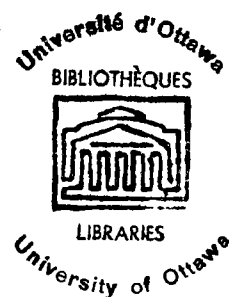


"SHADES OF ANGER: AN EXAMINATION OF FOUR
PROTAGONISTS IN THE PLAYS OF JOHN OSBORNE
WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ANGER."

by Barbara Joseph

Thesis presented to the School of Graduate
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Resume of thesis "SHADES OF ANGER: an examination of four protagonists in the plays of John Osborne within the context of anger."

Osborne used the emotion of anger to create four highly effective protagonists. He primarily established his successful use of the emotion in Look Back in Anger in the character of Jimmy Porter and he used the same basic emotion in the creation of his other protagonists, only with some slight variations; so that Archie Rice in The Entertainer, Bill Maitland in Inadmissible Evidence and Luther from the play of the same name are extensions of the Porter anger.

Themes which are common to all of Osborne's plays are also features which are common to his protagonists. A major theme is isolation, which in Porter, Luther and Archie Rice takes the form of a classlessness or social displacement. Maitland's isolation goes beyond mere social displacement; Maitland stands isolated from human life because society has long lost the means of communicating such love.

All themes or features of the angry protagonists are closely interrelated. The theme of isolation is linked up with those of feeling and nostalgia. The protagonists all look back longingly to a time when possibly better communication existed between human beings: Jimmy Porter to the good old Edwardian era, Archie Rice to the days of the Music Hall, Luther to the Biblical past of the patriarch Abraham, and Maitland to the youth he never had.

Feeling can only be transmitted if adequate lines of communication are kept open. We see where Archie Rice becomes a hollow man because he cannot communicate artistically: he has ceased to feel a thing.

Jimmy Porter rails at the upper classes because they do not care, and according to him caring is being human.

Osborne's plays are an indictment of a society which cannot accommodate the individual who does not give in to the conformity of the masses. His angry protagonists give out this message repeatedly.

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Introduction

In any consideration of Osborne's work, it is useful to classify his plays under one of two headings: his "public" voice plays and his "private" voice plays.¹ Look Back in Anger, The Entertainer, Epitaph for George Dillon, Luther, Inadmissible Evidence, A Patriot for Me, Time Present and A Hotel in Amsterdam fall into the "public" voice group, while The World of Paul Slickey, A Subject of Scandal and Concern, The Blood of the Bambergs, Under Plain Cover and A Bond Honoured are the "private" voice plays.

Generally, the "public" voice plays are better than the "private" voice ones because an audience is better able to identify with the protagonists in the first group of plays, whereas it is difficult for them to identify with the protagonists in the second group of plays.

In choosing the protagonists for discussion in this essay, I have restricted myself to those in Osborne's "public" voice plays, and from among these I have chosen the four whom I consider to be the foremost in this group: Jimmy Porter, Archie Rice, Bill Maitland, and Luther.

My purposes in this essay are firstly, to examine the sociological and psychological causes of the dramatist's anger and secondly, to see how within the same angry dimensions he transmits and develops this emotion within his protagonists.

¹Alan Carter, John Osborne (Edinburgh: Oliver Boyd, 1969), p. 51.

Section One
"John Osborne and the Angry
Tradition"

Many critics thought that anger was not the right word to express the mood that characterized English Literature of the mid-nineteen fifties. They called this mood by various names. Ronald Hayman called it "sulphuric energy", "wildly spirited aggression", and "fighting spirit". Hayman said further, that "anger has to be directed against something and if you're angry about everything then you're not really angry."¹

Kenneth Allsop offered a more explicit analysis of the mood. He called it "dissentience", and went on to elaborate on his choice of this particular word. The so-called "Angries" and their supporters "do share a quality which has been misread and misnamed anger. I think the more accurate word for this new spirit . . . is dissentience. They are all in differing degrees and for different reasons, dissentients. I use the word in preference to dissenter, because that implies an organized bloc separation from the Establishment, whereas dissentient has a more modulated meaning--more to disagree with majority sentiments and opinions."²

Others like Phillip Gelb diagnosed the angry trend in the theatre as a product of fascism, in that "the essence of

¹Ronald Hayman, John Osborne (London: Heineman, 1968), p. 3-8.

²Kenneth Allsop, The Angry Decade (London: Peter Owen, 1958), p. 17.

fascism is to dehydrate us of all ideals and emotions, particularly any ability to feel injustice or sympathy, and to leave us with only a general brainwashed sensation of sardonic sadism." He concluded that the "Angries" made it fashionable "to unmask the truths of antagonism and hate."³ In spite of all these various definitions, these same critics reverted to the old angry label simply because it was the most convenient one, and it embraced the whole range of attitudes in the mid-nineteen fifties, from resentment, to outrage and antagonism.

John Osborne belonged to this Angry tradition. Again, critics deplored the all-too-frequent use of the phrase "Angry Young Men", one which was "employed to a group without so much as an attempt at understanding all those sharing a certain indignation against the apathy, the complacency, the idealistic bankruptcy of their environment."⁴ Some other important members of the so-called "Angries" were novelists Kingsley Amis and John Wain. In Amis' novel Lucky Jim (1954) and Wain's Hurry on Down (1953), the protagonists were "shamelessly self-centered, liberated from social responsibility . . . bent on cocking a snook at social conventions and class limitations. Thus they can . . . be regarded as rebels,

³Phillip Gelb, "Strictly Controversial", Tulane Drama Review, 3 (1958), 58-60.

⁴Tom Maschler, ed., Declaration (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1957), p. 7.

defiers of the status quo, irreverent outsiders sniping at the existing structure of British society."⁵ Richard Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy⁶ and Colin Wilson's The Outsider⁷ were attempts to define the movement in sociological terms. Not that these writers formed an organized movement or school as such, but the dominant mood of anger pervaded their writings. Osborne was the most important figure of this Angry movement, if not the outright innovator of the trend.

Hayman listed Beckett, Osborne, Pinter and Arden as the four most important talents to appear in the theatre in the mid-nineteen fifties. Of the four, he said, Osborne had the most direct influence on the new movement, in that he did more than anyone to popularize the new type of hero and the new type of actor.⁸ Although Osborne only grudgingly assented to it, one could say that his play Look Back in Anger first produced in 1956 started the "Anger" movement. Carl Bode wrote: "No one really knows how it 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." Further, Wilson's book "popularised the image of the

⁵John Russell Taylor, Look Back in Anger: A Casebook (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 13.

⁶Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (New Jersey: Essential Books, 1957).

⁷Colin Wilson, The Outsider (London: Victor Gollancz, 1956).

⁸Hayman, pp. 1-3.

lonely, bitter, young intellectual But my own feeling is that it all started with Jimmy Porter, the hero of John Osborne's celebrated play, Look Back in Anger."⁹

The purpose of this essay is not to substantiate Osborne's claim as the originator of a movement, but rather to examine the manner in which the mood of anger operates in four of his protagonists in the plays: Look Back in Anger, The Entertainer, Luther and Inadmissible Evidence.

What exactly is this Angry tradition?

Every age has its vociferous elements. Protests against the Establishment are as old as Western Civilisation itself. Even Christ himself was a protester against social hypocrisy. The complaints of Osborne's Jimmy Porter are little different in content from those of D.H. Lawrence thirty years before. "But the tone is different and distinctive One's final feeling is that one is hearing the age-old voice of moral outrage, but hearing it authentically in the post-atomic age."¹⁰

Protest in the English theatre during the first decade of the twentieth century found its most potent expression in Shaw's realistic social drama which became stale a half century later. Osborne revitalised realistic drama by bringing it up to date. The

⁹Carl Bode, "The Red Brick Cinderellas," College English, 20 (April, 1959), 331-37.

¹⁰Taylor, Casebook, p. 25.

angry voice in the theatre is a traditional one, but there is this basic difference between Osborne and Shaw. Whereas Osborne's characters are highly critical of society and his somewhat haphazard handling of social themes is "not, for him, of first dramatic importance,"¹¹ Shaw dramatised social problems with a didactic purpose in mind, as in his play Widowers' Houses. Where Osborne's plays have no such didactic purpose, Shaw's were decidedly reformist. "Osborne is not concerned with social theories and panaceas. Social questions loom large in his plays only as they are imaginatively apprehended by his characters: they do not form the action."¹²

In support of the idea of an angry tradition in the theatre one can draw an analogy between the careers of Shaw and Osborne:

Both men received a bitter education in the school of poverty that made the protected assumptions of the well-to-do people appear to them as a kind of ludicrous insanity. Shaw's father was a drunkard; Osborne's mother was a barmaid. Shaw got his training for the stage as a speaker at street-corners and socialist meetings. Osborne got his as an actor, often unemployed. Bravado, impatience of cant, and a gift of gab are the product of these experiences. Shaw, to the day of his death, was obsessed with waking people up, rubbing their noses in the raw facts of life, of which they seemed so incredibly ignorant. Osborne is the same, though somewhat more savage, having come from lower down in the social scale.¹³

¹¹Katharine J. Worth, "The Angry Young Man" in Casebook, ed., J.R. Taylor (Macmillan, 1968), p. 102.

¹²Ibid., p. 103.

¹³Mary McCarthy, "A New Word," in Casebook, ed. Taylor, pp. 157-8.

If Osborne's protests took a different line from those of Shaw, there are socio-economic, as well as historical reasons for this. What may be called the manifestoes of the Angry generation of the Fifties are Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy, which throws much light on the development of the Angry Young Man, and Declaration,¹⁴ personal views contained in essays contributed by eight different angry people about the movement.

There was much in post World War II Britain for people to be angry about. Allsop suggests that the grievances ranged "across a whole keyboard of cases . . . from, say, the card-sharp use of nuclear power in diplomatic poker to the march of the concrete lamp-post men who are putting the mutilated carcase of Britain in a chalk-stripe suit."¹⁵ "The Red Brick Cinderellas" gave voice to these grievances and they are "important to us not because of any anger they may have but because of the creative results of their emotion."¹⁶

The qualities which characterised these Angry Young Men were "irreverence, stridency, impatience with tradition, vigour, vulgarity, sulky resentment against the cultivated and a hard boiled muscling-in on culture, adventurousness, self-pity, deliberate disengagement from politics, fascist ambitions, schizophrenia, rude dislike of anything phoney or fey, a broad sense of humour but low on wit, a general

¹⁴Maschler, ed., Declaration, 1957.

¹⁵Allsop, p. 28.

¹⁶Bode, p. 336.

intellectual nihilism, honesty, a neurotic discontent and a defeated, reconciled acquiescence that is the last flimsy shelter against complete despondency."¹⁷

In the main, these characteristics which many claimed to be mere poses were true, not only of the "Angries", but of the people who were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty in Britain of the mid nineteen-fifties. It was not merely coincidental that the protagonists of Wain and Amis were irreverent and "impatient with tradition", or, that like Jimmy Porter, they were strident and vulgar, yet deliberately disengaged themselves from politics. Also, in an attempt to be entirely honest with themselves, the "Angries" sought "the last flimsy shelter against complete despondency" in "reconciled acquiescence", and as such one might interpret Jimmy's reconciliation with Alison at the end of Anger. Nor can these angry attitudes Allsop delineated be termed mere biographical fallacies. The characteristics become more meaningful when one discovers that they are the result of conditions which caused "The Red Brick Cinderella" to lose all sense of identity within the society.

Colin Wilson elaborated on this situation when he defined the Outsider as:

a man who cannot live in the comfortable, insulated world of the bourgeois, accepting what he sees and touches as reality. 'He sees too deep and too much', and what he sees is essentially chaos. For the bourgeois, the world is fundamentally an orderly

¹⁷Allsop, p. 18.

place, with a disturbing element of the irrational, the terrifying, which his preoccupation with the present usually permits him to ignore. For the Outsider, the world is not rational, not orderly. When he asserts his sense of anarchy in the face of the bourgeois' complacent acceptance, it is not simply to cock a snook at respectability that provokes him; it is the distressing sense that the truth must be told at all costs, otherwise there can be no hope for an ultimate restoration of order. Even if there seems no room for hope, truth must be told. . . .¹⁸ The Outsider is a man who has awakened to chaos.

Both the "Angries" and their protagonists exhibited this need to voice the ills of society, to tell the truth "at all costs". Still, the feeling persists, that the problem of the "Angries" is more psychological and sociological than metaphysical. They regarded giving voice and artistic expression to the "chaos" in society as their primary function. Osborne's voice in this direction was the most rousing, rowdy, and explosive. His non-dramatic writings explain and demonstrate his rabble-rousing and iconoclastic purpose. In his article "They Call it Cricket", he states his motive:

I want to make people feel, to give them lessons in feeling. They can think afterwards. In some countries this could be a dangerous approach, but there seems to be little danger of people feeling too much--at least not in England as I am writing. I am an artist--whether or not I am a good one is beside the point. For the first time in my life I have a chance to get on with the job, and that is what I intend to do. . . . I shall simply fling down a few statements--you can take your pick. They will be what are often called 'sweeping statements', but I believe we are living in a time when a few 'sweeping statements' may be valuable. It is too late for caution.¹⁹

¹⁸Wilson, p. 15.

¹⁹John Osborne, "They Call it Cricket", in Declaration, ed., T. Maschler, p. 65.

If as an artist Osborne could make people 'feel' what was wrong in their society, if he could make them aware of the 'chaos' about which they were so apparently unconcerned, he would have done his bit. The apathy of the masses riled him and he deplored his helplessness in the face of all that was wrong in Britain of the mid-nineteen fifties. He found artistic satisfaction in shocking a society into awareness of its malaise through his play Look Back in Anger. All that was left in Osborne was unmitigated fury. Closely linked with this fury is the feeling of helplessness. On this point Osborne writes: "It takes an extraordinary human being to demonstrate action as well. Most weeks, my own courage allowance doesn't last beyond Monday lunch time."²⁰ "This helplessness is as distinctive as the anger: much of the appeal originally made by the play clearly came from its driving, remorseless energy. But its deepest fascination comes from the association of this energy with a sense of futility. Energy usually needs a sense of effectiveness. Look Back in Anger contrives to dispense with the need. In an increasingly bewildering world, it is an achievement calculated to awaken a response in many people."²¹

Osborne considered it an impertinent question to ask what he was angry about.²² Like many others of his time the

²⁰Osborne, "They Call it Cricket," in Declaration, p. 67.

²¹Geoffrey Carnall, "Saints and Human Beings: Orwell, Osborne and Gandhi," in Casebook, ed., Taylor, p. 130.

²²Osborne, "They Call it Cricket," in Declaration, p. 64.

fact was plain to see. The "Angries" were vociferous, they felt themselves committed, and yet, like Osborne, they were uninvolved in political activity. In "The Writer and His Age", Osborne gave his views on this inactive sense of commitment:

Of course, most writers appear to be indifferent to the problems of human freedom. . . . The reason for this is, I believe, that most writers find it difficult to be engaged in the problem on their doorstep. If you are surrounded by inertia at home, it is not easy to get all steamed up about what's going on in Central Europe or America. . . . Now that the man on the street corner is taking home twelve or fifteen pounds a week . . . he seems to have become a pretty contemptible creature. His poor over-taxed betters are keeping this greedy monster . . . and these people are really angry. They see themselves being eaten alive by this ignorant creature, with his telly and his pools, swallowing up all culture, all good manners, all decent behaviour. Why, they even send his sons to these red brick places for him. . . . My own sympathies are quite unequivocal in all this. They are with the Monster because I think he has been dumped on an ash-can as dirty and as dangerous as the old one.²³

Osborne's task as dramatist he said, was to try and "clear away the rubbish", at the risk of "getting his hands dirty, or losing his friends because they decide that he is not only slightly mad, my dear, but getting smelly as well."²⁴

Among Osborne's various targets were the Church, Royalty, and the Press. He took objection to the Royalty symbol on the grounds that "it is dead; it is the gold-filling in a mouthful of decay. While the cross symbol represented

²³Osborne, "The Writer and His Age", in Casebook, pp. 60-1.

²⁴Ibid., p. 61.

values, the crown simply represents a substitute for values."²⁵ He asserted that though "people need symbols to live by"²⁶ for the past half a century, "the Church has repeatedly ducked every moral issue that has been thrown at its head--poverty, unemployment, fascism, war, South Africa, the H-bomb, and so on. It has lived in an atmosphere of calm, casual funk. It has not been entirely negative in its attitude. It has even managed to spread the gospel of funk."²⁷ If the Church itself offered no solution to the major social problems of the time, must the dramatist take it upon himself to find these solutions?

The dramatist could attempt to suggest remedies for social ills in his plays, but there is always the risk of didactic intrusions hampering his art. The stage is not always the best place from which to preach social reform. The dramatist's art might be severely handicapped for the presentation of such reformist ideas in the theatre and he could also run the risk of being nothing more than a theatrical bore. Osborne's main intention was to call attention to social ills by stirring up feeling, even if this meant flinging down a few statements helter-skelter. The Angry dramatist achieved a better reaction from his audience through his shock tactics

²⁵Osborne, "They Call it Cricket," in Declaration, p. 76.

²⁶Ibid., p. 74.

²⁷Ibid., p. 74.

rather than by attempts to preach reform. Shock tactics succeeded with Osborne where didacticism might have failed him miserably.

Osborne is something of an "emotional activist" in that he is all for reform, for whipping up fervour for political causes. The dramatist found that he could no longer go on laughing at the idiocies of the people who ruled the lives of the British. He thought they were no longer merely absurd but murderous. He confessed that he was like any other "intellectual of his generation", in that "I, too, have done nothing."²⁸ His helplessness spurred him into an outburst of artistic energy, and according to Osborne, his play-writing was at least a start in the direction of clearing away the British national "rubbish" of his generation even at the risk of "getting his hands dirty".

Osborne was no politician or sociologist, he was primarily a dramatist whose art was not merely limited to purely personal grievances. In his work, he was free to explore aspects of society other than those which produced these grievances. This is what will make his plays more than just period pieces. The dramatist concerned himself with human conditions, and this lifted his work into the realm of the universal even though anger might be the dominant theme and mood of his plays; this emotion also had universal appeal.

²⁸Osborne, "They Call it Cricket", in Declaration, p. 67.

John Russell Taylor enumerated a series of causes for the spirit of agitation or disillusionment which existed in England in 1956. For one thing, there was the Hungarian Rebellion against domination by a communist power. The revolt was violently suppressed in the good old-fashioned imperialist way by Russia while the rest of the world looked on helplessly. Then, there was the take-over of the Suez Canal where the United Nations' action showed that Britain was no longer a truly imperial power when Suez was handed over to Egypt. There was also protest in Britain over nuclear disarmament. This resistance was of a non-activist character and took the form of demonstrations and street sit-ins.²⁹ But the factors which contributed to the climate of opinion in which Anger first appeared, had their roots way back in 1945 when the Labour Party's victory seemed to be the sign of a new era. In the past was India, raj, and the imperial tradition; ahead was a socialist Utopia.³⁰ Generally speaking, the British public soon became dissatisfied; there was a general aimlessness about life in the early nineteen fifties, and this disillusionment and resentment found expression in the life and literature of the time. The restlessness stemmed from the failure of the "socialist Utopia".

Such a work as John Osborne's Look Back in Anger is illustrative of the mood of the period. Anger appeared on the

²⁹Taylor, Casebook, p. 14.

³⁰Ibid., p. 12.

scene at the right moment. It "caught and crystallised a floating mood. It is as if a pin-table ball that many young people feel themselves to be today, ricocheting in lunatic movement, had hit the right peg and lights flashed. Bells rang. Overnight 'angry' became the code word."³¹ And anger became a highly sealable commodity.

In describing the typical Osborne-Porter anger, Allsop wrote:

The Jimmy Porters are not even angry about the dominant problem of our time . . . the unresolved struggle between capitalism and communism. Not only are the Jimmy Porters not angry about this: it bores them deeply. . . . They are not interested in mankind's political dilemmas . . . and even their concern with the deeper plight of the pervading loss of spiritual direction is utterly introspective. Their anger is a sort of neurological masturbation, deriving from the very problems they cannot bring themselves to confront. It is a text book psychotic situation: the emotional deadlock in a person caused by a general conviction that certain major man-made problems that man is facing are beyond the capacity of man to solve . . . part of the spreading sense of loss of liberty and identity. So the Jimmy Porters simmer and lacerate themselves with self-doubt.³²

Allsop's is a finely worded and accurate analysis of the psychological make-up of the Angry Young Man as typified by Jimmy Porter.

Of all the critical and sociological anatomizing put forward as reasons why the Jimmy Porters and the Outsiders "lacerate" themselves mentally, Richard Hoggart in The Uses of Literacy probed the situation in a simple, somewhat

³¹Allsop, p. 24.

³²Ibid., pp. 28-9.

personally analytic manner to reveal the ingredients that went into the making of our so-called Angry Young Man. It is worthwhile to examine Hoggart's findings and in a subsequent chapter to relate these to the character of Jimmy Porter.

First of all, the Jimmy Porters were "classless"; they were the anxious and the uprooted ones and this social displacement was the result of an educational or scholarship system which marked them out as intellectually superior in their working-class upbringing. This boy who went through "the process of further education by scholarships finds himself chafing against his environment during adolescence. He is at the friction point of two cultures."³³

Hoggart explained in full and intimate detail how the process of isolation developed in the Angry Young Man as an adolescent:

He has to be more and more alone, if he is going to 'get on'. He will have, probably unconsciously, to oppose the ethos of the hearth, the intense gregariousness of the working-class family group. Since everything centres upon the living-room, there is unlikely to be a room of his own; the bedrooms are cold and inhospitable, and to warm them or the front room, if there is one would not only be expensive, but would require an imaginative leap. . . . There is a corner of the living-room table. On the other side Mother is ironing, the wireless is on, someone is singing a snatch of a song or Father says intermittently whatever comes into his head. . . . He is enormously obedient to the dictates of school, but emotionally still strongly wants to continue as part of the family circle. . . . Quite early the stress on solitariness, the encouragement towards strong self-concern is felt."³⁴

³³Hoggart, p. 239.

³⁴Ibid., p. 241.

Hoggart proceeded to analyse the process whereby the scholarship boy, such as Porter, became frustrated with the world after the relatively sheltered existence of school life. Unlike other boys of an earlier generation who possessed vitality and resilience, our scholarship boy of the fifties, played very little on the streets, "his sexual growth was perhaps delayed. He loses something of the gamin's resilience and carelessness, of readiness to take a chance, of his perkiness and boldness, and he does not acquire the unconscious confidence of many a public-school-trained child of the middle classes. He has been trained like a circus-horse for scholarship winning."³⁵

No words other than Hoggart's could better describe the agonising metamorphosis from scholarship boy to displaced citizen: "When he is at last put out to raise his eyes to a world of tangible and unaccommodating things, of elusive and disconcerting human beings, he finds himself with little inner momentum. . . . He finds difficulty in choosing a direction in a world where there is no longer a master to please . . . a certificate, a place in the upper half of the assessable world."³⁶

Hoggart accurately and honestly spelled out the root cause of the whole anger situation when he showed what the one time scholarship boy became when he faced reality:

³⁵Hoggart, p. 244.

³⁶Ibid., p. 244.

He is unhappy in a society which presents largely a picture of disorder, which is huge and sprawling, not limited, ordered and centrally-heated; in which the toffee apples are not accurately given to those who work hardest nor even the most intelligent: but in which disturbing imponderables like 'character', 'pure luck', 'ability to mix' and 'boldness' have a way of tipping the scales. . . . This world, too, cares much for recognisable success, but does not distribute it along the lines on which he has been trained to win. He would be happier if he cared less, if he could blow the gaff for himself on the world's success values.³⁷

In Anger, Jimmy Porter belonged to the "classless intelligentsia"³⁸ and although he attempted to identify with the working-class, he could not dispense with his own sense of superiority. As a result, "he feels uncertain and angry inside when he realises that . . . a hundred habits of speech and manners, can 'give him away' daily."³⁹ Our Angry Young Man identified in spirit with the working-class, as Osborne himself did, but he did not belong with them, and he could not accept the middle class either; in fact, "he mistrusts and despises them. He is divided here as in so many other ways. With one part of himself he admires much he finds in them: a play of intelligence, a breadth of outlook, a kind of style. He would like to be a citizen of that well-polished, prosperous, cool, book-lined and magazine-discussing world of the successful intelligent middle-class . . . with another part of himself he develops an asperity towards that world:

³⁷Hoggart, pp. 244-5.

³⁸Ibid., p. 246.

³⁹Ibid., p. 246.

he turns up his nose at its self-satisfactions. . . ."40

So that a Jimmy Porter or a Lucky Jim was the artistic creation of his author's educational and social conditioning. He remained an Outsider, sad and solitary, and found it difficult to establish and maintain contact with others in his situation. "He is hemmed in because in the last resort he is scared of finding what he seeks; his training and experience are likely to have made him afraid of decision and commitment."41

This is why Osborne harps on his powerlessness, his not being able to do anything more concrete about the problems of his country. Jimmy Porter energized this frustration and helplessness in his tirades. Like others of his kind, "he has great aspirations, but not the equipment nor the staying power to realise them. He would be a happier person if he were able to perceive his own limits, if he learned not to over-estimate his possibilities, if he resigned himself . . . to being the moderately equipped person he is. But his background, his ethos and probably his natural qualities make such self-realisation difficult; he therefore remains harrassed by the 'discrepancy between his lofty pretensions and his lowly acts'."42

Many critics charged Osborne's protagonists with sentimentality, a certain "softness" which cropped up time

40Hoggart, p. 247.

41Ibid., p. 248.

42Ibid., pp. 248-9.

and again in spite of the anger. This all had to do with the conflict within the protagonist himself:

He cannot go back; with one part of himself he does not want to go back to a homeliness which was often narrow: with another part he longs for the membership he has lost, 'he pines for some Nameless Eden where he never was'. The nostalgia is the stronger and more ambiguous because he is really 'in quest of his own absconded self yet scared to find it'. He both wants to go back and yet thinks he has gone beyond his class, he feels himself weighted with knowledge of his own and their situation, which hereafter forbids him the simpler pleasures of his father and mother. And this is only one of the temptations to self-dramatisation.⁴³

It is only when one can fully understand the psychological make-up of such Osborne creations as Porter, Archie Rice, Bill Maitland, and his interpretation of the historical character Luther, and that the anger which erupted in Porter takes on a different shade in the other protagonists, that the emotion becomes meaningful. A.E. Dyson commented:

It is a commonplace of morality to point out that anger can be anything from an indispensable virtue to a most degrading and dangerous vice, and that between these extremes every shade of reality and illusion, nobility and viciousness, can often be detected. Notoriously, it is a chameleon emotion, changing colour and mood unnoticed, and subtly offering the best in a man to offer sanctions to the worst. Between the righteous indignation of Christ upbraiding the Pharisees, or of Blake contemplating an Albion which burns little boys for their innocence, and the spoilt petulance of a child or a tyrant, there are great ranges in which anger can work, and numerous occasions for good men, whose anger starts in outraged justice, to become bad. A moralist might offer specific reflections on this, as, for example, that anger is good when it is selfless, compassionate, and allied with positive action, evil when it is selfish, or tainted with bitterness, frustration and

⁴³Hoggart, p. 246.

the desire to hurt. A creative artist dealing with the emotion is more likely to be alive to ways in which most anger hovers between these two poles in most actual men and situations; and Osborne's Look Back in Anger is a moral exploration in exactly this field.⁴⁴

In subsequent parts of this essay, I propose to explore the manner in which anger operates in four of Osborne's protagonists. Further, I will attempt to see the mood as a result of certain sociological and psychological factors, and those listed by Hoggart (nostalgia, classlessness, and maladjustment due to an inadequate educational system) will serve as guidelines for the following section, in which I will attempt to examine the Osborne-Porter anger. Following the pattern set by many critics, I use the term "Osborne-Porter", since the play, Look Back in Anger firmly established angry attitudes typical not only of the protagonist, but of the dramatist as well.

⁴⁴A.E. Dyson, "Look Back in Anger," in Critical Quarterly, I (1959), 318-26.

Section Two
"Establishing the
Osborne-Porter Anger"

A.E. Dyson in his article on Look Back in Anger makes a very significant comment on an approach to Jimmy Porter's character: "To admire Jimmy Porter uncritically is to distort."¹ Any appraisal of Porter then, must be frank in order to be truthful. On the other hand, Porter's character demands such empathetic involvement that it is extremely difficult to maintain a middle, detached view of him. Alan Carter says that "it was much too easy to dismiss Jimmy Porter's anger as some manifestation of his neurosis. What was really needed was a thoughtful inquiry into the reasons for that neurosis. One must attempt to explain Porter's pain and position."²

The action of the play fosters a dual attitude in the minds of its audience towards its protagonist. John Russell Taylor comments further on this when he writes that "it is arguable that the force and intensity of the play derive mainly from the author's shifting, ambivalent love-hate relationship with his hero. In the stage directions criticism direct or implied abounds."³ At the beginning of the play Osborne describes Jimmy as "a tall, thin young man about twenty-five, wearing a very worn tweed jacket and flannels. . . . He is a

¹A.E. Dyson, "Look Back in Anger," in The Critical Quarterly, I, No. 4 (1959), 318-26.

²Alan Carter, John Osborne (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969), p. 3.

³J.R. Taylor, Anger and After (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 41.

disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice of tenderness and freebooting cruelty; restless, importunate, full of pride, a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike. Blistering honesty, or apparent honesty, like his makes few friends. To many, he may seem sensitive to the point of vulgarity. To others, he is simply a loud-mouth. To be as vehement as he is is to be almost non-committal."⁴ (I, 9-10).

Two images which emerge of Porter during a performance of Anger are: the angry image and the petulant image. At times Jimmy appears to be a difficult spoilt child or someone suffering from adolescent maladjustment, and is hysterical because the world is not run entirely for his convenience. Indeed, many critics saw Porter mainly as a neurotic and did not sufficiently take into consideration the other and more important image which also emerges: that "Jimmy is the saint-like witness to right values in a world gone wrong, the mouth-piece of protest for a dissatisfied generation."⁵

The character of Jimmy Porter completely overshadows that of the other characters in the play. They spend most of their time listening to his outbursts. Through the use of words Osborne is able to achieve the major dramatic effects of the play and he is able to give to Porter that personal

⁴Citations to Anger in my text are to Look Back in Anger, John Osborne (London: Faber & Faber, 1957).

⁵Taylor, p. 42.

magnetism which compels an audience to listen and become emotionally involved. The paradox of Porter lies in the impotence which couples itself with his driving remorseless energy. As Taylor put it, this is the mystery of the play. "Why should someone so forceful remain so impotent?" Porter himself and ultimately Osborne provides the answer: "it is the deficiencies of the modern world which have made him so."⁶

In this section on Look Back in Anger I will attempt to show how Porter's anger is not merely a case of neurotic hysteria but the result of social pressures within the British class system which were beyond his power to remove.

Helena, Allison's actress friend and Jimmy's mistress, utters the most pointed and accurate judgment in the play about its protagonist. She sees his atavism as the chief cause of his anger.⁷ Porter finds it "pretty dreary living in the American Age" (I.17), and he finds the Edwardian Age of which Colonel Redfern is the embodiment, "tempting but phoney" (I.17). Where then does Jimmy Porter belong? He has no world of his own and in Anger he is furiously seeking to create one but he makes no progress. Helena discovers that he is born out of his time. She says: "There's no place for people like that any longer . . . in sex, or politics, or anything. That's why he is so futile. Sometimes when I

⁶Taylor, p. 43.

⁷Kenneth Allsop, The Angry Decade (London: Peter Owen, 1958), p. 116.

listen to him, I feel he thinks he is still in the middle of the French Revolution. . . . He doesn't know where he is, or where he is going. He'll never do anything, and he'll never amount to anything" (III.ii.90).

Hoggart's comment about the Angry Young Man and the fulfillment of his ambitions coincides with Helena's judgment of Jimmy Porter. Jimmy has great aspirations but he does "not have the equipment nor the staying power to realise them".⁸ He finds an outlet for his frustrations in being unpleasant. In trying to discover his world he does not commit himself to anything more absorbing than selling sweets in the market. Perhaps for him this is a "necessary condition before a new identity, a new style of life can be discovered."⁹ This impotence in Porter, the apparent meaninglessness of his occupation has within it the "possibility of creation: the creativity of a Luther or a Hitler."¹⁰

These two men dominated the ages to which they belonged. They radically altered history to suit themselves, to create their own worlds. Porter's aspirations are similar to theirs in that he too wants to change the face of the world to suit himself if he possessed the means of doing so.

Jimmy Porter even has literary aspirations. He

⁸R. Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy (New Jersey: Essential Books, 1957), pp. 248-249.

⁹Geoffrey Carnall, "Saints and Human Beings: Orwell, Osborne and Gandhi," in Casebook, ed. J.R. Taylor, p. 135.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 135.

threatens to write a book when he will no longer be running a sweet stall. "It's all here. (Slapping his forehead.) Written in flames a mile high. And it won't be recollected in tranquility either, picking daffodils with Auntie Wordsworth. It will be recollected in fire and blood. My blood" (II.i.54). Both Luther and Hitler can be described as Messiah-type figures. Porter uses imagery which is full of Messianic significance. The terms "fire" and "blood" imply not only the blaze of Jimmy's anger, but a renewal, a sort of angry baptism in which Porter might have achieved greatness or found his world. But this literary inclination is not mentioned again in the play, and until Porter can successfully find his niche in life, which Helena sees as a virtual impossibility, he will be angry and unbearable to live with.

Futility and helplessness are sources of the Porter anger. Samuel A. Weiss raises a number of questions about Porter's futility: "Jimmy Porter does appear submerged in futility, ineffectual in action and disengaged except in the confines of his garret. The world has left its mark on Jimmy, will he leave his mark on it? Will this man of volcanic temperament move beyond private statement to public gesture?"¹¹

According to Helena and Hoggart, Jimmy will never amount to anything more than what he is in the play. This ironical insight into his character adds a greater dimension to his anger. Understandably, Jimmy lashes out at all those

¹¹Samuel A. Weiss, "Osborne's Angry Young Play," in Educational Theatre Journal, 12 (1960), 285-288.

forces which he feels as detrimental to his progress, but he has an inkling that there may be some unseen power which exerts a far greater control over him. In Act III he muses: "All I know is that somebody's been sticking pins into my wax image for years" (III.i.76). Ultimately Jimmy is angry with Fate which has more or less doomed him to impotence. In this context the Osborne-Porter anger is most vehement.

Questions which confront an audience while viewing a performance of Anger are: What is Jimmy Porter really angry about and is the dramatist as bitter about life as his protagonist? This last question Osborne called "a most unflattering" one since it implies that he does not have any talent as a creative writer, and that he is incapable of making any character but his own come to life on the stage.¹² The transformation of experience into art in his plays attests to the dramatist's creative ability, but the clue to the first question lies as much in the dramatist's past as it does in Porter's.

Of Osborne's past Richard Findlater reports that his family was "a glorious mixture" in that his "family tree is rooted in both middle and working-class backgrounds." More importantly, "his education was split down the middle by class barriers." Until he was twelve years old, Osborne attended state (free) schools, but was afterwards transferred to a lower grade public school, where he was confronted with

¹²Cue, Oct. 26, 1957, p. 10.

all the attendant snobberies.¹³ From these early years Osborne developed that fierce opposition to middle class standards which his plays reveal. Time magazine reported that "the manners and the morals of the middle class drove him to total fury."¹⁴

Osborne exploited this fury against the middle-class to the fullest extent in Look Back in Anger. Osborne maintained that the main object of his plays was to make people "feel". It appears that he associates the idea of feeling with the lower classes. They are the ones most capable of feeling. Osborne himself comments that the traditional "stiff upper lip" of the English is a "physical deformity", that it is a myth and that all Englishmen are not reserved. He says further: "You just go into a pub and talk to ordinary people. They'll start pouring out their hearts to you after a beer or two."¹⁵

Jimmy Porter's stirring emotional tirades are an attempt to shock the upper middle class out of their complacency. If Osborne can make them "feel" as the ordinary people are capable of feeling they will then become human beings. At the end of Act I, in what is probably his most acid attack on Alison, Jimmy exclaims:

¹³Richard Findlater in New York Times, Sept. 29, 1957, Sec. 4, p. 9.

¹⁴Time, April 22, 1957, p. 14.

¹⁵Findlater, New York Times, Sep. 29, 1957, Sec. 4, p. 9.

Oh, my dear wife, you've got so much to learn. I only hope you learn it one day. If only something--something would happen to you, and wake you out of your beauty sleep! (Coming in close to her.) If you could have a child, and it would die. Let it grow, let a recognisable human face emerge from that little mass of indiarubber and wrinkles. (She retreats away from him.) Please--if only I could watch you face that. I wonder if you might even become a recognisable human being yourself. But I doubt it (I.37).

Weiss lists two levels on which Anger can be taken, the micro-social where Jimmy persecutes Alison demanding unconditional surrender and the macro-social aspect at which level both Osborne and Porter wage war against the middle class of England.¹⁶ Alison is here representative of this class.

England of the mid-nineteen fifties still had stringent class barriers and members from the upper middle class gained responsible positions in the government. According to Porter such men, like Brother Nigel, were not fit to govern. One had to shock them out of their "beauty sleep" first, make them aware of the needs of the ordinary people, in other words make them "feel"; but the "communication of feeling is a complex task."¹⁷ Osborne gets his meaning across by means of flamboyant language: "indigestible mess", "tremor", "distended overfed tripes" (I.38). In this savage, rhetorical manner the dramatist questions the standards by which the English live and extends our knowledge of the way the English

¹⁶Weiss, p. 286.

¹⁷Carter, p. 3.

society functions. Carter comments that Anger is a statement of useful facts "which may encourage human beings to arouse themselves and tackle whatever problems face them." He concludes by saying that "there is profound hope in this attitude."¹⁸ Taken at this level the play rises above the battle of classes and attaches to itself more than just social or political implications. The play is basically about the existence of human beings or, as Osborne himself says, it is about "the texture of ordinary despair."¹⁹

One of the most important factors contributing to an understanding of the character of Jimmy Porter in Look Back in Anger, and one which has not been sufficiently taken into account, is the title of the play itself. What is significant about looking back in anger? In the play much of Jimmy's talk is spent in recounting the past. He is perpetually and angrily "looking back". The root cause of his anger is basically human suffering. When he was only ten years old, he watched over his dying father for a whole year. The senior Porter had come back from the war in Spain where "certain god-fearing gentlemen there had made such a mess of him, he didn't have long left to live." While the situation embarrassed everyone else in the family, Jimmy stresses that he was the only one who cared. He explains emotionally to Helena: "You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry--angry and

¹⁸Carter, p. 4.

¹⁹J. Osborne, "They Call it Cricket," in Declaration, ed., T. Maschler, 1957, p. 69.

helpless. And I can never forget it. (Sits.) I knew more about -- love . . . betrayal . . . and death when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life" (II.i.57-8).

Throughout the play Osborne never fails to place the emotion of anger together with the feeling of helplessness. Porter is aware of his impotence and his anger stems from the fact that he is powerless to reshape destiny, and the ones who can are far too complacent to do so. Towards the end of the play he says: "the injustice is almost perfect! The wrong people going hungry, the wrong people being loved, the wrong people dying" (III.ii.94).

The feelings which Porter drives home hardest in talking about his past and those which are tantamount to his total suffering are loneliness, bewilderment, despair, helplessness and anger. He views life, love and death in terms of these qualities. Together they constitute the experience of living for Jimmy Porter and he gibes at Helena: "Anyone who's never watched somebody die is suffering from a pretty bad case of virginity" (II.i.57). In order to be initiated into life, he believes one must not merely experience death and suffering, but experience them in a manner and with an intensity which Porter feels is equal to his. Only then by Jimmy's standards can one be a human being.

The play starts off on a note of Sabbatical boredom. In this atmosphere Porter is restless and burning up with nervous energy while Cliff has no more life in him than "a

lump of dough" and Alison thumps away at an ironing board as though she is in a dream. Jimmy is virtually bursting and he is deliberately offensive:

No one can raise themselves out of their delicious sloth. . . . Oh heavens, how I long for a little ordinary human enthusiasm. Just enthusiasm--that's all. I want to hear a warm, thrilling voice cry out Hallelujah! I'm alive. . . . Oh, brother, it's such a long time I was with anyone who got enthusiastic about anything (I.15).

The ordinary human being can at least possess the energy to live. It is significant that Osborne starts off the play with Jimmy feeling himself suffocating in this lethargic Sunday afternoon atmosphere. Jimmy's restlessness is symbolic of the frustration that members of the classless intelligentsia feel towards society's indifference to their demands for change. Porter's rage is the result of his futility and helplessness in trying to spread the gospel of life as he knows it and the lack of enthusiasm and understanding about the Porter gospel by those who are closest to him. In this respect one can view Porter as something of a frustrated Messiah.

What then is the gospel of life according to Porter? Simply that people should become human beings. Towards the end of the play when Helena is about to leave him he complains in a low and resigned voice: "They all want to escape from the pain of being alive. And, most of all, from love." Then he goes on to upbraid her by saying: "if you can't bear the thought . . . of messing up your nice, clean soul . . . you'd better give up the whole idea of life, and become a saint. . . .

Because you'll never make it as a human being. It's either this world or the next" (III.ii.93-4).

Geoffrey Carnall commented that the antithesis of saint and human being with a preference for the human being has a long history. He said that the immediate source of Porter's doctrine appears to have been an essay by George Orwell on Gandhi. According to Orwell, the saint wants to escape from the pain of living and above all from love. Non-attachment, the ideal of the saint is easier than attachment. Orwell said that fastening one's love upon other human individuals means that one must be prepared to be defeated and broken up by life.²⁰ Judged by Porter's standards then, both Alison and Helena are not human beings in the true sense of the word.

At this point it might be appropriate to look at Porter's relationship with the two women in the play since it might throw some light on what he himself wanted out of life. First of all with Helena, since hers is a rather straightforward and honest character whose values are totally middle class. She is so firmly entrenched in this class that even when she becomes Jimmy's mistress, she never allows herself to go over to his camp.

Whereas Jimmy lives at war with the conventions, and believes that sincerity alone can govern human relationships, Helena is equally sure that the 'book of rules' is necessary to sanity. . . . The affair between them has never touched her at the deepest level, and the fact that her loyalty to conventions--

²⁰Carnall, p. 129.

whether through conviction, or fear, or even thoughtlessness scarcely matters--comes before her loyalty to people makes this partly inevitable. Jimmy knows, presumably, that in this they are opposites, so that when she leaves him, making the break with a toughness characteristic of her kind, he is resigned rather than angry, and hurt only at the level of personal response, not at the level of his ideals.²¹

In the stage directions at the beginning of Act II Osborne gives a picture of Helena:

She is the same age as Alison, medium height, carefully and expensively dressed. Now and again, when she allows her rather judicial expression to soften, she is very attractive. Her sense of matriarchal authority makes most men who meet her anxious, not only to please but impress, as if she were the gracious representative of visiting royalty. In this case the royalty of that middle-class womanhood, which is so eminently secure in its divine rights, that it can afford to tolerate the parliament, and reasonably free assembly of its menfolk. . . . In Jimmy, as one would expect, she arouses all the rabble-rousing instincts of his spirit (II.i.39).

Her middle-class stolidity is essentially disruptive to Jimmy. He attacks her and the traditions of her kind. "They spend their time mostly looking forward to the past. The only place they can see the light is in the Dark Ages. [Helena's] moved long ago into a lovely little cottage of the soul cut right off from the ugly problems of the twentieth century altogether" (II.i.56). Jimmy charges Helena's kind with not facing reality and this act is less than "human". Preferring "to be cut off from all the conveniences that others have fought to get for centuries" (II.i.56), is another means of escaping from the pain of being alive. Where Jimmy's

²¹Dyson, p. 322.

anger against Helena must be taken strictly at the macro-social level, that against Alison cuts on both macro-social and micro-social levels.

Unlike Helena,

Alison is far nearer to Jimmy, since he is trying to win not only her love, but her allegiance to his vision of life--a vision in which the 'book of rules' must be shut at the start, and true commital worked out in individual terms. He comes to feel . . . that Alison has betrayed him, by seeming to come over to him in marriage whilst remaining mentally and spiritually in the world of her parents. . . . She has responded to physical love, but not offered it; listened to ideas, but withheld enthusiasm; submitted to the attraction of Jimmy as a knight, but clung obstinately to the security of well-bred indifference in the face of his onslaughts.²²

Jimmy calls her a "monument to non-attachment" (I.21); he also uses other epithets in reference to her: "sycophantic", "phlegmatic", but most of all he stresses the pusillanimity of her nature and goes on hoarsely to elaborate on the aptness of his choice of words: "Pusillanimous. Adjective. Wanting firmness of mind, of small courage, having a little mind, mean spirited, cowardly, timid of mind" (I.22). Porter takes offense to this side of her nature because Alison refuses to absorb his gospel of life. To him, she will never be a real human being until she has experienced life in terms of suffering and death.

Jimmy tells Helena: "Either you're with me or against me" (III.i.86). He demands of those around him complete allegiance to his cause, even though this means their becoming

²²Dyson, p. 323.

lost causes themselves. Alison herself explains this side of his nature to Helena: "It is what he would call a question of allegiances and he expects you to be pretty literal about them. Not only about the things he believes in, his present and his future, but his past as well. All the people he admires and loves, and has loved--the friends he used to know, people I've never even known--and probably wouldn't have liked. His father who died years ago. Even the other women he's loved" (II.i.42).

In the context of ordinary human relationships such terms of complete faith and allegiance are difficult to understand, in fact, almost unacceptable. Jimmy's demands for complete allegiance to everything that is part of him is the Messianic quality of his personality. Indifference to these demands produces the frustration and rage we witness in the play. One must love Jimmy completely and have a blind, unquestioning faith in him and his cause. Jimmy Porter is the stuff of which jealous gods are made. So that at the beginning of Act II when Helena enters the play for the first time and drags Alison off to church with her, Jimmy honestly believes that his wife is demented:

Jimmy: You're doing what?

Silence.

Have you gone out of your mind or something?
(To Helena.) You're determined to win her,
aren't you? So it's come to this now! How
feeble can you get? (His rage mounting
within.) When I think of what I did, what I
endured to get you out-- (II.i.51)

This is the basic misunderstanding between Jimmy and Alison. She failed to understand that part of Jimmy's message of life which comprised allegiance to the class of his origin --the working-class. She failed to partake fully in the victory of that class war which to Jimmy, their very marriage symbolized. She turned his victory into defeat.

Alison recalls their first meeting at a party to which Jimmy had come on a bicycle, with oil all over his dinner jacket, where the men looked at him with distrust and the women with contempt. "It had been such a lovely day and he'd been in the sun. 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. He looked so young and frail, in spite of the tired line of his mouth" (II.i.45). One may interpret this in terms of Alison's glimpse of Jimmy, the Messiah, but hers is a blurred vision only imperfectly understood. She is never wholly converted to his cause. Her lack of faith simply frustrates his victory and makes him an avenger instead of the saviour he desires to be. Alison describes his battle action: "Jimmy went into battle with his axe swinging round his head--frail and so full of fire. I had never seen anything like it. The old story of the knight in shining armour--except that his armour really didn't shine very much" (II.i.45). After her marriage when she writes letters to her family without so much as mentioning Jimmy's name, she remains true to her class.

Alison forms the core around which Jimmy's anger coils and uncoils itself. She, her friends and her relatives, and what they represent are Jimmy's scourge. Initially, he was attracted by what appeared in her to be "a wonderful spirit of relaxation" (III.ii.94), but turned out to be only a dream-like state. Like many outsiders, Porter was attracted to the upper class by its apparently untroubled and easy style of living; but further experience revealed that this ease masked their indifference to a variety of social ills. This revelation drove our protagonist to total fury. Alison is only a "Sleeping Beauty" and Jimmy prods away at her savagely for some sign of life, some reaction to his anger. This is exactly the reaction which Osborne hoped to produce in his audience. But she withdraws farther and farther away from him, until they are no longer even pseudo-partners in a marriage game, but complete strangers on the human level where communication between them ceases to exist. The stark incompatibility of this marriage is frightening.

Whatever communication of love there is between Jimmy and Alison is expressed on the subhuman level--in the game of bears and squirrels. Jimmy is the bear and Alison is the squirrel. Helena speaks of their home as a "menagerie", and remarks that Jimmy doesn't seem to know what love means. Alison explains how the game works:

It was all a way of escaping from everything--a sort of unholy priesthole of being animals to one another. We could become little furry creatures with little furry brains. Full of dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other. Playful, careless creatures in their

own cosy zoo for two. A silly symphony for people who could bear the pain of being human beings any longer. . . . They were all love and no brains (II.i.47).

Through this kind of emphasis, the subhuman element of the play brings into relief the overall theme which Osborne is never tired of stressing throughout the play: the necessity for people to be human beings.

Even at the sub-human level, as Jimmy intimates at the end of the play, there were dangers, "cruel, steel traps lying about everywhere, just waiting for rather mad, slightly satanic, and very timid little animals" (III.ii.96). Even at this sub-human level, communication threatens to collapse. At the end of Act I when Alison goes to answer the phone, Jimmy searches her handbag for letters which might contain a reference to him. He admits to Cliff: "Living night and day with another human being has made me predatory and suspicious. I know the only way to find out exactly what's going on is to catch them when they don't know you're looking" (I.36). The lack of proper communication between individuals fosters distrust and hatred.

Jimmy even lashes out at Alison's sexual passion. He refers to it using snake imagery: "She has the passion of a python", devouring him whole as though he were an "over-large rabbit" (I.37). So that the invasion of their cosy zoo by other monsters such as "Mummy", the rhino, threatens communication even at the dumbest level of its existence between Alison and Jimmy.

Jimmy's identification with the bear is significant in the context of anger. It symbolizes the psychological and

social isolation of Jimmy: "The heaviest strongest creatures in the world seem to be the loneliest. Like the old bear, following his own breath in the dark forest. There's no warm pack, no herd to comfort him. The voice that cries out doesn't have to be a weakling's does it" (III.ii.94)? Jimmy who so despised weakness in others, needs to reassure himself that his angry cries are not entirely a sign of weakness within himself.

Alison's miscarriage has much dramatic significance within the anger context, since her loss is a baptism by death which enables her to feel suffering with some degree of intensity. Her loss through death and suffering initiates her partially into life as Jimmy knows it. It awakes her out of her dream. "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" (III.ii.95). In other words she is now seeking total identification with Jimmy, so that he relents, the anger drained out of him. When Helena arrived and dragged Alison off to church with her, severing the last gossamer of a link that connected Alison and Jimmy, Jimmy chanted his taunt: "Perhaps, one day, you may want to come back. I shall wait for that day. 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 watch it, I want the front seat" (II.i.59).

At the end she returns, as he prophesied she would, but he is shaken by her admission that, "I'm in the mud at

last!" She is at last converted and the circumstances were painful. All Jimmy can say is: "Don't. Please don't . . . I can't . . . You're all right. You're all right now. Please, I--I. . . . Not anymore" (III.ii.96). This reconciliation between Jimmy and Alison appears to be a weak point in the play and one can interpret it in terms of what Allsop described as "a defeated, reconciled acquiescence that is the last flimsy shelter against complete despondency." But having stressed Porter's helplessness in spite of his anger, one must conclude that any other ending would not be appropriate.

Alison in making such a difficult choice has come into her own as a character. After this ordeal, the marriage might work better because there will be better communication between the two. On the macro-social level the problem which Osborne posits in the story of Alison might be interpreted as follows: that it is only when the upper class is brought low, when they have experienced the conditions of life that the ordinary people experience, in other words, when they remove their mask of indifference; then, there will be better communication or genuine concern by all to remove the ills that plague society.

A great part of Jimmy's frustration stems from his loss of social identity in spite of his deliberate attempt to belong to the working-class. His university education places him above this class and nowhere in the play is this more apparent than in the first act where even in familiar, good-natured banter with Cliff, one sees Jimmy's frustrated sense

of superiority. He asks Cliff: "Do the Sunday papers make you feel ignorant?" "Not 'arf," Cliff replies and Jimmy retorts: "Well, you are ignorant. You're just a peasant" (I.11).

Cliff, in spite of the intellectual inertia which envelops him too, in the long run, will be a happier and more contented creature than Jimmy, because Cliff definitely belongs to the working-class and, unlike Jimmy, is not frustrated by excessive aspiration. Cliff knows his position in life and accepts it. Unlike Jimmy, he can resign himself to being the moderately equipped person that he is. Not so Jimmy. With him self-realisation is difficult, if not impossible, and this is a real source of suffering for him.

Towards the end of Act III, Scene One, Cliff tells Jimmy of his plans for leaving. It is as simple as "trying something different", because "the sweet-stall's all right, but I think I'd like to try something else. You're highly educated, and it suits you, but I need something a bit better" (III.i.83). In this comment by Cliff, the dramatist is being deliberately ironic and is concerned to show that for all Porter's education he can find no place in life. Cliff is prepared to face the limitations of his aspirations, and Jimmy predicts for his friend a comfortable, contented, working-class existence, which to Cliff doesn't sound too bad:

Jimmy: You're such a scruffy little beast--I'll bet some respectable little madam from Pinner or Guildford gobbles you up in six months. She'll marry you, send you out to work, and you'll end up as clean as a new pin.

Cliff: (chuckling.) Yes, I'm stupid enough for that too!

Jimmy: (to himself.) I seem to spend my life saying goodbye (III.i.84).

This nostalgic murmur which escapes him is expressive of a willingness to belong, to be socially static as Cliff will be eventually, instead of rolling on from nowhere to nowhere.

The sweet-stall is a symbol of Jimmy's deliberate attempt to identify with the working-class. Colonel Redfern fails to understand why a man of Jimmy's intellectual capacity should trouble himself with such an undertaking. The sweet-stall represents so many things for Jimmy. For one thing, there is the physical as well as the psychological association with the working-class. And too, there was his attachment to Hugh's "mum". The sweet-stall, Trussler commented, is part of a complex process of Jimmy's "self-identification with a lost proletarian innocence, as alien to the actual, university-educated Jimmy as the Spanish Civil War. And it is surely in this conflict between actual alienation and 'applied' identification that Look Back in Anger did strike a chord in many radical breasts of the mid-fifties. What is typical about the play is its hero's consciousness of the conflict; what is eccentric is his attempt to reconcile it by means of a sort of enacted nostalgia."²³

Hugh's "mum" starts him off with the sweet-stall. He uses her to replace the mental picture of his real mother

²³Simon Trussler, The Plays of John Osborne: An Assessment (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969), p. 54.

whom he disliked and distrusted. He remembers his mother's embarrassment and irritation on allying herself with a man like his father, "who seemed to be on the wrong side of all things." She had hypocritical middle-class pretensions. She was all for "being associated with minorities, provided they were the smart, fashionable ones" (II.i.57). So, in accordance with his vision of life and his attempt at identification with the working-class he adopts Hugh Tanner's mother. She never makes her appearance on stage but she lives and dies off-stage; and where Alison's mother is an invisible, yet powerful enemy, Hugh's "mum" is a firm ally for Jimmy.

When Colonel Redfern asks: "What is she like?" Alison answers: "Oh--how can you describe her? Rather ordinary. What Jimmy insists on calling working-class. A Charwoman who married an actor, worked hard all her life, and spent most of it struggling to support her husband and his son. Jimmy and she were very fond of each other" (II.ii.64).

In this respect too, Alison refuses allegiance to Jimmy. When he receives news by phone that Hugh's "mum" is dying, Alison chooses to go to Church with Helena rather than to go to London with him. Once again he faces death alone. He relives a death scene where he will be the only one who cares; where loneliness, bewilderment and a resigned anger will once more overwhelm him.

Jimmy: (rubbing his fist over his face.) It doesn't
make any sense at all. Do you think it does?
Alison: I'm sorry--I really am (II.i.62).

All of their married life, her only response to his despair has been a passive resistance to his attempt to absorb and involve her with him totally.

Porter's antagonism reaches out to many tangential targets. It touches not only Alison, her family and Helena, but the entire social system, women in general, people who don't like jazz, Conservative members of Parliament, Billy Graham, the Sunday papers, even Wordsworth, the Church, and the inertia or lack of care "in a generation that has scarcely anything to be positive about."²⁴ His greatest and most irreconcilable enemy though is "Mummy".

She too, never makes her appearance on stage, but he wages a relentless war with her in which he is not particularly victorious. Towards "Mummy" he is most vicious, because she is the antithesis of everything Jimmy stands for. She is the opposite of Hugh's "mum". "That old bitch should be dead," he declares, and even dead she "will be a good blow out for the worms" (II.i.53).

Jimmy: . . . Mummy and I took one quick look at each other, and, from then on, the age of chivalry was dead" (II.i.52).

It was a class war and a war of ideals between them. Jimmy describes his defeat using chivalric imagery. "Mummy" used every trick in the book "all so I shan't carry off her daughter on that poor old charger of mine, all tricked out and caprisoned in discredited passions and ideals! The old gray

²⁴Ronald Hayman, John Osborne (London: Heinemen, 1968), p. 4.

mare that actually once led the charge against the old order--well, she certainly ain't what she used to be. It was all she could do to carry me, but your weight (to Alison) was too much for her. She just dropped dead on the way" (II.i.52).

Why is it that Jimmy is so hard on the women? For Jimmy, women are just noise makers. He describes their nightly cosmeticizing operations as a refined sort of butchery. Women, like Alison and Helena, the actress, put on "new faces" every day. They change sides often and make new friends quickly and are somewhat fickle in their attachments. They lack the close binding relationships which exist among men. Jimmy is never really vicious towards the male characters in the play, but "the eternal racket of the female" (I.25) drives him out of his mind. Between Jimmy and Cliff there is a warm closeness which is missing in his relationship with the two women.

Jimmy is not savage towards Colonel Redfern. In fact, he adopts a sentimental, even nostalgic tone when he speaks about "Daddy". Alison reports his comments to her father: "'Poor old Daddy!--just one of those sturdy old plants left over from the Edwardian wilderness that can't understand why the sun isn't shining anymore" (II.ii.66). The Colonel left England in March 1914 and returned in 1947; to counter the changes he could not accept on his return to England, he chose to retreat into his old Edwardian dream:

Colonel: . . . I was happy to go on remembering it that way. Besides, I had the Maharajah's army to command--that was my world, and I loved it, all of it. At the time, it looked like going on forever. When I think of it now, it seems like a dream. . . . Those long, cool evenings up in the hills, everything purple and golden. . . . I think the last day the sun shone was when that dirty little train steamed out of that crowded, suffocating Indian station I knew in my heart it was all over then. Everything. (II.ii.67-8).

This sentimentality of the Colonel's, this yearning for a paradisaal past which at one time was real, has some affinity with Jimmy's nostalgia which is a definite source of his anger. This is why Jimmy is kind, even a little envious, of the Colonel who has actually had a taste of some Utopian paradise:

Jimmy: . . . I hate to admit it, but I think I can understand how her Daddy must have felt when he came back from India. . . . The old Edwardian brigade do make their brief little world look pretty tempting. All homemade cakes and croquet, bright ideas, bright uniforms. Always the same picture: high summer, the long days in the sun, slim volumes of verse, crisp linen, the smell of starch. What a romantic picture. Phoney too, of course. It must have rained sometimes. Still, even I regret it somehow. . . . If you've no world of your own, it's rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's (I.17).

Here lies the reason why Jimmy's attitude is so iconoclastic, not that he wants a return to the Edwardian past, but he wants a world of his own; as Hoggart said, this nostalgia so prominent in Porter is a further cause of his anger and his social displacement.²⁵ Jimmy longs for a

²⁵Hoggart, p. 246.

"Nameless Eden", not necessarily the prototype of the Colonel's Indian experience, but some state, physical and spiritual, in which he can find "that wonderful relaxation of spirit". So that Porter's nostalgia is one of the strongest features of his anger. Throughout the play he exhibits fear and uncertainty of what he might find when he discovers himself.

I have tried to examine the Osborne-Porter anger by investigating the working out of the play's major dramatic themes: the Porter suffering through social displacement, isolation, and lack of proper communication between individuals as well as between social classes, the futility of socially displaced persons such as Porter, the overall theme of the necessity of being human, and, most important of all, the communication of "feeling" not only between Porter and the other characters in the play, but between the dramatist and his audience. Osborne proposes a number of problems in the play which have more than just topical interest, but he does not pretend to prescribe any solution for social ills. It was enough for him to draw attention to them through his angry plays. In the following sections of this essay I will attempt to show how the main features of the Osborne-Porter anger recur in the case of the other protagonists with only slight variations.

Section Three

The Entertainer

Archie Rice--"Dead behind the eyes"

All the major aspects of the Osborne-Porter anger which the dramatist touched on in Look Back in Anger find full dramatic expression in The Entertainer. Nostalgia or the theme of "looking back" is more strongly dealt with and much more adequately handled here than in Anger. Archie Rice's atavism and his refusal to face reality squarely are the main causes of his anger.

Another strong feature of the Osborne-Porter anger is futility. We saw in the preceding section that Jimmy Porter was angry because he could not change the course of events to suit himself. Because of this inability to alter the course of events, the protagonist yearned after a style of living which he admired or which resembled the one he envisaged for himself. In this way, futility is closely bound up with nostalgia. In the person of Archie Rice, these two qualities combine to produce a protagonist whose anger is much more seasoned than that of Porter's. With Archie, futility has progressed a stage further to outright failure, and so his anger is more deep-seated than that of Porter.

Where in Anger Osborne depended heavily on flamboyant language for the communication of feeling, in The Entertainer, there is nothing comparable to Porter's shocking speeches; yet one feels that here, the communication of feeling more complex and more subtle than in Anger, because the tone is quieter and the effect is more penetrating. Also, The

Entertainer contains a follow-up of the social theme which Osborne introduced in Anger; but there is this essential difference: whereas Porter criticized social institutions helter-skelter and deplored society's lack of care about the poorer classes, Archie's anger has turned to hatred against a society which has caused his failure as an entertainer. And so, he bears a "couldn't-care-less" attitude towards this society.

It might be appropriate at this stage to examine the type of people Osborne dealt with in The Entertainer. In most of his work he never ceases to question, as Jean does in the play: "Who are my people?"¹ Usually, they are the people whom the pressures of life have pushed way down the social scale, but whose family-tree has middle-class branches.

In keeping with the tendency to look back, it might be helpful to delve again into Osborne's past in order to understand who the Rices are, and why the dramatist strips them as bare as he does to our view in the play. In his article in Declaration, "They Call it Cricket", he talks intimately and warmly about his own family; and the passage is worth quoting fairly fully, so that we can catch the intimacy, even the sentimentality, Osborne felt towards them and the kind of people they represent:

¹Citations from The Entertainer in my text are to The Entertainer, John Osborne (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), I.iv.31.

My mother's parents were publicans--to be accurate, they managed a succession of pubs in London--until my grandfather 'lost it all'. My mother has worked behind the bar most of her life. She still does because she likes to 'be with other people'. Her own mother who is now eighty-four, retired a few years ago on a small pension from Woolworth's. . . . She is a tough, sly, old Cockney, with a harsh, often cruel wit, who knows how to beat the bailiffs and the money-lenders which my grandfather managed to bring on her. Almost every working day of her life, she has got up at five o'clock to go out to work, to walk down what has always seemed to me to be the most hideous and coldest street in London. Sometimes when I have walked with her, all young bones and shiver, she has grinned at me, her face blue with what I thought was cold. 'I never mind the cold--I like the wind in my face.' She'd put her head down, hold on to her hat and push.

The whole family pushed, and whenever they got together for some celebration, there would be plenty to drink, however hard things were. That alone is something middle-class people find difficult to understand or forgive. As a small boy I would be given 'a little drop of port', and sit apprehensively always, while my grandfather told me about 'The Bells' and bawled a bit of the Bible at me . . . I would sit flushed with port and embarrassment while he told me that he would live to see the day when I would be Prime Minister of England.

During all this time the rest of the family would be yelling news at each other. A lot of it would be about some illness or other. My grandmother would come in and out of the kitchen, usually picking the wrong moments to interrupt my grandfather. . . . Often if I could escape I would follow her into the scullery and get a slice of the 'dinner', some winks, and possibly some story about how my grandfather had spent a weekend with some famous music-hall artist at Brighton. . . . By dinner-time--which meant about two o'clock in the afternoon--the emotional temperature would be quite high. There would be baffling shrieks of laughter, yelling, ignoring, bawling, everyone trying to get his piece in. Sometimes there would be a really large gathering, and we would all go over to Tottenham, which was the family headquarters.

Setting out from South London, it was an exciting journey. One never knew what might happen. There would be two or three dozen of us--somebody's brother would have a pint too many at the pub and perhaps hit his wife; carnation buttonholes would be crumpled; there would be tears and lots and lots of noise. . . . They 'talked about their troubles' in a way that would embarrass my middle-class observer. I've no doubt

that they were often boring, but life still had meaning for them. Even if they did get drunk and fight, they were responding; they were not defeated.²

The ingredients which found their way into The Entertainer: the candour, the family scenes, the inebriation and art in the form of the music hall tradition are contained in the preceding description. These ordinary folk were essentially Osborne's people and as familiar and as intimate as he was with his material, he uses it to explore an angry topic.

A look into the protagonist's background might help to unravel the reasons behind his anger. Archie Rice had an essentially middle-class upbringing. His father states, not without some pride, that he spent thousands of pounds on his son's education, and went on to point out that Archie "wasn't one of these scholarship people" (I.i.19), like Jean and Jimmy Porter. He attended one of the finest schools in England "which managed to produce some raffish middle-class adventurers as well as bank managers and poets" (I.v.34). Further, Archie assumed a pose in keeping with his middle-class background. In the stage directions, Osborne describes him as being almost fifty with his hair brushed flat and almost grey. "He wears glasses and has a slight stoop from some kind of off-hand pedantry which he originally assumed thirty years ago when he left one of those minor public day schools in London. . . . Landladies adore and cosset him

²Osborne, "They Call it Cricket," in Declaration, ed. T. Maschler, pp. 66-67.

because he is so friendly and obviously such a gentleman. Some of his fellow artists even call him "Professor" occasionally, as they might call a retired Army Captain "Colonel". He smiles kindly at this simplicity, knowing himself to belong to no class and plays the part as well as he knows how" (I.v.33-4).

One can say with some accuracy that one of Osborne's favourite themes is the evils of the class system in Britain. We saw how Porter became a socially displaced citizen because of his education. The same is true to a certain extent of Archie Rice, even though this educational factor does not form as integral a part of The Entertainer as it does of Anger. Still, Archie was equipped like his brother, Bill, by his educational upbringing for a middle-class existence, but he chose a career for which he was thoroughly unsuited: he did not have the talent to be a successful music hall artist. This caused his descent in the world.

Through Phoebe, we know the facts of Archie's downfall. She complains to Jean about the terrible life she had with him, and at the same time holds Brother Bill up as their saviour in times of distress:

We'd always be living in some bloody digs somewhere, and I didn't like him coming. . . . Then he and Archie would always have a row over something Archie had been doing. Either he'd lost money, or he was out of work. I remember once he came and Archie and me didn't have a bean. We'd been living on penny pieces of bacon from the butcher's and what we got from the Tribunal. . . . You and the boys were staying with the old man then. Archie wouldn't take money from his Dad then--perhaps it was professional

jealousy. . . . Anyway, Bill heard that Archie was in trouble again. . . . Something serious this time he tried to pass a dud cheque and he'd picked the wrong person. . . . old Bill came over-- we were living at Brixton at that time, and the kids in the street made a terrible mess of his car (II.vi.50).

The settings in Osborne's plays are an important part of the anger context. In Look Back in Anger, Osborne makes use of a drab, cluttered-up setting to emphasise the theme of anger. In this play, the disarray in the stage setting is symptomatic of the mental condition of his protagonist. In The Entertainer, the general setting of the play sets its overall, hard, angry tone:

The action takes place in a large coastal resort. The house where the Rice family live is one of those ugly monuments built by a prosperous businessman at the beginning of the century. Only twenty-five minutes in the brougham to the front. Now trolley buses hum past the front drive, full of workers from the small factories that have grown up round about. This is part of the town that holiday makers never see--or, if they do, they decide to turn back to the pleasure gardens. This is what they have spent two or three hours in a train to escape. . . . the main line trains don't stop there. It is not residential, it is hardly industrial. It is full of dirty, blank spaces, high black walls, a gas holder, a tall chimney, a main road that shakes with dust and lorries. The shops are scattered at the corners of narrow streets. A news agent's, a general grocer's, a fish and chips shop (p. 11).

What is evident here is the ugly aspect of neglect. There is nothing prettified about Osborne's setting. He brings to the audience, with shocking recognition, those aspects of society they will prefer to leave uninvestigated. This kind of editorial comment is more proper to the novelist than the dramatist. Throughout The Entertainer and indeed

all of the plays under discussion in this essay, Osborne attempts to ensure the emotional involvement of the audience who read his plays.

The story of the Rices in The Entertainer is one that the delicate sensibilities of an English audience will find distasteful. The story is one in which Osborne, more than in Anger, truly depicted the texture of ordinary despair. He strips his characters bare, since in keeping with his avowed aim of making people feel, he wants to call attention to those quarters of society that many people prefer not to think about. Set against this background, the anger of Archie Rice is more deep-seated than that of Porter.

Archie Rice himself describes the type of people the Rices are:

We're dead beat and down and outs. We're drunks, maniacs, we're crazy, we're bonkers, the whole flaming bunch of us. Why, we have problems that nobody's ever heard of, we're characters out of something that nobody believes in. We're something that people make jokes about, because we're so remote from the rest of ordinary, everyday, human experience. But we're not really funny. We're too boring. Simply because we're not like anybody who ever lived. We don't get on with anything. We don't ever succeed in anything. We're a nuisance, we do nothing but make a God almighty fuss about anything we ever do. All the time we're trying to draw someone's attention to our nasty, sordid, unlikely little problems (II.vi.54).

Kenneth Allsop said that characters such as Jimmy Porter and Archie Rice are not ordinary, in that they "could hardly be represented as a couple of typical post-war

Britons."³ In fact, it is their "ordinariness" which makes them extraordinary, and Archie's burst of sarcasm is an indication that their problems are considered too commonplace to merit attention. Again, when Phoebe insists on telling the story of the various financial ruts they were in, Archie shrugs it off: "This is a welfare state, my darling heart. Nobody wants, nobody goes without, all are provided for" (II.vi.53).

Stephen Spender adequately analyzes the Osborne-Porter anger in this respect. He said that in The Entertainer, Osborne is denouncing

the hypocrisy of welfare state uncharitableness--the idea that today the poor are looked after from cradle to grave. . . . Jimmy Porter and Archie Rice are people--who statistically and officially . . . are not supposed to exist in our society, unless, perhaps by an oversight. The reaction of many of the critics to these plays is that they are not--they cannot be--about 'real' people because the welfare state has deprived every individual of the right to be economically pitiable. Therefore . . . what these characters are commands no objective reason for pity. They should be left alone to stew in their own self pity.

The inexcusability of Osborne's characters being sorry for themselves--or anyone else being sorry for them--is just what makes them disturbing. And the flimsiness of their actual material situations--that Jimmy Porter and his friend sell sweets, that the Entertainer has managed not to pay income tax for so many years . . . these personal situations balanced out by a vision of the public one which exploits injustice and the pompous nonsense of monarchy: it is this defiance of the socially real which seems outrageous. Mr. Osborne shows how subtly many of us have allowed our personal love for our neighbour to be stifled by the idea that we all belong to a socially just state.⁴

³Allsop, p. 107.

⁴Stephen Spender, "London Letter: Anglo-Saxon Attitudes," in Partisan Review, 25 (Winter 1958), 110-116.

In Anger we saw where Jimmy Porter was angry because he cared too much. He deplored society's lack of care about suffering humanity. According to Porter then, to be angry means to care. What Spender refers to as "our personal love for our neighbour" is what Porter meant by "caring".

The main thrust of anger in the play though is expressed through the personality of the protagonist. An important clue to Archie's anger lies in the stage setting of his shows which comprises "ordinary, tatty backcloth and draw-tabs. The lighting is the kind you expect to see in the local Empire--everything bang-on, bright and hard, or a simple follow-spot." The music is "the latest, the loudest, the worst. A gauzed front cloth. On it are painted enormous naked young ladies, waving brightly coloured fans, and kicking out gaily. Written across it in large letters are the words 'ROCK'N ROLL NEW'D LOOK'" (I.i.12). The effect is one of showy decadence.

In the note which introduces the play Osborne writes: "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 folk art." The trouble with Archie Rice is that he refuses to recognise the fact that the music hall is dying. Porter, because he has no world of his own, found it rather pleasant to regret the passing of the bright, well-ordered world of the Edwardians. Archie Rice's world is dead. As Billy said in the play:

" . . . I keep telling him--it's dead already. Has been for years. It's all over, finished, when I got out of it" (I.i.18). Archie clings tenaciously to the raggedy pieces of the music hall, hoping to recreate a utopia out of this dead past; and while he is in the process of doing so, he becomes a hollow man. As Trussler wrote: ". . . his life is spent in an evasive attempt to stitch up his own little corner of a disintegrating social fabric. It is, of course, doomed to fail. His parent finds comfort in resignation, his daughter in active rebellion: he alone is of a lost generation, caught at the turn of history's tide."⁵

In the first section of this essay I tried to understand Porter's "pain and position", in this section I'll try to analyze the mask of the entertainer and why he adopts it.

The basic source of his anger is that he is a failure as an entertainer. He wants to be as successful as his father was in his vocation, and he cannot, as a result he wears a persona which has complete control over him. Carter says Archie Rice "has left anger long behind, only ironic detachment remains, his professional mask hides his bitterness--he is beyond reach."⁶

In spite of repeated failure, Archie is out to prove that he is an entertainer. Phoebe says his is a case of "professional jealousy" (II.vi.50). His seasoned anger operates on two levels like that of Porter's, the micro-social where

⁵Trussler, p. 67.

⁶Carter, p. 64.

he hates himself and his audience, and the macro-social where he projects his anger against society at large, since he believes that it is ultimately society which has failed him in the most important venture of his life.

On the micro-social level the dramatist himself explains to us how the pose of the entertainer works in Archie's attitude towards the other characters in the play:

He lightly patronizes his father whom he admires deeply. He patronizes his wife, Phoebe, whom he pities wholeheartedly. . . . he makes no secret of his perennial affairs with other women. It is part of his pity, part of his patronage, part of his personal myth. He patronizes his elder son Frank, who lacks his own brand of indulgence, stoicism and bravura, and for whom he has an almost unreal pantomime affection. In contrast, his patronage for his daughter Jean is more wary, sly, unsure. He suspects her intelligence, aware that she may be stronger than the rest of them. What he says to anyone is almost always very carefully 'thrown away'. Apparently absent-minded, it is a comedian's technique, it absolves him of seeming committed to anyone or anything (I.v.34).

Also on the micro-social level Archie himself explains how the mask works:

. . . You know when you're up there you think you love all those people around you out there, but you don't. . . . If you learn it properly you'll get yourself a technique. You can smile, darn you, smile, and look the friendliest jolliest thing in the world, but you'll be just as dead and as smug and used up and sitting on your hands just like everybody else. You see this face, you see this face, this face can split open with warmth and humanity. It can sing and tell the worst, unfunniest stories in the world to a great mob of dead, drab erks and it doesn't matter . . . because . . . I'm dead behind the eyes. I'm dead, just like the whole inert, shoddy lot out there. It doesn't matter because I don't feel a thing and neither do they. We're just as dead as each other (II.viii.72).

The most telling part of the Archie Rice myth is his laissez-faire attitude towards life, which he adopted as a result of society's failure to give him proper acknowledgment as an artist. His songs are an important clue in this respect. The first one, "Why should I care?" is a reiteration of his basic attitude. His next song "Number One's the only one for me", reinforces his avowed boast of self-centeredness. His other song "Thank God I'm normal", makes an audience question Archie's claim and their own assumption of normalcy.

What Trussler has to say with regard to the various groupings of people within the plays of John Osborne might help us to determine just how normal people like Archie Rice and Jimmy Porter are: ". . . there are on the one hand, interesting and exceptional people and on the other hand the unfortunate rest." Billy Rice in The Entertainer, like Colonel Redfern, in Anger falls into the "interesting" category of those who are wrong but sympathetic, while Archie Rice falls into the exceptional grouping of those "who are wrong and unsympathetic to boot, but who are redeemed by their non-conformity."⁷ As an entertainer, Archie Rice is far from normal. He will only be normal when he removes his mask and decides to come to terms with himself.

As in Anger, there are three distinct levels on which feeling operates in the play. The first is the communication of feeling between protagonist and audience, the second is an

⁷Trussler. p. 62.

offshoot of the first, that between dramatist and audience, and the third is that between protagonist and other characters in the play. "The communication of feeling is presented in a more complex form in this play. Archie's bitterness over his failure to communicate artistically is shown to affect, and in its turn to be affected by, his failure in private life."⁸

Where Porter began caring at the age of ten and was angry and helpless because he cared too much about the working-class, Archie Rice claims he has ceased to care. True, during the passage of time he "lost his responses on the way" (II.viii.72). There is much self-pity in his attitude. He discovered that nobody "gives a damn about anything except some little animal something. And for (him) that little animal something is draught Bass" (III.x.76). His ego is so thoroughly deflated that he has become conscienceless. His claim of caring about draught Bass alone, is an indication that he is only willing to swill himself into forgetfulness of his present troubles. The same is true of the "blues" tune he sings on hearing about Mick's death in Egypt: "Oh, lord, I don't care where they bury my body 'cos my soul's going to live with God" (II.viii.73). Death alone affords him the opportunity of escaping from reality.

Many critics seem to feel that in singing a "blues" tune at the death of his son, Archie is giving way to a deep and moving sadness, only as he knows how, in an artistic

⁸K. Worth, "The Angry Young Man," in Casebook, ed., I.R. Taylor, pp. 101-116.

manner. But the mask of the entertainer remains so firmly fixed that he is incapable of shedding it, when he most desires to do so. Osborne implies that society has wounded him in the worst way it knows how: by murdering his son, and it is pathetic that he is incapable of responding to such a wound. In his mind only one sacrifice can mitigate another, so in return he offers his father to society by pushing him back into show business and bringing about his death. Throughout the play, "one feels that Osborne is more objectively aware of Archie's shortcomings than of Jimmy Porter's in that there is no special pleading on Archie's behalf. Archie's father does not die in agony, being watched over by a boy being robbed of his childhood--but is effectively destroyed by his son in the very process of trying to perpetuate the past."⁹

On the macro-social level, Archie does not care about the institutions or the problems of society. Because he turns a deaf ear to world crises, and claims repeatedly that he does not care, many critics feel that he has left anger long behind. Implicit in all these negative attitudes of the protagonist is Osborne's more positive doctrine, that we cannot afford not to care. What happens to Archie Rice must not happen to us.

Katharine Worth explains how the communication of feeling between dramatist and audience works through a process of dramatic involvement.

⁹Trussler, p. 68.

With this play for the first time, Osborne's drama became experimental in the technical sense. He handles theatrical illusion with a new imaginative originality, achieving striking effects by alternating scenes with turns on the music hall stage. There are some similarities to Brecht's method, but whereas Brecht was trying to simulate detached thinking, Osborne is after greater emotional depth. . . . The method helps him, as he says in his introductory note, to 'solve the eternal problems of time and space that face the dramatist.' We, the audience are drawn into the heart of the play by this device. We are made to feel by direct contact, what it means to be Archie Rice, the entertainer, we are in a better position to understand his bitterness.

We come to feel, too, an uneasy consciousness of the debased values this theatre supports. It is we, after all, the audience in the theatre within the theatre who are sitting there, supposedly waiting for the nudes and getting the point of Archie's lewd innuendoes.¹⁰

Brecht is part of the "Angry Tradition". Shaw, like Brecht, and, if Worth is right, Osborne, practiced a theatre which deliberately refrained from producing a catharsis in the audience. Society then becomes the accused.

The third level, the communication of feeling between Archie Rice and the other characters is inextricably intertwined with the first level already discussed and with another important aspect of Archie's anger, his nostalgia. As a music hall artist Archie Rice felt that he could truly give vent to his feelings in the art of the entertainer, but he confesses a lack of talent for the calling, so that being an entertainer in the true sense of the word is a state he still wishes to achieve. He tries to explain to Jean what he thinks to be his moment of revelation, his epiphany:

¹⁰K. Worth, p. 112.

Did I ever tell you the most moving thing that I ever heard? It was when I was in Canada--I managed to slip over the border sometimes to people I knew, and one night I heard some negress singing in a bar. . . . if ever I saw any hope or strength in the human race, it was in the face of that old fat negress getting up to sing about Jesus or something like that. She was poor and lonely and oppressed like nobody you've ever known. . . . 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, the real people, how much you despise them, if they can stand up and make a pure, just natural noise like that, there's nothing wrong with them, only with everybody else. . . . 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. If I'd done one thing as good as that in my whole life, I'd have been all right. . . . I wish to God I were that old bag. I'd stand up and shake my great bosom up and down, and lift up my head and make the most beautiful fuss in the world (II.viii.70-1).

Archie's "beautiful fuss" is essentially the artist's manner of expressing true feeling. It is the equivalent of Jimmy Porter's wish for "enthusiasm", for a "warm thrilling voice" crying out "Hallelujah!" (Anger, I.15). Where Jimmy never heard the voice, Archie heard it but confessed himself to be incapable of giving "a damn about anything" (II.viii.71).

In The Entertainer Jean is the one whose anger most resembles that of Jimmy Porter. They belong to the same generation and social ills affect her in the same manner in which they affected Porter. Furthermore, like him, she chooses to ally herself with the working-class, although she had the choice of a pretty comfortable middle-class existence through marriage to Graham Dodd. There exists a gap between Archie and Jean which the former is not able to bridge: the generation gap. This could only be crossed by communication

between the two. When they are alone on stage Archie cannot bring himself to talk with her fruitfully, even though he expresses a desire for such communication at the end of Act One and again towards the end of Act Two.

His attempts at serious communication with Jean take the form of nostalgia which afflicts the older generation of Rices. And Archie does much of his reminiscing in the repetitive style of his music hall patter:

Did I ever tell you the greatest compliment I had paid to me--the greatest compliment I always treasure? I was walking along the front somewhere. . . . Well I was walking along the front, to meet what I think we used to call a piece of crackling. Or perhaps it was a bit of fluff. . . . But the point is I was walking along the front, minding my own business, (Pause) and two nuns came towards me--(Pause) two nuns-- (I.vii.42).

The repetitive style conveys to us Archie's inability to confront the present or reality squarely. More significantly it is an example of how Archie Rice has become his persona: he cannot get rid of his mask even at the times when he most desires to do so.

The relationship between Jean and her father is the most complex one in the play and the complexity centers around the question of the expression of genuine feeling. On this relationship, Katharine Worth comments that Jean and her father are in sympathy, since he is a man of feeling beneath his professional mask

But they part company on their ideas of how feeling should be expressed. . . . Her attendance at a rally in Trafalgar Square is, to both her and Archie, a symbol of her philosophy: reason and good works, the betterment of social conditions, these come first for her.

Archie is sceptical. He believes in her feeling in spite of, not because of, 'all that Trafalgar Square stuff'. 'You're what they call a sentimentalist,' he tells her. 'You carry all your responses about with you, instead of leaving them at home. While everyone else is sitting on their hands you're the Joe at the back cheering and making his hands hurt. But you'll have to sit on your hands like everyone else.' To Archie, Jean assumptions are arrogant. 'I still have a little dried pea of humility rattling around inside me,' he tells her. 'I don't think you have.' The 'little dried pea of humility' is the fruit of his travail as an artist; this 'failure' too, has produced something of value.¹¹

Phoebe is a character in her own right. She is neither dull nor colourless, although she could be irritatingly simple. She is "anecdotal to the point of senility".¹² Much of her talk is spent in recalling times that are past. For the older generation of Rices "the corollary of an absorption in the past is an acute dread of the future: and the prevailing inebriation of the Rice family brings fears of mortality to the surface just as it encourages the nostalgic self-indulgence of the middle generation."¹³

Doubts about her future constantly occupy Phoebe's mind and, unlike her husband, who drowns his sorrow and insecurity in drink, alcohol heightens these fears in her to a pitch of hysteria.

I don't want to always have to work. I mean you want a bit of life before it is all over. It takes all the guilt off if you know you've got to go on and on till they carry you out in a box. . . . I don't want to end up being laid out by some stranger in Gateshead, or West Hartlepool or another of those dead or alive holes (I.vi.40).

¹¹K. Worth, pp. 112-3.

¹²Trussler, p. 58.

¹³Trussler, p. 69.

Her echo is one of stark despair when she repeats her: "O Christ, I wish I knew what was going to happen to us" (I.vi.39).

In the marriage of Jimmy and Alison, communication breaks down and is only maintained on the sub-human level, in the game of bears and squirrels. The marriage between Phoebe and Archie has long since gone dead. All attempts at communication have ceased. Like everything else about Archie, his failure as an entertainer, mirrors his failure as a husband and father. He admits: "All my children think I'm a bum. I never bothered to hide it" (III.xii.84).

The characters talk abundantly in their inebriated state. No one really listens in The Entertainer. We get the impression also that the audiences do not listen during Archie's performances. In the play Frank calls for silence (II.vi.55). Jean discovers that "Nobody listens to anyone" (III.x.78) in England, whereas Billy diagnoses the trouble with the present generation: "Everybody's too busy answering back and taking liberties. 'Stead of getting on with it and doing as they're told" (III.x.78). This idea of unrestrained talk among the characters shows how the dramatist manipulates the theme of isolation in the play. Where everybody was compelled to listen to Jimmy's tirades in Anger, in The Entertainer the characters take a greater part in the action of the play, and are by no means spellbound by Archie's music hall patter. The other characters in the play draw further and further away from the protagonist and in Inadmissible Evidence,

they not only do not listen to the protagonist any longer, but they physically withdraw from him; Osborne's angry protagonists are extremely lonely men.

The Entertainer is a highly topical play. It was not only a product of a particular decade, but of a particular year. It was set in "the aftermath of the Suez crisis: a time of demonstrations in Trafalgar Square, trouble in colonial Cyprus and the impending resignation of a Prime Minister."¹⁴ This topicality which crops up in Osborne's plays helped to give them their immediacy; but anger is a universal emotion and will make the plays more than just period pieces. In the person of Jean, Osborne incorporates the outrage, the helplessness and the futility felt by those who were not at the centre of control. Jean voices their anger: "Why do people like us sit here and just lap it all up, why do boys die, or stoke boilers, why do we pick up these things, what are we hoping to get out of it, what's it all in aid of--is it really just for the sake of a gloved hand waving at you from a golden coach?" (III.x.78). This background is highly pertinent to any discussion of our protagonist's anger since in his bitterness against society he is incapable of reacting against any of these crises.

If Archie is the embodiment of atavism, his father Billy Rice is simply anachronistic. He is a fully drawn character and is responsible for one of the most crucial

¹⁴Trussler, p. 58.

pronouncements in the play: "I feel sorry for you people. You don't know what it is really like. You haven't lived most of you. . . . You're all miserable really. You don't know what life can be like" (I.i.23). Most of this pity he directs towards Archie, who when he tells his audience towards the end of the play: "Life's funny. It's like sucking a sweet with the wrapper on" (III.xiii.87), is reflecting the same idea that Billy expressed, that he (Archie) has missed out on reality. Archie's story at the end of the play about the little ordinary man, who stunned the whole of Heaven by repeating one, little, four letter word there--which I take to be "Hell", is again an expansion of the same idea: that one must be prepared to face up to reality.

The play ends on this note: "The orchestra goes on playing: 'Why should I care', suddenly the world of light snaps out, the stage is bare and dark. Archie Rice has gone" (III.xiii.89). His evasion of reality could not last much beyond Billy Rice's death which marked the end of all history for Archie. One is left to wonder beyond the darkened stage. Perhaps the mask will eventually disintegrate.

In this section I have attempted to examine a further stage of the Osborne-Porter anger and how its main features such as futility and the theme of looking back, and more importantly, the communication and expression of feeling which make people genuine human beings, operated in Archie Rice. I have also explored the reasons for his anger. Because I agree

with Trussler's remark that Archie Rice resembles Bill Maitland more than any other Osborne hero,¹⁵ I will proceed directly to a discussion of that protagonist in the following section instead of taking him in strict chronological order.

¹⁵Trussler, p. 74.

Section Four

Bill Maitland - "the world as
a playing field of pain"

American critics were lukewarm in their reception of Osborne's 1964 play, Inadmissible Evidence. John Simon said:

As usual with Osborne, there are two deficiencies: lack of sufficient form and lack of wholly convincing motivation. It is as though neurosis were its own begetter, its own sustenance, and its own final cause; it is not to be questioned any more than arrested, its reasons and consequences, the unshakable données of the protagonist's life. Can it be that this is as it should be: is the case history of Bill Maitland really the case of Maitland vs. Maitland, or of Maitland vs. Everything? Is what is required not psychological analysis but litigation?¹

John McCarten writing in the New Yorker said his reaction to Inadmissible Evidence was "negative". The protagonist is a "compulsive talker" who "is much too flaccid to skirmish with the Establishment." Further, "his doings both private and professional appear to have been singularly dismal." In McCarten's opinion, Maitland is a victim of "logorrhea who is afflicted with satyriasis."²

Two of the most favourable comments came from English critics Simon Trussler and Ronald Bryden. Trussler said this of the play:

Of all Osborne's lessons in feeling, Inadmissible Evidence has so far been the most impressive. . . . The mind and the feelings of Osborne's central character - and here the centrality has a particularly precise sense - are probed with an insight that is compassionate yet unyielding. And that character, Bill Maitland, is probably more representative a product of the sixties than Jimmy Porter ever was of the fifties:

¹John Simon in Hudson Review, 19 (Spring, 1966), 112-3.

²John McCarten in The New Yorker, 41 (Dec. 11, 1965),

but his malaise is also, more akin to Hamlet's, at once of his own and of all times. For Bill Maitlands go to spiritual seed in every period, drifting into dissociation with their age and ultimately with reality itself.³

To understand the protagonist Bill Maitland better, one must see him as the most extreme product so far of the Osborne-Porter anger, whose main features were established in the character of Jimmy Porter. Also, one must not view him as a product of the fifties as Porter and Archie Rice were, but he is characteristically a product of his own time, the sixties. The comments of Ronald Bryden in his article entitled "Everyosborne", will help us to place the Osborne-Porter anger in the perspective of the sixties.

Eight years have elapsed since the writing of Look Back in Anger. What happened to Osborne and the generation of Angry Young Men during that time? For one thing, it appeared as though anger as we met it in Jimmy Porter had cooled considerably. Our dramatist matured a great deal with time. No longer does he cause his protagonist to unleash his anger on various targets helter-skelter, but with maturity came greater breadth of vision, as well as a more controlled and seasoned anger. Bryden who considered himself to be of the Porter generation, said that since the appearance of Look Back in Anger during the mid nineteen-fifties

We had grown up and gone our ways, married, dispersed. Osborne, hunted into seclusion by Slickey and his brethren, had spoken his farewell to

³Simon Trussler, The Plays of John Osborne (London: Victor Gollancz), p. 120.

representativeness, surely in that last scene of Luther: sunk like ourselves and the couple in Under Plain Cover into privacy. . . . What went we forth eight years later for to see?

In his seclusion, Osborne had detoured and come out once more ahead of us on the road. There we were again on the stage, our inmost selves: older, unhappier, self-accusing, but recognized, spoken for. I don't suppose teen-agers will dig Inadmissible Evidence much, and the old will enjoy it for old, discreditable reasons. But if you grew up in the Fifties, it is yours to harrow and console. Osborne is still our voice.

He has entered with us the wasteland of the thirties. As we struggled through our twenties, we fancied that this would be the decade when we really grew up, took hold, learned to cope: when happiness would settle into habit, desire stop gnawing, when life would work. Instead . . . there is only this sharp early autumn of worsening hang-overs, failed marriages, pills, lost opportunity. Digestion teeth, nerves, begin to go; the children do not care. Life, it appears will not work for us either. . . .

Like Arthur Miller in Death of a Salesman, Osborne has gathered all the anxieties of his generation into a single image of cathartic collapse . . . the difference is that Willy's terror was superannuation by the society to which he belonged. Maitland's is a national dread: his is the generation in power in Britain, he is his own boss, and his sense of failure is mixed up with Britain's inability to cope with the world. He believes, like the posh papers he reads, in planning, automation, 'social engineering', to deal with 'the challenge of the future'. . . . He is no longer confident that the outside world knows or cares about his existence: he only knows it is too much for him. . . .

In a bold return to representativeness. . . . Osborne has written a modern version of Everyman.

Further, Bryden is of the opinion that Inadmissible Evidence is of special or parochial, rather than universal appeal like Death of a Salesman. He continues:

I can't see the English play making its way round the world. . . as a universal modern tragedy--there are too many places where it wouldn't work. But it works here (England); and tragedy . . . is a mechanism with a quantitative measure of success. It succeeds by the number of fears and anxieties it can gather up from the audience, and load on its protagonist and, by a balance of identification and alienation between them,

discharge in his destruction. In this time, this place, Osborne has gathered our English terrors in Maitland's image and purged them pitifully and terribly. He has not written everybody's tragedy. He has written ours.⁴

Even though Bryden pinpointed the appropriate state of mind with which one must approach the character of Bill Maitland: that he is an angry young man growing old, one feels that the proprietary position which he holds regarding Osborne's creation of Bill Maitland is not entirely valid. His claim about the parochialism of Osborne's play brings back the question of the topicality of the dramatist's plays. It is my opinion that even though Osborne's plays may be parochial in content, in the use of available material, anger is a universal emotion and what is applicable to England can also be applied anywhere else. The universality of the emotion will vouch for the timelessness of Osborne's protagonists.

With Maitland, Osborne struck once more a familiar chord in the breasts of many Englishmen: this time those who are between the ages of thirty-five and forty. As Bryden stated, they are the ones now in power in Britain, and they are the ones who are dehumanized by the technological and social progress of the sixties. The play is a protest against such a process of dehumanization. It is "a protest of things which cannot be helped,"⁵ as evidenced in the life of Bill

⁴Ronald Bryden, "Everyosborne" in New Statesman, 68 (Sept. 18, 1964), 410.

⁵A. Carter, John Osborne (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969), p. 6.

Maitland, where Osborne probed the doldrums of futility. In the play, Liz, Maitland's mistress, diagnoses such futility as "a state of catatonic immobility"⁶ (II.109).

In the opening paragraph of this section John Simon charged Osborne's play with lacking "wholly convincing motivation". In other words, what will answer Simon will also answer the question: "What is Bill Maitland angry about?" Maitland, like thousands of people in his situation, cannot cope with the problem of human existence in a society which has long left behind it the basically human value of love, and has replaced it with other less important values such as technological progress. Here again, as in Porter's case, there is a crying need for change, a restatement of the theme running through Anger and The Entertainer that people should become human beings. Where Anger offers some hope in this direction, Maitland, because of the complete breakdown of communication between himself and members of his family and staff, despairs of all hope. With Osborne, neurosis is never "its own begetter" and its "own final cause." The cause is always implicitly stated in the play.

In Jimmy Porter sheer futility in the face of certain conditions in society which could be changed, generated fury. In Maitland, as in Archie Rice, things have progressed too far. Maitland said: "I am not equal to any of it. But I can't

⁶Citations to Inadmissible Evidence in my text are to Inadmissible Evidence by John Osborne (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

escape it, I can't forget it. And I can't begin again" (I.20). Where Archie Rice reacted negatively to social ills, Maitland must force himself to pay lip service to the progress of a society which is responsible for his moral disintegration:

I hereby swear and affirm. Affirm. On my . . . Honour? By my belief. My belief in . . . more and more scientists . . . more and more schools and universities . . . the theme of change, realistic decisions based on a highly developed and professional study of society by people who really know their subject, the overdue need for us to adapt ourselves to different conditions, the theme and challenge of rapid change . . . in the inevitability of automation and the increasing need for stable ties of modern family life, rethinking, reliving, making way for the motor car, forty million by nineteen; in a forward looking, outward looking programme controlled, machine tool line assessment. With, yes, Faculties of memory and judgment far beyond the capacity of any human grief, being. Or any human who has ever lived (I.11).

This is Maitland voicing "a kind of creed of religio-technology, a state of belief he does not share in", Maitland, "caught up in the mechanics of a half-understood jargon, verbalising those anti-values to which he is unable to conform--but which he is unable ultimately to reject."⁷ Osborne always uses words to good effect and Maitland's speech pattern, abrupt, emotionless, and mechanical, suggests the process of dehumanization which his generation is undergoing. So that Simon's question: ". . . is the case history of Bill Maitland really the case of Maitland vs. Maitland, or Maitland vs. Everything?" is unnecessary in the context of Maitland's anger, since Maitland's case is the dramatist's way of presenting to society its distorted values.

⁷Trussler, p. 123.

Maitland's anger is basically the same Osborne-Porter anger, depicted in far less fiery shades than in Anger, so much so, that it caused some critics to question its existence in Inadmissible Evidence.

During the course of the play we learn that Bill Maitland is thirty-nine years old and that he is a solicitor who worked "in the service of the law" (I.16), for nearly twenty-five years. He started work in his profession when he was at least fifteen years old, and can remember himself as being always "tolerably bright." He complained about the long, hard climb to the top:

I knew that in order to become even a small market place solicitor, as distinct even from a first rate managing clerk with a big substantial firm, I should have to study very hard indeed for my, oh for my Law Society examinations all the while I was picking up probate and conveyancing, running out for jugs of tea, packets of fags for the other clerks and calling in the chemist for the telephonist (I.17).

Like Hoggart's Angry Young Man, Maitland was pressured by a type of education which did not leave him much time for other activities normally enjoyed by the youth of his age. This is the reason why he dislikes his daughter, because he is envious of her youth. He talks like Porter, with nostalgic yearning of that world of upper class lawyers which he will never belong to:

. . . but I never seriously thought of myself being brilliant enough to sit in that company, with those men . . . 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 (I.17).

Maitland worked his way into the middle class from a lower class background. In the process he obviously lost his responses on the way. Like Archie Rice, he doesn't feel a thing. Maitland's inability to express his feelings is a definite source of his anger. As a result of this inability to communicate he is unscrupulous and inflicts much pain where he never meant to:

I never hoped or wished for anything more than to have the good fortune of friendship and the excitement and comfort of love and the love of women in particular. I made a set at both of them in my own way. With the first friendship, I hardly succeeded at all. Not really. No. Not at all. With the second, with love I succeeded . . . in inflicting more pain than pleasure (I.20).

Bill Maitland is an angry protagonist, who like Archie Rice, has lapsed into apathy. He is so far gone, he is almost beyond anger. His feelings have retracted and only occasionally does Maitland lash out in a manner reminiscent of Porter, and then only when his position is threatened: He couldn't care less about "Britain's position in the world. Screw that. What about my position?" (I.29). His anger is one that causes little offence. Bill Maitland in deploring the trivial materialistic ends of most of his contemporaries is making a last stand against an insensitive society. He sarcastically ridicules them: "Jones entering the Promised Land in his mini" (I.30), he also attacks the dumb conformity of the mass mind. Social and technological progress is responsible for the transformation of English humanity into "flatulent, purblind, mating weasels" (I.24):

. . . people who go up every year like it was holy communion to have a look at the Christmas decorations in Regent Street. They're the ones who drive the family fifty miles into the countryside and then park their cars beside the main road with a few dozen others, get out their thermos flasks, camp stools and primuses and do you know what they do? They sit around and watch the long distance lorry drivers rattling past, and old people's coaches and all other idiots like themselves about to do the same thing (I.25).

Even though this is hardly a profound critique of "technological progress", still Porter's plea that people simply become human beings is re-echoed in Maitland's protest. Bill Maitland's downfall "is that of a man trapped in the machine of progress and as such is representative of John Osborne's fundamental position."⁸ This position is described by Time magazine:

Osborne recoils at the world of social contract symbolized by the world of his lawyer-hero, the world of abstract concepts, impersonal institutions, dehumanized relationships, bounded in paper and ratified by the press. The sense of loss that permeates his plays is an unrequited yearning for the old blood ties of pre-industrial man, the organic community of honor and duty where man was knitted to man without intellectual sophistication or corporate complexity. The spectacle of the human worm turning on the office spit, the sapped vitality, the jangled nerves, the repetitive routines, all these are abrasively marshalled by Osborne to convey his vision of the modern world as a playing field of pain.⁹

In this comment many important themes which we saw as direct offshoots of anger in a discussion of Jimmy Porter's character, conjoin. In Maitland, nostalgia, so common to all Osborne protagonists, is a result of the "yearning for the old

⁸Carter, p. 91.

⁹Time, 10 December 1965, p. 19.

blood ties of pre-industrial man." The statement from Time magazine also stresses the theme of feeling and the importance of communication between human beings.

Maitland's futility takes the form of a general inadequacy; his failure as a family man and as a solicitor. He is aware of this but does nothing to remedy the situation:

I've always managed to keep everything in place,
in place enough to get on with it, do my work,
enjoy things, enjoy other people, take an interest
in all kinds of things. . . . I keep trying and
the circle just seems to get smaller (I.33).

Maitland's actions in the play contradict this claim at any attempt to organize his life.

The excitement of the play is generated between these two irreconcilable positions: the protagonist's awareness of his malaise and his inability to do anything about it. The most important theme of the play is a condition which afflicts many Osborne's protagonists: isolation. In this play the dramatist develops it to its fullest extent.

Osborne's handling of the theme of isolation in Inadmissible Evidence as compared to that in Look Back in Anger shows definite development. In the earlier play the other characters remained dumbfounded by the protagonist's monologues, and through this lack of interaction or their refusal to participate in his beliefs, Porter was extremely lonely. In The Entertainer the other characters began to come into their own as individuals and to separate themselves from the protagonist mentally. In Inadmissible Evidence they withdraw both physically and mentally from Maitland, leaving him the

still, small point within the bounds of a tightening circle.

Osborne uses the image of the tightening circle to emphasise the protagonist's alienation. Because of Maitland's inability to communicate with those around him he is like a man trapped within himself. One gets the idea that he is a point of darkness within a circle of lights. The protagonist himself confesses that he has depended almost entirely on other people's efforts for his daily existence (I.19). In such a case, communication with the others is important for him, but his attitude alienates them. Through lack of adequate communication, the lights (love, comfort, and indeed the whole business of living) will go out and leave him in total darkness. Maitland expresses a fear of this psychological darkness when he talks to his mistress, Liz, of his emotional dependence on his wife:

I'm frightened. . . . It was as if I existed because of her, because she allowed me to, but if she turned off the switch . . . turned off the switch . . . who knows? But if she turned it off I'd have been dead. . . . They would have passed me by like a blank hoarding or a tombstone, or waste ground by the railway line or something (II.62).

During the play we see the lights go out one by one.

Even before the play begins the pattern of desertions start. Maitland's parents-in-law have ceased to acknowledge his existence. During the early action of the play he could not even hire a taxi, or receive a good-morning from the janitor. As the play progresses this alienation sharpens and intensifies. His secretary and one of his former mistresses, Shirley, leaves abruptly and angrily by the end of the first

Act. Early in the second act, his managing clerk, Hudson, indicates his intention of going to work for a rival firm. In the second act too, he chases off his clients one by one, and in a long, valedictory speech, takes a rather rhetorical leave of his daughter. His telephonist leaves, his mistress goes and finally he calls his wife to tell her that he does not think there is much point in his coming home; instead, he chooses to stay in his office: "I think I'll stay here. . . . I think I'll just stay here. . . . Goodbye" (II.115).

The other isolation motif of "rendering an account" of himself recurs throughout the play. During his conversation with Maples, Maitland talks of "gradually being deserted and isolated" so much so that the truth "becomes elusive" and "one can grasp so little, trust nothing, its inhuman to be expected to be capable of giving a decent account of oneself" (II.92). "The recurrent image of rendering an account . . . is integral to the process of his characterisation: and it simultaneously gives definition to the narrowing boundaries of his world. What is remarkable is that Osborne can create at one stroke an impression of the gradual whittling away of experience--and of the complex personality which has emerged thus atrophied from the emotional battlefields of two decades of adulthood."¹⁰

It is my opinion that Inadmissible Evidence has more to say on this "gradual whittling away of experience" than on any other topic. In fact, this is what the play is about,

¹⁰Trussler, p. 137.

just as The Entertainer is about the expression of true feeling.

Bill's state of mind at the end of the play, the "catatonic immobility" which Liz pointed out, shows a man reduced to a state of despair. This attitude reflects the cry that Jimmy Porter made in Anger that there are no good, brave causes left worth fighting for anymore. "Where in society is there anything worthy of rousing us to significant action?"¹¹ So that Bill chooses to stay in his office in pathetic isolation. The final picture we get of Maitland is that of a man rendered incapable of expressing his true feelings because of the values of the society in which he lives.

Just how does this theme of isolation fit into the context of anger in the plays of John Osborne? Alan Carter's comments answer the question:

What do the plays suggest? They suggest that there is something wrong with a society which isolated human beings who simply want to be themselves, to complete their own development and not necessarily accept that which society forces upon them. . . . Aware of their difference, angry at the injustice they see around them, but helpless to change it and desperate for recognition and love, they despair, to end alone and defeated. Osborne's purpose is to imply the need for change, any change, so that the vicious circle might not complete itself. The anger which was so apparent in the plays is an expression of the heroes' aversion to a life without worthwhile belief or hope. 'To be angry is to care', and Osborne's anger is certainly one that stems from love.¹²

¹¹Carter, p. 92.

¹²Ibid., p. 130.

Maitland's loss of touch with reality is a direct result of his isolation. This loss of touch with reality takes two forms in the action of the play: his mental disintegration and his nostalgia. Like the other Osborne protagonists previously discussed, nostalgia comes as a result of their anger with existing conditions. Both Jimmy Porter and Bill Maitland long for a "Nameless Eden". The former was frightened because he has little hope for the future, the latter shrinks into himself because he has no real past. Just as Archie Rice could not accept the music hall tradition as dead, Maitland refuses to submit to age. He dislikes his daughter and the new youth of the sixties because they represent what he never was. He is angry because he was never really young. In his search for this lost youth he even hopes to identify with his daughter:

I always used to think . . . that when you're the age you are now, I'd take you out to restaurants for dinner, big restaurants like I think posh restaurants were like. . . . And I thought we'd behave like a rather grand married couple, a bit casual but with lots and lots of signals for one another (II.102).

His attitude towards Jane's youth is a mixture of nostalgic jealousy, admiration, and contempt:

Oh I read about you. . . . I see you in the streets. I hear what you say, the sounds you make . . . the wounds you inflict without ever longing to hurt. . . . You've no shame of what you are, and very little, well not much doubt as to what you'll become. . . . You'll hitch-hike and make your young noises from one end of Europe to the other without a thought of having the correct currency or the necessary language. . . . But . . . , I still don't think that what you're doing will ever, even, even, even, approach the fibbing, mumping, pinched little worm of energy eating away in this me of mine, I mean (II.106).

Because there is nothing in society to rouse Bill to significant action, we witness during the course of the play, energy recoiling upon itself and leading to its own eventual destruction.

The quality of Maitland's nostalgia is "slightly down-at heel and old fashioned, highly analytical of the actual sensations of pleasure and independence, and hopeful of recapturing an art of casual communication he has long since lost."¹³ In the second act he speculates about his wife's death:

There used to be a time when I used to speculate about her death. Oh, but not only Anna's. I'd be crunching back up that new path, with the planks and the wet clay and the flowers. Perhaps I'd have walked out of that place on my own, there'd have been no one else. I could have done as I liked. I could have sat in Lyons and got myself a cup of coffee and a roll and butter all on my own . . . and I'd smile sentimentally at the coloured girl who was clearing away the plates just because she was coloured. . . and I'd kid myself we were friendly to one another (II.86).

But Maitland is no longer able to experience such events. He can only wish for such things in a world which has become for him "a playing field of pain."¹⁴

I want to feel tender, I want to be comforting and encouraging and full of fun and future things But all I feel is as if my head were bigger and bigger and spiked and falling off, like a mace, it gets in my way, or keeps getting too close (I.35).

There is no place left for the expression of true feeling, for that down-to-earth communication which in Osborne's opinion

¹³Trussler, p. 136.

¹⁴ Time, 10 (Dec. 1965), p. 19.

make people true human beings.

Maitland's mental disintegration is Osborne's dramatic exposition of his vision of the modern world as a playing field of pain. This vision is conveyed in the technique of the play. "Osborne has intricately blended his technical and thematic requirements so that each reinforces the other."¹⁵ In the first act, the stylistic modulations reflect Bill's gradual loss of a sense of reality and this develops in the second into his total incapacity for objective relationships. Trussler finds that in this way the play can be viewed "as spanning not so much the events of two successive days, as the impressionistic, extra-temporal course of a nervous breakdown."¹⁶

The play starts off with a dream in which we learn much of what we must know of Bill Maitland. Hayman is of the opinion that the dream is inconsistent with other parts of the play. He writes that the dream sequence is "far too long in itself and . . . has very little connection stylistically or thematically, with the play that follows. It shows that Bill is anxious and guilty, afraid that the Law Society is after him, and at some level wanting to be taken to task. . . . But the scene comes nowhere to being justified by the little that the subsequent story gains from it."¹⁷ I disagree with Hayman since the dream introduces us to the play's major thematic

¹⁵Trussler, p. 131.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁷Hayman, p. 65.

strands. In the stage directions Osborne describes the dream as the "prison of embryonic helplessness" (I.20). The emphasis throughout the play is on pain: the physical pain felt by the protagonist is symbolic of the psychological pain felt by his generation:

. . . I am by nature indecisive. . . . I am almost forty years old, and I . . . have depended almost entirely on other people's efforts. Anything else would have been impossible for me, and I always knew in my heart that only that it was that kept me alive and functioning at all (I.19).

The dramatist consistently expands the notion of the embryo in the play and it furthers well the purpose of anger. Maitland is like a foetus in the womb of society. During the period of his development he is sustained in this womb by all its false values. His "birth" or his emergence: his coming into his own as a solicitor and human being, is extraordinarily painful because the sustenance during his period of development was insufficient.

The dream also immediately launches us onto my main concern in the play: the theme of anger. Our protagonist is charged with "having unlawfully and wickedly published . . . and caused to be procured and made known, a wicked, bawdy and scandalous object. Intending . . . to vitiate and corrupt the morals of the leige subjects of our Lady the queen . . . to raise in them lustful desires and to bring the leige subjects into a state of wickedness, lewdness and debauchery" (I.9-10). The accused pleads not guilty to the charge and yet affirms his belief in a society whose technological progress he cares

nothing for. One source of Maitland's anger then, is his inability to express his real feelings. The charge clearly shows society as the object of his anger. The rest of the play goes on to develop this anger in terms of Maitland's isolation and his mental deterioration. The dream subtly introduces the theme of anger and the pain and futility it occasions. Not only this, but it introduces the solipsistic nature of the play which is consonant with Maitland's receding sense of reality.

Inadmissible Evidence is increasingly impressionistic in form in the second act, where various telephone conversations and Maitland's conversations with his clients take place. These all show Bill's diminishing sense of human contact. Osborne explains this effect in his stage directions at the beginning of Act II:

This telephone conversation and the ones that follow it and some of the duologues should progressively resemble the feeling of dream and the unreality of Bill's giving evidence at the beginning of Act I. Some of the time it should all seem actually taking place at the particular moment, naturally, casual, lucid, unclouded. At others the grip of the dream grows tighter . . . the presence of the person on the other end should be made very real indeed, but sometimes it should trail off into a feeling of doubt as to whether there is anyone to speak to at all (II.59).

The beginning of Act Two further expands on the notion of "embryonic helplessness" which the dramatist introduced at the beginning of the play. His stage directions indicate the helplessness of the individual when deprived of the means of adequate communication.

In spite of Bill's many faults what is Osborne's attitude towards him and what is the significance of the play's title? As Bryden stated, with Inadmissible Evidence Osborne once more after eight years made a return to representativeness.¹⁸ As such Inadmissible Evidence unlike The Entertainer, "is all special pleading. Maitland is immersed in self-pity: but the empathetic totality with which an audience comes to comprehend him makes him a worthy subject for their own pity."¹⁹ We know that Maitland is unworthy of love and yet our attitude is one of sympathy. Simultaneously, he is self-judging and asking the audience to judge him. Bill Maitland in asking members of a modern society to judge him, presents his life as it unfolds in the play as his evidence. And he is a man destroyed by this same modern society. For this reason his evidence is inadmissible.

Contrary to what many critics think, anger did not play itself out in the plays between Look Back in Anger and Inadmissible Evidence. If anything, the dramatist allowed the emotion to smoulder since it never again flared as flamboyantly as it did in the first play. But Inadmissible Evidence is an important play in the dramatist's career. In it, Maitland is revealed to us, not so much as another type of angry hero, but as a continuation of the same type Osborne began in Jimmy Porter.

¹⁸Bryden, p. 410.

¹⁹Trussler, p. 121.

Section Five

"Luther: The Angry Young Man par excellence"

Martin Luther resembles Jimmy Porter more than any other Osborne protagonist. In choosing Luther as an angry hero, Osborne is continuing the dramatization of the Angry Young Man he began in Look Back in Anger, since Luther appealed to him mainly as a rebel defying the Establishment. Osborne is not so much concerned with an accurate interpretation of the historical Luther, instead, he "tried to balance the idea of man as an individual with that of man as part of society."¹ The overall theme of the play is "a man's rebellion against the world he was born into and his attempt to understand life through a personal relationship with God. As such, Luther may be regarded as of more than strictly historical or theological appeal."²

The dramatist gives an account of what he aimed to do in Luther:

It is difficult to pin-point just how Luther started. It's been brewing over a long period. I wanted to write a play about religious experience and various other things, and this happened to be the vehicle for it. Historical plays are usually anathema to me, but this isn't a costume drama. I hope that it won't make any difference if you don't know anything about Luther himself, and I suspect that most people don't. In fact the historical character is almost incidental. The method is Shakespeare's or almost anyone else's you can think of."³

¹Carter, p. 76.

²Ibid., p. 78.

³John Osborne in "That Awful Museum," interview with R. Findlater, Twentieth Century (February 1961).

In his portrayal of Luther, Osborne places more emphasis on the human rather than the historical aspects of the reformer's personality. I agree with Carter when he suggests that Osborne shares with Luther "the same search for identity and the same refutation of the inherited traditions of life", and that "Martin is symbolic of Osborne's grand design, the recovery of personal belief and a private conscience"; even the fact "that the monk is uncertain of the way in which to reform the world may well be another parallel with Osborne."⁴

Luther shares many qualities in common with Osborne's other protagonists: their inner violence, their feeling and capacity for suffering, the despair and anger which arise from dissatisfaction with existing conditions and not knowing what to do to change them. In Luther's case, even though change did come in the form of the Reformation, he is never free from the nagging doubts and fears of the shape this change must take.

In order to discover the affinity of Luther's anger with Porter's, I will attempt to give an outline of Luther's background and relate it to that of the Angry Young Man. This is important to any understanding of the personality of Luther which Osborne portrays in his play. The source which Osborne faithfully followed in writing Luther is Eric Erickson's book Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History.⁵

⁴Carter, p. 77.

⁵Erik H. Erickson, Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962).

According to Erickson, the most dominant influence in Martin's life from childhood to young adulthood, at the point where Martin entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt, was his father, Hans Luder. Hans represented a growing capitalistic force in Germany that challenged the material power of the Church.⁶ Hans was an ex-peasant turned miner, a hard, thrifty, ambitious man who tried to develop and impose on his children in as short a time as possible

those virtues which serve the pursuit of new goals: the negative goal of avoiding the proletarianization which befell many ex-peasants, and the positive goal of working himself up into the managerial class of miners. . . . In Martin's upbringing, then, the image of the peasant may have become what we call a negative identity fragment, i.e., an identity a family wishes to live down--even though it may sentimentalize it at moments--and the mere hint of which it tries to suppress in its children. As a matter of fact, the literature on Luther abounds in the same ambivalence. In one place a reference to his peasant nature is made to underline his sturdiness; in another, to explain his vulgarity and blockheadedness. . . . To call Hans Luder a peasant . . . shows either sentimentality or contempt. He was an early small industrialist and capitalist, first working to earn enough to invest, and then guarding his investment with a kind of dignified ferocity.⁷

He made his son go first to Latin school, then to University, and he expected him to become a jurist or a burgo~~ma~~ster. No price was too high for such an investment.

In his determination for self-upliftment, Erickson reports that Hans attempted to bridge the gap between his past and the class of burghers he aimed to join, through education.

⁶Erickson, p. 95.

⁷Ibid., pp. 52-3.

So that he "beat into Martin what was characteristic of his own past, even while he meant to prepare him for a future better than his own present."⁸ Such an atmosphere of strict discipline both at home and in school, and the religious climate in the community and church were more oppressive than inspiring for the young Martin. He later blamed this atmosphere "for . . . his intensity of monastic 'scrupulosity', his obsessional preoccupation with the question of how on earth one may do enough to please the various agencies of judgment--teacher, father, superior, and most of all one's conscience."⁹

Erickson relates an incident which occurred at the Latin school that Martin attended; here it was customary to appoint a spy or informer who wrote down the names of the boys who spoke German or the vernacular, swore, or were unruly. Punishment at the end of the week was usually one stroke for one point against bad behaviour. Luther said during one week he once received fifteen strokes. Erickson makes an interesting comment on this incident. He sees such events as having a decided effect on Luther's later volubility, his scrupulosity, and his eventual rebellion:

Note the overall injunction against verbal freedom: against speaking impulsively, or in German . . . and note also the occurrence of a judgment day at the end of each week when there was hell to pay for sins recorded on a secret ledger, sins committed so far in the past one might not even remember them. This

⁸Erickson, p. 77.

⁹Ibid., pp. 78-9.

temporal and relentless accumulation of known, half-known or unrecognized sins was a sore subject in all of Luther's later life. He apparently associated it with another experience with temporal qualities--the experience of learning that nothing was ever good enough for teacher or father, and that any chance to please them seemed always removed by one more graduation in one more, one better school.¹⁰

What kind of boy was Luther from childhood to young adulthood? I have already mentioned the fact that he attended Latin school. As a Latin school boy he had special status in the world of children. For one thing, his uniform marked him out as a future magistrate, cleric or privy counselor. "It was a good uniform with which to express (and hide) a precocious conscience."¹¹ He was not permitted to appear in public in anything but a uniform. Naturally, he must also abstain from games played by the ruder sort of boys: ice-skating or throwing snowballs.¹² Because of a scarcity of facts concerning Martin Luther's childhood, one cannot know for certain how much "Martin was or was not one of those boys with thick hides who can adjust to any system; make the most of whatever status the system provides."¹³ There is on record the fact that he stole a nut and was severely beaten for it, but nowhere is there mention made of the fact that he "indulged in those small, physical, verbal and moral explosions without which strictly kept children rot inside. Rather, he

¹⁰Erickson, p. 79.

¹¹Ibid., p. 83.

¹²Ibid., pp. 82-3.

¹³Ibid., p. 83.

was one of the best students all the way through; and there are indications that he did rot in a slow way, often sinking into a kind of sadness. This does not mean, however, that he did not maintain up to the very gates of the monastery, the role of . . . a 'good fellow', with its active good will in social and musical affairs."¹⁴

What Erickson gives as his version of young man Luther is a picture of the Angry Young Man par excellence:

I could not conceive of a young great man in the years before he becomes a great young man without assuming that inwardly he harbours a quite inarticulate stubbornness, a secret furious inviolacy, a gathering of impressions for eventual use within some as yet dormant configuration of thought--that he is tenaciously waiting it out for a day of vengeance when the semi-deliberate straggler will suddenly be found at the helm, and he who took so much will reveal the whole extent of his potential mastery. . .¹⁵

Of course one might add the fact that when Luther entered the monastery he had not the slightest idea of the role he was going to play in religious history.

The points of affinity between Luther and the Angry Young Man of whom Porter is the representative are clearly seen when one compares Erickson's comments on Luther's boyhood to that of Hoggart's on the development of the Angry Young Man. The first major point of similarity and one which no doubt attracted Osborne is isolation. The Angry Young Man's isolation was due to an educational system which marked him out as intellectually superior in his working-class environment.

¹⁴Erickson, p. 83.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 83.

Erickson conjectures that the same must have been true in Luther's case. Luther wore a uniform that marked him out as intellectually and socially superior and is literally shoved into a system of education by an over-ambitious father. Hoggart's Angry Young Man participated in a scholarship system that was involuntarily imposed on him.

Hoggart describes his Angry Young Man as being at the "friction point of two cultures"¹⁶ and this increased his isolation. He was obedient to the dictates of school, but part of him still yearned for the simplicity of an uncomplicated, working-class family life. Isolation brings nostalgia. Erickson sees the conflict in Luther's early education as being responsible not only for his isolation and nostalgia, but for some of the larger crises which were to arise during his manhood.

This conflictedness of Martin's early education, which was in and behind him when he entered the world of school and college, corresponded to the conflicts inherent in the ideological-historical universe which lay around and ahead of him. The theological problems which he tackled as a young adult, of course reflected the peculiarly tenacious problem of the domestic relationship with his own father; but this was true to a large extent because both problems, the domestic and the universal, were part of one ideological crisis: a crisis about the theory and practice, the power and responsibility of the moral authority invested in fathers: on earth and in heaven; at home, in the market place, and in politics; in the castles, the capitals and in Rome.¹⁷

¹⁶Hoggart, p. 239.

¹⁷Erickson, p. 77.

The main force which Osborne's and Erickson's Luther had to reckon with, but which might or might not be missing in the development of Hoggart's Angry Young Man is the over-ambitious father. The senior Porter did not influence Jimmy's life in the way Hans influenced Martin's because the Spanish Civil War rendered Jimmy fatherless when he was only ten years old. But the senior Porter through his suffering influenced his son's anger. Jimmy claimed that he was the only one in his family who cared about his dying father for a whole year; from an early age he learned what it was to be angry and helpless.

After the relatively sheltered existence of school life, Hoggart's Angry Young Man is frustrated with the world when he is left alone to face reality. He had been trained like a circus-horse for scholarship winning and he did not possess the inherent vitality and resilience of boys of an earlier generation. He played very little in the streets and Hoggart suggests that his sexual growth was perhaps delayed. He did not possess boldness and the readiness to take a chance. He became a displaced citizen. Hoggart's Angry Young Man at this stage corresponds very closely with Erickson's picture of the school boy Luther who possessed a precocious conscience, but was deprived of outlets: games and moral and verbal explosions which caused him to sink slowly into a kind of sadness. One must mention, however, that in spite of these psychological problems, Luther was following a socially acceptable path.

Hoggart suggests that the Angry Young Man's sexual growth was delayed and no doubt this was the case with Luther. Was Luther ready to face the life his father had him trained for: an early marriage and a prosperous career? There is much debate and conjecture about the matter, but Erickson suggests that Martin, shortly before his entry into the monastery "must have been in the throes of a conflict which probably made the idea of a marital commitment repugnant to the point of open panic."¹⁸ Exactly what this conflict was we do not know, but it led him to defy his father and seek admission to the Augustinian monastery. This is the first stage of rebellion. Because of the lack of historical data, one cannot conclusively say what happened during the thunderstorm of July 2, 1505, when Luther received his call to the monastic life, except that he did not embark on his father's dream of entering Law school and of facing an early marriage. He chose instead to enter a monastery. It is at the first stage of Luther's rebellion that Osborne begins his play.

There is not only a close affinity between Luther's background and that of the Angry Young Man, but the Reformer's task is similar to the dramatist's in that both attempt to do the dirty work of their respective generations; both reformer and dramatist severely criticise the Establishment. In an earlier section of this essay, I referred to Osborne's sympathy for the working-class, since he thinks this class

¹⁸Erickson, p. 91.

which he calls "the Monster" was given a raw deal; they have been dumped on a dangerous "dirty ash can". Osborne declares that part of his task as a dramatist is to try to clear away this rubbish, not only at the risk of getting his hands dirty, or losing his friends, but by becoming "smelly" as well.¹⁹

When Erickson wrote his book Young Man Luther, he included in his rationale for writing the book one characteristic which Luther shared with Freud: "a grim willingness to do the dirty work of their respective ages: for each kept human conscience in focus in an era of material and scientific expansion. Luther referred to his early work as . . . 'to work in the mud' and complained that he had worked all alone for ten years. . . ." ²⁰

Throughout his career we find Luther constantly attempting to identify himself with the class of his origin, the peasantry, through his coarseness, his use of plain German instead of Latin, and his attempts to free the peasantry from the clutches of the Church. In spite of his unequivocal sympathy for them, his attitude towards peasants remained as ambivalent as Osborne's towards the working-class. Osborne calls the working-class a "greedy monster", Luther saw the transformation of his peasants into such a monster during the Peasants' Rebellion of 1525, when they became "the devil's organ."²¹

¹⁹J. Osborne in Declaration, ed. T. Maschler, p. 61.

²⁰Erickson, p. 9.

²¹Citations to Luther in my text are to Luther by John Osborne (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), (III.2.89).

From what I have mentioned above, the idea of body stench as Osborne uses it in Luther is symbolic of a sense of commitment to a cause. It forms part of the important theme of physicality in the play. In Act ~~Three~~, Scene ~~Two~~, the Knight accuses Luther of having turned against the peasants:

Knight: That day in Worms . . . you were like a pig under glass weren't you? . . . I could smell every inch of you even where I was standing. All you've ever managed to do is convert everything into stench and dying and peril. . . . You could even have brought freedom and order in at one and the same time (p. 89).

and Martin refutes the accusation:

MARTIN: I smell because of my own argument, I smell because I never stop disputing with Him, and because I expect Him to keep His Word. Now then! If your peasant rebelled against that Word, that was worse than murder because it laid the whole country waste, and who knows now what God will make of us Germans! (III.ii.91).

Commitment to a cause is a matter of individual choice. In Martin's case his conscience dictated this choice.

Allsop defines the angry mood in Britain of the mid nineteen-fifties as "dissentience", and he calls the Angry Young Men "dissentients" rather than "dissenters" because he says, this last word implies "an organised bloc separation from the Establishment, whereas dissentient has a more modulated meaning--more to disagree with majority sentiments and opinions."²² So, according to Allsop, where Porter is merely a "dissentient", Luther is an outright "dissenter" and he becomes one through his decision to enter a monastery.

²²Allsop, p. 17.

This marks the first stage of his dissent. The ambitious Hans represents a form of the Establishment. Martin himself questions: "Churches, Kings, and fathers--why do they ask so much, and why do they all get so much more than they deserve?" (I.iii.41). This brings into focus the nature of the filial relationship between Hans and Martin, which Erickson sees as a determining factor in the major crises of Martin Luther's life. Osborne gives full dramatic expression to this conflict between father and son and the rebellion of the son in Act I of Luther. The dramatic implication in the play is that this early rebellion foreshadows Luther's later break with the Church.

The rebellion in which Luther's anger found active expression has two aspects: the micro-social and the macro-social.

In Act I during the confrontation between Hans and Martin, the latter questions his father: "Father, why do you hate me being here?" (I.iii.38) and Hans himself answers the question: "You could have been a burgomaster, you could have been a magistrate, you could have been a chancellor, you could have been anything" (I.iii.39). When he laments the loss of his investment in Martin's education: "Well, I think I deserve a little more than you've given me." Martin replies: "I've given you! I don't have to give you! I am--that's all I need to give to you " (I.iii.41-42). This scene is the only confrontation between Hans and Martin in the play and its dramatic intensity contributes much to the total meaning of the play by defining the nature of Martin's rebellion against

the authority of his father; the problem hinges on the question of feeling and communication between the two.

Hans confesses that though he beat Martin "fairly often and pretty hard sometimes . . . it wasn't more than any other boy" (I.iii.43). This calls forth a Porter-like speech from Luther in which he recalls his suffering and his need to be loved:

You disappointed me . . . and not just a few times, but at sometime of everyday I ever remember hearing or seeing you, but, as you say, maybe that was also no different from any other boy. But I loved you best. It was always you I wanted. I wanted your love more than anyone's, and if anyone was to hold me, I wanted it to be you (I.iii.43).

In connection with this, a comment from Erickson will help to amplify the nature of the relationship presently under discussion.

A child can feel ugly towards somebody for whom he does not specially care; but he feels sadly resentful towards somebody he loves. Similarly, a parent could be 'at pains to win back' almost anybody . . . but he would try to reaccustom somebody to himself only for the purpose of restoring an intimate daily association. . . . Martin, even mortally afraid, could not really hate his father, he could only be sad; and Hans while he could not let the boy come close, and was murderously angry at times, could not let him go for long. They had a mutual and deep investment in each other which neither of them could or would abandon, although neither of them was able to bring it to any kind of fruition.²³

This is the reason why Hans is a reckoning force throughout all of Martin's life. Where Jimmy Porter complains of watching an ailing father die for a whole year, Hans in Luther complains of watching his son die a spiritual death: "I see a young man,

²³Erickson, p. 65.

learned and full of life, my son, abusing his youth with fear and humiliation" (I.iii.42). Hans views Martin's rebellion as a type of slow death. Carter comments on the relationship between father and son: "This scene is intensely personal as father and son explore their relationship, and though each in his own way admits his love for the other, they acknowledge at the same time their estrangement. We see in this how Martin will have the same emotions towards God, his need for love and his fear of rejection."²⁴

The first act then, is a psychological interpretation of the private world of Martin Luther and as such explains the micro-social aspect of Luther's anger.

Luther shares with all other Osborne heroes a capacity for intense suffering, an example of this is seen when he recollects the whipping he received from his mother for stealing a nut:

MARTIN: She beat me once for stealing a nut, your wife. I remember it so well, she beat me until the blood came, I was so surprised to see it on my fingertips. . . . Always before when I was beaten for something, the pain seemed outside of me in some way, as if it belonged to the rest of the world, and not only me. But, on that day, for the first time, the pain belonged to me and no one else, it went no further than my body, bent between my knees and my chin (I.iii.43-4).

Such suffering is Porter-like in its appeal. Throughout the play, Luther's physical suffering is symptomatic of his mental condition. The physical disabilities of Luther, the profuse

²⁴Carter, p. 81.

sweating and chronic constipation convey well "the sense of a character locked up in his own tension and fear."²⁵ So that Porter's cry in Anger: "The voice that cries out doesn't have to be a weakling's does it?" is applicable throughout almost every stage of Luther's career, since he exhibits much doubt as to what he will become.

During the first act we also see the introduction of themes familiar to Osborne's plays, themes which I have earlier established as main features of the anger of Osborne's protagonists. The theme of isolation is a permanent condition of the Angry Young Man. Following Luther's entry into the monastery his growing isolation there is well shown. Hayman says that "the intensity of internal pressure leads to an exorbitant guilt for which confession is an adequate safety valve . . . all authority is irksome to him and there is never any chance of his sinking his feelings, of being special into membership of a group. In that negative aspect, Luther does stand out as an individual, but the isolation becomes much more real than any kind of positive commitment even to God."²⁶ The outward expression of Martin's internal conflicts cut him off from his fellow monks. This sense of not feeling membership for a group corresponds with the "classlessness" of Jimmy Porter. In this way Luther's isolation is the same as Porter's. During the confession scene, "Martin is shown to be so sensitive

²⁵Katharine Worth, "The Angry Young Man," in Casebook, p. 113.

²⁶Hayman, p. 44.

to religious ritual that he must either be ridiculing it or supernaturally inspired."²⁷ His confessions stand out in marked contrast from the trivial concerns of the other monks:

Martin: I am a worm and no man, a byword and a laughing stock. Crush out the worminess in me, stamp on me.

BROTHER: I confess I have three times made mistakes in the Oratory, in psalm singing and Antiphon (I.i.19).

The nature of Martin's isolation brings to light the paradox in his nature: his humility and his arrogance. Not only this, but it also brings into question his commitment to God. How real is it? "Luther's relationship with God is rather like Jimmy Porter's with Alison: what is made very real is the resentment, the feeling of giving everything and getting nothing back except hatred or indifference, but the moments where Osborne tries to build up a positive feeling of love don't work at all."²⁸ Just before the celebration of his first Mass, Martin talks about his relationship with God:

MARTIN: It's this, just this. All I can feel . . . is God's hatred.

BRO: WEINAND: Repeat the Apostles' Creed.

MARTIN: He's like a glutton, the way he gorges me, he's a glutton. He gorges me and then spits me out in lumps (I.ii.28).

Jimmy Porter, in Look Back in Anger, uses the same kind of imagery when he complains about the love between himself and Alison:

²⁷Carter, p. 80.

²⁸Hayman, p. 44.

Jimmy: . . . She just devours me whole everytime,
as if I were some over-large rabbit. That's
me. That bulge around her navel. . . . Me
buried alive down there, and going mad,
smothered in that peaceful looking coil (I.37-38).

And again, Luther seeks the mediatorship of Mary in order to
appease God's anger towards him:

MARTIN: Oh Mary . . . all I can see of Christ is a
flame and raging on a rainbow. Pray to your
Son, and ask Him to still His anger, for I
can't raise my eyes to look at Him. Am I
the only one to see all this and suffer? (I.ii.30).

Erickson's comments on Martin's anxiety on the occasion of
his first Mass are very pertinent in the light of anger:

Martin, at this moment, faced the Great Divide of
his life, as every young man must sooner or later--
the divide which separates once and for all the
contributaries to the future from the regressive
rivulets seeking the past. In front of him was the
Eucharist's uncertain grace, behind him his father's
potential wrath. His faith at that moment lacked
the secure formulation of the nature of mediator-
ship. . . . He had no living concept of Christ; he
was, in fact, mortally afraid of the whole riddle of
mediatorship. Because of all this, he may well have
been morbidly sensitive to some theological problems
which only later did he have the courage to face and
challenge as true moral problems.²⁹

Act One, Scene Two of the play opens with a monologue
by Martin which begins:

MARTIN: I lost the body of a child, a child's body,
the eyes of a child; and at the first sound
of my own childish voice. . . . I was
afraid, and I went back to find it. But
I'm still afraid. . . . Continually!
For instance of the noise the Prior's
dog makes on a still evening when he
rolls over on his side and licks his
teeth. I am afraid of the darkness

²⁹Erickson, p. 140.

and the hole in it; and I see it sometime of everyday! And some days more than once even, and there's no bottom to it, no bottom to my breath, and I can't reach it (I.ii.24).

This monologue introduces many qualities typical of the angry young hero. Firstly, it introduces nostalgia in the form of the "lost body of a child motif". "This search for a lost identity, for a lost innocent childhood . . . runs through the play to the last moment when Luther dandles his own baby on his knee. It owes most to Erickson's psychological pattern, but it also perhaps achieves something human and universal, that nostalgia for a vanished innocence which has haunted all men from the time of Adam until now."³⁰ As a further illumination of the quality of Luther's nostalgia I might add that when the protagonist longs for the innocence of childhood he also longs for the love of a protecting father, since he himself has never really experienced such love. Towards the end of the scene in which the Knight accuses him of turning on the peasants, Luther makes a sermon on the story of Abraham and Isaac, in which he expresses his idea of what true fatherly love is.

MARTIN: . . . Abraham was . . . an old man . . . he was a hundred years old, when . . . what must have been a miracle happened . . . a son was born to him. And he loved Isaac. Well, he loved him with such intensity, one can only diminish it by description. But to Abraham his little son was a miraculous thing, a small, incessant . . . animal . . . astonishment. And in the child he sought the father (III.ii.92).

³⁰Rupp, p. 33.

Secondly, the monologue also introduces Luther's panic and despair when he describes the darkness as having a hole with no bottom to it; panic and despair as we saw in the case of Bill Maitland are also conditions of Osborne's angry protagonists.

Before concluding the discussion on the micro-social aspect of Luther's anger, I must mention one event which Osborne dramatizes and which Erickson makes much of in his book: Martin Luther's fit in the choir. At the end of Act One, Scene One of Luther, Martin is seen to throw a violent fit:

muscles rigid, breath suspended, then jerking uncontrollably as he is seized in a raging fit. Two brothers go to him, but Martin writhes with such ferocity, that they can scarcely hold him down. He tries to speak, the effort is frantic, and eventually, he is able to roar out a word at a time.

MARTIN: Not! Me! I am not! (I.i.23).

According to Erickson, in the fit in the choir, Martin experienced "the epileptoid paroxysm of the ego-less, the rage of denial of the identity which was to be discarded."³¹ Luther "is at the crossroads of obedience to his father--an obedience of extraordinary tenacity and deviousness--and to the monastic vows which at that time he was straining to obey almost to the point of absurdity."³² The fit is a physical manifestation of

³¹Erickson, p. 39.

³²Ibid., p. 38.

pent-up anger, the roaring as Osborne dramatizes it suggests "a strong element of otherwise suppressed rage."³³

So far I have paid attention to just the micro-social aspect of Luther's anger which Osborne concentrates on in the first act; the macro-social aspect concerns rebellion against the Church itself. As usual with Osborne, his stage directions indicate the state of mind of his protagonist, or they may be symbolic of a particular aspect of his anger which the dramatist wishes to emphasize. At the beginning of Act Two, we note his stage directions:

After the intense private 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 (p. 46).

The stage directions are indicative of the split in the play between micro-social and macro-social aspects of Luther's anger.

Osborne is not very much concerned in Act Two with the weighty theological arguments which came about as a result of Luther's break with the Church. He aims at something other than this--he tries to make Luther come alive.³⁴ So that the nature of faith which historically was Luther's main problem is never really discussed in the play. Osborne gives glimpses of the public world which envelops Luther in the second act. Where Act One dealt with the identity crisis of Luther, in the second part we see him beginning to assume an official identity.

³³Erickson, p. 38.

³⁴Carter, p. 83.

It is the moment when life "suddenly becomes biography" for him. In many ways, "life began for Luther all over again when the world grabbed eagerly at his ninety-five theses and forced him into the role of rebel, reformer and spiritual dictator."³⁵

Osborne's other protagonists, Jimmy Porter and Archie Rice never really discover the utopias they yearn after; Luther, unlike them, has the means at his disposal to change the world. Before the situations arise which will bring these changes, we see a restless Martin Luther, learned and eminent, yet full of doubt and in need of consolation. His attitude is similar to that of Jimmy Porter's longing for good, brave causes worth dying for. The Vicar General of the Augustinian Order tries to console Luther:

MARTIN: Tell me, Father, have you never felt
humiliated to find that you belong to a
world that's dying?
STAUPITZ: No, I don't think I have.
MARTIN: Surely, this must be the last age of time
we're living in. There can't be anymore
left but the black bottom of the bucket
(II.ii.54).

Martin cannot be consoled. He expresses his despair for humanity and envisages his position in terms of "a ripe stool in the world's straining anus, and at any moment we're about to let each other go "(II.ii.55). Luther here finds his counterpart in the restless Jimmy Porter shouting to the world to wake up and give him just a little human enthusiasm. Von Staupitz is moderate and assures the young man that there are still causes left worth fighting for. At this point he

³⁵Erickson, p. 54.

introduces the question of Luther's attack on the system of indulgences. As with Porter, the paradox of the angry hero again comes into play. Luther's attack on the system of indulgences indicates his energy and his despair. Unlike Porter, however, Luther is not futile. This is the main point of difference between them; Luther has at his disposal the means to fight for his cause.

The dramatist's iconoclastic attitudes have already been established in the first section of this essay and the very reason why Luther appealed to him, should indicate his attitude to the Church in this play. In the stage directions opening Act Two, he suggests that caricature replace portraiture, still, he gives eminence where eminence is due, as in his handling of the character of Cajetan. The caricature of Tetzel, the indulgence vendor, "is theatrically quite devastating."³⁶ The scene in which Tetzel hawks his wares gave Osborne the opportunity to ridicule with a large measure of success.

In this second part of the play, Osborne in episodic fashion, takes us swiftly from scene to scene over great lapses of time. The scenes are short so that there is no time for the dramatic development or expansion of the personalities involved. Many of the scenes are just statements of the various steps in the second stage of Luther's rebellion. In the main, they are depictions of Luther's public life. As Carter says, after the caricature of Tetzel, in Act Two, Scene

³⁶Carter, p. 81.

One, "the following scenes seem to be anticlimatic."³⁷

In Act Two, Scene Four, Luther is summoned before Cajetan, the papal legate in Germany; the latter asks "the excessive doctor" (II.iv.65), to admit his faults, to retract all his errors and sermons and in future to refrain from propagating controversial ideas damaging to the Church's teaching; Luther refuses to retract until he is shown where he has erred. In this scene we get the most telling expression of the task of the Angry Young Man, doing the dirty work of his generation:

Cajetan: Oh it's fine for someone like you to criticize
and start tearing down Christendom, but tell
me this: what will you build in its place?

MARTIN: A withered arm is best amputated, an infected
place is best scoured out, and so you pray for
healthy tissue and something sturdy and clean
that was crumbling and full of filth (II.iv.72).

This sounds very much like Osborne defending his anti-establishment attitude to his critics. He has no definite plans for reform, but he implies that there is no need to be pessimistic since the main idea is first to clear away the filth.

Cajetan's summation of Luther is that he is a man who "hates himself . . . he could only love others." (II.iv.74). This is a restatement of the Porter doctrine that to be angry is to care. This Porter-like mission as Martin Luther fulfills it is one of love, of concern for humanity.

Jimmy Porter threatened to write a book when he would

³⁷Carter, p. 81.

no longer be running a sweet stall. But this book ~~would~~ be written in flames a mile high, and ~~would not~~ be recollected in tranquility, but in fire and blood. In the section of this essay dealing with Jimmy Porter, I said that the terms "fire" and "blood" imply not only the blaze of Jimmy's anger, "but a renewal, a sort of angry baptism in which Porter might have achieved greatness or found his world." In Act Two, Scene Six, Luther uses fire to destroy the papal bull and books of canon law, and in so doing he finds that creativity Porter was so furiously searching for. Erickson comments: "Luther was gladder about this pyrotechnic deed . . . than about anything he had said in his whole life. Even as hearing his own words had previously inspired his convictions, seeing the fire he set seems to have inflamed his rebelliousness. From this time on, the struggle set in between the Word and the Deed, between the method of persuasion and the method of fire."³⁸

When in the disputation with Eck, Martin is again asked to retract his books and his errors and he says: ". . . I don't believe in Popes or Councils--unless I am refuted by scripture and my conscience is captured by God's own Word. I cannot and will not recant, since to act against one's conscience is neither safe nor honest" (III.i.85), we hear once more the old voice of defiance which was established upon his entry into the monastery. Luther is a man of doubt, but for such a man, the surest guide is his conscience. "In his

³⁸Erickson, p. 230.

native German he spoke those words of conscience which were a new kind of revelation achieved on the inner battlefield. At Worms Luther faced ostracism and death, not for the sake of an established creed or ties of ancestry and tradition; he did so because of personal convictions, derived from inner conflict and still subject to further conflict. The conscience he spoke of was not an inner sediment of formalized morality, it was the best a single man between heaven, hell and earth could know."³⁹

The historical Luther was violent and rude and this must have endeared him to Osborne. He was a man of poetic temper "whose language burned with imaginative life: when he described something he took to be evil he made it sound evil, yielding no telling phrase, however gross to the dictates of good taste."⁴⁰ An example of Luther's rhetoric is heard in the burning-of-the-papal-bull diatribe:

MARTIN: I have been served with a piece of paper.
 . . . It has come to me from a latrine called Rome, the capital of the devil's own sweet empire. . . . These lies they rise up from the paper like fumes from the bog of Europe; because papal decretals are the devil's excretals. You see this signature? Signed by one certain midden cock called Leo, an over-indulged jake's attendant, a glittering worm in excrement, known to you as his holiness the Pope (II.vi.79).

This surge of rhetoric which Luther let loose is more violent in expression than anything we have so far witnessed in the play but does not exceed anything that Porter was capable of.

³⁹Erickson, pp. 230-1.

⁴⁰Worth in Casebook, p. 113.

In terms of anger, Erickson suggests that "Luther's use of repudiative and anal patterns was a safety valve",⁴¹ and that the tonal nature of such profanity "is explosive, its affect repudiative and its general attitude a regressed, defiant obstinacy. It is the quickest way for many to find release from feeling victimized by the impudence of others."⁴²

In the meeting between Cajetan and Martin, Cajetan accuses Martin of being nothing but a "common rebel".

CAJETAN: . . . you don't want to break rules, you want to make them. You'd be a master breaker and maker and no one would be able to stand up to you . . . or ever sufficiently repair the damage you did (II.iv.73).

Erickson noted a characteristic of great young rebels is "the absolute need . . . to take the lead, not only themselves but over all the forces and people who impinge on them."⁴³ Luther has such firm control over the forces which impinged on him, that he himself becomes the Establishment: "There is no such thing as an orderly revolution" (III.ii.89), he tells the Knight. This explains his support of the princes in the quelling of the Peasant's Rebellion.

Just how must one interpret the older Luther we find at the end of the play? He is a Luther who has reverted to the opposite end of Osborne's scale of values. There is a certain ease and loss of tension in the atmosphere of this last scene. We see a complacent Luther settled into the

⁴¹Erickson, p. 247.

⁴²Ibid., p. 246.

⁴³Ibid., p. 157.

domesticity of married life.

Luther ends on the same note of reconciliation and optimism with which Osborne ended Look Back in Anger. Some critics consider it a weak ending because Luther at the end of the play is no longer angry; but Osborne never set out to prescribe solutions to the problems posed in his play.

In Luther no other character except Hans is fully drawn. None of them in fact, ever reaches the stature of the protagonist. Osborne presents Hans as a formidable force; no doubt his reliance on Erickson is responsible for this. The other characters in the play: Cajetan, Von Staupitz, Tetzl, Katharine von Bora, are merely types who cannot be perceived three-dimensionally.

I have tried by extensive use of Osborne's source for the play, Erickson's Young Man Luther, to examine the character of Martin Luther in terms of anger. He is an angry hero of the Jimmy Porter type and he possesses the same characteristics shared by the other protagonists already discussed; but there is one point of difference between Luther and Porter: Luther was able to bring about his rebellion.

Conclusion

In the preceding sections of this essay, I have attempted to show how Osborne used anger to create four highly effective protagonists. Having successfully established his use of the emotion in Look Back in Anger in the character of Jimmy Porter he used the same basic emotion in the creation of his other protagonists, only with some slight variations; so that Archie Rice, Bill Maitland and Luther are extensions of the Porter anger. A.E. Dyson called anger "a chameleon emotion"; in the case of the protagonists discussed, one can argue that they are all shades of the Osborne-Porter anger.

One of the major problems of writing this essay has been finding an adequate method of analysing anger in the plays. I chose a thematic approach. We have seen where themes which are common to all of Osborne's plays are also features which are common to his protagonists. A major theme is isolation which in Porter, Luther and Archie Rice took the form of a classlessness or social displacement. Maitland's isolation goes beyond mere social displacement. In Inadmissible Evidence the protagonist stands isolated from human love because society has long lost the means of communicating such love.

All themes or features of the angry protagonists are closely interrelated. The theme of isolation is linked up with those of feeling and nostalgia. All of the protagonists look back longingly to a time when possibly better communication

existed between human beings: Jimmy Porter to the old Edwardian era, Archie Rice to the good, old days of the Music Hall, Luther to the old Biblical past of the patriarch Abraham, and Maitland to the youth he never had.

Feeling can only be transmitted if adequate lines of communication are kept open. We see where Archie Rice becomes a hollow man because he cannot communicate artistically; he has ceased to feel a thing. Jimmy Porter rails at the upper classes because they do not care, and according to him caring is being human.

It is worthwhile mentioning at least two other protagonists from Osborne's "public" voice plays before closing the case for anger. These are George Dillon in Epitaph for George Dillon and Alfred Redl in A Patriot for me. The first play was produced in 1958, two years after Look Back in Anger, but it was probably written before Anger and one might consider it as Osborne's apprentice piece which he wrote in collaboration with Anthony Creighton. The play treats of a young artist as philistine. George Dillon lives off the working-class Elliott family while trying to make a name for himself as a playwright. Dillon is always self-consciously controlled in his relationship with the Elliott family. The situations in the play do not sufficiently lend themselves to the dimensions of anger although there are many motifs in Epitaph which foreshadow Anger and Entertainer. Some of these are Osborne's portrayal of a working-class family, George's

periodic burst of anger and scorn, and his education which made him a socially displaced person in that intellectually it placed him above the working-class family he lived with.

The next play A Patriot for Me first produced in 1965 is like Luther in that Osborne explores a persistent human problem within a particular historical period: the problem which Osborne handles in this play is that of self awareness and adjustment to social standards and the play is set in Austria at the turn of the twentieth century. Alfred Redl is unlike any of the other Osborne protagonists already discussed in that he makes an exceptional effort to come to terms with himself and to live out his life as a homosexual. This is the cause of his isolation and of his tragedy. As the title of the play suggests, Redl chose to be a special kind of patriot: he chose honesty to himself rather than love of country. Redl's anger is not very much in the tradition of Porter. His rhetoric is always very much restrained. Only towards the very end of the play does he burst out in Porter-like fashion.

Osborne's plays are an indictment of a society which cannot accommodate the individual who does not give in to the conformity of the masses. Repeatedly his angry protagonists give out this message.

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