened on 11 February, New York productions of *The Entertainer* and *Epitaph for George Dillon.*

1959 14 April: *The World of Paul Slickey* opened at the Pavilion, Bournemouth, directed by John Osborne.

1960 6 November: *A Subject of Scandal and Concern* transmitted by BBC television. Film of *The Entertainer* released.

1961 26 June*: Luther* opened at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham. Member of Committee of 100, for unilateral nuclear disarmament through civil disobedience; arrested in Trafalgar Square sit-down and fined.

1962 19 July: *Plays for England*. *The Blood of the Bambergs* directed by John Dexter; *Under Plain Cover* by Jonathan Miller. *The Devil Inside Him* (written with Stella Linden in 1950) staged at Pembroke Theatre, Croydon, as *Cry for Love,* by Robert Owen.

1963 Marriage to Mary Ure dissolved. New York production of *Luther* which received the New York Drama Critics Award and the Tony Award for the Best Play of 1963. Married Penelope Gilliatt, critic and journalist on the 24th of May. Wrote script for successful film, *Tom Jones,* and in these years wrote scripts for three films not made: *The Hostage*, *The Secret Agent*, and *Moll Flanders.*

1964 *Inadmissible Evidence* opened on 9 September. Osborne received Film Academy's Oscar Award for screenplay of *Tom Jones*.

1965 May: directed Charles Wood's *Meals on Wheels* at Royal Court. A *Patriot for Me* staged at Royal Court, 30 June. New York productions of *Inadmissible Evidence* and *Plays for England* and stage production of *A Subject of Scandal and Concern.*

1966 6 June: *A Bond Honoured* opened at the National Theatre.

1967 5 December: Penelope Gilliatt divorces Osborne; they had one daughter.

1968 23 May: *Time Present* opened at the Royal Court followed on 3 July by *The Hotel in Amsterdam*. Married Jill Bennett. Acted in *The Parachute,* by David Mercer, on TV.

1969 Acted in *The First Night of Pygmalion* on television and played Maidonov in the film *First Love*.

1970 *The Right Prospectus* transmitted by BBC Television on 22 October.

1971 *Very like a Whale* published. *West of Suez* opened at the Royal Court, 17 August.

1972 *The Gift of Friendship* published. *Hedda Gabler*, an adaptation by Ibsen, opened at the Royal Court on 28 May, followed on 4 December by *A Sense of Detachment.*

1973 *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *A Place Calling Itself Rome* published. *A Patriot for Me* revived at Watford Palace Theatre.

1974 A television play *Jill and Jack* transmitted on 11 September by Yorkshire Television.

1975 16 January: *The End of Me Old Cigar* produced at Greenwich Theatre. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* produced at Greenwich Theatre, 13 February. *Watch It Come Down* published.

1976 24 February: *Watch It Come Down* produced at the National Theatre.

1977 Osborne divorced Jill Bennett.

1978 *You're Not Watching Me, Mummy* and *Try a Little Tenderness*, two plays for television, published. Osborne married Helen Dawson, drama critic and journalist. Acted in *Tomorrow Never Comes*.

1980 20 January: *You're Not Watching Me, Mummy* transmitted by Yorkshire Television. *Very Like a Whale* transmitted by ITV.

1981 3 March: *Hedda Gabler*, abridged, transmitted by Yorkshire Television. Radio performance of *A Patriot for Me*, 15 March. *A Better Class of Person*, autobiography, published.

1982 Television critic of *Mail on Sunday*, for three months.

1983 *A Patriot for Me* revived at Chichester Festival Theatre with Alan Bates.

1985 *A Better Class of Person* and *God Rot Tunbridge Wells!* (About Handel) televised.

1989 An adaptation of Strindberg's *The Father*.

1991 *Déjàvu* (*Look Back II*) the play was published, uncharacteristically, a year before production, an interval painfully spent bickering and negotiating.

1992 *Déjàvu* staged at the Comedy Theatre, London.

1994 Died. Buried in Clun, Shropshire.

4 - Ficha Diccionario de Literatura Comparada. La Recepción de la Obra de John Osborne en España

OSBORNE, JOHN JAMES (Londres, 1929 – Shropshire, 1994). Osborne fue el creador de una nueva tendencia teatral en el Reino Unido, que la crítica denominó escuela de los "jóvenes airados" (angry young men) por la vitalidad, la sátira y el realismo de su propuesta. Su ensayo *They Call it Cricket,* parte del libro titulado [*Declaration*] editado por Tom Maschler en 1957, [Declaración 1958], puso de relieve la formación de dicho grupo. Según el crítico Kenneth Tynan, de *The Observer*, considerado como el teórico de la nueva dramaturgia, se produjo un renacimiento teatral en Gran Bretaña a partir del estreno de *Mirando hacia atrás con ira* (11 de marzo de 1959) [*Look Back in Anger*,1956], [Tynan, 1966]. Se trata de jóvenes escritores británicos que habían publicado hacía poco tiempo una serie de novelas picarescas en que se perfilaba un nuevo tipo de héroe, un intelectual de la clase baja caracterizado por su irreverente sentido del humor, su enorme afición a la cerveza y lo sexual, y su actitud de perversa irreverencia ante el orden establecido. Los jóvenes críticos y directores cinematográficos acababan de lanzar un ataque a la vaciedad del cine británico: su nueva consigna era compromiso con la realidad y verdad social. La escuela de la cocina y el fregadero, «The Kitchen Sink School of Drama», así llamada por su declarada preocupación por la inmundicia doméstica, había comenzado a moverse por este sendero. Era la época del retorno del liberalismo inglés, aunque ya sin espejismos imperiales, y del desmoronamiento del izquierdismo. El protagonista Jimmy Porter se convierte de este modo en representante de una juventud rebelde, angustiada y desesperada: « el repentino sentimiento de notarse miembro de una sociedad que no le comprende y…el miedo o casi pavor de no querer continuar sus leyes» [Pérez Gallego, 1968]. En los círculos críticos y dramatúrgicos de Madrid, causó considerable impacto. Ha sido traducido a otras lenguas y representado en varios países.

Tras haber finalizado sus estudios de grado medio en el Belmont College, de Devonshire, y después de haber probado fortuna, con muy poco éxito, en el periodismo de carácter mercantil, debutó como actor en el Lyceum Theatre de Sheffield, en 1948. Destacó también como guionista, escribió dos autobiografías, así como un gran número de piezas teatrales. *Look Back in Anger* no fue la primera obra dramática que John Osborne compuso: habían salido ya de su pluma *El Diablo Interior,* [*The Devil Inside*, 1949], escrita en colaboración con Anthony Creighton, y *Enemigo personal* [*Personal*

Enemy, 1955]. Pero fue con ella donde Osborne creyó haber conseguido algo verdaderamente rotundo. Envió copias del drama a las empresas teatrales y directores de escena de Londres. Todos rechazaron la obra de plano, hasta que cayó en manos de George Devine. Entrenada en el Royal Court Theatre el día 8 de mayo de 1956, se representó también en otras salas de Londres por espacio de dieciocho meses. Luego se montó en Broadway, donde se dieron 408 representaciones y recorrió en *tournée* los Estados Unidos y el Canadá. Recibió el Premio del Círculo de los Críticos de Nueva York como el mejor drama extranjero de 1957. Más tarde se representó en París con el título de *La Paix du Dimanche*, «La paz del domingo», expresión a todas luces irónica, porque la acción dramática se inicia en una de esas tardes dominicales, aplastantes de aburrimiento, rutina y atosigante holganza. *Mirando hacia atrás con ira* fue estrenada en Madrid, por Dido, en el Teatro Goya, el 11 de marzo de 1959, bajo la dirección de José María de Quinto. El título, que fue bastante debatido fue dado por Antonio Gobernado. Lo que más llama la atención del director José María de Quinto durante los ensayos es que: «durante los días de trabajo sobre el texto de este drama, escuchaba una y otra vez los mismos gritos de rebeldía y desesperación» [de Quinto, 1959]. Subraya, pues, la vitalidad de los personajes: «Me encontraba ante un drama de criaturas vivas, de seres emocionantes, íntimos y verdaderos, cuya esencial misión era la de desnudarse ante el espectador para mostrarle la cruda realidad de sus vidas» [de Quinto, 1959]. En la interpretación destacaron Germán Cobos; en el papel de protagonista, Julio Navarro, que dio mucha sinceridad a un tipo de apoyatura, y María Luisa Romero, algo defectuosa de voz [Prego, 1959: 85]. Ante el éxito forman cooperativa los intérpretes, poniéndola comercialmente en el Recoletos y en el Goya, de Madrid, y en Barcelona [Conesa, 1974]. Unos años más tarde Victoria Ocampo traduciría el texto al español publicándose la obra con el título *Recordando con ira* (Edit. Sur, Buenos Aires, 1960).

Destacamos un artículo de 1959, publicado en el número 7 de una revista perteneciente a la colección de teatro *Primer Acto* y dirigida por José María de Quinto, con motivo de estrenarse en España en sesión única, *Mirando hacia atrás con ira*. Es la primera aportación de la crítica española, al estudio de la nueva generación de autores ingleses de la posguerra, conocida con el nombre de generación airada o movimiento de los jóvenes iracundos [Pemán, 1970]. El drama de John Osborne llegaba a los escenarios españoles precedido de un halo de "malditismo", que sin embargo no resistía ni el más mínimo análisis. Se trataba de un drama bastante ingenuo, como ingenuo era el movimiento puramente literario de los «angry young men». Solo el ataque de la

burguesía perpetrado desde los escenarios y el desenfado del montaje que se hacía, merecían la pena [Pérez Gallego, 1968]. No obstante, parte de la crítica de los diarios nacionales se dio por escandalizada [de Quinto, 1959]. Según de Quinto: «Se trataba de una exageración por supuesto, como tuve ocasión de entender mas tarde en Londres donde traté alguno de los componentes de los angry young men, como Kenneth Tynan, Osia Trilling, Arnold Wesker, Bernard Kops, Shelagh Delaney, etc» [2001, pp.77-78].

Con otro título, *Mirando hacia atrás con odio,* existen numerosas solicitudes para su estreno en España. El 18 de marzo de 1959, el director de la compañía del teatro Lara solicitaba su estreno en cinco días en dicho teatro, como así aconteció. El destacado y ferviente falangista, Gumersindo Montes Agudo (24-03-1959) [Expediente de Censura, 1959] consideró que se presentaba una «obra muy inquieta, queremos decir fuera de nivel intelectual medio y de moral extraviada. Es un clima extraño, morboso. Con una solución "cómoda". Obra minoritaria, muy cerebral, paradójicamente, pese a su aire desgarrado. Todo en ella no es ajeno. No veo motivo de prohibición, ni tampoco de complacencia». Aunque marcó supresiones en las páginas 8, 9, 16, 24 y 30, porque «se señalan algunos deslices», la calificó «tolerable para mayores solamente, en representación normal» [Expediente de Censura 194-58]. El mítico programa Estudio 1 de TVE emitiría *Mirando hacia atrás con ira* el 5 de marzo de 1974 bajo la dirección de Alfredo Castellón; en vísperas de la muerte del Dictador esto constituía todo un inquietante presagio. El conocido actor Fernando Guillén representó el papel de Jimmy Porter [Programa Estudio 1: *Mirando hacia atrás con ira*, 1974].

La crisis de Suez coincidió y se reflejó en su segunda obra, *El animador* (1958), [*The Entertainer* 1957], con Sir Laurence Olivier como protagonista en la versión sajona. El 6 de agosto del año 1958 John Osborne inauguraba con ella un escenario español, con Josefina Sánchez Pedreño como directora de Dido, Pequeño Teatro de Madrid. Este fue el más activo de los teatros de cámara madrileños durante muchos años, teniendo que crear el Premio Valle-Inclán para establecer los supuestos de expectación que le permitieran seleccionar y estrenar una obra de Lauro Olmo y otra de Ricardo Rodríguez Buded. Este tipo de teatro aceptaba así su destino minoritario [Monleón, 1970].

El 1 de marzo de 1961, la Compañía Dido pequeño teatro ofreció, en el teatro Goya de Madrid, una representación de la obra de Osborne y Anthony Creighton, *Epitafio para Jorge Dillon*, con Germán Cobos como protagonista. El propio director escribió una crítica, el mismo día de su estreno, resaltando «la calidad humana de los personajes, para que éstos tengan a los pocos minutos de comenzar la representación un lugar entre

vosotros, espectadores españoles» [Gordón, 1961]. El crítico Alfredo Marquerie [*ABC*, 2 de marzo de 1961] destacó la traducción de Antonio Gobernado y la dirección y adaptación de José Gordón, así como la escenografía de María Nieves, R. de León y J. L. Montero. Sin embargo, no fue gratamente acogida por el público. En cuanto al tono interpretativo, comenta que fue de tono apagado, aunque Germán Cobos y Hebe Donay estuvieron magníficos de acento, estudio y expresión haciéndose acreedores al elogio Amelia Hermida, Montserrat Blanch, Esperanza Saavedra Gandia, Bebón, Gobernado y José Franco.

Por último, el tercer acontecimiento clave que dio a conocer a Osborne en español tuvo lugar con *Lutero* (1967) [*Luther*, 1961]. La puesta en escena de Magán encontró una solución en el tan socorrido brechtianismo. Se representó en Santiago de Compostela por la Agrupación Teatral Ditea y por sus asociados, con carácter estrictamente privado, bajo el apropiado marco de la capilla del Hostal. La interpretación tuvo en el actor Ezequiel Méndez un valor destacado en el papel de Lutero.

Aunque Osborne nunca visitó España, hizo referencia en *Mirando hacia atrás con ira* a la Guerra Civil española y muchas de sus demandas concuerdan literariamente con las de la generación realista española: Alfonso Sastre, José Martín Recuerda, Lauro Olmo, José María Rodríguez Méndez, Carlos Muñiz, Ricardo Rodríguez Sudad, Joaquín Maridán, Ricardo López Aranda y Antonio Buero Vallejo. Destacamos la analogía que mantenían en España los escritores coetáneos a John Osborne en sus posiciones, respecto a uno como Rattigan en la Gran Bretaña; las razones no son difíciles de explicar. Después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y con la pérdida del Imperio, Inglaterra vive un momento parecido al de la Generación del 98 española, salvando distancias. En el prólogo a la revista *Primer Acto*, José Monleón indica: «Ser inglés, como en el 98 ser español, ha dejado de tener significaciones especiales» [1964, 10]. Otra analogía que propone Monleón es el rechazo del moralismo. El programa de mano del estreno comienza: «Esta obra ha escandalizado e irritado a muchos espectadores. En el fondo, las causas son las mismas, y como ocurría en España, la intolerancia de los jóvenes se manifiesta en el rechazo de las formulas morales y hacia un teatro más comprometido con la realidad» [1964]. Sin embargo, y a pesar de su abundante producción literaria, no contamos con muchas traducciones de sus obras al español.

Bibl.*: Declaración* (1958) en Rev. Primer Acto, num.56, agosto 1964. *El animador,* trad. de Celia H. Paschero y Juan Carlos Pellegrini, Edit. Sur, Col. Teatro – 6, 1960. *Recordando con ira,* trad. De Victoria Ocampo, Edit. Sur, Buenos Aires, 1960.

Estudios: Conesa, Leandro: «Extracto de un reportaje sobre Julio Navarro» *La Verdad.* Murcia:(7-7-1974). Gordón, José «Autocrítica» *ABC* (1-3-1961), 50. «Lutero» de Osborne, *Primer Acto* 8, (1967). Monleón, José: «El Teatro que parece nuestro» (Prólogo al libro *Teatro Inglés: de Osborne hasta ahora*). 5, (1967), 72. Marquerie, Alfredo: «Estreno de Epitafio para Jorge Dillon» *ABC* (2-III-1961). Monleón, José: «Del Teatro de Cámara al Teatro Independiente», *Primer Acto*, 123 y 124, (1970) pp.8-14. Monleón, José: «Epitafio para Jorge Dillon de John Osborne», *Primer Acto*, 20, (1961), pp. 47-48. Pemán, Jose María*:* «Hasta Aquí…» *ABC* (14-10-1970). Expediente de Censura n. 191-58 Caja 71704, topogr.: 83/51. Pérez Gallego, Cándido: *Literatura y Rebeldía en la Inglaterra Actual*, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid, 1968, 1. Prego, Adolfo: «Crítica Teatral» *Blanco y Negro*, *ABC* (21-III-1959) p. 85. Programa Estudio 1 de TVE: *Mirando hacia atrás con ira*, 5 de Marzo de 1974.). Quinto, José María de: «Dido y Josefina Sánchez Pedreño» *ADE Teatro,* p. 84. Madrid: enero-marzo 2001, pp77-78. Quinto, José María de: «Mirando Hacia atrás con ira», *Primer Acto* 7, (1959), pp.1-3. Tynan, Kenneth: «El movimiento de los jóvenes iracundos», Primer Acto 79, (1966), pp.13-17.

Resumen en Español

REFERENCIAS SOCIOLÓGICAS Y CULTURALES EN LA OBRA DE JOHN OSBORNE

La presente tesis doctoral tiene por objeto el estudio crítico-literario de la obra del escritor y dramaturgo británico John Osborne (1929-1994) en su contexto histórico-social y político. Una aproximación analítica de carácter cultural – materialista a la obra de Osborne, siguiendo para ello los estudios critico-literarios reflejados por el crítico literario Alan Sinfield en su libro *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (2004), acerca al lector al contexto histórico-sociales y político en el que la obra de Osborne fue recibida por lectores y público en general (incluida la crítica especializada). El termino cultural-materialista fue utilizado por R. Williams en su libro *Marxism and Literature,* texto clave, así como la obra de Stuart Hall y del Círculo de Estudios Culturales de Birmingham que dirigió, llegando a una mejor comprensión de cómo han influido las autoridades políticas en la producción y recepción de obras literarias. El objetivo general de esta tesis es proporcionar al lector un conocimiento global de las circunstancias socio-políticas y culturales en las que se circunscriben las obras de John Osborne ofreciendo una perspectiva nueva, original e incluso sorprendente del propio autor así como sus implicaciones, para llegar a una mejor comprensión del teatro británico en la primera década del nuevo milenio.

Los manuales de Historia de la Literatura Británica contemplan el año 1956 como la fecha que marca el comienzo de una nueva etapa del teatro británico del periodo de posguerra. Y la razón de esto es la puesta en escena de la obra *Mirando Hacia Atrás con Ira* en mayo de ese mismo año. El año 1956 es clave por la coincidencia de su estreno con el comienzo de la Crisis de Suez unas semanas más tarde. La obra de Osborne fue importante por lo que supuso para el joven y novato Royal Court Theatre, situándolo en el panorama contemporáneo del teatro subvencionado de posguerra. En torno a esta fecha Bertolt Bretch visita Gran Bretaña por primera vez, estimulando el interés y la controversia en torno al género dramático en los círculos literarios de la época.

La metodología seguida ha consistido en combinar elementos ya conocidos para llegar a algo nuevo, es decir, encapsulando elementos sociales y culturales encontrados en las obras del dramaturgo e interpretando su significado. El periodo estudiado abarca

desde el surgimiento del movimiento literario de los jóvenes iracundos británicos, en la década de los 50, hasta la aparición a mediados de los años 90 de una tendencia del teatro británico contemporáneo, el provocador y descarado "in-yer-face theatre", donde escritores vanguardistas presentaban la realidad social sobre el escenario. Este término fue acuñado por Aleks Sierz. El teatro ha reflejado mejor que la novela esa fase de desajuste de unas jóvenes generaciones inglesas que, disconformes con la sociedad, consideran que ninguna doctrina política pudiera ser cauce apto para sus afanes.

En las décadas de 1960 y 70 se produjeron cambios en todas las esferas del conocimiento y estos cambios aparecen reflejados en sus obras. El teatro estaba en constante transformación, explorando sus propios límites y rechazando las convenciones del teatro burgués. Desde mediados de los 60 hasta los 70 John Osborne fue considerado uno de los dramaturgos británicos vivos más importante del momento. Este reconocimiento no estuvo basado en su espíritu joven e innovador, sino en su probada habilidad técnica, estilística e intelectual.

El estudio del autor tiene que ir irremediablemente unido a su obra, del mismo modo que el estudio de los acontecimientos sociales y culturales que afectaron a Gran Bretaña y al resto del mundo forma el contexto de su obra. Desde el movimiento de los Jóvenes Iracundos en la década de los 50 hasta el denominado in-yer-face de mediados de la década de 1990 hubo un sentimiento de vanguardia entre la nueva generación de artistas que escribían y representaban la realidad social en el escenario.

Proponemos los siguientes objetivos específicos a tener en cuenta para el desarrollo de esta tesis. En primer lugar, realizar un estudio del significado de las obras dramáticas de Osborne, para entender la cultura dominante y subordinada de la historia británica durante ese periodo. A continuación, establecer una relación entre ambas culturas dentro de los estudios literarios para llegar a una comprensión de la emergente cultura juvenil y su influencia en la sociedad a través del drama. Consideramos de importancia estudiar la correlación, e incluso la coalescencia de las palabras con la acción, que es lo que más claramente distingue el teatro de la literatura, por lo que un estudio del uso del lenguaje en la obra de Osborne es el cauce adecuado para una mejor apreciación crítica de su trabajo. Del mismo modo, temas como el racismo, sexismo y homofobia, el alcance de las disidencias alternativas y las formas en que el sistema tiende a acomodar o repeler diversas corrientes culturales así como sus implicaciones, son tratados en este trabajo. Otros temas como el género y la raza, la cultura y el lenguaje que han sido abordados por académicos literarios y que han tratado sobre la

naturaleza y el significado del proyecto imperialista, son de relevancia. Hacer un estudio de la relación entre teatro e identidad para explicar el carácter político de las obras de Osborne es otro objetivo a tener en cuenta. Enfocar el controvertido tema de "la ira" en lo que más tarde se denominará política identitaria en el contexto de "New Writing" en el teatro británico, así como la manera en que esta forma de expresión cuestionó la realidad de la experiencia migratoria en Gran Bretaña.

La metodología de trabajo seguida en esta tesis ha consistido en la elaboración de un corpus literario a partir de la lectura crítica y comparativa de las obras primarias del autor así como de las obras secundarias y que en su conjunto han hecho posible la elaboración de la tesis. El uso de otros recursos como páginas web, Theatre desk y The Andy gram.com, han resultado de gran ayuda, ya que su amplia difusión en la red, hace que la información llegue a un público más numeroso que con el uso de los recursos tradicionales, haciendo de este modo más amplia su difusión. El estudio del autor no puede separarse de su trabajo, del mismo modo que el estudio de los acontecimientos sociales y culturales que afectan a Gran Bretaña y al resto del mundo, forman el contexto de su obra artística. De esta manera, una búsqueda en la relación entre su trabajo y la dimensión socio-política de su obra es nuestro objeto general de estudio desafiando, de este modo, la propia percepción social en las primeras décadas del siglo veintiuno, en las que aún se reconoce su presencia y su voz en la escena internacional.

La razón de situar el tema de la educación en el primer capítulo es para reconocer su relevancia como agente de cambio social en la construcción de una moderna sociedad en la Gran Bretaña de posguerra. De este modo, cabe formular la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo se ha dirigido el mensaje de cambio social a través del tema educativo y de qué modo ha quedado reflejado en las siguientes obras dramáticas*: Mirando hacia atrás* con Ira (1956), *El Animador* (1957) y *Prueba Inadmisible* (1964)?

El segundo capítulo versa a acerca del tema político. Cabe destacar el surgimiento de una "Nueva Izquierda" compuesta por intelectuales jóvenes que forman parte de una contracultura y que analizan las ansiedades y las confusiones encontradas en el texto literario, en función de su ideología. Cabe preguntarse lo siguiente: ¿Podemos calificar como teatro político el teatro de John Osborne? ¿Qué significa Teatro Político? Desde luego, el teatro que inauguró Osborne estaba cargado de tintes de disidencia siendo un teatro contestatario de las prácticas hegemónicas anteriores, destruyendo mitos tales como que el teatro tenía que ser gentil, que los héroes

representados eran seres estoicos y que el público quería que los personajes fueran amables para poder identificarse con ellos.

El tercer capítulo estudia desde la pragmática la relación marital de los protagonistas Jimmy y Alison en la obra *Mirando Hacia Atrás con Ira*, atrapados dentro de un círculo de ira y desesperación. Esta interpretación desde una perspectiva pragmática se acerca más a la obra que Osborne realmente escribió que otra lectura crítica desde el punto de vista convencional, siempre cargada de connotaciones moralistas. 'El conflicto en la pareja no tiene claros vencedores ni vencidos', interpretación social dada por psiquiatras de los años 1960 como una expresión de carácter privado de la condición de desamparo del individuo.

El cuarto capítulo versa sobre la importancia del lenguaje. Lo más relevante en este sentido es comprobar cómo *Mirando Hacia Atrás con Ira* se establece de manera firme en el canon literario como la obra que marcó la transición hacia el uso de un lenguaje claro y directo en la escena británica de posguerra. Algunos directores artísticos han tenido ocasión de ver cómo la energía de esta obra teatral se debe fundamentalmente a la ambigüedad de su lenguaje y no a las actitudes arrogantes del protagonista Jimmy Porter.

El capítulo quinto se centra en el tema de la identidad cultural. Las imágenes que tienen que ver con la identidad cultural son siempre una declaración política y la política busca cambios. Pero para cambiar algo hay que imaginarlo de manera diferente a la que en ese momento tiene. Los dramaturgos re-escriben aspectos de la nación cuando crean metáforas que recrean la realidad de manera seria o humorística, o ambas a la vez. Ellos no se consideran, como declaró Osborne, responsables políticos.

El presente es una etapa de consumismo, en contraste con los años de austeridad de la posguerra en la que estaban racionados muchos de los productos de primera necesidad. Sin embargo y a pesar de los cambios a lo largo de estas últimas décadas, los británicos que aparecen representados en escena contienen los mismos rasgos fundamentales, debido a que las contradicciones que se dan en la sociedad y con las que conviven a diario sufren cambios de manera paulatina: tradición versus modernidad, jerarquía social versus movilidad social, segregación versus asimilación, conservadurismo versus reformas e innovación.

Como conclusión final cabe subrayar tres rasgos en la obra de Osborne: la evidente sinceridad que se desprende de sus palabras, el uso innovador del lenguaje y un

fino arte escénico. Estos rasgos han sido ilustrados con numerosos ejemplos tomados de diversas obras a lo largo de esta tesis, tanto del propio autor como de otros.

Habiéndose cumplido los objetivos propuestos para esta tesis el resultado final ha sido la propia tesis doctoral, consistente en un estudio de carácter informativo sobre la dimensión social y cultural de la obra de John Osborne. Se incluye en la tesis a modo de apéndice (4), un artículo que es en una entrada para un diccionario de Literatura Comparada en fase de preparación, titulado "La Recepción de John Osborne en España", y que forma parte de un proyecto de investigación del Instituto del Teatro de Madrid, ITEM: El teatro extranjero en la escena madrileña (1975-2005): recepción y puesta en escena. Otra actividad realizada a lo largo del periodo de investigación ha consistido en la elaboración de un ensayo para la presentación de una charla titulada: Una Aproximación Pragmática a la Obra de Teatro *Mirando hacia atrás con Ira* de John Osborne (1956), como parte de las X Jornadas de Estudios de la Mujer celebradas en la Universidad Complutense en el año 2012.

Summary in English

TITLE OF THE DISSERTATION: THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE WORKS OF JOHN OSBORNE

This dissertation aims to investigate the historical, social and political circumstances in which John Osborne's works were produced, circulated and then received by audience and readers. Most histories of postwar British drama are in fact histories of British drama since 1956. The main reason for this choice is the première of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* in May of that same year. 1956 is a key date for a number of reasons: The near coincidence of the play's première and the start of the Suez Crisis a few weeks later. Osborne's play was an important event to the neophite Royal Court Theatre, placing it in the larger history of public funded theatre in postwar Britain. In addition and in this same year, Bertolt Bretch's Berliner Ensemble visited Britain for the first time, stimulating interest and controversy in theatre literary circles.

The central aim of this dissertation is to provide the reader with a general knowledge of the sociological and cultural background of the works of John Osborne and its implications for a better understanding of the theatre in Britain during the first

decade of the new millennium. A cultural-materialist critical approach, a term coined by Raymond Williams in his book *Marxism and Literature* (1977) has been followed in the elaboration of this dissertation. In this way, Osborne's work has been analyzed in its original context, challenging and informing about the perception of ourselves.

This is Raymond Williams' term, his *Marxism and Literature*[538] a key text, as well as the work of Stuart Hall and the whole Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies which he directed and which are of equal importance. Having left apart our musings about the subject, we have followed the method of combining those elements already known in such a way that the result is something new, that is, by encapsulating all the social and cultural elements found in the works of Osborne and looking at their significance. Metaphorically speaking it reads as "by pouring old wine into new Wineskins."[my translation]

The chief aim is that of making accessible information and ideas that will enable the reader to become better acquainted with the nature of the world inhabited by John Osborne, offering a new, original and often surprising perspective of him. The period covering the decades of the1950's/60's and the 70's was one in British history where radical changes in all fields of knowledge were taking place and affecting, in one way or another, the cultural climate of the time. In his plays, references are made to the problems which beset British society in those years: The precariousness of Britain's apparent economic recovery, the threat to the provision of social needs, the moral decline of the Labour government, the so called welfare state, the Noting Hill Race Riots of 1958, political issues such as the Suez crisis, the Hungarian revolt and the Prague Spring in 1968 were of the most concern. Theatre of the late sixties and seventies was in constant upheaval, exploring its own limits and challenging what "bourgeois" theatre had taken all too granted. From the mid-sixties to early seventies Osborne was widely regarded as one of the most important British playwrights alive, a recognition no longer based on novelty or youthful charm but on proven technical, stylistic, and intellectual ability.

The study of the author is bound to his work, in as much as the study of the social and cultural upheavals affecting Britain and the rest of the world form the context of his work. From the Angry Young Men of the 1950's to the in-yer-face playwrights of the mid 1990's, there was a sense of a vanguard breaking through and riding a new

[538] Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and Literature.* Oxford University Press.

wave of artists who were writing and presenting the social reality on stage. It will be posited that an exploration of the significance of the dramas of Osborne on understanding the dominant and subordinate cultures of this time in British history is highly relevant. The relationship between both cultures will be established within the cultural studies tradition leading to an understanding of the emergence of youth subcultures and their meaning through drama. Considering that the correlation or even the coalescence of words and action is what most clearly distinguishes theatre from literature, a study of the use of language in Osborne's drama will be considered for a critical appreciation of his work. The implications of racism, sexism and homophobia, the scope for subaltern resistance and the ways through which the system tends to accommodate or repel diverse kinds of dissidence are issues discussed in the body of this work. The work on gender and race, culture and language that has been undertaken by literary scholars, telling us things about the nature and meaning of the imperial enterprise, will be accounted for as well. The study of the relationship of theatre and identity will suggest to what extent Osborne's plays were a form of political expression. The controversial issue of 'Anger' is focused upon in the light of what later came to be known as identity politics in the context of new writing in British drama. At the same time, new writing questioned the reality of the immigration experience in Britain.

The methodology used in this compelling project consists in an in depth reading of the works of John Osborne and of the books which review them and have helped in the elaboration of this dissertation. It eventfully developed into a corpus of literary analysis worth considering in a better understanding of the writer and the characters created by him. Web sites such as Theatre Desk and THEANDYGRAM.COM have proved to be very helpful audio-visual resources for the elaboration of this study, bringing the magic of the arts to a wider audience. The study of the author cannot be separated from that of his work, in as much as the study of the social and cultural upheavals affecting Britain and the rest of the world, form the context where Osborne's work arose. Thus, a searching inquiry into the relationship between his work and the social and cultural dimension is our object of study since its full and specific original context challenges and informs the perception of ourselves in the starting decades of the twenty-first century.

Education (chapter 1): The reason for placing the issue of education first is mainly to acknowledge its relevance in the construction of a modern society in post-WW II Britain and thus as agent and vehicle of that change. A basic question addressed

is: How is the message of social mobility conveyed through the issue of education and how is it reflected in *Look Back* (1956), *The Entertainer* (1957) and *Inadmissible* (1964)?

Politics (chapter 2): It deals with the emergence of the New Left as a kind of subculture which appropriated what they were most interesting in from a text, and went on to analyze the anxieties and confusions that informed it. To what extent can we talk about Osborne's plays as political theatre? And what does political theatre mean? The new type of theatre which John Osborne inaugurated represented a form of dissidence since it contested hegemonic previous practices and came to destroy the following inhibiting myths: that the theatre had to be genteel, that heroes were stoical and lofty creatures and that audiences wanted nice people with whom to identify with.

Human relations (chapter 3): In *Look Back* the couple (Jimmy Porter and Alison) is engaged in a double-binding relationship drawing a circle of anger and despair. A reading of the play from a pragmatic approach is much nearer to the play Osborne wrote than a conventional or gendered reading which contains moralistic connotations. It is a conflict without solution and without clear winners or losers singled out by politically inspired anti-psychiatrists in the sixties as the private expression of the prevailing social condition of futility and helplessness. At the time of its première such relationships would come to symbolize the ways in which the welfare state had perfected its subtle, treacherous forms of control over the individuals.

Language (chapter 4): What becomes more relevant in *Look Back* (1956) is in having established itself in a firm way in the canon, marking the transition toward increased directness in the language of the post-war British stage. Some directors have been aware of the fact that the play's irresistible energy is due to the fundamental and lastingly ambiguity of its language and not by Jimmy's arrogant certainties.

Cultural identity (chapter 5): Images of national identity are always a political statement, and politics is about changing things. But to change anything you have to imagine it differently. Thus, playwrights rewrite the nation when they come up with metaphors which imagine reality in a different way, whether deadly serious or wryly funny (or both). After all, they are not (as Osborne remarked) policy makers.

The present (2015) is a time of seemingly unlimited consumer choice, in contrast to the 1950's which began with post-war food rationing still in place. Nevertheless and despite all the changes going on around, Britons shown on stage have remained the same and this is because the contradictions they live with are slow to change: tradition

versus modernity, class divisions versus mobility, segregation versus assimilation, conservatism versus reform.

The conclusions we have drawn from the analysis, in this dissertation, consider the three most outstanding qualities of Osborne's work to be the following ones: sincerity, an innovative use of the English language and a fine stagecraft. They have been illustrated with countless examples found in Osborne's writing and have been compared to other instances by other playwrights.

The outcome of this research has been a very positive one. Having accomplished the aims proposed in this dissertation it has thus resulted in a very informative study thoroughly undergone after a precise critical appreciation of Osborne's work in its social and cultural dimension. Appendix 4 is a paper titled "La Recepción de Osborne en España" written as an entry for a dictionary, *Diccionario de Literatura Comparada*, and as part of a research Project under the heading, Proyecto ITEM (Instituto del Teatro de Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid): El teatro extranjero en la escena madrileña (1975-2005): recepción y puesta en escena. Another activity related with my research has been the elaboration of a paper as part of an oral exposition about the following subject matter: X Conference on Women's Studies (Madrid). The title of the paper is: "A Pragmatic Approach to John Osborne´s "*Look Back in Anger*: The Logic of Anger in Despair."

Primary Sources

Agbaje, B. (2010). *off the endz.* London: Bloomsbury, Methuen drama.

Allsop, K. (1958). The Emotionalist. In K. Allsop, *The Angry Decade A Survey of the Cultural Revolt of the Nineteen-Fifties* (pp. 96-147). London: Peter Owen.

Alvarez, A. (1959). The Antiestablishment Drama. *Partisan Review,* 26.

Amory, M. (1974). Jester Flees the Court. *Sunday Times Magazine,* 34.

Anderson, P. (1992). *English Questions.* London.

Anderson, Perry. "The Left in the Fifties." *New Left Review* 29 (1965).

Arnold, M. (1962). *Lectures and Essays in Criticism.* Michigan: R.H. Super.

Balakian, N. (1959). The Flight From Innocence: England's Newest Literary Generation. *Books Abroad , 33* (3), 261-270.

Banerjee, A. (1993). A Modern Hamlet: Jimmy Porter in Look Back in Anger. *Hamlet Studies* (15), 81-92.

Banham, M. (1969). *Osborne.* Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd Ltd.

Barlett, Mike. *Cock.* London : Methuen Drama, 2009, p.10.

Barnes, J. (1994, August 22-29). The Modernizer. *The New Yorker* , 70.

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind: Collected Essays in Antropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology.* New York: Paladin Granada.

Beckett, S. (2011). *Waiting for Godot.* Grove Press.

Bédàrida, F. (1991). *A Social History of Britain 1851-1990.* Routledge.

Berkowitz, L. (1969). *Roots of Aggression: A Re-examination of the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis.* New York: Atherton.

Bierhaus, E. G. (1976). No World of its Own: Look Back in Anger Twenty Years Later. *Modern Drama , XIX* (1).

Billington, M. (1973). A Patriot for Me at the Waldorf Palace. *The Manchester Guardian,* p. 24.

Billington, M. (2007). *State of the Nation. British Theatre since 1945.* London: Faber and Faber.

Blamires, H. (1979). *A Short History of English Literature.* London: Methuen.

Bode, C. (1959). The Redbrick Cinderellas. *College English, 20* (7), 331-337.

Bolt, R. (1960). *A Man For All Seasons.* London: Heinemann.

Bolton, J. (2010). Blasphemy in John Osborne's A Subject of Scandal and Concern and Luther. *Modern Drama, 53* (1).

Brenton, H. (1981). *Romans in Britain.* London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

Briefing Reforming education. (17 de September de 2011). *The Economist*, págs. 19-22.

Brien, A. (21 de March de 1965). Osborne Sets his Seal. *The Sunday Telegraph*.

Brown, G. (10 de June de 1992). Beside Himself. *Independent* .

Bryden, R. (18 de September de 1964). Everyosborne: Inadmissible Evidence. English Stage Company. *New Statesman*.

Buffini, M. (2006). *Plays One. Blavatsky's Tower; Gabriel; Silence; Loveplay*. London: Faber.

Burgess, R. G. (1984). Aspects of Education in postwar Britain. In J. Obelvekich, & P. Catterall, *Understanding Postwar British Society* (p. 128). London and New York.

Buruma, I. (1994). *Action Anglaise.* The New York Review of Books.

Buse, P. (2001). Drama + Theory: Critical Approaches to Modern British Drama. Manshester: Manshester University Press.

Calder, A. (1969). *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945.* New York.

Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Campaign_for_Nuclear_Disarmament.

Cannadine, D. (2002). *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carter, A. (1969). *John Osborne.* Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd.

Coleman, T. (1971, August). Osborne Without Anger. *The Guardian*.

Clurman, Harold. "The World of John Osborne." *Observer* (1959).

Committee on Higher Education (1963). *Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins.* Retrieved December 21, 2011, from http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/robbins/robbins1963.html

Common, J. (1990). *Kiddard's Luck.* Bloodaxe Ltd.

Conesa, L. (7 de 7 de 1974). Extracto de un reportaje sobre Julio Navarro. *La Verdad* .

Corrigan, R. W. (1968). *The New Theatre Europe 3.* New York: Dell Publishing Company.

De Jongh, N. (2000). *Politics, Prudery and Perversions: The Censoring of the English Stage 1901-1968*. London: Methuen.

Dempsey, D. (1957). Most Angry Fella. *The New York Times Magazine* (VI), 22, 25-27.

Denison, P. D. (1997). *John Osborne: A Casebook.* New York and London: Garland Publishing,Inc.

Devlin, P. (June, 1964). John Osborne. *Vogue*.

Eliot, T. S. (1991). *Selected Essays 1917-1932.* London: Faber and Faber.

Eliot, T. S. (1961). *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism.* USA: President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Erikson, E. H. (1958). *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History.* New York: The Norton Library United States.

Espasa, C. (1919). *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (Vol. 40). Madrid: Espasa Calpe S.A.

Eyre, R. (1994). *Utopia & Other Places.* Vintage.

Fairlie, H. (1955). Political Commentary. *The Spectator*.

Ferrar, H. (1973). *John Osborne.* New York and London: Columbia University Press.

Fiedler A, L. (1958, January). The Un-Angry Young Men. America's Post-War Generation. 4-9.

Findlater, R. (1957, September 29). The Angry Young Man. *New York Times* (II), pp. 1-6.

Findlater, R. (1981). On the Writer's Side In Conversation With Richard Findlater. In R. Findlater, *At The Royal Court: 25 Years of the English Stage Company* (pp. 19-26). Derbyshire.

Gilleman, L. (2008). From Coward and Rattigan to Osborne: Or the Enduring Importance of Look Back in Anger. *Modern Drama, 51*(1), 104-25.

Gilleman, L. (2002). *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist.* New York and London: Routledge.

Gilleman, L. (2011). *Review of a draft on chapter 1.* Academic advice, Department of English/ Smith College, Northampton MA.

Gilleman, L. (1997). The Logic of Anger and Despair: A Pragmatic Approach to Look Back in Anger. In P. D. Denison, *John Osborne: A Casebook* (pp. 71-90). New York and London.

Goldman, Lisa, et al. "Debate: Political Theatre." *Red Room debate on political theatre.* Dominic Cavendish. 26 September 2003.

Gordón, J. (1 de 3 de 1961). Autocrítica. *ABC* .

Gorer, G. (1957). The Perils of Hypergamy. *The New Statement and Nation , 53*.

Grasso, L. M. (2002). *The Artistry of Anger. Black and White Women's Literature in America 1820-1860.* North Carolina Press.

Greig, D. Rough Theatre. In R. (eds) D'Monté, & S. Graham, *Cool Britannia* (pp. 208-21).

Gupta, T. (2002). *Sanctuary.* London: Oberon.

Hague, A. (1986). Picaresque Structure and the Angry Young Novel. In A. Hague, *Twentieth-Century Literature* (Vol. 4, pp. 209-220). IIUC Studies.

Hall, L. (2000). *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880.* Basingtoke.

Hall, W. (1994). *The Long and the Short and the Tall.* Halley Court Jordan Hill Oxford OX 2 8E: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Halsey, A. H. (1980). *Origins and Destinations: Family, Class and Education in Modern Britain.* Oxford University Press.

Hansberry, L. (1995). *A Raisin in the Sun.* Modern Library.

Harwood, Ronald. *An English Tragedy*. London: Faber, 2008, p.62-3.

Hayman, R. (1979). *British Theatre Since 1955: A Reassessment.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture, the Meaning of Style.* London: Methuen & CO LTD.

Heilpern, J. (2006). *John Osborne: a Patriot for Me.* London: Chatto & Windus.

Heilpern, J. (2008). *John Osborne: The Many Lives of the Angry Young Man.* Vintage Series.

Hemingway, E. (1926). *The Sun Also Rises.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Hill, J. (1986). *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963.* London: British Film Institute.

Hobson, H. (1958). *"Introduction", International Theatre Annual.* (H. Hobson, Ed.) Garden City New York: Doubleday.

Hobson, H. (1984). *Theatre in Britain: A Personal View.* Oxford: Phaidon.

Hoggart, R. (1992). *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments.* London: Penguin.

Hollis, C. (1957). Keeping Up With the Rices. *Spectator* (CXCIX), 504-505.

Hope, A. (1968). *Favourite Fairy Tales.* J Salmon.

Hopkins, H. (1963). *The New Look: A Social History of the Forties and Fifties in Britain.* London: Secker and Wanburg.

Hunt, Albert. "Only a Soft-Centred Left." *Encore* (1961).

Ibsen, H. (2014). *A Doll's House.* New york: Global Classics.

Jackson, B., & Marsden, D. (1962). *Education and the Working Class.* London: Routledge.

Johnson, R. (1986). What is Cultural Studies Anyway? *Social Text* (16), 38-80.

Johnston, J. H. (1964). *English Poetry of the First World War.* Princeton.

Jowell, T. (2004). *Government and the Value of Culture.* IFACCA. United Kingdom.

Kneale, N., Osborne, J. (Writers), & Richardson, T. (Director). (1959). *Look Back in Anger* [Motion Picture].

Knight, W. G. (1963). The Kitchen Sink; On Recent Developments in Drama. *Encounter: Literature, Arts Current Affairs , 22* (6), 48-54.

Knott, A. (2011, June 5). «Re:From Amanda Knott creative cow Look Back in Anger.» *Email to Maria del Mar Vega.*

Koeniig, R. (2002, September 4). What's Not on Stage. *Independent* .

Kynaston, D. (2007). *Austerity Britain 1945-1951.* London: Bloomsbury.

Kynaston, D. (2009). *Family Britain 1951-1957.* New York: Walker.

Lacan, J. (1977). The Signification of the Phallus, 1958. In A. Sheridan, & A. Sheridan (Ed.), *Ecrits: A Selection* (pp. 280-291). New York: Norton.

Lacey, S. (1995). *British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in its Context 1956-1965.* London and New York: Routledge.

Lacey, S. (2006). The Moment of Look Back in Anger and Post-War Cultural History. *New Historiographies of Post-War British Theatre*. FIRT/IFTR-SIBMAS Bulletin 2006 Volume 1.

Langhamer, Claire. "The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain." *Journal of Contemporary History* 40.2 (2005): 341-362.

Larkin, P. (1964). *Jill.* London: Faber.

Larkin, P. (1955). *The Less Deceived.* London: Marvell Press.

Lehman, J. (1957). The Writer in His Age. *London Magazine, 4* (5), 38.

Lerner, H. (1989). *The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Courageous Acts of Change in Key Relationships.* William Morrow Paperbacks.

Lessing, D. (1969). *The Four Gated City.* New York: Koopf.

Lessing, D., Kops, B., & Wesker, A. (1968). *Three plays: Each his own Wilderness, The Hamlet of Stepney Green, Chicken Soup with Barley.* Hamondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin plays New English Dramatists.

Lewis, P. (21 de September de 1964). Enter the Rebel Who Slams Doors on Success. *Daily Mail*.

Luckhurst, M. (2006). *Blackwells Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama (1850-2005).* Oxford: Blackwells.

Lukács, G. (1964). “Theatre and Environment”. *The Times Literary Supplement* (23), 347.

Lumley, F. (1967). *New Trends in 20th Century Drama.* London.

MacInnes, C. (1980). *Absolute Beginners.* London: Allison and Busby.

Maclnnes, C. (1957). *City of Spades.* London: Mac Gibbon & Kee.

MacInnes, C. (1958, February). Pop Songs and Teenagers. *The Twentieth Century*.

Marquerie, A. (2 de Marzo de 1961). Estreno de Epitáfio para Jorge Dillon. *ABC* .

Marwick, A. (1982). *British Society Since 1945.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1942). *Selected Correspondence 1846-1895.* New York: Dora Torr.

Maschler, T. (1957). *Declaration.* London: Mac Gibbon & Kee.

Maude, A., & Lewis, R. (1949). *The English Middle Classes.* Plymouth: Phoenix House Limited.

McCarthy, M. (1965, July 4). Verdict on Osborne. *The Observer*, 17.

Miliband, R. (1961). *Parlamentary Socialism.* Allen and Unwin.

Milne, T. (1966, Nov/Dic). Luther And The Devils. *New Left Review* , 55-58.

Monleón, J. (1970). Del Teatro de Cámara al Teatro Independente. *Primer Acto 123-124* , 8-14.

Monleón, J. (1964). El Teatro que parece nuestro. En F. M. Lorda Alaiz, *Teatro Inglés: de Osborne hasta ahora* (pág. 72). Madrid: Taurus.

Monleón, J. (1961). Epitafio para Jorge Dillon de John Osborne. *Primer Acto* (20), 47-48.

Morris, M. (1966). *William Morris: Writer. Socialist* (Vol. 2). Oxford.

Morrison, R. (1994, Decenber 31). Obituary. John Osborne. *Times* .

Musgrave, F. (1974). *Ecstasy and Holiness: Counter Culture and the Open Society.* London: Methuen.

Ngai, S. (2005). *Ugly Feelings.* USA: Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.

Obelkevich, J., & Catterall, P. (1994). *Understanding post-war British Society.* London and New York: Routledge.

Odets, C. (1994). *Waiting for Lefty and other Plays.* New York: Grove Press.

Osborne, J. (1981). *A Better Class of Person: An Autobiography. 1929-1956.* London and Boston: Faber.

Osborne, J. (1985). *A Better Class of Person and God Rot Tunbridge Wells.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1966). *A Bond Honoured. A Play. From Lope de Vega.* Faber&Faber.

Osborne, J. (1961, August 18). A Letter to My Fellow Countrymen. *Tribune* , 193-94.

Osborne, J. (1965). *A Patriot for Me.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1994). *Almost a Gentleman: An Autobiography 1955-1966.* London and Boston: Faber.

Osborne, J. (2009). *Before Anger. Two Early Plays: The "Devil Inside Him" and "Personal Enemy".* (J. Andrews, Ed.) Osborne Modern Play Wrights.

Osborne, J. (1994). *Damn You England: Collected Prose.* London and Boston: Faber.

Osborne, J. (1991). *Déjàvu.* London: Faber.

Osborne, J. (1960). *El animador* (Col. Teatro ed., Vol. 6). (C. H.Paqchero, & J. C. Pallerini, Trads.) Sur.

Osborne, J., Wood, C. (Writers), & Palmer, T. (Director). (1995). Alexander Metodiev, J. W. (Producer), *England, My England* [Motion Picture]. Reino Unido.

Osborne, J. (1957). Fighting Talk. *Reynold News*.

Osborne, J. (1973). *Four Plays: West of Suez; A Patriot for Me; Time Present; The Hotel in Amsterdam.* New York: Dold, Mead.

Osborne, J. (1965). *Inadmissible Evidence.* New York: Grove Press.

Osborne, J. (1968, June 30). Interview with John Osborne. (K. Tynan, Interviewer)

Osborne, J. (1968, July 07). Interview with John Osborne. (K. Tynan, Interviewer)

Osborne, J. (1978). *Look Back in Anger.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1957 First edition, first printing ed.). *Look Back in Anger, A Play in Three Acts.* London: Evans Brothers.

Osborne, J. (1961). *Luther.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1966). On Critics and Criticism. *The Sunday Telegraph* .

Osborne, J. (1967, October 14). On the Thesis Business and the Seekers after the Bare Approximate... *The Times*, 20.

Osborne, J. (1963). *Plays for England:The Blood of the Bambergs and Under Plain Cover*. London: Evans Brothers Limited.

Osborne, J. (1996). *Plays One: Look Back in Anger, Epitaph for George Dillon, The World of Paul Slickey, Déjà vu.* London: Faber.

Osborne, J. (1960). *Recordando con ira.* (V. Ocampo, Trad.) Buenos Aires: Sur.

Osborne, J. (n.d.). Sex and Failure. Review of Tennesse Willians's Four Plays, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and Baby Doll. *The Observer*.

Osborne, J. (1967). Supporting the Cause. *Encounter*.

Osborne, J. (1961). That Awful Museum. *Twentieth Century , 169*, 212-16.

Osborne, J. (1957). *The Entertainer.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1959). *The World of Paul Slickey: A Comedy of Manners with Music.* London: Faber.

Osborne, J. (1957). They Call it Cricket. *Declaration*, 61-84.

Osborne, J. (1973). *West of Suez, A Patriot for Me, Time Present, The Hotel in Amsterdam.* New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company.

Patterson, M. (2003). *Strategies of Political Theatre: Postwar British Playwrights.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pemán, J. M. (14 de 10 de 1970). Hasta Aquí... *ABC*.

Perez Gallego, C. (1968). *Literatura y Rebeldía en la Inglaterra Actual: "Los Angry Young Men" Un Movimiento Social de los Años Cincuenta.* Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

Pfister, M. (1981). Music Hall und Modernes Drama: Populäre Komik als Mediun und Thema im Zeitgenössischen englischen Theater. *Anglistendag 1980*, 127.

Pierson, S. (1973). *Marxism and the Origen of British Socialism: The Struggle for a New Consciousness.* New York: Corner University Press.

Ponting, C. (1989). *Breach of Promise: Labour in Power 1964-1970.* London.

Potter, D. (1967). *Stand Up, Nigel Barton (1965), in The Nigel Barton Plays.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Prego, A. (21 de Marzo de 1959). Crítica Teatral. *ABC, Blanco y Negro*, pág. 85.

Quinto, J. M. (enero-marzo de 2001). Dido y Josefina Sanchez Pedreño. *ADE Teatro*, 77-78.

Quinto, J. M. (1959). Mirando Hacia Atrás con Ira. *Primer Acto* (7), 1-3.

Rattigan, T. (1955). *Separate Tables.* Hamish Hamilton.

Ravenhill, M. (1996). *Shopping and Fucking.* London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

Rebellato, D. (1999). *1956 and All That.* London: Routledge.

Rhys, M. (Winter de 2012). A Look at Acting. (T. Sod, Entrevistador) Education Department at Roundabout Theatre Company.

Rickson, I. (1998, September 20 Sunday). *Independent on Sunday*.

Ritchie, H. (1988). *Success Stories: Literature and the Media in England 1950-1959.* London and Boston: Faber.

Rusinko, S. (1989). *British Drama 1950 to the Present: A Critical History.* Boston.

Russell Taylor, J. (1969). *Anger and After: A Guide to the New British Drama.* London: Eyre Methuen.

Russell Taylor, J. (1968). *John Osborne: Look Back in Anger: A Casebook.* London: Macmillan.

Sauter, W. (2000). *The Theatrical Event: Dynamic of Performance and Perception.* Iowa: U of Iowa.

Schlüssel, A. (2005). Making a Political Statement or Refusing to Grow Up, Reflections on the Situation of the Academic Youth in Postwar British Literature. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis , 65* (4).

Shakespeare, W. (1992). *Hamlet.* (S. Weller, Ed.) Dover-Thrift-Editions.

Shaw, B. (1921). Back to Methuselah. A Metabiological Pentateuch. *The Project Gutemberg eBook* .

Shaw, B. (2007). *Heartbreak House.* Bibliobazaar.

Shaw, B. (2001). *Saint Joan.* Penguin Classics.

Shaw, G. B. (1956). *Man and Superman: a comedy and a philosophy.* London: Longman.

Sierz, A. (2011, March 22). Email to Maria del Mar Vega: Spanish Research Student on John Osborne. London.

Sierz, A. (n.d.). *In-Yer-Face Theatre.* Retrieved 12 03, 2010, from http://www.inyerfacetheatre.com/archive2.html

Sierz, A. (2010, February 21). *the artsdesk.com*. Retrieved February 26, 2011, from http://www.theartsdesk.com/theatre/endz-royal-court-theatre

Sierz, A. (2012, February 8). *theartsdesk.com.* Retrieved from Sex with a Stranger, Trafalgar Studios: http://www.theartsdesk.com/theatre/sex-stranger-trafalgar-studio

Sierz, A. (1996). John Osborne and the Myth of Anger. *New Theatre Quarterly, 12*(46), pp.136-46.

Sierz, A. (2008). *John Osborne's Look Back in Anger.* London and New York: Continuum Modern Theatre Guides.

Sierz, A. (2011). *Rewriting The Nation. British Theatre Today.* London: Methuen Drama.

Sierz, A. (2009, October 24). *www.theartsdesk.com Theartsdesk Q&A:Playwright Roy Williams*. Retrieved November 10, 2012.

Simon, S. (2011). Lord of the Flies. Violent Nihilistic Youth Lay Waste To Britain's Cities. *Newsweek*, 6-9.

Sinclair, John. *Collins Cobuild. English Language Dictionary*. London and Glasgow: Collins, 1988.

Sinfield, A. (2004). *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain.* London and New York: The Athlone Press.

Sinfield, A. (1983). *Society and Literature, 1945-70.* New York: Holmes and Meier.

Strindberg, A. (1967). *Miss Julie.* (M. Meyer, Trans.) London.

Strindberg, A. (1970). *Scandinavian Studies* (Vol. 42 nº3). Published by University of Illinois Press.

Swift, J. (2007). *A Tale of a Tub.* Echo Library.

Swindells, J., & Jardine, L. (1990). *What's Left: Women in Culture and the Labour Movement.* Routledge.

Taylor, R. (1978). *Art an Enemy of the People.* Brighton: Harvester.

Thatcher, M. (1987, September 23). No such thing as society. (D. Keay, Interviewer)

The National Archives.The Barlow Report of 1946 (n.d.). Retrieved January 23, 2011, from http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/before-after-second world-war.htm

The Official King James Bible. (n.d.). Retrieved June 25, 2011, from http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/

Thiher, A. (1983). Wittgenstein, Heidegger, The Unnamable, and Some Thoughts on the Status of Voice in Fiction. In S. E. Gontarski, P. Astier, & B. Morris (Eds.), *Samuel Beckett: Humanistic Perspectives* (pp. 80-90). Ohio.

Times, T. (1957, January 25). Swete Alisoun. *The Times*, Literary Supplement.

Trussler, S. (1966). Brecht and the English Theatre. *Tulane Drama Review*, 69.

Trussler, S. (1969). *The Plays of John Osborne: An Assessment.* London: Gollancz.

Tynan, K. (1956, May 3). "The Voice of the Young" Review of Look Back in Anger. *London Observer*, p. 8.

Tynan, K. (1984). *A View of the English Stage.* London: Methuen.

Tynan, K. (1966). El Movimiento de los jóvenes iracundos. *Primer Acto* (79), 13-17.

Tynan, K. (1964). *Tynan on Theatre.* Penguin.

U.S. History. (n.d.). Retrieved from The Age of Jackson: http://www.ushistory.org/us/24a.asp

Wager, W. (1967). John Osborne. (G. Longmans, Ed.) *The Playwrights Speak* , 71-86.

Wain, John. «Prologue.» *The Listener* (1959).

Wain, J. (1962). *Strike the Father Dead.* London: Macmillan.

Wandor, M. (1987). *Look Back in Anger: Sexuality and the Family in Post-War British Drama.* London: Methuen.

Wardle, I. (1965). Looking Back on Osborne's Anger. *New Society*.

Watzlawick, P., H. Beavin, J., & Don D., J. (1968). *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies and Paradoxes.* London: Faber and Faber.

Weatherby, W. (1981). Middle Age of the Angry Young Men. *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 30-42.

Webb, S. (1983). Socialism in England. In S. Webb, *British Socialism: Socialist Thought fron the 1880's to 1960's* (p. 62). London: Anthony Wright.

Welsh, I. (Writer), & Boyle, D. (Director). (1996). *Trainspotting* [Motion Picture].

Wesker, A. (2011). *Chicken Soup with Barley* . London: Methuen Drama.

Wesker, A. (19 de 12 de 2003). Theatre Archive Project. (E. Jeffrey, Entrevistador)

Williams, R. (2013). *Advice for the Young at Heart.* London, New Delhi, New York, Sidney: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Williams, Raymond. "Drama and the Left". *Encore* (1959) Vol. 5. p.12.

Williams, R. (1968). *Drama Fron Ibsen to Brecht.* London: Chatto and Windus.

Williams, R. (1976). *Keywords*: *A Vocabulary of Culture and Society.* New York: Croom Helm Ltd.

Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and Literature.* Oxford University Press.

Williams, R. (2004). *Plays: 1 The No Boys Cricket Club, Starstruck, Lift Off.* London: Methuen Drama.

Williams, R. (1961). *The Long Revolution.* London: Chatto and Windus.

Williams, T. (2007). *A Glass Menagerie.* Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations.

Williams, T. (2009). *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

Williamson, B. (1990). *The Temper of the Times: British Society Since World War II.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Wilner, S. (2002). *Theatre, Society and the Nation: Staging American Identities.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (1980). *Culture and Value* (2 ed.). (G. v. Nyman, Ed., & P. Winch, Trans.) Chicago: U.of Chicago P.

Wittgenstein, L. (1972). *On Certainty.* (A. G.E.M., v. W. G.H., Eds., P. Denis, & A. 1. G.E.M., Trans.) New York: Harper.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations.* (G. Anscombe, Trans.) New York: Macmillan.

Wittgenstein, L. (1933). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* (C. Orgden, Trans.) London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner.

Wittgenstein, L. (1982). *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1932-1935.* (A. Ambrose, Ed.) Chicago: U. of Chicago P.

Wittgenstein, L. (1967). *Zettel.* (G. A. Wright, Ed., & G. Anscombe, Trans.) Berkeley: U. of California P.

Worth, K. J. (1964). Shaw and John Osborne. *The Shavian: The Journal of the Shaw Society , 2* (10), 29-35.

Wright, G. H. (1982). *Wittgenstein.* Minneapolis: U.of Minneapolis P.

Young, G. M. (1964). *Portrait of an Age* (Preface). Galaxy Books.

Zyl, J. V. (1989). Film Adaptation as an Interpretation of a Play: The Case of "Look Back in Anger". *South African Theatre Journal* (2), 4-18.

Secondary Sources

Acto, P. (1967). Lutero de Osborne. *Primer Acto* (85), 72.

Aguirre, J. M. (1963). El anti-teatro inglés y Ramiro de Maeztu. *Índice* (179), 13.

Albee, E. (1962). *Whose Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* New York: Signet.

Allen Brown, P. (2003). *Better a Shrew Than a Sheep. Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Amis, K. (1955, October 7). Editor's Notes. *The Spectator* , 459.

Amis, K. (2002). *Lucky Jim.* London: Penguin Books.

Amis, K. (1962). *My Enemy's Enemy.* London: Gollancz.

Amis, K. (1962). *Take a Girl Like You.* Harmondsworth.

Amis, K. (1937). That Certain Revulsion. *Encore* (3), 10-12.

Amis, K. (1955). *That Uncertain Feeling.* London: Gollancz.

Amis, K. (1971). Why Lucky Jim Turned Right. In K. Amis, *What Became of Jane Austen? And Other Questions* (pp. 200-211). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Anderson, M. (1978). *Anger and Detachment: A Study of Arden, Osborne, and Pinter.* London: Pitman.

Angus, W. (1963). Modern Theatre Reflects the Time. *Queen's Quarterly*, 255-263.

Barber, J. (12 de February de 1958). Why Look Back Mr. Osborne? *London Daily Express*, p. 11.

Barthes, R. (1967). *Writing Degree Zero.* London: J.Cape.

Beckerman, B. (1970). *Dynamics of Drama: The Theory and Method of Analysis.*

Benedict, N. (1982). The Fatality of Hatred: On John Osborne. *Encounter*, 58-64.

Bennett, T., John, M., & Richard, M. (1985). *Popular Culture Block 5, Politics, Ideology and Popular Culture* (Vol. 1). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality.* New York: Doubleday.

Bhatia, N. (1999). Anger, Nostalgia and the end of Empire: John Osborne's Look Back in Anger. *Modern Drama* (42), 391.

Billington, M. (1993). *One Night Stands: A Critic's View of Modern Theatre.* London: Nick Hern Books Limited.

Blackburn, R. (1979). *Ideology in Social Science.* London: Fontana.

Blumenthal, S. (1986). *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment.* New York: Times Books.

Board, T. B. (2012). On the Road: Jack Kerouc's manuscript scroll. *British Library*

Bond, E. (1965). *Saved.* London: Penguin.

Bradbury, M. (1982). *All Dressed up and Nowhere to Go.* London: Pavilion.

Bradbury, M. (1971). *The Social Context of Modern English Literature.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Brown, I. (1967). The High Froth. *Drama,98*,pp. 32-34.

Bryden, R. (1969). *The Unfinished Hero and Other Essays.* London: Faber.

Burdick, E. (1959). The Politics of the Beat Generation. *The Western Political Quarterly , 12* (2), pp.553-555.

Burgess, A. (1984). *Ninety-Nine Novels: The Best in English Since 1939.* London: Alison & Busby.

Burton, D. (1980). *Dialogue and Discourse: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Modern Drama Dialogue and Naturally Occurring Conversation.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Calvocoressi, P. (1979). *The British Experience 1945-75.* London: Bodley Head.

Cannadine, D. (2000). *Class in Britain.* London: Penguin.

Castellón, A. (Director). (1974). *Mirando hacia atás con Ira* [Motion Picture].

Chaman, A. (1979). Luther, an Archetype: Role of Anger in Evolution. *The Literary Criterion* (14), 40-51.

Churchill, C. (1960). Not Ordinary, Not Safe. *The Twentieth Century* , 443-51.

Clurman, H. (1957). Theatre. *Nation* (CLXXXV), 272.

Colby, T. (1960). *Playwrights on Playwriting: The Meaning and Making of Modern Drama from Ibsen to Ionesco.* New York: Hill and Wang.

Combres, C. (1978). Osborne's Imagery in Look Back in Anger. (15), 35-54.

Corrigan, R. W. (1973). Anger and After: A Decade of British Theatre. *The Theatre in Search of a Fix* .

Cousin, G. (1996). *Women in Dramatic Place and Time: Contemporary Female Characters on Stage.* London: Routledge.

Croce, A. (1960). The Entertainer. *Film Quarterly, 14* (2), 42.

De Quinto, J. M. (enero-marzo de 2001). Dido y Josefina. 77-78. Madrid: ADE Teatro, p 84.

De Quinto, J. M. (1959). Mirando hacia Atras con Ira. *Primer Acto* (7), 1-3.

Deakin, N. (1987). *The Politics of Welfare.* London: Methuen.

Denning, B. (1958). John Osborne's War Against The Philistine's. *The Hudson Review, 11* (3), 411-419.

Digaetani, J. L. (1991). *A Search for a Postmodern Theatre: Interviews with Contemporany Playwrights.* Greenwood Press.

Duncan, R. (1960). A Preface to the Sixties. *London Magazine, 7* (7), 15.

Duncan, R. (1960). Eclipse. *Plays and Players , 8* (3), 15-20.

Dunleavy. (2003). *Authoring a PhD: How To Plan, Draft, Write and Finish a Doctoral Thesis Or Dissertation.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Duytschaever-Sneppe, J. (1972). *John Osborne.* Uitgeverij Orion.

Dymphna, C. (1950). What is Wrong With the English Playwright? (9), 127-30.

Dyson, A. E. (1959). Look Back in Anger. *Critical Quarterly, 1* (4), 318-26.

Eagleton, T. (1986). *Against the Grain.* London: Verso.

Eagleton, T. (1976). *Criticism and Ideology.* London: New Left Books.

Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: An Introduction.* London: Verso.

Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary Theory: an Introduction.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Eagleton, T. (1976). *Marxism and Literary Criticism.* London: Methuen.

Eagleton, T. (1984). *The Function of Criticism.* London: Verso.

Esslin, M. (Winter de 1966). Brecht and the English Theatre. *The Tulane Drama Review*, 63-70.

Esslin, M. (1970). Brief Chronicles. *Tulane Drama Review*, 93-94.

Findlater, R. (1953). *The Autumnal Stage.* Twentieth Century.

Findlater, R. (1952). *The Unholy Trade.* Gollancz.

Fowler, R. (1986). *Linguistic Criticism.* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Freser, G. S. (1964). *The Modern Writer and His World.* London.

Gable, R. W. (1959). The Politics and Economics of the 1957-1958 Recession. *The Western Political Quarterly, 12* (2), 557-559.

Garcia Pavón, F. (25 de Mayo de 1974). Mirando hacia Atrás con Ira en Lunes del Muñoz Seca. *ABC*.

Gareth, & LLoyd, B. E. (1985). *Plays in Review: British Drama and the Critics.* London: Batsford Academic and Educational.

Gibaldi, J. (1988). *MLA Style and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (Second ed.). New York: The Modern Language Association of America.

Giglio, M. (19 September 2011). London's Streets of Race. Britain Riots. *Newsweek* , 33-37.

Gilliatt, P. (1959). Vital Theatre: a Symposium. *Encore*, 20-27.

Glicksberg, C. I. (1960, August). The Literature of the Angry Young Men. *The Colorado Quartely*, 293-300.

Godbolt, J. (1984). *A History of Jazz in Britain 1919-50.* London: Quarter.

Goldman, J. (1966). *The Lion in Winter.* New York: Penguin Books.

Goldstone, H. (1984). *Coping with Vulnerability: The Archievement of John Osborne.* Boston: Twayne.

Grand, J. L. (1982). *The Strategy of Equality: Redistribution and the Social Services.* London: Allen & Unwin.

Gurpegui Palacios, J. A. (2002). *Estudios de Teatro en Lengua Inglesa.* Madrid: Universidad Complutense.

Hancock, R. (1957). Anger. *Spectator* (CXCVIII), 438-439.

Hare, D. (2005). I Have a Go, Lady, I Have a Go. In D. Hare, *Obedience Struggle & Revolt* (pp. 34-36). London: Faber.

Hayman, R. (1969). *Contemporary Playwrights: John Osborne* (Vol. 2). London: Heineman.

Hayman, R. (1969). *John Osborne.* London: Heinemann Contemporary Playwrights.

Hennessy, P., & Laity, M. (1987). Suez-What The Papers Say. *Contemporary Record*, (1), 2-8.

Hewison, R. (1981). *In Anger. British Culture in the Cold War 1945-60.* Oxford: Methuen.

Hidalgo, P. (1981). *Estudios sobre teatro inglés contemporáneo.* Madrid: Universidad de Educación a Distancia.

Hidalgo, P. (1978). *La Ira y la Palabra: Teatro Inglés Actual.* Cupsa.

Hinchliffe, A. P. (1984). *John Osborne.* (E. Roby Kinley, Ed.) Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Holloway, J. (Autumn de 1957). Tank in the Stalls: Notes on the School of Anger. *Hudson Review*, 424-429.

Hope-Wallage, P. (1956, May 9). First Play by Young Author. *Manchester Guardian* , p. 5.

Houston, P. (1958/1959). Look Back in Anger. *Sight and Sound*, *28*, 31.

Howe Kritzer, A. *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain. New Writing 1995-2005.* Elaine Aston & Bryan Reynolds.

Howe, S. (1993). *Anticolonialism in British Politics. The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964.* Oxford: Clarendon Press: Oxford Historical Monographs.

Hyndman, H. M. (1883). *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England.* London: K.Paul, Trensh & co.

Innes, C. (1992). *Modern British Drama 1890-1990.* Cambridge.

Jackson, B. (1968). *Working Class Community.* London: Routledge.

Jhonson, F. (1978). The British Experience 1945-75. *The Spectator, 240* (7819), 21.

John, N. D. (1992). *Not in Front of the Audience: Homosex-uality on Stage.* London: Routledge.

Johnstone, I. (1969, July 3). John Osborne in Conversation with Iain Johnstone. *The Listener*.

Keer, W. (2 de October de 1957). Look Back in Anger. *New York Herald-Tribune,* pág. 16.

Kennedy, A. K. (1975). *Six Dramatists in Seach of a Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.

Kenneth, A. (1958). *The Angry Decade.* London: Peter Owen.

Kershaw, J. (1966). *The Present Stage.* London: Collins.

King, K. (1977). *Twenty Modern British Playwrights: a Bibliography, 1956 to 1976.* New York: Garland.

Koestler, A. (1967). *The Age of Longing.* Macmillan.

Kritzer, A. H. *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing, 1995-2005.* Palagrave.

Kynaston, D. (2010). A Different Class of People. In D. Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951-57* (p. 142). London: Publishing.

Lamming, G. (1960). *The Pleasures of Exile.* University of Michigan Press.

Larkin, P. (1970). *All What Jazz.* London: Faber.

Lay, S. (2007). Good Intentions, High Hopes and Low Budgets: Contemporary Social Realist Film-making in Britain. *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* (3), págs. 231-244.

Lea, D., & Shoene, B. (2003). *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-War and Contemporary British Literature:3.* Amsterdan: Rodopi.

Lewis, P. (1992, June 7). The Lamp Still Burns. *The Sunday Telegraph*.

Lipson, C. (2006). *Cite Right A Quick Guide to Citation Styles - MLA, APA, Chicago, the Sciences, Professions, and More.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Lorda Alaiz, J. M. (1964). *Teatro Inglés. De Osborne hasta Hoy.* Madrid: Taurus Ediciones.

Lutero de Osborne. (1967). *Primer Acto* (85), 72.

MacGrath, J. (1984). *A Good Night Out: Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form.* London: Methuen.

Madden, F. *Exploring Literature: Writing and Arguing about Fiction, Poetry, Drama and the Essay.* Prentice Hall.

Marowitz, C. The Ascension of John Osborne. *Tulane Drama Review, 7* (2).

Marwick, A. (1990). *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA Since 1930* (2 ed.). London: Macmillan.

Mateo, L. (2002). El Teatro Inglés Contemporáneo y su Recepción en la Crítica Española. En J. A. Gurpegui Palacios, *Estudios de Teatro actual en lengua inglesa.* Madrid: Universidad Complutense.

Maude, A. (1953). The Conservative Party and the Changing Class Structure. *Political Quarterly*, 146.

Mc Kay, G. (Duke University Press). *Circular Breathing. The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain.* 2005.

Merino Alvarez, R. *Traducción, Tradición y Manipulación del Teatro Inglés en España 1950-1990.*

Miller, A. (1987). *Timebends: A Life.* New York: Groue.

Montes Agudo, G. (s.f.). *Expediente de Censura (191-58 Caja 71704, topogr: 83/51).*

Morley, D., & Chen, K.-H. (1996). *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies.* London: Routledge.

Morton, K. (1959). The Politics of Britain's Angry Young Men. *The Western Political Quarterly , 12* (2), 555-57.

Murphy, B. (2006). Arthur Miller's America: Theatre and Culture in a Time of Change. *Modern Drama , 49* (1), 135-137.

Newton, E. (1959). *The Jazz Scene.* London: MacGibbon.

Nightingale, B. (1982). The Fatality of Hatred: On John Osborne. *Encounter*, 58-64.

Northouse, C., & Thomas, P. W. (1974). *John Osborne: A Reference Guide.* Boston: G.K.Hall & CO.

Ortiz, B. (2010). La Máscara hace 50 años. Mirando hacia Atrás con Ira. *La Ratonera Revista Asturiana de Teatro* (30).

Osborne, J. (1973). *A Place Calling Itself Rome.* London: Faber.

Osborne, J. (1973). *A Sense of Detachment.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1961). *A Subject of Scandal and Concern.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1982). *Look Back in Anger.* New York: Penguin Books.

Osborne, J. (1957). On the National Theatre. *Observer*.

Osborne, J. (1968). Osborne. *The Observer*, July.

Osborne, J. (1962). Sexo y Fracaso. *Protesta.* (G. Feldman, & M. Gartemberg, Recopiladores) Barcelona: Luis de Caralt.

Osborne, J. (1975). *The End of Me Old Cigar and Jill and Jack.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1972). *The Gift of Friendship.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1970). *The Right Prospectus.* London: Faber.

Osborne, J. (1962). The Socialist Once Angry. *Daily Herald*.

Osborne, J. (1957). The Writer in his Age. *The London Magazine , IV*.

Osborne, J. (Writer), & Richardson, T. (Director). (1962). *Tom Jones* [Motion Picture]. New York: Grove Press 1964.

Osborne, J. (1971). *Very Like a Whale.* London: Faber and Faber.

Osborne, J. (1975). *Watch It Come Down.* Londo: Faber.

Osborne, J., & Creighton, A. (1958). *Epitaph for George Dillon.* New York: Criterion Books.

Osborne, J., Kneale, N. (Writers), & Richardson, T. (Director). (1960). *The Entertainer* [Motion Picture].

Osborne, J., Wood, C. (Writers), & Richardson, T. (Director). (1968). *The Charge of the Light Brigade* [Motion Picture].

Osborne, J., Creighton, A., Wesker, A., & Kops, B. (1964). *Penguin Plays: Epitaph for George Dillon, The Kitchen, The Hamlet of Stepney Green [Paperback]*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Page, M. (1988). *File on Osborne.* London and New York: Methuen.

Perry, A. (1965). The Left in Fifties. *New Left Review* (29), 3-18.

Peschmann, H. (1960). The Noncomformist Angry Young Men, Lucky Jim and Outsiders. *English: Literature, Criticism, Teaching , 13* (73), 12-16.

Peter, J. (1986, 6 15). Reviving the Domestic Drama. *Sunday Times*, 49.

Piers, B. (2007). *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire 1781-1997.* Vintage.

Prater, E. (1993). *An Existential View of John Osborne.* Pine Hill Press.

Rabey, D. I. (2004). *English Drama Since 1940.* London and Madrid: Longman.

Rattigan, T. (1955). *The Deep Blue Sea, Harlequinade Adventure Story, The Browning Version.* London: Pan.

Riquer, M. d., & Valverde, J. M. (1968). *Historia de la Literatura universal. Del romanticismo a nuestros dias* (Vol. 3). Barcelona: Planeta.

Robinson, D. (1959). Look Back in Anger. *Sight and Sound*. 122.

Rogers, P. (1987). *The Oxford Ilustrated History of English Literature.* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Rogoff, G. (1966). Richard's Himself Again: Journey to an Actor's Theatre. *Tulane Drama Review*, 29-40.

Rooney, D. (2010, November 17). 1953 Politics, Paranoia and a Family Torn Apart. *The New York Times*, p. C7.

Rosen, A. (2003). *The Transformation of British Life 1950-2000. A Social History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Roudané, M. C. (1987). *Conversations With Arthur Miller*. Mississippi: Jackson and London.

Roy, W. (2013). *Advice for the Young at Heart.* London, New Delli, New York, Sidney: Blomsbury Publishing.

Rupp, G. (1965/1966). Luther and Osborne. *Cambridge Quarterly, 1* (1), 28.

Russell Brown, J. (1968). *Modern British Dramatists.* New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs.

Russell Brown, J. (1972). *Theatre Language: a Study of Arden, Osborne, Pinter and Wesker.* London.

Russell Taylor, J. (1967). *The Rise and Fall of the Well-Made Play.* Methuen.

Sälgado, G. (1980). *English Drama: a Critical Introduction.* London: Edward Arnold.

Sandbrook, D. (2006). *Never Had it So Good: A History of Britain From Suez to the Beatles.* London: Abacus.

Sardar, Z. (2002). *The A to Z of Postmodern Life: Essays on Global Culture in the Noughties.* London: Vision.

Sartre, J.-P. (1938). *La Nausée.* Losada: Paris.

Sassen, S. (2011). Why Riot Now? Malaise among Britain's urban poor is nothing new. So why did it finally tip into widespread, terrifying violence? *Newsweek*, 6-9.

Scott Kilvert, I. (1957). The Hero in Search of a Dramatíst: The Plays of John Osborne. *Enconter* (IX), 26-30.

Scott, J. D. (1957). Britain's Angry Young Men: A Gallery of Lucky Jims. *Saturday Review* (XL), 8-11.

Shanks, M. (1961). *The Stagnant Society.* Penguin.

Shaw, B. (1961). *Fabian Essays in Socialism.*

Sillitoe, A. (2006). *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning.*

Stanley, P. (1973). *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism: The Struggle for a New Consciousness.* New York: Ithaca.

Staten, H. (1984). *Wittgenstein and Derrida.* Lincoln: U. of Nebraska.

Sternlicht, S. (2005). *Materpieces of Modern British and Irish Drama.* Greenwood.

Stylan, J. L. (1982). *The Elements of Drama.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tatinge Nascimento, C. (2008). *Crossing Cultural Borders Through the Actors Work: Foreign Bodies of Knowledge.* London: Routledge.

Tecmer, E. (2005). *The Analysis of the Theme of Anger in John Osborne's Plays: Look Back in Anger, Inadmissible Evidence, Watch it Come Down.*

The Most Angry Fella. (22 de April de 1957). *Time*, 90, 93.

Trilling, O. (1962). The New English Realism. *Tulane Drama Review , 7* (2), 184-93.

Trussler, S. (1969). *John Osborne. Writers and Their Work* (Vol. 213). Essex: Longmans Green.

Tynan, K. (n.d.). *https://archive.org/stream/.../curtainsselectio00tyna_djvu.txt*.

Valverde, J. M. (1986). *Historia de la Literatura Universal. De las Vanguardias a Nuestros Días (II)* (Vol. 10). Barcelona: Planeta.

Van de Pierre, H. (1962). *John Osborne-Boze Jonge Man.* Hague: Tielt.

Van Laan, T. (1970). *The Idiom of Drama.* New York: Ithaca.

Vanden Heuvel, M. (1989). Ransacking Realism: The Plays of American New Realism. *Contemporary Literature , 30* (4), 583-588.

Wager, W. (1967). Arnold Wesker. (G. Lonmans, Ed.) *The Playwrights Speak*, 212-229.

Wagner, H. R. (1967). Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. "The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge"(Book Review). *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science , 369*, 225.

Wain, J. (1957). The Entertainer. *Listener* (LVII), 711-712.

Wardle, I. (1966). Osborne and the Critics. *New Society* .

Wells, S. (1975). *English Drama(excluding Shakespeare): Select Bibliographical Guides.* London: Oxford University Press.

Wickham, G. (1962). Drama in a World of Science. London.

Williams, R. (1981). *Culture.* Glasgow: Fontana.

Williams, R. (2004). *Plays: 2 The Gift, Clubland, Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads.* London: Methuen Drama.

Wintour, C., & Edwards, S. (1980). Anger and After. 10-26.

Worsley, T. C. (1957). England, Our England. *New Statesman* (LIII), 512.

Zygmunt, B. (1982). *Memories of Class.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1 - Osborne as modest young playwright on the barge on the Thames that he shared with Anthony Creighton, 1956. A houseboat moored at Chiswick was an unlikely setting for a meeting in 1955 that was literally to lead to a transformation of the British theatre. The houseboat was the home of John Osborne, a penniless actor, late of Derby Rep, and to it one summer morning hastened George Devine and Tony Richardson, who were soon to take over the Royal Court Theatre with the launching of the English Stage Company.

1 Joan Plowright, 2 Anna Manahan, 3 Jacqueline Hussey, 4 John Osborne, 5 Frances Cuka, 6 Tony Richardson, 7 George Devine, 8 Mary Ure, 9 Alan Tagg, 10 A. L. Lloyd, 11 Alan Dobie, 12 Alex Jacobs, 13 Tom Maschler, 14 Miriam Brickman, 15 N. F. Simpson, 16 William Gaskill, 17 Michael Hastings, 18 Robert Shaw, 19 Anthony Page, 20 John Arden, 21 Margaretta D'Arcy, 22 John Dexter, 23 Wilfred Lawson.

Fig. 2 - At the Royal Court: Writers, actors and directors (1956).

Fig. 3- Sara Goldberg and Matthew Rhys. Photo by Joan Marcus. Roundabout Theatre Company.

Fig. 4 - Osborne and Ure march to “Ban the Bomb”, September 1959.

Fig. 5 - The first production of *Look Back in Anger*, with left to right Kenneth Haigh as Jimmy Porter, Alan Bates as Cliff Lewis, Mary Ure as Alison Porter, June 1956.

Fig. 6 - *Look Back in Anger* 2011 revival. Creative Cow touring repertory theatre company. Exeter (England).

Fig. 7 - Laurence Oliver as Archie Rice in *The Entertainer*, 1957.

Fig. 8 - Pieter Brueghel The Elder, *The Painter and The Buyer*, c1565, pen and ink on brown paper." In this drawing by Pieter Brueghel the Elder, *the painter* is thought to be a self portrait. In it, a bespectacled critic peers over an artist's shoulder at the latter's canvas. Whereas the artist's gaze is open, clear and bold, the critic's is fixed and restrained by its obsessive attention to detail reflecting the aesthetic attitude they take toward the piece of art. Both men's bodies bespeak difference in every respect. That of the artist is straight and robust, that of the critic is stooped and withered. "Oh Happy Poet, by no Critic Vext" (Longfellow "In Memory Of Mrs Fanny Kemble's Readings of Shakespeare" 1847-49).

Fig. 9 - The young actor Albert Finney plays Martin, *Luther,* 1961. A heavily carved pulpit at the front.

Fig. 10 - *The Entertainer* at the Royal Court Theatre, 1957, *left to right*, Dorothy Tutin, Richard Pasco, Brenda de Banzie, Lawrence Olivier.

Fig. 11- A photograph which was taken in Victoria Station, in the 1950's. The New Commonwealth was now coming home to the British in more senses than one. Shipload after shipload, year after year, the West Indians arrived like this at Victoria Station, eager to seek their fortunes in "the Mother Country". In hospitals, on the railway, and elsewhere, they became indispensable. But there were complications.

Fig. 12- Osborne as an actor in film adaptation of Turguéniev's *First Love* (1860).

Fig. 13- David Schofield as Archie Rice in *The Entertainer* Royal Exchange, Manchester 2009. Photograph by Jonathan Keenan.