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## An Examination of John Osborne's "Luther" in Light of Erik Erikson's "Young Man Luther" and Historical Tradition

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AN EXAMINATION OF JOHN OSEORNE'S LUTHER  
IN THE LIGHT OF ERIK ERIKSON'S  
YOUNG MAN LUTHER AND HISTORICAL TRADITION

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A Thesis

Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of English  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by  
Anne Lawrence McIntosh Bowman

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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to show how the dramatist John Osborne has successfully created a new portrait of Martin Luther by carefully dealing with source material available to him in Erik Erikson's Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History and possibly Roland Bainton's Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther.

Four selective events found in both Osborne's play and Erikson's study will be discussed to illustrate how the playwright has handled this material. Some of the characters who appear in both works will be mentioned to show how they have been presented by each writer. A study will also be made of Osborne's tone and diction to show how they are comparable to those in Erikson's book.

The results will show what Osborne has included from his source material, what he has omitted, and what he seems to have contributed as his own interpretation of character. In conclusion, it will be shown that Luther is consistent with the dramatist's other non-historical works.

John Osborne's Luther (1961) is unique among the playwright's compositions for its historical setting at the beginning of the Reformation, its focus upon an historical personage, and its increased concern for questions of a spiritual nature. Some of the playwright's other works, which include Look Back in Anger (1957), The Entertainer (1958), Epitaph for George Dillon (1958), and Inadmissible Evidence (1965), are almost without exception contemporary in their settings and current in their thematic focus.<sup>1</sup> Epitaph for George Dillon, written in collaboration with Anthony Creighton, was Osborne's first major work; but it was not until Look Back in Anger that Osborne established his reputation for the vehement tone (in this case, that of Jimmy Porter) which generated the overworked epithet "angry young man." No longer quite so young, Osborne attempted to deal with historical material in A Subject of Scandal and Concern, a shallow documentary which premiered on BBC television on November 6, 1960. George Holyoake, the central figure, was the last person in England to be tried for blasphemy. Although based on an historical character and events, Luther nevertheless bears a resemblance to most of Osborne's other more contemporary plays in that the central character dominates the action, he is angry about his situation in life, and his reaction to his situation is violent.

Since it has been established by Gordon Rupp that Osborne drew much of his inspiration from an interesting psychological study by Erik Erikson, Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History (1958),

I will attempt to analyze Luther in relation to the portrait by Erikson and the traditional historical portrait of Luther found in the work most accessible to me--and a possible source for Osborne-- Roland Bainton's Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (1950). My method will be to show the treatment of four selective events in the life of Luther as they are reflected in Erikson and Osborne. I will also discuss some of the individuals who appear in both works. A third consideration will be a study of the typically angry tone and diction of the playwright and their parallels in Erikson's study. It is my intention to discuss in the course of this paper that which Osborne has included from Erikson and, in some few instances, from conventional historical data, second, that which he has omitted, and lastly, that which he seems to have contributed as his own addition to the image of Luther in the contemporary world. I will also show how Luther is comparable to some of the playwright's other plays which are not historically oriented.

Luther was first presented at the Theatre Royal in Nottingham on June 26, 1961; Alan Carter has cited Osborne's interview with R. Findlater which appeared in Twentieth Century (February, 1961) concerning the inspiration for the play.

It's 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. 2

In this statement, the dramatist has stressed that his intention was

to create a dramatically effective work rather than reproduce an historical text on stage, and it is the effectiveness of Osborne's Luther that makes this a valuable play.

Osborne once noted that the purpose of his writing is "to make people feel, to give them lessons in feeling. They can think afterwards."<sup>3</sup> This, like Osborne's other plays, "is intended to be a lesson in feeling,"<sup>4</sup> and the emotions that we "feel" the most are Luther's frustrations and anger. It is essential to briefly point out the importance of anger in Osborne's plays. He and many other writers of the fifties have been collectively called "angry young men" because an angry tone was evident in their work. It can be found in the novels of Kingsley Amis, John Wain, and John Braine, and in the poetry of such writers as Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes, as well as in the drama of Osborne. Although the works of many of these writers found their way to the public before Osborne introduced Jimmy Porter, the central character in Look Back in Anger, it is the playwright who has been recalled most often as the innovator of the anger motif in the literature of the fifties.<sup>5</sup> Osborne's choice of Martin Luther was logical and consistent with his other protagonists in that Luther was "perhaps the first Angry Young Man in modern time."<sup>6</sup> The dramatist shows Martin as a man isolated from society and God, one who angrily rebelled against his alienation, and the play concerns "the growth of Martin as a man."<sup>7</sup>

Osborne has relied on the interpretation of Luther developed by the twentieth-century psychologist, Erik Erikson, in his analytical study, Young Man Luther; and Gordon Rupp is one of the earliest critics who noted Osborne's use of this source. In his article "Luther and Mr. Osborne" which appeared in Cambridge Quarterly (1965-66),

Rupp pointed out several parallels that can be found in the play and the study. Rupp has said that it is "no demerit that Osborne should stick closely to his source [i.e. Erikson], as did Shakespeare to Holinshed or Plutarch, nor that he should alter and adopt the historical frame to fit his interpretation of character." Although Young Man Luther is Erikson's interpretation of Luther's identity crisis during the priest's young adult life, the discussion is based on historical data which Erikson obtained from noted Luther scholars. Because he perhaps found in Erikson's work some interesting psychological explanations for Luther's complex personality, Osborne has creatively incorporated into his play some of the psychological conflicts.

To show the playwright's reliance on this source, four events treated by Erikson and Osborne can be cited. One is the unusual outburst Martin makes while in the choir almost immediately after he has entered the convent of the Augustinian Order in Erfurt. After confessing his sins to a Brother, Martin participates with the choir during a mass and shouts out in the midst of the service:

11  
Not! Me! I am not!

Erikson says, "Three of young Luther's contemporaries (none of them a later follower of his) report that sometime during his early or middle twenties, he suddenly fell to the ground in the choir of the monastery at Erfurt, 'raved' like one possessed, and roared with the voice of a bull: 'Ich bin's nit! Ich bin's nit!' or 'Non sum! Non sum!' The German version is best translated with 'It isn't me!' the Latin one with 'I am not!'" Erikson explains this occurrence, which he refers to as the "fit in the choir," as a "part of a most severe identity crisis--a crisis in which the young monk felt obliged to



protest what he was not (possessed, sick, sinful) perhaps in order to break through to what he was or was to be" (p. 36). Because of Hans Luther's aversion to his son's becoming a monk, the young man, according to Erikson, suffered from guilt and doubt until his break with the Church.

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Erikson, then, explains the seizure as a manifestation of the guilt feelings Luther experienced as a result of disobeying his father. Osborne hints at the tension between Martin and Hans in a brief scene at the beginning of the play involving Hans and his friend Lucas (an invention of Osborne's) in which Hans's disappointment in his son is introduced. According to Erikson, Hans's visit at this time is historically inaccurate. This scene is essential, however, in that the father's disappointment is apparent from the onset. Hans feels that not only has he lost a son, but the son has lost himself. After all of his educational training, Hans believes Martin has thrown his life away as he says: [Hans] says:

A Master of Arts! What's he master of now?  
Eh? Tell me. (p. 16)

The psychologist enlarges on this father-son conflict. We learn from Erikson that Luther felt not only emotional alienation in his newly chosen environment but also physical alienation which had been imposed upon him by his parents. Erikson has given a brief summary of the entire family's reaction to Martin's decision, and it is no wonder that Luther became obsessed with doubts that he had made the right choice. As Erikson notes, "The father refused permission even for that one year of probation, which is all the Augustinian order bargained for at first. He went almost mad . . . and refused all fatherly good will . . . . The mother, too, and her family, obediently

swore the son off. This was gruesome enough. But then, 'pestilence came to Martin's help,' as the theological biographers put it. Two of Martin's brothers died. Martin's friends used this circumstance, with somewhat horrible logic, to convince Hans that he should give his oldest son to God as well" (p. 95). Hans's change of heart did not come about readily, and neither did the alleviation of tension and uncertainty within his son. Erikson maintains that "his greatest worldly burden was certainly the fact that his father had only most reluctantly, and after much cursing, given his consent . . . to the son's religious career" (p. 26). He has used this episode in the choir to illustrate a young man's mental upheaval caused by fear and doubt after having displeased his family, especially his father.

Instead of concentrating on all of the reasons for Martin's turmoil which have been discussed in detail by Erikson, Osborne effectively shows us only the results of his character's psychological problems in this scene. The father-son conflict is minimized by the dramatist at this point in order to introduce the singularity of Luther, who is surrounded by the members of his Order, and we are able to "feel" Martin's isolation although we might not know exactly what has caused it.

A second experience included in Erikson's study and used in Osborne's play which played an important role in Luther's life is the occurrence of the thunderstorm which led to Martin's decision to enter the monastery. Erikson begins his explanation of the storm by describing what happened on July 2, 1505, near Erfurt. "A bolt of lightning struck the ground near him, perhaps threw him to the ground, and caused him to be seized by a severe, some say convulsive, state of terror" (p. 91). As a result of this traumatic experience it is said

that Martin, calling upon St. Anne, decided to become a monk and dedicate his life to God, who had spared him from death. Roland Bainton states in his biography of Luther that while Luther was "Struggling to rise, he cried in terror, 'St. Anne help me! I will become a monk!'" Luther felt the necessity to fulfill the promise immediately, for "he had abruptly and without his father's permission left the University of Erfurt, where [he] had just received with high honors the degree of a master of arts" (Erikson, p. 24). Not only had Luther disappointed Hans by going into the ministry rather than becoming a lawyer, but he had not even asked for his father's approval before making this decision.

An early scene between Luther and Weinand in Osborne's Act I shows the young monk being chastized by his superior for his superficial confessions. In describing Luther's predilection for fears and doubts, Weinand says:

You always talk as if lightning were just about to strike behind you. (p. 26)

Osborne has taken this statement, which clearly reveals Luther's fear of God's power, from Erikson's study, in which the psychologist notes that "Kierkegaard once said that Luther always spoke and acted as if lightning were about to strike behind him the next moment" (p. 59). At the conclusion of Act I another reference to this event is made by Hans after he has witnessed his son's ordination (p. 44). Hans is interested in pointing out that Martin had always been frightened, and even his decision to become a monk was the result of fear rather than dedication. Again, Osborne brings out the loneliness and anxiety of his central character, this time in the speeches of Hans and Weinand.

Some of Luther's biographers have noted that he had always feared

being hoodwinked by the devil, and Erikson draws on one of these sources (Heinrich Denifle) to illustrate how Luther and his father suspected that his call might have been the work of the devil rather than God. "With his suspicion that Luther's whole career may have been inspired by the devil, Denifle puts his finger on the sorest spot in Luther's whole spiritual and psychological make-up. His days in the monastery were darkened by a suspicion, which Martin's father expressed loudly on the occasion of the young priest's first Mass, that the thunderstorm had really been the voice of a Gesperst, a ghost; thus Luther's vow was on the borderline of both pathology and demonology" (p. 26). Osborne mentions the specific event in the final scene of Act I, in which Martin and his father are having a conversation after the performance of his first mass. The thunderstorm is one of a number of events Hans lists as examples of his son's fears, and he concludes by saying that he hopes Martin's decision was the result of divine calling and not just fear.

I mean: I hope it really was a vision. I hope it wasn't a delusion and some trick of the devil's. I really hope so, because I can't bear to think of it otherwise. (p. 44)

Erikson tells us that Hans made a statement concerning the possibility of the devil's intervening in his son's decision. As the psychologist has pointed out, "Hans Luder said what was as good as a curse: 'God give that it wasn't a devil's spook' . . . --referring, of course, to the thunderstorm on the road to Erfurt, Martin's 'road to Damascus'"  
 15  
 (p. 145).

It is important to note at this point exactly why Hans was so averse to his son's becoming a monk. More than anything, Hans had hoped his son would become "a lawyer, that is, one who would understand

and profit by the new secular laws which were replacing those of the Roman commonwealth" (Erikson, p. 56). Hans was a prosperous miner who wanted his son to excel as a member of the growing middle class, and Martin's selection of the ministry as a career negated the possibility of his ever becoming financially successful as his father had hoped. Bainton also agrees to this reason for Hans's disappointment, but he brings out another point which Erikson does not mention by saying that "His parents looked to him as a lad of brilliant parts who should become a jurist, make a prosperous marriage, and support them in their old age" (pp. 23-24).

Osborne cleverly reveals the father's thwarted marriage plans for Martin by introducing the figure of Lucas, the monk's would-be father-in-law. In the first scene of Act I we learn that Martin was to have married Lucas's daughter. The men are making an initial visit to Luther, who has just entered the monastery, and in an irate speech, Hans compares the magnitude of his loss to that of Lucas.

That's exactly what it is--an end of it!  
 Very fine for you, my old friend, very fine indeed. You're just losing a son-in-law, and you can take your pick of plenty more of those where he comes from. But what am I losing? I'm losing a son; mark: a son. (p. 15)

Through this speech we become aware of Martin's independence and rebelliousness, and what Hans says about his son's disobedience portends what is to occur later in the play when the Church also "loses a son."

At a later point in the play when Luther breaks with the Church and marries a nun, he notes that now his father will be pleased that he has finally done what Hans wanted him to do. A knight is criticizing Martin for his role in the Peasants' uprising and his decision to

marry.

All right, my friend. Stay with your nun then. Marry and stew with your nun. Most of the others have. Stew with her, like a shuddering infant in her bed. You think you'll manage? (p. 91)

To this query Martin replies:

At least my father'll praise me for that. (p. 91)

Erikson has also stated that the young monk "publicly proclaimed as his first and foremost reason for taking a wife that it would please his father" (p. 91).

A third significant event explained by both the playwright and the psychologist is the catastrophic ordination service during which Martin again became somewhat paralytic and could not pronounce the liturgy without stumbling. By using this event as an example, Erikson points out another reason for Hans's anger at his son's decision. The father was a strict and overpowering man who was accustomed to having his orders followed, and he was not anxious for anyone, including God, to force his family into decisions other than those he wanted them to make. Erikson maintains that Hans knew that "Ordination would bestow on the son the ceremonial functions of a spiritual father, a guardian of souls and a guide to eternity, and relegate the natural father to a merely physical and legal status" (p. 95). The author goes on to add that with this knowledge in mind, "all hell broke loose after that ordination" (p. 95). Erikson notes that Hans was so incensed by his son's disobedience that he lashed out at the members of the monastery as well as at Luther during the banquet that was held immediately after the service.

Osborne uses exposition to inform the reader of what has transpired during the mass, and we learn from Martin that he has not performed the

service without difficulty. He repeats to his father the part of the liturgy with which he had trouble and concludes by saying:

When I entered the monastery, I wanted to speak to God directly, you see. Without any embarrassment, I wanted to speak to him as myself, but when it came to it, I dried up-- as I always have. (p. 38)

This statement is also mentioned by Erikson while he illustrates what Luther was hoping to accomplish by joining the Augustinians. "We must concede entirely that Luther, when he entered the monastery, had no inkling of the particular role which he was to play in religious history. On the one hand, he was in search of a highest good. As Nietzsche put it: 'Luther wanted to speak to God directly, speak as himself, and without embarrassment'" (p. 97).<sup>16</sup> Osborne has taken the words of the German philosopher and given them to the central character in order to show Martin's awareness of his own limitations, which cause him acute frustration.

Martin continues to tell in his explanation to Hans what happened during the ceremony.

I don't understand what happened. I lifted up my head at the host, and, as I was speaking the words, I heard them as if it were the first time, and suddenly-- . . . they struck at my life. (p. 40)

Erikson and Bainton go into deeper explanations for what could have brought about the difficulty. Erikson indicates that at the crucial moment, "he had the presence of the Eucharist in front of him--and the presence of the father behind him. He had not yet learned to speak with God 'without embarrassment,' and he had not seen his father since the visit home before the thunderstorm" (P. 139). He also tells us what Luther himself had said after the service, which has been recorded by his biographers. "Luther may or may not have meant it literally

when he said later that he had felt like fleeing the world as a Judas, and had actually made a motion to run away when he read the words, Te igitur clementissime Pater, which appeal 'to the most merciful Father'; he suddenly felt that he was about to speak to God directly, without any mediator" (p. 139).

Other events surrounding this special occasion are brought out by Erikson and Osborne. Erikson explains the importance of this day in the life of a new priest by saying, "A priest's first Mass was a graduation of unique import. Therefore a celebration was planned, and his family, according to custom, was invited to attend. 'There,' Luther later said in a strange tabletalk, 'the bridegroom was invested in the light of torches with horas canonicas; there the young man had to have the first dance with his mother if she was alive, even as Christ danced with his mother; and everybody cried'" (p. 138). Osborne and his sources point out the mother's absence on this special occasion, which surely must have indicated to the young man the disapproval which still existed within the family. Hans, however, did attend and brought a sizable gift to the Augustinians. As Erikson has noted, "Hans arrived on the appointed day, leading a proud calvacade [sic] of twenty Mansfeld citizens, and bringing twenty Gulden as a contribution to the monastery's kitchen" (p. 138). Osborne incorporates this fact in the play when Weinand informs Luther of his father's arrival and the gift. While in the process of becoming inebriated after the service, the father says:

I'm getting me twenty guilder's worth  
before the day's out. After all, it's  
a proud day for all of us. That's right,  
isn't it? (p. 31)

One final occurrence that somewhat spoiled the day for Martin



was the argument Hans had with the members of the monastery after the ceremony. Erikson does not elaborate, but says that "during the banquet the father denounced the assembled staff of the monastery" (p. 139). Osborne, however, finds in this information the perfect material for his character and creates Porteresque dialogue for the monk's father. In a scene before Martin joins the guests for the celebration, Hans tries to carry on a conversation with Weinand and is deliberately insulting about the educational background of the Augustinians. Hans is aware of his son's rebellious nature, and his comments to Weinand in the following passage show that he thinks Luther might be a potential threat to the Church. He then concludes with the implication that his son is too brilliant to be associated with such unintelligent people.

But wouldn't you say then--I'm not saying this in any criticism, mind, but because I'm just interested, naturally, in the circumstances--but wouldn't you say that one bad monk, say for instance, one really monster sized, roaring great bitch of a monk, if he really got going, really going, couldn't he get his order such a reputation that eventually it might even have to go into--what do they call it now--liquidation. That's it. Liquidation. Now, you're an educated man, you understand Latin and Greek and Hebrew-- (pp. 31-32)

To this Weinand admits that he knows only Latin. Although he is Martin's superior, Hans suggests that his son is more intelligent than Weinand. He tries to pursue the discussion but is cut off by Lucas. Trying to change the subject, Lucas equates the ordination to a wedding ceremony, but this time Hans interrupts and says:

Or a funeral. By the way, what's happened to the corpse? Eh? Where's Brother Martin? (p. 33)

Hans continues to insult the members of the Order by mocking various parts of their beliefs and regulations, and Osborne has

incorporated the contemporary British idiom into Hans's speech which illustrates the father's singularity amid the rest of the guests. He feels that children justify their parents' existence, and he says:

There's only one way of going 'up you' to Old Nick when he does come for you and that's when you show him your kids. It's the one thing-- that is, if you've been lucky, and the plagues kept away from you--you can spring it out from under the counter at him. That to you! Then you've done something for yourself forever--forever and ever. Amen. . . . Come along, Brother Martin, don't let your guests go without. Poor old Lucas is sitting there with a glass as empty as a nun's womb, aren't you, you thirsty little goosey? (p. 36)

Obviously Martin is in no position to produce children, and Hans is saying that the son will be unable to perform what Hans feels is the most vital function of life because Martin has consigned himself to a life of celibacy. Still enraged, Hans continues to make light of the Eucharist by saying:

Bread thou art and wine thou art  
And always shall remain so. (p. 39)

It is interesting to note the origin of this statement, since in the source it was not Hans but rather monks who had said it. Bainton records that in 1510 Luther made a trip to Rome, where he was horrified to see and hear the rapidity with which the Roman priests performed masses for the dead. "Such a practice lent itself to irreverence. Some of the Italian clergy, however, were flippantly unbelieving and would address the sacrament saying, 'Bread art thou and bread thou wilt remain, and wine art thou and wine thou wilt remain'" (p. 50). This event, according to Bainton, was just one of Luther's reasons for wanting to reform the Church.

By adding this passage to the other insulting comments Hans makes

about the priesthood, Osborne very skillfully shows the father's anger and hurt caused by Martin's decision to enter the ministry. Like many other Osborne characters, Hans reacts angrily when he feels he has lost someone's love and attention, and we see that the father's attempt to humiliate the son is the result of the elder's sense of unimportance in Martin's life.

One final event which should be mentioned is the Peasants' Revolt and Martin's influence on it. The information we get from the playwright is somewhat nebulous, since Osborne moves from the questioning of Martin at the Diet of Worms to a scene with a Knight after the peasants have been defeated. The jump is erratic, and we are not informed about what has happened other than what the Knight says against Luther. We can only infer that Martin has been partially responsible for the destruction that has occurred. The Knight had been present at Worms when the monk was interrogated, and he says:

I tell you, you can't have ever known the kind of thrill that monk set off amongst that collection of all kinds of men gathered together there--those few years ago. We all felt it, every one of us, just without any exception, you couldn't help it, even if you didn't want to, and, believe me, most of those people didn't want to. (p. 86)

He goes on to explain the charismatic effect Luther had on him and on the others who were present, and we can sense from what he says how Luther was capable of bringing about a religious revolution.

I don't think, no I don't think even if I could speak and write like him, I could begin to give you an idea of what we thought, or what some of us thought, of what we might come to. Obviously, we couldn't have all felt quite the same way, but I wanted to burst my ears with shouting and draw my sword, no, not draw it, I wanted to pluck it as if it were a flower in my blood and plunge it into whatever he would have told me to. (p. 87)

As Martin enters, the Knight begins to blame him for his influence on the people which led them to revolt.

That day in Worms . . . you were like a pig under glass weren't you? Do you remember it? 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, but you could have done it, Martin, and you were the only one who could have ever done it. You could even have brought freedom and order in at one and the same time. (p. 89)

To this accusation Martin replies:

There's no such thing as an orderly revolution. Anyway, Christians are called to suffer, not fight. (p. 89)

Erikson also points out that the monk was against any sort of violence, and he mentions that "Luther had previously warned of such violence, and did so again in An Earnest Exhortation for all Christians, Warning Them Against Insurrection and Rebellion" (p. 235).

Again, without any explanation, the Knight blames Luther for stirring the peasants to revolt and then siding with the nobility.

But weren't we all of us, alloftus, without any exceptions to please any old interested parties, weren't we all redeemed by Christ's blood? (Pointing to the peasant) Wasn't he included when the scriptures were being dictated? Or was it just you who was made free, you and the princes you've taken up with, and the rich burgers and-- (p. 89)

Martin retorts in despair:

Free? . . . The princes blame me, you blame me and the peasants blame me-- (p. 89)

Later in the scene Martin confronts God for consolation in this matter.

Christ! Hear me! My words pour from Your Body! They deserved their death, these swarming peasants! They kicked against authority, they plundered and bargained and all in Your name! Christ, believe me! (p. 91)

In discussing the scene with Martin and the Knight, Ronald Hayman has said, "No audience could possibly guess from this scene why or how the peasants rebelled or in what sense Luther let them down." <sup>17</sup> Instead of portraying Luther as a young man who cannot abide violence, Osborne presents him in such a way that we are not certain of what he has done.

Osborne seems to make this event deliberately ambiguous in order to emphasize Martin's singularity and isolation from everyone else. As a result of his alienation, Luther says callously in a prayer to Christ, "They deserved their death," perhaps in an attempt to rationalize his own involvement in this sad experience. His reaction is very similar to that of Jimmy Porter at the conclusion of Look Back in Anger when he learns that his wife, who had left him earlier in the play, has lost her first baby during childbirth. In a cold, insensitive tone, Jimmy says to Alison:

I don't exactly relish the idea of anyone being ill, or in pain. It was my child, too, you know. But (he shrugs) it isn't my first loss. 18

In both of these plays, the protagonists are extremely lonely men for whom communication with others is at times difficult; and because both are solitary figures they are often incapable of expressing any sort of sympathy for the misfortunes of others.

In regard to the Peasants' Revolt, I believe that Bainton, more than Erikson, goes into a great amount of detail to show that Luther was not favoring any particular class during the uprising, especially a class that advocated violence. At one point a group of knights had offered protection to Martin, who was in danger of losing his life, but even then Martin refused their help. As Bainton has noted, "To

such offers Luther was noncommittal. 'I do not despise them,' he confided to Spalatin, 'but I will not make use of them unless Christ, my protector, be willing, who has perhaps inspired the knight'" (p. 134). Like Erikson, Bainton also points out that Luther repeatedly warned the peasants against using violent means to overcome their oppressors.

In all of these events our attention is focused on Luther, who is riddled by fears and doubts about his actions. The seizure in the choir establishes Martin's physical and emotional complexities, and through exposition the playwright informs us of Luther's fear-inspired decision to join the Augustinians. The ordination further illustrates the young man's fear of accepting his responsibility as a "guide to eternity" because of his dread of approaching God; and his reaction to the peasants' uprising also shows his uncertainty about having made the right choice in refusing to support the peasants. Osborne has expertly presented these events mentioned also by Erikson in order to show Luther's isolation from others.

In addition to the events, another aspect of Luther which shows the dramatist's use of other sources is his characterization. In all of Osborne's plays we are introduced to characters who are vividly drawn and whose speeches are often unforgettable. Because of his stylistic expertise the playwright is capable of successfully creating outstanding characterizations in his works. It is the language used by the characters that gives them their life and their verisimilitude. Ruby Cohn in her discussion of Osborne, found in Currents in Contemporary Drama, has noted the value of the relationship between each character and his means of expression. "All his plays--some dozen in that many years--focus on a single memorable character, who moves us by the vigor of his idiom." Although many of the characters in Luther

are found in Erikson's study, their vitality and credibility have been contributed by Osborne.

The most outstanding feature about Luther is his difficulty with physical ailments, which has been treated at length by the dramatist and the psychologist. Martin was apparently the victim of constipation, nausea, and uncontrollable crying fits, and both Erikson and Osborne have elaborated on the importance of illness in his life. Erikson explains that in addition to attacks such as the one Martin experienced in the choir after entering the monastery, "he suffered from indigestion, constipation, and hemorrhoids; from kidney stones, which eventually caused him severe pain; and from an annoying Ohrensausen, or sussurrus, as he called it, a buzzing in his ears" (p. 244). Of these maladies, Osborne seems most preoccupied with Luther's constipation and alludes to it repeatedly throughout the play. Martin begins in Act I, scene 2 to comment on his physical state and continues to do so as the play progresses. While talking to Weinand before his ordination, Martin begins to look ill and says:

My bowels won't move, that's all. But  
that's nothing out of the way. (p. 26)

Before the conversation is over Martin again says:

I wish my bowels would open. I'm blocked  
up like an old crypt. (p. 29)

After the service Hans also comments on Martin's illness by saying:

Upset tummy, is it? That what it is? Too  
much fasting I expect. (p. 34)

In Act II, scene 2 Luther is again conferring with one of his spiritual mentors, this time Staupitz, and mentions the discomfort caused by his constipation. In disgust Staupitz says:

Constipated? There's always something the

matter with you, Brother Martin. If it's not the gripes, insomnia, or faith and works, it's boils or indigestion or some kind of belly-ache you've got. All these severe fasts-- (p. 55)

All of Martin's difficulties seem to accompany emotional struggles caused by his spiritual and earthly anxieties. As Erikson points out, "One could say that Luther was compulsively retentive, or even that he was mentally or spiritually 'constipated'--as he was apt to be physically all his life" (p. 176). His physical difficulty was the manifestation of his emotional turmoil, and Osborne has done an excellent job of showing the conflicts which led to some of his physical problems. Each instance in which Osborne includes a reference to Luther's condition is followed by a scene which makes the cause of the trouble more apparent. In the conversation with Weinand which occurs in Act I, Martin is preparing to say his first mass, and his doubt of his ability to approach God is obviously the cause of his uneasiness. Similarly, in the scene with Hans after the ordination, it seems that it is the confrontation with his father, whom he has not seen in quite a while, that is the source of his nervousness. The argument with Staupitz in Act II, scene 2 reveals that Martin has been plagued by doubts of his own religious beliefs. Although the references in the play to constipation might appear crude, as Erikson indicates, "nobody who has read Luther's private remarks can doubt that his total being always included his bowels" (p. 205).

In his discussion of Luther, Ronald Hayman has explained why Osborne's reliance on Erikson is beneficial in his characterization of the man more than in the playwright's handling of some of the historical events. Hayman has said, "The dependence on Erikson explains why the parts of the play dealing with Luther's private conflicts are



so much better than the parts dealing with public conflicts." <sup>20</sup>

To explain more fully Martin's physical infirmities, it is necessary to examine the fears and doubts which caused them, and Erikson has enumerated many of these in his study. In addition to his fear of his father, Luther also came to fear the image of his "Heavenly Father" and the devil, who he felt was constantly near him. It is important to look at each of these figures to see what influence each exerted on the young man.

First, we should consider the devil who, Hans feared, was the cause of Martin's decision to enter the priesthood, a problem which has already been introduced. Erikson establishes the fact that during this period it was not unusual for people to believe strongly in the devil as a concrete reality. "The fact is that Luther, like all children of his time, was deeply imbued with the idea of the universal presence of spirits in concrete form" (p. 59). This fear, which apparently took root during the monk's childhood, carried over into Martin's later life and became even more predominant. He believed that the profuse sweat he released during periods of uncertainty was directly attributable to the devil. Erikson has commented on Luther's transference of fear of the devil to a fear of God during his stay in the monastery. "But it seems certain, and is fully documented by his friends, that Luther in those years suffered from acute anxiety, and would wake up in a cold sweat ('the devil's bath,' as he called it); that he developed a phobia of the devil which in the way of typical obsessive ambivalence gradually included the fear that the very highest good, such as the shining image of Christ, might only be a devil's temptation; that he came to fear and even hate Christ, in spite of his superiors' patient arguments, as one who came only to punish" (p. 148).

Osborne has taken the idea of Martin's suspicion of his perspiration and has placed it in the speech made by Weinand prior to the ordination service.

You were sweating like a pig in a butcher's shop. You know what they say, don't you? Wherever you find a melancholy person, there you'll find a bath running for the devil. (p. 26)

Another direct reference is made to this belief at the conclusion of the play when Martin is telling Staupitz of the advantages of being married to a nun who can sometimes lift him out of his depression and fear.

Sometimes, I'm lying awake in the devil's own sweat, and I turn to Katie and touch her. And I say: get me out, Katie, please, Katie, please try and get me out. And sometimes, sometimes she actually drags me out. (p. 96)

Indirect references are made about Luther's preoccupation with his sweat by the Knight who describes Luther's appearance at Worms by saying that:

He'd sweat so much by the time he'd finished, I could smell every inch of him from where I was. (p. 86)

In addition to the fear he had of the devil in his many forms, including uncleanliness, Luther, as Erikson shows, also feared God, perhaps even more than he did the devil. Martin considered God to be a ravenous entity devoid of any sort of compassion. The psychologist mentions that "Luther later pictured God himself as a devourer, as if the wilful sinner could expect to find in God's demeanor a mirror of his own avarice, just as the uplifted face of the believer finds a countenance inclined and full of grace: 'He gorges us, with great eagerness and wrath . . . he is an avaricious, a gluttonous . . . fire'" (p. 121). In the play Luther says:

He's like a glutton, the way he gorges me, he's a glutton. He gorges me, and then spits me out in lumps. (p. 28) 21

Not only was Luther afraid of his earthly father, but he was also afraid of his Heavenly Father, and it is impossible to understand his fear of Hans without discussing his attitude toward God. Erikson has shown the way in which the two were interrelated. Of the father, he has said, "He showed the greatest temper in his attempts to drive temper out of his children. Here, I think, is the origin of Martin's doubt that the father, when he punishes you, is really guided by love and justice rather than by arbitrariness and malice. This early doubt later was projected on the Father in heaven with such violence that Martin's monastic teachers could not help noticing it. 'God does not hate you, you hate him,' one of them said" (p. 58).

Osborne dramatizes this statement in the scene between Martin and Weinand prior to the ordination. Luther explains why he is upset by saying:

It's this, just this. All I can feel,  
all I can feel is God's hatred. (p. 28)

Fatigued by Martin's complaints, Weinand shouts:

You're a fool. You're really a fool. God  
isn't angry with you. It's you who are  
angry with him. (p. 30)

It is interesting to note that Osborne has substituted the word "angry" for "hate" in order to sustain his tone more effectively. According to Erikson Luther's fear of God stemmed from his fear of his father, but Osborne departs from his source at this point. We are not made aware of any fear Luther might have of Hans, but we are exposed to the priest's fear of God. The playwright seems to emphasize the love Luther felt for his father.

As Erikson has noted, "Martin, even when 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" (p. 65). Osborne illustrates the young man's love of his father in a poignant scene when both are left alone after the first mass. Martin turns to Hans and confesses:

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. Funnily enough, my mother disappointed me the most, and I loved her less, much less. She made a gap which no one else could have filled, but all she could do was make it bigger, bigger and more unbearable. (p. 43)

In this statement Osborne has touched on a number of points which have been brought out by Erikson. Luther's admission of his desire for his father's love is substantiated by the psychologist, who has noted that Martin was always trying to prove his worth to his father or some figure of authority. In his attempt to gain his father's love he had to learn "that nothing was ever good enough for teacher or father, and that any chance to please them seemed always remote, always removed by one more graduation in one more, one better, school" (p. 79).

Erikson discusses Luther's aberrations in an effort to psycho-analyze the religious leader during the time Martin was trying to establish his identity. The psychologist goes on to show that in spite of his emotional problems, Luther eventually broke out of his "moratorium" and accomplished a great deal during his life. Osborne, however, emphasizes Luther's abnormalities with the hopes of showing his singularity and isolation from others. In keeping with the dramatic themes of his previous plays, the dramatist wants us to see Martin only during this period of doubt, frustration, and anger. Osborne seems to use Luther to illustrate again a man faced with a

situation which requires an angry response. Like Jimmy Porter, who reacts violently to the limitations placed on him by what he feels to be a worthless society, Luther reacts violently to the physical, emotional, and spiritual limitations imposed on him by his family, his Order, his God, and himself.

Some of the other characters that Osborne includes in the play deserve consideration. In addition to relying heavily on Erikson for his depiction of Luther, Osborne also consults the psychologist for other figures who influenced the young man. Next to Luther himself, Hans is discussed most by Erikson in an attempt to show the extent of the father's omnipresent influence on his son, which seemed to affect almost every step the monk took. Erikson describes Hans as a ruthless, capitalistic, social-climbing Saxon miner who wanted only for his children to justify his existence by being financially successful leaders in society, and Osborne also presents Hans in this way. The father's appearance in the play is brief, and when he is on stage we see an angry old man for whom, despite his obnoxious behavior, we feel pity rather than animosity. Hans realizes the unimportant role he plays in Martin's life by the conclusion of Act I, and his resignation is similar to that expressed by Alison's father, Col. Redfern, in Look Back in Anger. As he recalls what Jimmy has once said about him, the father says:

Perhaps I am a--what was it? an old plant  
left over from the Edwardian Wilderness. And  
I can't understand why the sun isn't shining  
any more. (p. 67)

Some of the most interesting characters in Luther are those about whom little has been recorded. Osborne has taken their names and has developed distinct personalities for each based on general information

supplied by Erikson and possibly Bainton. These characters include Staupitz, Tetzel, an outrageous church official whom Osborne accurately portrays as a burlesque entertainer, Pope Leo X, who is mentioned by both sources, and Lucas and the Knight, who are the inventions of the playwright.

Staupitz was an influential force in Luther's life according to Erikson, and Osborne does not deemphasize his role in Luther's life in the play. Staupitz had guided Martin during this period of turbulence to an answer about the question of justification. Erikson describes him as a man "who understood his needs, refused to argue with him, and put him to work" (p. 165). Osborne enlarges on this information and brings to life this man who exerted a great deal of influence on Luther. Even at the conclusion when Martin is trying to convince himself as well as Staupitz that he has done the right thing concerning the peasants' rebellion, the old priest refuses to argue with him.

One of the most important statements Staupitz ever made is incorporated into the play from the case study. Concerning Martin's doubt about the sincerity of his repentance, Staupitz says:

One mustn't be truly penitent because one anticipates God's forgiveness, but because one already possesses it. (p. 56)

Osborne's passage comes directly from Erikson's book, in which he notes the old man's advice to Luther. "Staupitz, he claimed, once said to him that one is not truly penitent because one anticipates God's love, but because one already possesses it" (p. 167). It is again interesting to note Osborne's changing of the word "love" to "forgiveness," which would indicate Staupitz's understanding of Luther's feeling of guilt for which the young man longed to be forgiven.

Osborne, from what his sources have said about Staupitz, has sensed the kind of man he must have been. Often in the play, Staupitz, the spiritual father, is neatly juxtaposed to Luther's earthly father, and we see the influence Staupitz had on the young monk.

The character of Tetzal is only briefly mentioned by Erikson in a discussion concerning Martin's aversion to the sale of indulgences, yet Bainton has provided a great deal of information which Osborne seems to have used. Luther's hatred of this man is stated by Erikson, who says "he was highly incensed at the limitless promises made by Tetzal, a Dominican at that, to Luther's constituents who were flocking over the border to participate in the fun as well as in the gain of the noisy campaign. Tetzal had, in certain cases, dispensed with confession altogether, and was distributing sealed letters of credit for sins as yet contemplated" (p. 227). Osborne has taken this and other references and created one of the most despicable--and yet entertaining--characters in the play, and it is as an entertainer that the playwright presents him. From the very first appearance of Tetzal we are faced with a man who has all the combined charm, poise, and subtlety of a Mississippi delta evangelist, a carnival hustler, and a Nazi interrogator: none. Addressing an assembled crowd of peasants Tetzal says in the vernacular:

Do you all know who I am? If it's true, it's very good, and just as it should be. Just as it should be, and no more than that! However, however--just in case--just in case, mind, there is one blind, maimed midget among you today who can't hear, I will open his ears and wash them out with sacred soap for him! (p. 47)

Osborne shows the propagandist techniques used by Tetzal to get people to purchase indulgences, and few English writers other than Chaucer and Spenser have done as good a job as Osborne of pointing

out the corruption which existed in the Holy Roman Church. Tetzl has perfected his sales pitch to such an extent that no one would have dared not give over his money. At the end of a long monologue Tetzl says:

For Remember: As soon as your money rattles  
in the box and the cash bell rings, the soul  
flies out of purgatory and sings! (p. 50)

Bainton's account is strikingly similar, since he has noted the charlatan's saying, "Remember that you are able to release them, for

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings,  
The soul from purgatory springs!" (p. 78).

Tetzl continues to pop in and out of scenes which lead to Martin's questioning at the Diet of Worms, and Osborne seems to have great fun developing this character. Both the play and the historical accounts show him to have been a ridiculous figure. He becomes a foil for Luther, who bombards him with abuse because he embodies the Church corruption against which Luther is fighting. We find out that he does not abide by the vows of poverty or celibacy, since he receives "eighty guilden" each month and has fathered two children.

In addition to the events and characters in the play, it is necessary to discuss the language which is used. Many of the lines found in Luther come almost verbatim from the psychological study and possibly from the historical biography. Examples of the reliance on these sources have previously been cited, but there are some other aspects of the language which deserve further consideration.

The imagery which appears in the play deals with animalistic violence, and the choice of violence as an image accompanies Osborne's belief that society deserves an angry or violent response. Man's situation on earth is at times deplorable, and the final attempt in



an effort to retaliate is made through the use of harsh and sometimes cruelly biting language which captures the desperate emotional state of mind of the individual who feels like a trapped animal.

Alan Carter, one of the playwright's critics, has also recognized this common image in his work and has elaborated by saying that "Osborne bases much of his imagery on the spectre of war or the hunt. The vocabulary of battle is constantly before us: kill, death, butcher, beat, destroy, enemy, slaughter, murder, agony, trap, snare, wound, stab, rage."<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the play Osborne presents images characteristic of his own style selected from those attributed by Erikson to Luther, and these images are consistent with those listed by Carter. Although there are a number of images which pervade the play, we shall concentrate on four in particular: the use of animal imagery--especially references to pigs--which is noticed in the language of several characters, the idea of exposing one's hind parts to ward off the devil, the references to Luther as a lost child, and the image of man as a shell.

Commenting on the animal imagery which occurs frequently in the speech of Luther and in what others say about him, Erikson refers to the importance of the image of the pig by noting that one of Luther's biographers, Denifle, had ironically suggested "that the sow was Luther's model of salvation" (p. 32). Osborne does not actually use the pig as an eschatological symbol but as a derogatory euphemism in describing Luther.<sup>24</sup> Like other twentieth-century writers such as Ted Hughes, Osborne seems to be using animals to signify violence and destruction, which Luther no doubt symbolized to the officials in the Catholic Church. Most of the references to Martin as a pig are made by the

representatives of the Church such as Tetzel, Cajetan, and Pope Leo, and also by the Knight, who sees Luther as a destructive force after the outcome of the Peasants' Revolt. While Martin is appearing before Cajetan, the General of the Dominican Order in Augsburg, he and Tetzel have words before Cajetan begins his questioning. Tetzel reports to Cajetan what Luther has said to him and concludes by saying, "He's a pig" (p. 65). Pope Leo also carries out this image of Luther by saying:

There's a wild pig in our vineyard, and  
it must be hunted down and shot. (p. 78)

Bainton verifies this statement by saying that Pope Leo was signing the papal bull against Luther, and in the preface to the bull he wrote, "'Arise, O Lord, and judge thy cause. A wild boar has invaded thy vineyard'" (p. 147).

Erikson points out that Luther sometimes equated a pig with a rather complacent Christian who is content with life exactly as it is. Since Martin advocated change, this image would indicate a dislike for a person so described. Such an equation is found in Erikson's book, and he quotes directly from the religious leader. "'For a sow,' he writes, 'lies in the gutter or on the manure as if on the finest feather bed. She rests safely, snores tenderly, and sleeps sweetly, does not fear king nor master, death nor hell, devil or God's wrath, lives without worry, and does not even think where the clover . . . may be'" (p. 32). Osborne has used this passage in an abbreviated and original form in a scene between Luther and Staupitz. The elder monk has just told Martin that Hans is a contented man, and the young man says:

A hog waffling in its own crap is  
contented. (p. 56)

This statement clearly indicates Martin's disdain for those who are

content with life as it is and who never attempt to initiate change when it is desperately needed. Luther's comment is similar to one George Dillon makes to Ruth Eliot in Epitaph for George Dillon, which expresses Dillon's contempt for the Eliot family.

Have you looked at them? Have you listened to them? They don't merely act and talk like caricatures, they are caricatures! That's what's so terrifying. Put any one of them on a stage, and no one would take them seriously for one minute! They think in clichés, they talk in them, they even feel in them--and, brother, that's an achievement! Their existence is one great cliché that they carry about with them like a snail in his little house--and they live in it and die in it! 25

In both of these quotations the playwright compares people to other life forms that blindly accept their lot in life without trying to change it for the better.

In addition to the references made to pigs, a number of other animal images are noted in the play, especially in the relation of Martin's dreams after he entered the monastery. He confesses to a Brother that he has thought of himself as a worm and a bear. Similarly, Weinand refers to him as one who is "sucking up cares like a leech" (p. 28). Unlike the pig image, which came directly from Erikson and possibly Bainton, the other references made to animals such as bear, worm, and leech are the invention of the playwright.

Another image which occurs often is the association of the devil with one's backside. Erikson explains Luther's preoccupation with this idea by saying that "The devil according to Luther, expresses his scorn by exposing his rear parts; man can beat him to it by employing anal weapons, and by telling him where his kiss is welcome" (p. 79). Erikson also includes an event in Luther's life when this image

played an important role. "Even a few days before his death, Luther saw the devil sitting on a rainpipe outside of his window, exposing his behind to him" (p. 59).

Osborne uses this image quite effectively at the conclusion of the play when Luther is comforting his infant son, who had just awakened from a bad dream.

What was the matter? Was it the devil  
bothering you? Um? Was he? Old nick?  
Up you, old nick. Well, don't worry.  
One day you might even be glad of him.  
So long as you can show him your little  
backside. That's right, show him your  
backside and let him have it. (p. 102)

The image of the lost child occurs repeatedly in Luther, and it is mentioned in Erikson as well. It seems to stand for a loss of innocence which Luther longed to regain. Erikson comments only briefly by saying that the monk's "desperate patienthood" and his "fanatic leadership" were the result of a "childhood lost" (p. 99), but Osborne has developed this into one of the most important images in the play. An early example of the use of this image is found just before Martin says his first mass. He says:

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 lost the body of a child; and I was  
afraid, and I went back to find it. (p. 24)

Even in a letter he sends to Pope Leo he says:

Deign to listen to me, most holy father,  
to me who is like a child. (p. 75)

After the papal bull has been burned, Luther offers a prayer to God and says:

Lord, I'm afraid. I am a child, the lost  
body of a child. I am stillborn. (p. 80)

Finally, while holding the body of his own child, he indicates that

he had sensed a return of his childhood freedom when he defied the Church.

You should have seen me at Worms. I was almost like you that day, as if I'd learned to play again, to play, to play out in the world, like a naked child. (p. 102)

Closely tied to the image of the lost child is the image of the hollow shell, which Erikson mentions quite briefly. He notes that Martin once said, "a man without spirituality becomes his own exterior" (p. 135). Again Osborne has taken a reference and created a dominant image in the play. He incorporates this idea in a speech made by Luther on the steps of the Church Castle in Wittenburg. To the crowd he says:

A man without Christ becomes his own shell. We are content with shells. Some shells are whole men and some are small trinkets. And, what are the trinkets? Today is the eve of All Saints, and the holy relics will be on show to you all; . . . Shells for shells, empty things for empty men. (p. 62)

When Martin has gained the courage to defy the Church openly, he finally understands the impossibility of ever losing his humanity while trying to achieve spirituality. Throughout the play we see Martin mature and outgrow his fears, and by the conclusion he seems to accept what Hans had angrily told him after the ordination. Hans had shown his awareness of Martin's desire to isolate himself from his body when he said:

You can't ever get away from your body because that's what you live in, and it's all you've got to die in, and you can't get away from the body of your father and your mother! We're bodies, Martin, and so are you, and we're bound together for always. But you're like every man who was ever born into this world, Martin. You'd like to pretend that you made yourself, that it was

you who made you--and not the body of a woman and another man. (p. 41)

One final aspect of Osborne's language in the play which seems to disturb a number of critics is his use of vulgarity and allusions to eliminatory processes. In his article, Rupp maintains that Osborne's use of the monk's constipation is disgusting and asserts that until 1521 Luther has no problems with his bowels at all, which would indicate that Osborne was inaccurate in his play. <sup>27</sup> This discrepancy is minor, since Osborne is mainly concerned with the truth that Luther did suffer from physical problems, and the exact date is inconsequential to the play.

George Wellwarth also finds some of Luther's lines distasteful, as he notes in his book The Theater of Protest and Paradox. "Who knows what world-shaking events are really ultimately traceable to some great man's irritation with the chambermaid's lack of compliancy or with the inordinate activity of the fleas in his wig? Osborne's theory is surely a valid one--but what is one to do with an author who can write lines like these: 'I'm like a ripe stool in the world's straining anus, and at any moment we're about to let each other go'?" <sup>28</sup> Despite the crudeness of this passage, these lines are taken almost verbatim from a statement made by Luther which Erikson has mentioned in his study. In fact, Osborne has had the good taste to censure the comment to some extent, since the original is a bit more graphic. "'I am like ripe shit,' he said once at the dinner table during a fit of depression . . . , 'and the world is a gigantic ass hole. We probably will let go of each other soon'" (p. 206).

In order to show how Luther is consistent with Osborne's other plays although it deals with an historical religious reformer, it is necessary to point out how this play is thematically in keeping with

the playwright's other work. The main ideas of Osborne's characters may be roughly separated into ~~four~~ categories, and Luther contains all of these themes.

The first is man's idealism which has been crushed by external reality. In almost all of his plays, Osborne's protagonists have established ideals which they are unable to achieve or attain. Jimmy Porter envisions an ideal woman and is disappointed when Alison fails to live up to the standards he had set. The dramatist's characters are in search of something better in life than what they have, and they are miserable because they cannot reach their goals. Their frustrations lead to anger and sometimes resignation, as with Archie Rice, the central figure in The Entertainer, who says to his daughter, Jean:

Listen, kiddie, you're going to find out that in the end nobody really gives a damn about anything except some little animal something. And for me that little animal something is draught Bass. 29

Martin is also an idealist, and when he enters the monastery he hopes to "speak to God directly." As he quickly learns, such an ideal is impossible for him in view of his fear of God and his awareness of his own unworthiness.

Another theme is the negative influence of society on the individual. Jimmy Porter pleads for some sort of change in his mundane existence, which is quite mechanical. While watching Alison and his best friend, Cliff, perform their boring Sunday activities, Jimmy says in anger:

I know you're going to drive me mad. 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! . . . Hallelujah! I'm alive! I've an idea. Why don't we have a little game? Let's pretend that we're human

beings, and that we're actually alive. (p. 15)

Luther is also affected by the negative influence of his family, especially his father, who expressed profound disappointment in the son's decision to enter the priesthood, making an already difficult decision almost unbearable for the young man. As a result of the family's treatment of Luther and his own inability to approach God without great dread, the monk felt alienated and isolated due to his failure to communicate with God, the members of his Order, and his family. Unlike Jimmy, who merely rants about wanting some changes to be made in his existence, Luther actually generates changes in not only his own life but in the life of the Church as well. However, both of these characters are motivated by negative influences.

Fear of alienation and isolation is a third recurring theme found in Osborne's plays. Bill Maitland, in Inadmissible Evidence, experiences this fear to such an extent that he has dreams of everyone deserting him, and by the conclusion of the play his dream has become a reality. Maitland's fears are expressed in a phone call he makes to his wife, Anna. We become acquainted with his alienation as he says:

Sometimes I think you're my only grip left,  
if you let me go, I'll disappear, I'll be  
made to disappear, nothing will work, I'll  
be like something in a capsule in space,  
weightless, unable to touch anything or do  
anything, like a groping baby in a removed,  
putrefying womb. . . . No, I'll not leave  
you. . . . I've told you. I'll not leave  
you. . . . you are leaving me. 30

Martin's feeling of rejection grows to such an extent that he is forced to express his emotions in an angry way. At first he turns to scholarly study and writing until he gets a definite understanding of his own religious faith, and then he forcefully puts into effect his beliefs by condemning what he sees to be wrong within the Church. His anger is



channeled into decisive action as he goes through all of the steps leading to the Reformation, such as the writing and posting of the Ninety-Five Theses and the burning of the papal bull. As in Osborne's other works, Luther contains the theme of man's necessity to express his emotions. Jimmy Porter, George Dillon, Archie Rice, Bill Maitland, and Martin Luther are all distinct characters, yet the one feature that is found in all of these men is their expression of anger when they cannot achieve their goals, when they become unable to communicate to their satisfaction, and when they feel rejected and isolated from others.

Finally, the dramatist includes the theme of nostalgia for a way of life which was better than the present, and the characters sometimes resent those who still have their youth. This theme is clearly evident in Inadmissible Evidence as Bill comments on his teenaged daughter, Jane.

She's a nice girl but she's a strapping nevertheless seventeen, less than half our age and looked after and cosseted and God knows what. Besides she's young, she's got all that youth everyone's so mad about and admires. Even if she's not very clever or pretty, she's got good old youth. I'd never use anything else if I could help it. (p. 61)

Luther's nostalgia is apparent at the play's conclusion when he speaks to his slumbering child about the time he felt like a child himself after defying the Church at Worms. Ronald Hayman has noted that perhaps this is one of the strongest emotions Luther expresses in the play.

"What Osborne's Luther feels more than anything is a nostalgia for childhood, with its combination of innocence and dependent love on a strong protecting father." All of these ideas, then, have effectively been incorporated into this play.

In concluding, it may be said that Osborne's selection of Luther as the subject for his play was appropriate in that the playwright found a ready-made protagonist who possessed the same sort of personality found in his other major characters such as Jimmy, Archie, George, and Bill. Like the others, Martin longs for a past that is much simpler, and he wants to be able to communicate with those around him. Most importantly, he is angry about his situation in life, and he reacts angrily in both his writings and his verbal expression. He desires a response not only from other people, but from God as well. He sees what he believes to be wrong in the world, and he wants to change it.

Although much of Osborne's play was inspired by Erikson's study, it remains apparent that Luther is a distinct and original work because of the playwright's handling of material that was available to him. The four representative events illustrative of Osborne's reliance on his source are presented differently by the dramatist in order to generate the emotional atmosphere he hoped to create within his audience. The characters, who are mentioned by Osborne and Erikson are similar, but the playwright has given them speeches and actions, which make them more vigorous, credible, and entertaining than they are in Erikson or Bainton. Osborne is also indebted to the psychologist for some of the language that is used in Luther, but the dramatist has added his own unique means of expression throughout the play. At times he writes in twentieth-century vernacular to establish his point more clearly than if he had adhered to the exact wording found in Erikson's study.

In returning to the purpose Osborne maintains is at the heart of his plays, we must finally question what it is we are to "feel" as a result of becoming familiar with Luther. I believe that the focal point of the play is Luther himself, who, like Jimmy Porter and Osborne's

other protagonists, has the ability to move an audience in a number of ways. We sympathize with the young monk as he struggles physically and mentally to live with a decision he has made in fear and doubt. At the same time we are made to feel animosity toward Luther because of his seemingly callous attitude for those who died in the Peasants' Revolt. We are caused to be astonished by the man's preoccupation with his physical condition and his self-pitying concern for himself, and finally, we admire the mature Martin for adhering to his beliefs. It is the ambivalence which Osborne is capable of establishing in an audience through the language and actions of his central character that makes this play a success. Unlike the dramatist's other works, Luther is concerned with an actual figure whose achievements in religious history are well-known. Perhaps it is the fact that we know that Luther did more in his lifetime than merely stew in his own vitriolic juices that makes this work so unusual.

I believe that Osborne has shown a great deal of skill in applying the information found in the source material to his play, and he has been consistent in choosing a person who actually embodied the spirit of his other protagonists. By creating vivid characters and carefully arranging the biographical information in order according to acts and scenes, Osborne has successfully portrayed Luther as a man who is quite different and much more "human" than the Luther who is often presented in historical texts. It is Osborne's ability to make Luther come alive that makes this play a worthy contribution to modern British drama.

## NOTES

1

In addition to the plays mentioned in the text, Osborne's other works include The World of Paul Slickey (1959), Plays for England: The Blood of the Bambergs and Under Plain Cover (1963), Tom Jones: A Film Script (1964), A Patriot for Me (1966), A Bond Honoured (1966), Time Present (1968), The Hotel in Amsterdam (1968), The Right Prospectus: A Play for Television (1970), West of Suez (1971), Very Like a Whale (1971), A Gift of Friendship: A Play for Television (1972), a translation of Ibsen's Hedda Gabler (presented at the Royal Court Theatre, London, June 28, 1972), A Sense of Detachment (1973), A Place Calling Itself Rome (1973), and The Picture of Dorian Gray: A Moral Entertainment (1973), which is an adaptation of Wilde's work.

2

John Osborne quoted in Alan Carter, John Osborne (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969), pp. 77-78.

3

John Osborne quoted in Carter, p. 1.

4

Simon Trussler, The Plays of John Osborne: An Assessment (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1969), p. 97.

5

With varying degrees of competence, a number of critics have discussed this issue. See Robert Hancock, "Anger," in Spectator, April 5, 1957, 438-439, George Wellwarth, The Theater of Protest and Paradox (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 221-231, Frederick Lumley, New Trends in 20th Century Drama: A Survey since Ibsen and Shaw (New

York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 221-232, and John Russell Taylor, The Angry Theatre: New British Drama (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), pp. 9-63.

6

Haskell M. Block and Robert G. Shedd, Masters of Modern Drama (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 1071.

7

Trussler, p. 105. For a further discussion of alienation and anger see also Robert Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964).

8

Gordon Rupp, "Luther and Mr. Osborne," Cambridge Quarterly, I (1965-66), 28-42. The original suggestion for looking at Young Man Luther was made by my husband, Philip C. Bowman, who recognized a quotation from Osborne's play as being similar to one found in Erikson.

9

Rupp, p. 31.

10

For instance, Otto Scheel, P. Heinrich Denifle, Preserved Smith, and Dr. Paul J. Reiter.

11

John Osborne, Luther (New York: Criterion Books, 1961), p. 23. All additional references from this play will come from this edition, and ellipses indicate the exclusion of stage directions.

12

Erik Erikson, Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1958), p. 23. All additional references from this book will come from this edition, and the ellipses found in certain quotations indicate the exclusion of German or Latin terms which are already explained in the passage. See Rupp, p. 32.

13  
Erikson, p. 26.

14  
Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 21. All additional references from this book will come from this edition.

15  
See Rupp, p. 31.

16  
See Rupp, p. 31.

17  
Ronald Hayman, Contemporary Playwrights: John Osborne (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 51.

18  
John Osborne, Look Back in Anger (New York: S. G. Phillips, 1957), p. 92. All additional references from this play will come from this edition.

19  
Ruby Cohn, Currents in Contemporary Drama (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1969), p. 15.

20  
Hayman, p. 43.

21  
See Rupp, p. 31.

22  
See Bainton, p. 105.

23  
Carter, p. 154.

24  
See Rupp, p. 37.

25  
John Osborne and Anthony Creighton, Epitaph for George Dillon (New York: Criterion Books, 1958), pp. 58-59.

26  
See Rupp, p. 33.

27

See Rupp, p. 34.

28

George Wellwarth, The Theater of Protest and Paradox (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1964), p. 231.

29

John Osborne, The Entertainer (New York: Criterion Books, 1958), p. 76.

30

John Osborne, Inadmissible Evidence (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p. 64. All additional quotations from this play will come from this edition.

31

Hayman, p. 45.

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