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"LESSONS IN FEELING:" AN ANALYSIS OF FOUR PLAYS BY JOHN OSBORNE

by

Bari Lynn Gilliard

B.A. University of Montana, 1964

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

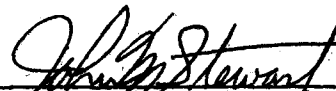
Master of Arts

1973

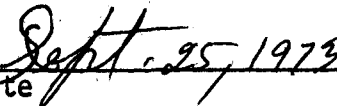
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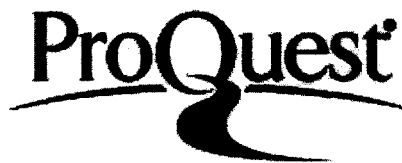


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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

One universally accepted tenet of modern drama criticism is that on May 8, 1956, the most significant event in Post World War II British drama took place: in its flood tide a decadent, atrophied British theater was reborn. The event was the first performance of John Osborne's Look Back in Anger, and the rest is legend. In Anger and After, John Russell Taylor carefully documents the event: the play's partial success at its opening, its subsequent critical and commercial success, the role of the Royal Court Theater Company in fostering it, and the popular and artistic reactions which met it. Since there is little value in paralleling Taylor's excellent summary of the play's initial reviews, it suffices to say that Kenneth Tynan's review in The Observer vouchsafes one viewpoint:

Jimmy is simply and abundantly alive; that rarest of dramatic phenomena, the act of original creation has taken place; . . . Is Jimmy's anger justified? Why doesn't he do something? These questions might be relevant if the character had failed to come to life; in the presence of such evident and blazing vitality, I marvel at the pedantry that could ask them.<sup>1</sup>

And, J. C. Trewin, writing The Birmingham Post, typifies another:

I look back upon a night misconceived and mispent. . . . The principle character is self-pitying, uncouth, cheaply vulgar. I felt for most of the night that I was listening to an extension of some feebly rancid short story in a highly contemporary idiom. We are warned that the piece is controversial. I don't want

to argue: I wonder only, in helpless distaste, whether this is a play to be done in a season that began with hope so eager.<sup>2</sup>

The polarity of these reviewers was not unusual as there was little middle ground: one was either for or against Look Back in Anger. It seems that one must react strongly and urgently to the play, suggesting that the work projects compelling dramatic power. Largely because of the intensity of response generated by the drama, the general critical judgement, whether for or against the play was that Osborne was a dramatist to watch:

Mr. John Osborne, the author of Look Back in Anger, is a writer who at present does not know what he is doing. He seems to think that he is crashing through the world with deadly right uppercuts, whereas all the time it is his unregarded left that is doing the damage. Though blinkers still obscure his vision, he is a writer of outstanding promise, and the English Stage Company is to be congratulated on having discovered him.<sup>3</sup>

Considering him a most promising playwright, reviewers, critics, and audiences have continued to watch Osborne throughout his career, and one factor remains constant, pervading all judgements on his canon: the continued immediacy of critical and audience response to his works. From Henry Hewes' eulogy of Look Back in Anger as "the loudest and most beautiful yelp to be raised in the English theater in this century,"<sup>4</sup> to George Wellwarth's denigration of The Entertainer as "a clumsily constructed hodgepodge about a talentless vaudeville actor with the morals and feelings of a toad,"<sup>5</sup> the intensity of the viewers' response is a common bond. My own reader and audience experience of Osborne's canon also suggests to me that, in varying degrees, his plays are characterized by a dynamic power to generate intense responses. The primary question seems to be, then: what is it in Osborne's plays

which projects this vitality? Strongly felt reactions to Osborne's work are not only healthy signs of the dramatist's ability, they also contain clues to the sources of his plays' energies. Here are no lukewarm receptions of recognized truth in conventional form; rather, here are intense responses to theme and technique: Osborne has something significant to say and he says it forcefully and effectively through his dramaturgy.

The next pertinent question one must ask is: what is it, specifically, in Osborne's theme and dramatic method that is so compelling it inspires immediacy of response? In exploring this question it is necessary to look at critics' reactions, Osborne's statements, and then, most importantly and rewardingly, at the plays themselves.

Among critics, one finds a good deal of confusion over just what creates the power of Osborne's dramas. Some critics focus mainly on content, others on dramaturgy, and others on the "Angry" movement. In many instances these patterns of focus reflect a distortion of Osborne's stature as a dramatist, and, far more seriously, a distortion of the themes and structures, the dramatic vision, which underlies his works.

Osborne is singled out as the "grand old man" of the "Anger" playwrights, the standard bearer of protest theater, and the leader of the "New Wave" of realism in British theater. True, Look Back in Anger was the first wave in the onslaught, and true, Osborne has contributed fifteen plays<sup>6</sup> to date to the revitalized English stage. But his place in the theater movement is often elevated to dominance over his abilities as a dramatist. Martin Banham, for example, in his largely perceptive study, Osborne, cites the playwright's

appearance as the playwright who overnight brought the English theater up to date. . . . The serious theater had become a place of vigorous dispute, experiment and endeavor. Above all else it has become relevant to its age, outspoken on social and moral issues. John Osborne's achievement must not be measured in terms of individual plays but in relation to his overall revolution.<sup>7</sup>

While Banham's observation is valid, for perhaps one must assess Osborne's contributions to the theater his works appear in as well as his merit as a dramatist, surely, the major emphasis must be on the works rather than the movement; Osborne's importance to British drama rests more on the artistic merit and the compelling force of his plays than on his literary or theatrical influence on other playwrights. Moreover, his significance as a dramatist lies not in "his overall revolution" but in the artistic merit, the content and form, of his individual plays, which are his contributions to the revolution.

Of those critics who focus on the merit of Osborne's individual plays, some find that it is his content which is compelling. The majority of the content commentators feel that the importance of Osborne's plays lies in his litanies of social protest. Banham clearly pinpoints Osborne's social protest trademark:

The targets against which he used the weapon [the theater] have changed in detail . . . but they retain one constant factor. They are targets that represent those aspects of society, either traditional or materialistic, that suffocate initiative, deny feeling, frustrate the individual.<sup>8</sup>

It is true that social protest is a large element in Osborne's work from the first scattergun vehemence of Jimmy Porter in Look Back in Anger to the echoes of protest in Laurie's self-conscious introspection in Hotel in Amsterdam. Here it is also worth noting that it is the social protest



factor that causes some major twentieth century dramatists to disregard Osborne and the so-called "angry" playwrights. Eugene Ionesco says of the "new British realism:"

Your new wave? Your Osborne, Wesker, Delaney?  
I am indifferent to the poorer-off English's  
anger with the better-off English--and one-  
dimensional, bourgeois triviality. Propagandist,  
polemical art shouting a message is dangerous.<sup>9</sup>

Social protest, then, is a double edged weapon, a rallying cry for some and an anathema to others. Although Banham qualifies his analysis of the import of Osborne's social protest themes by a statement that the dramatist uses social targets to illuminate individuals,<sup>10</sup> both Banham and Ionesco seem wide of the mark in defining Osborne's content mainly in terms of social protest polemics. Katherine Worth seems close to the core of Osborne's dramas when she suggests: "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."<sup>11</sup> Further evidence that it is not topical social protest which forms the action and which viewers respond to is evident in the fact that when Look Back in Anger was revived in London in 1971, fifteen years after its initial performance, its protest elements were creakily period, yet the play again was an astounding critical and popular success.<sup>12</sup> The dramatic intensity of Osborne's plays is not derived from an emphasis on social protest themes or even an emphasis on social forces in conflict, as it is in John Arden's plays, but, rather, from an emphasis on the larger immediacy of humanity under stress.

Continuing the concept of Osborne as a revolutionary, other critics focus on Osborne as a revolutionary dramatist, somehow equating theatrical and social revolution with artistic revolution. In examining the

artistic form of his dramas, most, because they expect some monumental formal revolution to accompany his other ascribed revolutionary aspects, find Osborne's dramaturgy weak and conventional in spite of his range from the "well-made" Look Back in Anger to the epically realistic Luther to the expressionistic Inadmissible Evidence to the absurdist stasis of West of Suez. For example, Lawrence Kitchin writes of Luther:

If Luther's obsessions are the main theme, naturalistic treatment and a limiting title might have been a good idea. Depth psychology doesn't go well with epic form, or with the broad, episodic effects of International Stage presentation.<sup>13</sup>

And, in John Osborne, a work mainly devoted to an analysis of the playwright's dramaturgy, Ronald Hayman complains of Inadmissible Evidence:

In some ways Inadmissible Evidence is better than anything else Osborne has written, but the mixture of styles and conventions is very messy. It starts off with a confusing, unrealistic nightmare sequence which is far too long in itself and which has very little connection, stylistically or thematically, with the play that follows . . . the scene comes nowhere near to being justified by the little that the subsequent story gains from it. The rest of the play zigzags between naturalism and stylization, without ever managing--or even particularly trying--to establish a convention by which the shifts could be made an asset.<sup>14</sup>

These criticisms may have some justification: Osborne himself depreciates his dramaturgy at times; for example, he views Look Back in Anger as a "rather old-fashioned" play. But much of the criticism of the playwright's dramaturgy seems out of balance, because many of the critics are bent upon seeing Osborne's content mainly as revolutionary social protest and therefore expect, or demand, revolutionary dramaturgy along socially relevant lines.

Thus, within the main body of critical opinion surrounding Osborne's work, there is a great deal of confusion as to where his significance lies and as to what creates the driving force of his plays. Many feel that his contributions rest more in his influence on the "new British realism" than in his plays; many others feel that his content is mainly aimed at social polemic; and many more feel that his dramaturgy is deficient. There is the additional problem that many critics who focus on content seem to limit their focus to just that while many who focus on dramaturgy seem to limit their discussions to that aspect only, rather than focusing on the plays as totalities. Few of the aforementioned critical points of view seem adequate to explain the intensity of response which greets Osborne's plays, and many of these critical stances are simply wrong in light of the plays themselves. Other critics, such as Worth, seem closer to the source of Osborne's tremendous impact in pinpointing his emphasis on individuals, but much more critical work remains to be done to clarify exactly what it is in his theme and method, his dramatic vision, which electrifies modern audiences and readers.

But, if critical focus presents confusing, sometimes misleading, insights into Osborne's works and his significance as a dramatist, Osborne too contributes to the melee of opinion surrounding his position as a playwright and the nature of his art. He accepts his role as a progenitor of the "new theater." Writing against the formation of a National Theater (an argument he lost) in "That Awful Museum," He chides:

The big danger in the 1960's is the formations of a new theater Establishment. That, I feel, is the objection to the National Theater, where all the safest talents will be busy creating some kind of awful museum. It seems to me like

the idea of building a new Royal Academy . . . There's a danger too, that the establishment of the 1960's may try to promote a synthetic version of the really new theater, with all its teeth drawn. Safe, apparently high-minded middle-brow plays which make all the gestures but are really not very different from the old Shaftesbury Avenue models.<sup>15</sup>

Here he takes the patriarchal role, admonishing the younger novitiates against the pitfalls around them.

He fuels his image as a protest playwright by statements like "They Call It Cricket" where he pronounces: "I do not like the kind of society in which I find myself. I like it less and less. I love the theater more than ever because I know that it is what I always dreamed it might be: a weapon."<sup>16</sup> Indictments like this, plus his many "Letters to the Editor," scatologically decrying social conditions in England, serve as red herrings laid over his art.

He also advances the controversy over his dramaturgy by his ferocious battles with critics. In "Critics and Criticism," he goads:

My own attitude to most critics is clear and entirely reasonable. It is one of distrust and dislike based on predictability and historical fact. I regard them as something like kinky policemen on the cultural protectionist make, rent collectors, screws, insurance men, customs officers and Fairy Snowmen. One should simply not open one's door to them. The reason for this is fairly simple. They consistently threaten my livelihood and have done so for the past ten years of my working life. Whatever success of reputation I may have earned is due to a few isolated writers on the theater, the wet noses of news editors, and the blessed alchemy of word of mouth.<sup>17</sup>

But, if Osborne further clouds the circumstances of his career, he also includes insights into the nature of his canon. As Osborne says: "I am an artist;" he does not claim to be a social theorist or a poli-

tical agitator, and one should keep this emphasis in perspective when evaluating his pronouncements. The test of the validity of his non-dramatic statements is to measure them against the plays themselves, and, generally speaking, his comments on his art are borne out in his plays and his insights into his work are illuminating rather than obfuscating. Early in his career Osborne tells us what it is that is so compelling in his dramas and what is so effective about his method. In "Critics and Criticism" he instructs critics in their craft and reveals his perspective on content and form in drama:

Remember also that theatrical ideas are theatrically expressed and not in the literal-minded manner of literary weeklies. They are not to be recognized like intellectual mottoes tattooed on random pieces of sculpture. They are organic, and when they work they can be seen to be working.<sup>18</sup>

Here Osborne directly states his aesthetic. His plays are organic, a forging of idea and form rather than an idea translated into dramatic form, and this intrinsic weld of subject and structure, this dramatic vision, then, molds his works. And, in "They Call It Cricket," his declaration, he voices his purpose as an artist and reveals the core of his vision.

I want to make people feel, to give them lessons in feeling. They can think afterwards . . . What is most disastrous about the British way of life is the British way of feeling . . . We need a new feeling as much as we need a new language. Out of the feeling will come the language.<sup>19</sup>

Osborne's dramatic vision, then, is an organic vision based in feeling, not ideas. And it is this basic vision, realized in the weld of theme and technique, that is the vital impulse searing through his plays, evoking intense audience response. Social protest is not his main focus;

it is only one manifestation of feeling, and should be viewed as such, for Osborne's scope is not limited to one range or focus of feeling. Moreover, the playwright's concern with feeling is not just to present it, to give the audience a cathartic bath in passion or excess, to swirl about in the muck of feeling, as he might put it, but, "to make people feel, to give lessons in feeling." In this didactic intent the focus of his vision lies, for ultimately, his lessons in feeling are moral lessons and are explorations of the moral significance of feeling in the modern age much as the Elizabethan revenge tragedy explored the moral significance of feeling in its day through the passions involved in retribution.

Reviewing the first performance of Look Back in Anger, Kenneth Tynan prophesied: "There will be time enough to debate Mr. Osborne's moral position when he has written a few more plays." Perhaps, now, since Osborne has written those few more plays there is "time enough" to merit analysis of his "moral purpose," one fundamental of his organic dramatic vision. A.E. Dyson has begun the study of Osborne's moral view in his "General Editor's Comments" to Look Back in Anger: A Casebook. He analyzes the moral significance of anger in the modern age as dramatized by Osborne through Jimmy Porter. The essay is a good beginning, for it pinpoints Osborne's moral position in his central concern, the feelings and passions of men; as Dyson sums up his response to the moral view of the play: "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."<sup>20</sup>

Osborne's commitment to feeling as a moral force is a pattern which consistently underlies his canon. Through feeling he probes and exposes

the moral texture of the age: the problems of commitment, the sources of moral value for modern man, the relevance and viability of twentieth century moral symbols, the ethical questions of behavior and responsibility in today's world, and the age-old but still pertinent significance of justice, art, and love as bastions of moral feeling. In general, he explores the efficacy of the modern moral condition. And because his vision is organic, that is to say because it is dramatic in conception as well as execution, Osborne renders his moral view in terms of forces in conflict. For Osborne, given his moral view's basis in feeling, the moral forces in conflict are the feelings of men, and modern man's moral condition emerges as a crisis of feeling between man and his society, man and other individuals, and ultimately and most importantly, as a crisis of feeling within himself. Through feeling as a moral force, Osborne dramatizes the chief moral crisis and dilemma of our age, man's desperate need for something of moral value and his complete absence of it on the other. One might describe the moral value which is sought in terms of the traditional moral virtue, caritas, the sense of brotherhood, of caring, of love, which seems to have vanished from the moral universe inhabited by Osborne's characters. It is by nature a moral value expressed in terms of feeling and seems a suitable summary moral value for Osborne's "lessons in feeling." Osborne's works brilliantly dramatize man's need for a viable moral system and the conflict of this need with the arid moral wasteland surrounding and within him, recording and measuring the intensity of the need and search in the depth, range, and conflict of the characters' feelings.

But, Osborne's moral lessons are not lectures in the efficacy of feeling, or sermons, nor are they essays dealing with the moral issues

of the day. Osborne is a dramatist, not a moralist or a philosopher, and he does not pose his moral issues as either exempla or syllogisms of abstract philosophical hypotheses. He poses his moral issues more as rhetorical questions; as explorations of the moral condition of the modern age rather than definite conclusions on it. In keeping with his perception of a moral universe revealed in man's feelings, Osborne asks his moral questions in terms of intuitively recognized human problems in the language of everyday life and everyman's experience:

But there are other questions to be asked--  
 how do people live inside those houses? What is their relationship with one another, and with their children, with their neighbours and the people across the street, or on the floor above? What are the things that are important to them, that make them care, give them hope and anxiety? What kind of language do they use to one another? What is the meaning of the work they do?<sup>21</sup>

These questions are essentially moral questions on the value of the modern world and man's place in it couched in images of feeling rather than the parlance of philosophical debate. To frame these questions in his plays, to dramatize the human condition as he sees it, Osborne projects three thematic situations, three motifs, constant in all his works, which inherently demonstrate his moral lessons: modern man's isolation, his alienation and his inability to communicate. The tie to existentialism is obvious, but Osborne does not project these themes as intellectual dramas of the mind in the manner of Sartre, for example: rather, Osborne's plays are works of flesh and blood. Within these three dominate thematic situations Osborne asks and explores "Where does the pain lie, where is the weakness, the loneliness? Where are the things that are unrealized?"<sup>22</sup> He does not ask what the philosophical implica-



tions or intellectual portents of these situations are; he probes the ramifications of the moral situation of our age for the individuals who must live in it, and he asks in a highly personal idiom, the feelings of pain, loneliness and emptiness.

Osborne's vision is not only apprehended in terms of passionate feeling framed in personal questions about the situation in which the characters find themselves, that is to say it is not only apprehended dramatically, it is also theatrically expressed, as he deems it should be, through the voices of his characters, and through his careful structuring of his plays around the dictates of those voices. Osborne renders his moral vision of feeling through man's primary vehicle for expressing his feelings, his voice: a voice at times shrill, at times fluid, but always a recognizable human voice, speaking at the gut level to cover a range from social protest to the "domestic malice" noted by Kitchin.

To project feelings as moral forces through a vigorous voice, Osborne writes in the mode of the strong protagonist in his major plays. His focus on terrible and immediate, highly vocal protagonists who embody his vision in both its moral and theatrical aspects is not necessarily heretical or atavistic as some modern critics would say. Osborne is in a long line of English dramatists of the strong protagonist, dramatists whose original models are to be found in the plays of Greece and Rome: Shakespeare in his Hamlet, Macbeth and King Lear, or Marlow in his Dr. Faustus or Tamberlaine, or Shaw in the early modern theater and, somewhat later, T. S. Eliot in his fragmentary Samson Agonistes. However, in the twenty or so years preceding Look Back in Anger, where drawing

room comedy prevailed, the drama which pivots on a strong central figure has not been a popular mode in English theater. Other British dramatists of the "New Wave" have not, in the main, adhered to Osborne's vogue, and dramatists like John Arden, John Whiting, and Harold Pinter eschew the drama of a strong central consciousness. This does not mean that Osborne is deficient as a dramatist, or old-fashioned, or even that he is out of step with his contemporaries; it merely means that this mode suits his dramatic vision, and that he recognizes it.

Osborne's dramaturgy specifically sets off and characterizes his protagonists. For example, Osborne frequently focuses on a single, piercing voice in aria against a background of relatively mute other voices. Osborne relies on the soliloquy as one of his major dialogue devices because it sharply spotlights his individuals, conveying at once their isolation, alienation, and inability to communicate, and their feelings about those conditions; his protagonists speak in soliloquy because it is the only recourse left to them. Here one might point out that, since the playwright's concern is with feelings rather than action, it seems illogical to condemn his dramas on the basis of faulty action when conventional dramatic action is not the focus, and to condemn them at the same time for a focus on long, frequent speeches by a central figure when that focus is precisely what projects Osborne's compelling dramatic vision.

Here let me boldly note my own critical bias regarding dramaturgy. The perfect play does not exist, so, while Osborne's plays predictably have their weaknesses, as Hayman catalogues ad infinitum and as Trussler emphasizes, they also have their strengths as Banham acknowledges in his conclusion to Osborne and as Gabriel Gersh notes, pointing out that

Osborne's dramas present a new dramatic convention, the tirade.<sup>23</sup> Viewed from the perspective of a strong central consciousness voicing a "lesson in feeling" as a moral force, perhaps Osborne's plays have more dramaturgical strength than hitherto acknowledged. Behind the critical carping over Osborne's dramaturgy lies the feeling that the theater-goer is being tricked, that rhetoric and characterization are camouflaging structural deficiencies. But, perhaps the very things cited as weaknesses: a lack of interaction among characters, a dependency on rhetoric, or too much focus on the central figure are strengths if viewed within the total perspective of the playwright's vision rather than as dramaturgical devices alone. By structuring his dramas around looming protagonists, Osborne effectively dramatizes his vision of the human situation, uniting form and content through his medium, a strong voice crying out man's needs and desires.

In examining and evaluating what critics have to say about Osborne's canon and what Osborne himself has to say about his works, some progress towards clarifying what it is in his plays that synergizes audiences and some suggestions on the nature and of the playwright's vision and method have been made. Osborne's vision and the giants who voice it cause the electric response to his plays, for audiences respond to its urgency and vitality. The playwright's works are an organic unity of content and form, which indeed "can be seen to be working" through the protagonists who embody both aspects. It is a vision with a good deal of range, and it is a dynamic vision, growing and changing perspective, which never deviates from its basis in feeling as a moral force and gauge. Through their felt reactions of anger, doubt, fear, and hope to their contemporary situations of isolation, alienation, and inability

to communicate, Osborne's protagonists vigorously shout from the proscenium modern man's moral dilemma: on the one hand man's desperate need for something of value, a kind of caritas, which will mitigate his condition and release his feelings, and on the other, the complete absence of any such value in the modern world. Perhaps an analysis of Osborne's four major works, Look Back in Anger, The Entertainer, Luther, and Inadmissible Evidence will show the consistent dramatic vision which grips his audiences and energizes his plays. It is a driving, monumental vision, constantly refined from its initial dramatization in Look Back in Anger. Gradually Osborne's vision clarifies in the voices of his protagonists: Jimmy Porter, Archie Rice, Martin Luther, and Bill Maitland.

## Notes and References

## Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Tynan, rev. of Look Back in Anger, The Observer, rpt. in John Russell Taylor, ed., John Osborne: Look Back in Anger (New York, 1962), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>J. C. Trewin, rev. of Look Back in Anger, Birmingham Post, rpt. in John Osborne: Look Back in Anger, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Harold Hobson, rev. of Look Back in Anger, London Sunday Times, rpt. in John Osborne: Look Back in Anger, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Hewes, "Broadway Postscript: The Unquiet Englishman," Saturday Review of Literature, 12 October 1957, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup>George Wellwarth, The Theater of Protest and Paradox: Developments in the Avant Garde Drama (New York, 1964), p. 174.

<sup>6</sup>See Appendix.

<sup>7</sup>Martin Banham, Osborne (Edinburg, 1969), pp. 96-97.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>9</sup>Kenneth Allsop, The Angry Decade (London, 1958), p. 42.

<sup>10</sup>Banham, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup>Katherine J. Worth, "The Angry Young Man: John Osborne," Experimental Drama, 16 (1963), 148.

<sup>12</sup>"Look Back in Anger Revived," Salt Lake Tribune, September 5, 1971, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup>Lawrence Kitchin, "Red Brick Luther," Drama of the Sixties: Form and Interpretation (London, 1966), p. 126.

<sup>14</sup>Ronald Hayman, John Osborne (Heinemann, London, 1969), p. 65.

<sup>15</sup>John Osborne, "That Awful Museum," The Twentieth Century, 169 (1961), 212.

<sup>16</sup>John Osborne, "They Call It Cricket," Declarations, T. Maschler, ed. (New York, 1957), p. 51.

<sup>17</sup>John Osborne, "Critics and Criticism," rpt. in John Osborne: Look Back in Anger, p. 70.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>19</sup>Osborne, "They Call It Cricket," p. 47.

<sup>20</sup>A. E. Dyson, "General Editor's Comments," John Osborne: Look Back in Anger, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup>Osborne, "They Call It Cricket," p. 66.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Gabriel Gersh, "The Theater of John Osborne," Modern Drama, 10 (1967), 137.

## Chapter II

### LOOK BACK IN ANGER

It is paradoxical that the characterization of Jimmy Porter, Osborne's first protagonist, is the main reason viewers and critics determine that the playwright's main thrust is social protest. Evidently they do not progress beyond the obvious invective to its underlying causes within the man, and it is in the causes that Osborne's commitment to a vision much larger and more universal than social protest becomes apparent. Jimmy Porter is often described as a "young pup" mouthing Osborne's social views. The fallacy of equating the speaker of a poem with the poet has been amply demonstrated by Cleanth Brooks in Understanding Poetry: by analogy, there is also a danger in equating the protagonist with the playwright. It is Porter's diatribes that cause John Mander to dismiss Osborne as a noncommittal playwright.<sup>1</sup> This dismissal is based primarily on a stage direction given at the beginning of the play for the benefit of the actor and director: "To be as vehement as he is is to be almost noncommittal."<sup>2</sup> Viewing Porter as the "mouthpiece" for Osborne, Mander then deduces that Osborne too is noncommittal. It must be observed, of course, that the crucial phrase actually is "almost noncommittal." Also, the stage direction appears at the beginning of the play, and a change in the character may be anticipated before the end of the drama. More importantly, the direction does not occur within the body of the play itself. Os-

borne may or may not be stating an intended interpretation of his protagonist, but even if he is, the character of Jimmy Porter must be considered as he emerges in the total context of the play rather than from stage directions alone.

According to the introductory stage directions, Jimmy Porter is "a 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" (p. 1074). True, Porter is as Osborne initially delineates him and this is the sole interpretation many reviewers have given him. But, Jimmy's major trait, his vitriolic anger is conspicuously absent from the stage directions, and it is in exploring Jimmy's anger, its causes and effects, its scope and implications, within the context of the play that his character is ultimately revealed. The first quality of Jimmy's anger which strikes the viewer is its range, encompassing everything and everyone around him. But, in looking closely at the targets of Jimmy's invective, it becomes apparent that it is the absence of important and real values in his world which he and the audience perceive through his isolation, alienation, and inability to communicate that inspires his wrath and emerges as the cause of his social protest and seeming lack of commitment. Through these three motifs Porter's anger with his public and private worlds acidly etches the moral crisis he so deeply feels.

At first glance it appears that social protest is the force behind Jimmy's anger since, in the opening scene, he lashes out at a large social spectrum from domesticity to bishops. But, gradually these outbursts take on a pattern and center around the value system represented in this scene by "The Establishment" newspapers. As Porter reads the



"posh" papers, his ire steadily mounts; unable, or unwilling, to contain himself, he reads bits of news aloud to Alison and Cliff:

Did you read about the woman who went to the mass meeting of a certain American evangelist at Earl's court? She went forward, to declare herself for love or whatever it is, and, in the rush of converts to get to the front, she broke four ribs and got kicked in the head. She was yelling her head off in agony, but with 50,000 people putting all they'd got into "Onward Christian Soldiers," nobody even knew she was there. . . (p. 1074)

The irony of his commentary signals the source of his irritation: the cruelty and stupidity of a world where a woman can be trampled in blind religious fervor. Within the pattern of this protest the real target of his anger is clear. It is not the social evil of organized religion but the moral evil construed in "nobody even knew she was there." It is in the pinpointing of the reason for his anger that Jimmy reveals himself as a moral protestor rather than a social protestor per se. This real source of Jimmy's fury is explicit again later in the same scene when Porter says: "Nobody thinks, nobody cares, no beliefs, no convictions, and no enthusiasm" (p. 1075). Jimmy's wrath is directed against these deficiencies in society and men throughout the play. He is still furious about them in the last act when he says: "The injustice of it is almost perfect: the wrong people going hungry, the wrong people being loved, and the wrong people dying!" (p. 1100). His anger is directed against a moral order gone wrong, against the absence of belief and concern, and not against "The Establishment" itself.

Perhaps now is the time to raise the thorny problem of where social protest leaves off and moral protest begins. The two are on the same continuum and do overlap, and there is obviously an element of social

protest in the preceding tirade. Ultimately all social protest is moral protest in that the social protestor wants a change in the moral order of his world which will have social consequences. But in determining whether a voice of protest is raised more in social protest or moral protest, the crucial distinctions seem to lie in the purpose and emphasis of the protest. That is to say a distinction of whether the protest is aimed at the workings of society or at the moral attitudes evident in a society, whether the protestor's goals are social consequences or moral consequences, and whether the emphasis is on mass behavior or the feelings and attitudes of individuals. Social protest seems to be that protest which is directed at the institutions and problems of a society and sees the evils of the world as directly stemming from the workings of the society, evils like poverty, genocide and war for example. Such social protest is clear in dramatic form in works of George Bernard Shaw, for example. However, Jimmy Porter's preceding tirade on religion does not emphasize social machinery as the annihilating force, rather it emphasizes people as the destructive force and its purpose is not to castigate religion for its role in society, but to reveal one individual's agony. In Osborne's first play then, the force of Osborne's social protest is not in its condemnation of social evil as such, but in the moral outrage embodied in the feelings and voice of his protagonist, Jimmy Porter.

In Look Back in Anger social protest, then is a metaphor of moral protest rather than an end in itself. It is one manifestation of Porter's moral indignation; a moral indignation which consistently motivates him throughout the play. Social ills, such as class distinctions and poverty, are only symptoms of the malaise, the cancer of moral decay,

which pervades Jimmy's world; he protests, then, not against the symptoms, but against their source as he sees it, the absence of caring and belief.

Porter's moral indignation against the moral decadence of his society also in part lies behind his belligerence towards his wife, for on one level of her relationship to Jimmy she functions as a symbol of "The Establishment." He condemns her as

Pusillanimous. Adjective. Wanting of firmness of mind, of small courage, having a little mind, mean spirited, cowardly, timid of mind. From the Latin pusillus, very little, and animus, the mind. (slams the book shut) That's my wife! That's her, isn't it? Behold the Lady Pusillanimous! (p. 1077).

Since Porter partly views Alison as a representative of "The Establishment," he implies a curse against society for these same qualities, which are a part of the moral attitude Jimmy strikes out against. In his entire diatribe against her and her family, his real target is this smallness of mind and its corresponding smallness of conviction as his real target in his social protest is the corresponding smallness of mind and smallness of conviction evident in the absence of caring and belief in the social order at large.

Here the internal structure of the play sheds some light on Jimmy's anger, reinforcing the idea that his anger is moral outrage rather than social protest. As previously established, to decide whether protest is social or moral in scope, one must assess several criteria, its emphasis and its relationship to individuals. In the matter of emphasis within the structure of the play it is clear that Jimmy's protest is moral in tone. Jimmy's social protest diatribes are scattered over the play, but the main body of the play centers

around Jimmy's personal life and personal relationships. He does not interact with social forces or even with their most explicit representative, Colonel Redfern (Jimmy is off-stage during the Colonel's only scene); instead he interacts with individuals on a highly personal level as his lines illustrate. The play is structured around his relationship to Alison with a quasi-parallel plot to Helena which shows Jimmy some truths about his relationship to his wife and with some aside-like scenes with Cliff which mainly explicate Jimmy's relationships to the women. The structure of the play, then, is composed of Porter's private world, at moments, in indirect form as a topic of conversation in which it is usually the opening gambit for Jimmy to get into a more personal confrontation with another character.

. . . Did you read Priestly's piece this week?  
 Why on earth I ask, I don't know. I know damned well you haven't. Why do I spend ninepence on that damned paper every week? Nobody reads it except me. Nobody can be bothered. No one can raise themselves out of their delicious sloth. You two will drive me round the bend soon--I know it, as sure as I'm sitting here. I know you're going to drive me mad. . . (p. 1074)

Furthermore, the emphasis of the social protest passages, considered in their own right, passages like Jimmy's castigation of the revival meeting, is not directed against the social order; instead, the soliloquies of protest show Porter's own felt reactions to social conditions. Social protest tirades are metaphors for and leads into Jimmy's highly personal speeches of moral outrage. Thus, the emphasis within the play's structure is not on social protest but on a more intimate kind of protest, anchored firmly in one individual's moral consciousness.

Porter, then sees the same evils in society that he sees in his personal life, not the other way around. He uses social protest for his

own ends, both as a springboard to individualized moral protest and as a kind of allegory to his personal life, as exempla to punctuate and clarify intuitions he feels about his private world. The macrocosm/microcosm relationship in this play is a mutually reinforcing one, but the usual emphasis is reversed: the macrocosm illuminates the microcosm. The structural link between Jimmy's social and individual worlds, between public and private, is Alison who represents both "The Establishment" and an individual.

Jimmy's savage personal attacks on Alison are further evidence that it is the absence of caring which angers him in his personal world. Their marriage can only be described as a carnage, a Strindbergian battle of the sexes with the ultimate goal of annihilation of the weak by the strong. Their struggle fuels many of Porter's tirades:

Do you know I have never known the great pleasure of lovemaking when I didn't desire it myself: Oh, it's not that she hasn't her own kind of passion. She has the passion of a python. She just devours me whole every time, as if I were some over-large rabbit. That's me. That bulge around her navel--if you're wondering what it is--it's me. Me, buried alive down there, and going mad, smothered in that peaceful looking coil. Not a sound, not a flicker from her--she doesn't even rumble a little. . .She'll go on sleeping and devouring until there's nothing left of me. (Exit)  
(Alison's head goes back as if she were about to make some sound. But her mouth remains open and trembling, as Cliff looks on). (p. 1082)

The motif of this tirade shows the anger and pain of their relationship; Jimmy and Alison only come into contact on a personal level to wound each other. But Jimmy's humiliation of Alison is not mere venting of spleen, both the imagery and purpose of this tirade show what it is that Jimmy is so angry about. Through the image of a python devouring her prey without a flicker or a rumble, Jimmy ascribes to Alison a cold,

reptilian indifference. It is this indifference, a sign of the absence of caring, which enrages him in his personal relationship to Alison as it enrages him in his relationship to her as a symbol of "The Establishment" and as it enrages him in his outbursts of social protest.

Jimmy's purpose in delivering this tirade also shows the cause of his anger, for he is trying by invective to elicit a response from Alison on a personal level as he is from "The Establishment" on the social level. Any response will do, any indication that he is alive and that someone cares, even in a negative way. He feels isolated in a void of indifference and non-belief and is looking for any type of "enthusiasm." It is ironic that Alison is not really indifferent to him at all, as her reaction to his "python" exit speech indicates. But it is significant that she shows no reaction to him during his speech, standing stoic and mute under his charge, only showing her feelings when he is not present to see them. She is paralyzingly unable to display her real concern in the face of his onslaught. Alison assumes a mask of indifference to protect herself; she really does care about him, but she too is isolated--by her assumed indifference. All of Jimmy's attacks upon Alison are launched for his purpose of eliciting a response, and her indifference, her defense, only enrages him more because he interprets it as further evidence that no one cares.

Jimmy's isolation in his individual relationships and from his society is complete: he is an outsider both on the personal and social levels. He is an educated working-class man, a graduate of a "white tile university" who cannot gate-crash "The Establishment" as he gate-crashed their parties, even though he married into it. But Jimmy is isolated in a much

more serious way than class distinctions. He is isolated from his social world by the callous indifference he feels around him and from his individual world by what he feels is the same lack of concern. That this is the main cause of isolation is clearly indicated in his previously cited attacks on society and on Alison. His anger, then, is not basically the petulance of the outsider (although at times this too is a factor) but the righteous indignation of a man who feels the inequities and injustices of his world, and, because he feels these wrongs in both his social and personal worlds, he is isolated from both by these moral deficiencies.

But Jimmy is not a one-dimensional character and his anger is not a one-dimensional moral outrage. It is obvious that Jimmy's anger is a part also responsible for the very indifference he meets from Alison. The more he rages: the farther she withdraws. His angry attacks, are, ironically, partly the cause of his failure to achieve a sign of caring. Jimmy's isolation, then, has a cyclical pattern: he feels isolated which causes him to try for a response from others through assault and attack which in turn causes people to further withdraw, making him feel more isolated. His anger is at once his reaction to the lack of concern he feels in his world and a further cause of it. His anger, then, is complex, showing not only his moral outrage but also contributing to the vortex of isolation whirling about him. As Jimmy's anger fails to strike a response, leading only to a greater feeling of isolation and a more desperate anger, the battle between he and Alison grows more terrible, and as the cycle between them grows in violence, his isolation becomes ever more solid and clear.

Osborne's emphasis in the play is on the isolation motif, and the

alienation and inability to communicate themes as developed to reinforce Jimmy's patterns of isolation. Porter's isolation and its causes are clear in the images of his anger and his alienation is also clear in his rhetoric, for Jimmy is estranged, not just cut off. His estrangement is evident in the range and violence of his anger, his epithet in the image of Alison as a "python," a cold animal image, and his diction in describing her as "pusillanimous" are signs of his alienation. Most of his tirades convey his estrangement in their images and diction; for example:

. . . If the big bang does come, and we all get killed off, it won't be in aid of the old-fashioned, grand design. It'll just be for the Brave New-nothing-very-much-thank you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus. No, there's nothing left for it, me boy, but to let yourself be butchered by the women. (p. 1097)

Jimmy's alienation is clear in his description of contemporary values as a "Brave New-nothing-very-much," his relegating death to pointlessness and ingloriousness, and equating his view of being alive with being butchered.

Both Porter's isolation and alienation are thus conveyed explicitly through the verbal level of the drama. Indeed, this play's main structural device is the language of the protagonist, for it is Jimmy's rhetoric of anger which energizes and moves the play. The action is generated by the character's reactions to Jimmy's tirades and his subsequent spoken responses to their reactions. For instance, Alison, Cliff and Helena all abandon Jimmy during the course of the action as a response to his rhetoric. Thus, his isolation is physically clear which reinforces his spoken feelings of isolation and gives rise to further dialogue expressing his loneliness; "I seem to spend my life saying good-bye." His speeches



cause the actions which dramatize his isolation cycle as well as express his awareness and response to it. Porter's rhetoric is dramatic proof of Osborne's insight that "out of the feeling will come the language," and one might add that out of the language will come the play, for Osborne makes the language of feeling his primary method of dramaturgy in this work. In focusing on a strong protagonist primarily through his verbal development, Osborne is not so much in the school of Sardou as he is in the realm of Bizet. Look Back in Anger is operatic in the grand manner of Carmen in its emphasis on the central figure with sketchily characterized second leads. Porter's soliloquies are arias of personal feeling which, like operatic arias, stop the action while they themselves form and move the plot and theme. They are the dominant moments of the play, containing the crucial feelings of the work, while all other moments and actions of the play are subservient to them. And, like operatic arias, the significance of Jimmy's tirades is in the tone and nuance of the line, where the language and orchestration express the feeling.

Both Jimmy's isolation and alienation are vividly expressed through his Longinian speeches of anger and the action which they catalyze. But, in spite of Jimmy's verbal facility, he fails to communicate with any of the characters. Given the verbal structure his isolation and concomitant alienation are perhaps most effectively shown as Osborne develops, through the emphasis on brilliant rhetoric, Jimmy's inability to communicate. The sound and listening imagery, conveying Jimmy's lack of communication with his world, is a good example of the effectiveness of this motif.

Jimmy blisters everyone and everything and yet is always ignored by

the others: "What was that?" "What did he say?" "What did who say?" Alison responds to his outbursts with "I'm sorry. I wasn't listening properly." No one listens to him and he finds, at best, that what he says is merely irritating noise:

Cliff: Why don't you listen to that concert of yours? And don't stand behind me. That blooming droning on behind me gives me a funny feeling down the spine. (p. 1076)

When Jimmy attempts to listen to a concert, the program is constantly interrupted by noise from the iron and people talking; finally, he reacts:

Oh, hell! Now the bloody bells have started! (he rushes to the window). Wrap it up will you? Stop ringing those bells! There's somebody going crazy in here! I don't want to hear them. (p. 1078)

What should be meaningful communication--conversations, concerts, and churchbells--are reduced to the level of irritating noise. The play is a symbolic collation of noise, of non-communication, including all of Jimmy's brilliantly articulate soliloquy's; people shout, bells ring, and trumpets blare, and it all seems meaningless to Jimmy because he feels that no one listens and therefore no one cares.

In part Jimmy is isolated, alienated and not in communication with his world because of a lack of caring in the moral order he lives in; in part he inadvertantly causes it himself through his anger; and in part he deliberately closes himself off. His angry rhetoric is his response to the pain of his situation and perhaps it is also his defense, for, as he feels his isolation, he strikes out like a trapped animal. Part of his isolation cycle is that each of his overtures is rejected and he receives no response. His anger could be construed as a defense in case

his efforts fail again, and he has just reason for his fears. Thus, his aggression is also a sign of his need for a response and his fear that once again it won't be forthcoming. Jimmy's anger, then, is ambivalent; it is both a reaching out for a meaningful, caring relationship with those around him and a closing off of such a relationship as a defensive measure, masking his fear of rejection. His invective is not an end in itself, for it conveys, in addition to his moral indignation at an uncaring universe, his ambivalent reaching out and fear of rejection. His remarks are not so much self-pity or aggressiveness, although they are that too, as they are a despairing man's last defense, the only way he is able to cope with his situation. More than anything else his diatribes communicate his desperation, measured by his volume and choice of diction, and his defensive attacks are still distorted appeals for help and recognition in a world that seems totally indifferent.

Porter's inability to communicate meaningfully with his world or to receive meaningful communication from it clearly reinforces his isolation and alienation. Additionally, church bells are a second-hand communication, as are newspapers and the radio, rather than direct communications of experience. Porter's communications with the outside world are distant and indirect, further demonstrating his isolation. Another feature of these once removed communication devices is that they are under Jimmy's own control; he can either read the papers or wrap the garbage with them, and he can turn off the radio at will. This suggests another aspect of his isolation, for, when the church bells intrude into his personal world, he slams the window shutting them out and rejecting their communication, saying, "I don't want to hear them." Jimmy, then, communicates with the outer world indirectly or not at all,

and by his own choice.

His withdrawal from his social world is also evident in that he stays in his dismal flat most of the time, only going out to work, one supposes, and to a funeral. His profession, sweet stall manager, is also an avoidance of direct confrontation with his social world because he does not participate at the level his education presupposes. Porter is not only isolated and alienated by his world, in part he isolates himself from it.

Jimmy is not in communication with Alison and Cliff any more than he is with the outside world, and his personal attempts to communicate also reflect his self-imposed isolation and alienation. His conversations are monologues, precluding response because of their one-sided form and because of their vitriolic content, consisting mainly of epithets and witty, degrading remarks. His attacks on Alison and Cliff force them into not listening in order to protect themselves. Jimmy's articulate tirades do not achieve communication and are, in effect, barriers to communication because they intimidate or stun people into silence and withdrawal. As his tone varies from sarcasm to scream, he ironically cuts off response from others by his very tactics, and this too may be a deliberate rejection as his shutting out the churchbells is. Porter may be isolating himself intentionally from others through his tirades as well as using them to stimulate a response.

Jimmy's anger then is a complex reaction to a moral climate he feels suffocating him. It is not a one-way, singly-directed passion, but a feeling which expresses both his outrage and his fear that he will not ever find desired response. The duality of feeling, anger as both a sword and a shield, is his complex moral response to the isolation,

alienation and inability to communicate he finds surrounding him. But, Jimmy's anger is not a simply two-way response operating in a tandem, for there is at least one other ambivalence in Jimmy's moral anger.

In Jimmy's attacks on Alison it is clear that he too makes mistakes, misdirecting his righteous anger at some wrong targets. Alison dons a mask of indifference and Jimmy assumes that it is real; after all, it is what he sees. Jimmy too has limitations in vision: he is myopic. He does not always see clearly and lashes out at those very individuals who do care and who could alleviate his isolation, because of his own blindness. Even with all his heightened sensitivity, and his keen perception of moral flaws, he too is subject to moral error, moral error of the same kind he strikes out against, an indifference to others needs. Part of Porter's moral complexity derives from the fact that it is his moral anger which clouds his judgement. He is angry and because he is angry he sometimes does not see clearly. In this blurring of moral line, in Jimmy's mistakes in judgement caused by the anger he is aiming at moral deficiencies, lies one of the major strengths of the characterization. Look Back in Anger is no cut and dried moralistic play, but a play of human feelings with their implicit contradictions and cross purposes. Moral outrage, like all human feelings, too is subject to human frailty. It is this realistic portrayal of the passion of anger, including its errors and fallacies, which makes Jimmy such a towering presence in twentieth century drama, for the audience sees no hero of large and perfect proportions, only a vulnerable man, like themselves.

Jimmy is not an historical heroic type. He is an ordinary man, with weaknesses and limitations, who is no better than anyone else. He is a complex man at odds with the world and himself in his moral struggle,

and his awareness brings him no relief or solace from its terrible consequences. But, if Porter is not heroic, his struggle is, for Jimmy refuses to be conditioned and subdued by the moral climate. His anger, ambivalent, enigmatic and imperfect as it is, is a moral weapon and in spite of his astonishing misdirection at times, Jimmy does have the ability to be angry, which he sees as a virtue balanced against the indifference hanging in miasma around him, and the audience too admires the vigor of his moral outrage, even if one doesn't always agree with the target. Through Jimmy's anger, which is both potent and impotent, Osborne develops anger as a moral force, one of the few moral forces capable of operating in the limited world of Jimmy's isolation, alienation, and inability to communicate.

Jimmy's anger is both symptom and symbol of his moral condition on many levels, then, but ultimately his anger is a positive moral force showing the absence of anything of moral value to believe in in his world, and his desperate need for something to believe in. Jimmy is angry because he cares and because he feels no one else does. That Jimmy does have the sense of caring within himself is evident not only from his anger, but also from his concern for Mrs. Tanner when she is dying, and from his past concern for his father's death when no one else cared. Jimmy feels alone in his caring; the individuals he lives with seem indifferent to him, and the symbols of caring in his world are empty and seem to mock him; neither marriage nor the church, nor any of the traditional bastions of traditional moral value, offer him a sign of recognition. He is a man, then, who not only psychologically needs a sign of caring, he needs to believe in it as a moral symbol and his desperate need for caring reflects his desperate need for something of value

to believe in. His angry demands are howls of disillusion, charting the range of his need. Jimmy is, albeit in a negative sense, an idealist whose ideals have been betrayed rather than merely a nasty belligerent. By the force of his outrage, he cries out man's need for something to believe in.

Jimmy's need for something to believe in is also evident in his other feeling towards his situation; his compassion, which is directed at the same entities that so anger him, "The Establishment," in the form of the Edwardian age, and Alison. At times Jimmy approaches nostalgia towards "The Establishment:"<sup>3</sup>

The old Edwardian brigade do make their brief little world look pretty tempting. All home-made 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. Phony too, of course. It must have rained sometimes. Still, even I regret it somehow, phony or not. If you've no world of your own it's rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's . . .  
(p. 1075)

The feeling voiced here is the antithesis of anger. This is the brief little world of dead dreams and values cherished by Colonel Redfern-- and to some extent by Jimmy. He hankers after the Edwardian period because in that age, men knew right from wrong and were secure in a sense of a caring universe; there were still absolute values and they were believed. This is not to say that the value system of the Edwardian age in fact did exist or even that it had definite social manifestations; whether or not it actually worked in practice, people believed in it. It is not the social world of the Belle Epoch Jimmy wants but the underlying moral condition which produced it. His romantic idealism recognizes

this while his realistic pragmatism must acknowledge that it is these values which his own relativistic society lacks and whose loss he feels so keenly. Jimmy's yearning for an age of solid moral value is also evident in a recurrent image pattern noted by David H. Karrfalt:

A prominent group of images in Look Back in Anger is what might be called types of the historical hero--as in such terms as 'Old Puritan,' 'Knight in shining armour,' 'Knight on a white charger,' 'another Shelley,' 'Eminent Victorian,' 'Edwardian officer,' 'Victorious general,' 'Romantic hero,'.... The repetition of these images indicates among other things a strong interest in the past.<sup>4</sup>

These images not only suggest the past, they also suggest the value system of the past, a value system with definite absolutes which could be believed and which allowed men to realize their aspirations in knighthood, romantic vision, and eminent Victorianism. Not only does Porter look back to the past as an embodiment of an ideal value system, but, as the title of the play suggests, one reason he will look back in anger is because what existed in past ages, a sense of permanent values, does not exist today.

In Jimmy's relationship with his wife the same idealization of values and the same duality of response exists: first he is angry with her, then tender. He deliberately knocks a hot iron on her to burn her, and then immediately becomes solicitous and affectionate. His tenderness towards her is clearly revealed in the animal fantasy of bears and squirrels:

(Staring at her anxious face) You're very beautiful. A beautiful, great-eyed squirrel. (She nods brightly, relieved,) Hoarding, nut-munching squirrel. (She mimes this delightedly) with a highly polished gleaming fur, and an ostrich feather of a tail. (p. 1031)



In both contexts of his tenderness he is removed from the realities of his daily life; he yearns for the Edwardian age, an unattainable dream of the past, and he is affectionate towards Alison in a fantasy world of little furry creatures. These are ideals held at a distance from reality, a utopian haven from life as it is, where anger is not needed. Both his tenderness and invective spring from the same source, his need for something to believe in and its absence in his life. Hence, his apparent ambivalence in both rejecting and accepting "The Establishment" and his wife, is not really ambivalence at all; instead, the two reactions are, in their given contexts, antithetical poles of a continuum, affirming his need for something of value.

The particular value Jimmy seeks is love, and his eyes the principle failure in his world is the failure of love. Jimmy plucks this value from the crumbling moral structure about him and hopes that it is still valid (or still absolute) in spite of all signs of indifference. For Jimmy, it is this value, or the absence of it, which is the basis of both the wrongs of society and the struggle between him and Alison. Society fails in love in the sense of the classical virtue, caritas, which defines caring as brotherhood. This is indicated by the failure of social institutions, particularly the church, which should be the embodiment of caritas. The absence of Christian caritas is a constant in the play: in the first act Jimmy notes the woman trampled in the name of love to the tune of "Onward Christian Soldiers;" in the second act he hurls epithets at the church because Alison is leaving him to attend services, causing a division in home and marriage which the church should reinforce, not destroy; and in the last act, when Helena leaves Jimmy, church bells ring out, ironically pointing out his personal loss. Love also fails in the relationship bet-

ween Alison and Jimmy; they can only express their love when it is disguised in animal fantasy. Although Jimmy's dilemma results from the failure of his value, love, in himself and his society, it may yet be his salvation, for it is through love that he might establish a new relationship to Alison at the close of the play.

Through Jimmy's angry disillusion and suffering, he learns about his highest value, love, and his life in relation to it, and his hard knowledge may enable him to transcend failure. Jimmy recognizes when Helena leaves him that:

They all want to escape from the pain of being alive. And, most of all, from love . . . It's no good trying to fool yourself about love. You can't fall into it like a soft job, without dirtying up your hands. (Hands her the make-up things, which she takes.) It takes muscle and guts. And 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. (p. 1101)

This is a new appraisal of the situation, a brutal one, but a sounder one than shrieking out in pain. It is an attempt to live with love, with caring, in a real world, not in the Edwardian past or in animal fantasy.

Jimmy also discovers that he is no longer isolated in an insane world of indifference, or that possibly he never was isolated by anyone except himself. Alison finally responds overtly to him, dropping her defensive apathy to reveal that she does care about him and his value, love, in her suffering and anguish upon the death of their child: "I was wrong! I don't want to be neutral, I don't want to be a saint" (p. 1101). Jimmy is shocked out of both his angry and "bear" roles by her suffering and he too drops his masks. For the first time in the play a genuine kinship is established between them as they mutually reveal

their feelings. The situation may not improve, since the play closes with the two of them safe in their animal fantasy, but hope is a possibility in their lives--at least there are now two caring human beings in Jimmy's world who have nakedly and honestly communicated their feelings once and who may be able to do so again. There is a potential established that Jimmy's faith in love as a value may be justified, and with this ambiguous, tentatively positive scene, the play ends.

Jimmy Porter, in his angry quest for something of value, for a sign of caring, contains the kernel of Osborne's dramatic vision, albeit incomplete and sketchy in this first play. It is a vision that is paradoxically positive, even though it is developed through negation. By showing a man who is isolated and without meaningful relationships, the playwright shows man's need for communion; by showing a man who is alienated by the empty value symbols around him, the dramatist shows man's need for viable moral symbols; and by showing us a voluble man who cannot communicate, the author shows us man's need to communicate. Thus, Osborne's vision does not depict the fullness of life, but its meagerness. By showing the effects of that meagerness, by showing man's need for something of value to believe in by portraying the implications of its absence for Jimmy, Osborne dramatizes an implicitly positive moral position.

In exploring modern man's moral condition by focusing on Jimmy's despair and anger, Osborne shows not only Jimmy's need for something to care about and his need to be cared for, he also shows the necessity for a change in the current moral order because the present moral condition brings about Jimmy Porters. But, as A. E. Dyson states: "In all of this Osborne's concern is to offer the truth of a situation, not to offer moral reflections on what it means,"<sup>5</sup> and Osborne's truth lies in the

truth of human response to a moral situation, it lies in Jimmy Porter's feelings. Osborne's vision in Look Back in Anger is not contained in the play as a whole, but in the giant figure of Porter and specifically in his anger as a moral force. Jimmy's anger is at times capricious, at times, vulgar, and at times desperate, but primarily Jimmy's fury personifies Osborne's belief that "to become angry is to care."

Through his angry moral outrage, Jimmy Porter emerges from the context of the play a very committed man rather than a noncommittal one, and Osborne's early use of the phrase, "almost noncommittal is judicious." Jimmy is morally committed rather than socially committed and his allegiance is to a value he cannot find in any of his worlds. Jimmy is exactly what his creator said he would be: and much more. A complex modern man, he represents a universal mankind in his moral condition: his pain, anger, and shattered idealism, his need to believe in something and to be believed in, his need for love, his ambivalent reaching out and rejecting, his isolation, alienation, and inability to communicate are all qualities of modern man. He is neither admirable nor heroic; he retreats into fantasy and he is often weak, exhibiting his limited strength only by trampling on other's weaknesses. One cannot revere him, but one identifies with him, however grudgingly, because in Porter's anger, one sees man's universal hunger for something of value.

## Notes and References

## Chapter II

<sup>1</sup>John Mander, The Writer and Commitment (London, 1961), p. 188.

<sup>2</sup>John Osborne, Look Back in Anger in Masters of Modern Drama, eds. Haskell Block and James Shedd (New York, 1963), p. 1072. Subsequent references to this edition appear in the text.

<sup>3</sup>John Russell Taylor, Anger and After, rev. ed. (Baltimore, 1963), p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>David H. Karrfalt, "The Social Theme in Osborne's Plays," Modern Drama, 13 (1970), p. 79.

<sup>5</sup>A. E. Dyson, "General Editor's Comments," John Osborne: Look Back in Anger, ed. John Russell Taylor (New York, 1962), p. 27.

### Chapter III

#### The Entertainer

Why should I care?  
Why should I let it touch me!  
Why shouldn't I, sit down and try  
To let it pass over me?  
Why should they stare,  
Why should I let it get me?  
What's the use of despair,  
If they call you a square?  
If they see that you're blue, they'll--look  
down on you  
So why should I bother to care? (Thank  
God I'm normal!)

So why should I bother to care?<sup>1</sup>

And thus one meets Archie Rice--"Mrs. Rice's favorite boy." This number, sung at the close of a Music Hall interlude amid stale jokes about boy sopranos and pathetic jibes at the audience, reveals Archie Rice's garishness, irony, and bravado. Surrounded by the "Rock and Roll New'd Look" of his act, Archie, the entertainer, throws his lyrics at a jaded audience occupying seats in a shabby theater in a decaying resort town. These lyrics epitomize Archie's outlook on life and encapsulate one aspect of Osborne's vision of modern man, for in the context of the play they illustrate Archie's isolation, alienation, and inability to communicate meaningfully with his world or anyone in it.

As Osborne characterizes him, Archie Rice is greying and fiftyish, paradoxically stoic and self-indulgent, well-educated but patronizing, and both raffish and professorial, the latter a mannerism adopted thirty years ago. His lines are carefully "thrown away," a studied comedian's

technique which "absolves him of seeming committed to anyone or anything." (pp. 33-34). Archie is in several ways directly antithetical to Jimmy Porter. Archie Rice is an aging adventurer, educated at more or less the right schools, established in a time honored British institution, the music hall, and who wonders why he should bother to care, whereas Jimmy fiercely demands that someone care. Archie has a certain nonchalance about him; he radiates iconoclastic indifference as Jimmy does anger. But in spite of the striking differences between these characters, they both show concern with modern man's sense of commitment, for Jimmy was "almost non-committal in his vehemence,"<sup>2</sup> so Archie is absolved of "seeming committed" in his throw away lines, and, as Jimmy emerges as a committed man from the context of his play, Archie Rice, too, is committed, behind his flippant facade.

Archie's first appearance in the play is as the entertainer. He is a species of the slick comedian with a spiel, risqué jokes, and music hall songs, all directed to his "stooge," Charlie, the conductor of the out-of-tune orchestra. Archie's comic style, the "put down," consists of running down everyone around him, including the audience. But Archie's comedy is as flat as the orchestra and it falls on tone deaf ears, or so he seems to feel. Since his humor is not funny and the audience does not respond, he turns to badgering them but still, not surprisingly, gets no response. Describing his profession to his daughter Jean, he illuminates his role as an entertainer and his relationship with the audience:

You know when you're up there you think you love all those people around you out there, but you don't. You don't love them, you're not going to stand up and make a beautiful fuss. If you learn it properly you'll get yourself a technique. You can smile, darn you, smile, and l-ok the friendliest jolliest

thing in the world, but you'll be just as dead and 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, it doesn't matter. (pp. 82-85)

Thus Archie Rice, the entertainer, is exposed, naked in the glare of the spotlight, an isolated man, empty behind his technique and smiling face who seeks to communicate with his audience but fails to achieve a response because of their mutual emptiness. He is forced to conclude that "it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter," and it takes courage to face his twice-nightly ordeal.

But, in spite of his abysmal failure to inspire a reaction in the audience, Archie remains somehow undefeated. Not for him Porter's anger; instead, he figuratively fics the audience and his own failure. This spirit shows at the close of his turns in the lyrics he sings after he fails to please or stimulate the patrons. Here one meaning of his phrase "Why should I bother to care" becomes explicit. Another of his songs also portrays his response to the indifference of his audience:

Oh, number one's the only one for me!  
 We're all out for good old number one,  
 Yes number one's the only one for me----  
 God bless you!  
 Number one's the only one for me!  
 Number one's the only one for me! (p. 32)

Archie does not seem to care what his paying audience thinks; after all, it's every man for himself. But uneasiness underlies his cockiness as is evident in the shifting tone of his turns. He vasculates between confidence and contempt perhaps because he feels keenly his failure as a performer, or is trying to cover his inadequacy; or, perhaps, he is succumbing to the situation, giving up by placing his emphasis on the



self rather than on his relationship with his audience. There is no single available interpretation of his motives, but the result is clear. Archie is literally saying that he does not give a damn; the question is whether he means it or not.

Soon after Archie's appearance as an entertainer, Archie Rice, the family man enters. The stage is set to accommodate both scenes at once, and Osborne uses the dual structure of his play to support the thematic relationship between Archie, the entertainer, and Archie, the family man. One thing made clear by this structure is that Archie is always "on." His entrance on the home scene is as studied as his entrance for his numbers:

(Archie rushes in, his arms full with a carrier bag and bottles, briskly distracted . . .)  
 Ay, ay, women's legs again! (to the others.)  
 That's what Stern calls riding your tit with sobriety. I think it was Stern anyway. Or was it George Robey? Um? (pp. 33-34)

His mannerisms and speech are strikingly similar here to those of his performances. Thus, it is very difficult to separate Archie Rice, the human being, from Archie Rice, the entertainer. Archie himself has difficulty distinguishing between his roles and this makes a comment on his self-identity, for Archie always plays a part in the drama of his existence. He constantly queries his audience, "You think I'm real don't you," half-jesting, half-serious in tone. Both of Archie's identities, performer and family man, are roles which support each other. This is made clear through the epic staging which removes the fourth wall of the conventional stage and allows Osborne to show that actors are also ordinary people and that ordinary family men are also actors, or role players. Thus, the split-stage structure itself works to convey Osborne's vision by showing the relationship between the fragments of modern man's life and man's

lack of a true identity in his adoption of roles in all situations. One is reminded of Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author by Archie's concern with and adoption of roles as he assumes masks in the absence of a core identity of his own.

Archie's parallel stage and personal mannerisms are also evident in his attitude towards both his audience and his family. He patronizes both; in effect, his family is another audience. Patronizing his family may be a mannerism as patronizing his audience is part of his performance, but again, it is something he feels is necessary in his family role as it is in his defensive reactions as a performer. For, superior though his manner may be, he is no more certain of his actions as a man than he is of his performances as an entertainer.

But one reality is certain, Archie Rice is a fraud. He hasn't paid his income tax for twenty years. A con-artist par-excellence, he inveigles people to back his shows under false pretenses; currently, he is courting a young girl in an effort to finance a road show without informing her that he has a wife and three grown children. In the travesty he calls marriage he is unfaithful to his wife, frequently bringing his one-night-stands home to his living room couch. His other familial relationships are equally brutal. When Billy, his father, thwarts his virgin marriage scheme, Archie, pretending a false sense of duty, puts him back on the stage as a music hall entertainer; one of the most chilling tableaux of the play is the scene with Billy's flag-draped coffin. True, Archie has his humane moments; he gently teases Billy into a better humor on occasions of irritability, and he saves the news of Mick's capture until morning in an effort to spare the family. But these instances of kindness are outnumbered by his more usual crassness. Plainly, Archie fails in his res-

possibilities to humanity and to his family; he is neither a good citizen nor a good business man; he is not a good husband, father or son. Archie, then, is a failure as a man as well as an entertainer and is again isolated in the naked glare of truth as Jean, his daughter, describes him:

You're like everybody else, but you're worse-- you think you can cover yourself by simply not bothering. (Newspapers.) you think if you don't bother you can't be humiliated, so you just roar your life out in four-letter words and just hope that somehow the perks will turn up.  
(p. 93)

Jean's assessment pinpoints one significance of Archie's keynote song; it is his flippant, brash way of facing an unpleasant reality. But both his song and his manner of not bothering, of studied indifference, may also reveal another facet of Archie's complex personality. Not bothering may be a way of pretending awkward situations do not really exist and that it is normal for him to behave as he does. In this view Archie still emerges as a failure, but as a self-indulgent one who tolerates himself, expecting the same of others; and if they do not, well, why should he care?

However, Archie has yet another role in the play, which emerges from the context of his two formal parts: Archie Rice, the individual. Archie is a man beset by failure; in seeing him as an individual between the two parts, one sees how he reacts to it privately as well as publicly. As an individual, he still plays a role, for himself, consistent with his other parts; he remains flippant and brash, but with an undercurrent of uneasiness. His facade slips a bit in private, and he is only too able to see his failures on all levels. In spite of Archie's facility at adopting roles to cover the emptiness that is his basic identity, he, like other men, cannot completely escape reality, and in epiphanic moments sees him-

self and his failures for what they are. As an entertainer Archie recognizes an artistic performance when he sees and hears one and is quite capable of comparing his own slick performances to that standard, showing himself painfully aware of the gap. One such moment occurs when he recalls the most moving thing he ever heard:

. . . 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. Or me, for that matter. 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. I've never heard anything like that since . . . I don't suppose we'll ever hear it again. There's nobody who can feel like that. I wish to God I could, I wish to God I could feel like that old black bitch with her fat cheeks, and sing. If I'd done one thing as good as that in my whole life, I'd have been all right . . . . But I'll never do it. I don't give a damn about anything, . . . (pp. 81-82)

Thus Archie recognizes that he never has and never will achieve artistic merit as a performer because he lacks the power to create a response in the listener as the Negress does. His business and family endeavors have similarly failed and he is just as conscious of the discrepancy between what should be and what is in these instances as he is in his failure as an artist.

Furthermore, Archie knows why he fails; as he says, "I wish to God I could feel like that." His inability to feel underlies his failures and causes him to say specifically of his performances:

It doesn't matter because--look at my eyes.  
 I'm dead behind these 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. (p. 83)

But while Archie's inability to feel causes him to characterize himself as dead behind the eyes, it is not altogether true that he does not feel a thing, for paradoxically he feels the absence of feeling. He feels the deadly emptiness in himself, and in tracing the perimeter of that emptiness, he traces the cause of his failures, the cause of his escape into roles, and the cause of his disillusion; indeed, he traces the primary cause of all modern man's alienation and despair.

Because Archie can see the chasm between the ideal and the real, he is skeptical of achieving fulfillment. His skepticism is apparent in his conversation with Bill, his brother, over the projected emigration to Canada, although deportation might be a more apt word. Archie holds very little hope that life will be more rewarding, either publicly or privately, in Canada than it was in England, partly because he was briefly in Canada before, and partly because he realizes that his emptiness will remain and that he will no more be able to feel anything in the new world than he was in the old. His skepticism is the product of his many years of pretending, of playing roles, only to find that he cannot pretend feeling or its absence, and that he cannot escape this condition. Because of his knowledge, he is disillusioned with life and himself.

Archie's disillusion and skepticism are also apparent in the scope of his current ideal dream:

. . .All my life I've been searching for something. I've been searching for a draught Bass you can drink all evening without running off every ten minutes, that you can get drunk on

without feeling sick, and all for fourpence.  
(p. 92)

No longer hopeful of artistic achievement, business success or personal fulfillment, he speculates upon the transient pleasures of a utopian beer. This bit of irony aptly shows his assessment of dreams and dreamers and of his own life. He no longer has big dreams, just small ones, and, ironically, his small dream is as unattainable as his large ones were. The ideal Draught Bass seems to be the only thing to which Archie is committed, but small though the dream is, it speaks eloquently on Archie's position in modern society. In the absence of dreams and the larger values that dreams represent by being committed to so small a thing, Archie shows man's urgent need to be committed to something. His position also reflects the unfortunate fact that for him, and for modern man, there are no longer dreams or hopes to be committed to. All of Archie's failures, including his lack of commitment, stem from his failure to feel; he would be committed if he could; he needs to be committed; but, because he cannot feel, he cannot be committed. His mundane dream reflects again the emptiness of his life and etches its source in his inability to feel.

Archie sought fulfillment professionally, familially, and personally and failed on all levels, but somehow he seems to outface failure. His activities now, in his disillusioned middle years, are not directed towards fulfillment but are carried out in the spirit of "the show must go on," not because he believes life will get any better, but because it simply must go on as his performances do. Conscious of his failures, with ideals or without them, with a commitment or without it, with feeling or without it, Archie will troop through his life. He does not demand a better life as Porter does, or as Jean does; he accepts life the way it is. Thus,

upon examining Archie Rice, the individual, another interpretation of his lyric, "Why Should I Bother to Care" appears. It is a stoic's phrase, accepting the disillusion of an unfulfilled life without despair. This is also borne out by his references to "getting on with the job without making fuss and all that." His stoic outlook is neither a positive commitment nor a negative rejection; it is one modern man's way of coping with failure without despair.

Thus Archie Rice emerges from the context of the play, a complex personality who is variously a rascal, a roué and a courageous man; his behavior ranges from despicable to affectionate to sensitive; his attitudes towards life and other people are sometimes patronizing, sometimes gentle, and sometimes cruel. He is both appealing and repellent, representing the curious admixture of traits which comprise his type. He is a man undaunted by his own limitations and behavior or the limitations and behavior of others, a man who is used to failure but is undefeated by it. He is a man who claims to feel nothing and is seemingly committed to nothing, a man uneasy in his valueless world who adopts a series of roles in an attempt to feign a reality where values and dreams exist, a man who sees through his own sham to his own emptiness. He is a man who says "why should I bother to care?" sometimes flippantly, sometimes pathetically, and sometimes bravely.

In his emptiness Archie is surrounded by decay, and not the least of his decaying environment is the hollow core within him. Physically he is aging, a decay of youth with its corollary, the decay of youthful idealism. He works in a dead theater; the decay of the music hall in England closely parallels the degeneration of Vaudeville to Burlesque in America. He performs before a dead audience, "sitting on their hands," in a dying resort

town. Decay permeates the fabric of the play, and is the dominant fact of life for all the Rices.

The Rices live in a run-down coastal resort, once thriving at the turn of the century. They inhabit a flat in an old mansion which was noble in the Belle Epoch but now is occupied by many families like the Rices and the "bloody Poles." Their sordid surroundings reflect the decay of their lives: Archie is a failure; Billy, his father, a has-been; Phoebe, Archie's wife, a sixtyish peroxide blonde, a dime-store clerk. Frank and Jean, two of Archie's children, are members of the body of disenchanted youth: he is a jailbird because he is a conscientious objector, and she is a member of the angry generation. The decay of their environment, then, has a corollary in the meagerness of their lives, and their discontent with their environment and their lives, with the decay around them, measures their alienation.

That the Rices are dissatisfied with their situation is obvious in their reactions to their decaying surroundings and empty lives: Archie retreats to "Why should I bother to care;" Billy reiterates "Things aren't like they used to be;" Phoebe resorts daily to a double-feature movie; Frank concludes that "nobody cares;" and Jean desires to do something useful at last. The generation gap is not a factor in Rice's dissatisfaction; from Jean, the crusading youth, through Phoebe, the middle-aged, to Billy, an aged relic, they are all discontented with their lives. Each individual's reaction is different, but the factors involved in their general dissatisfaction have many common qualities, and there is a common root in the source of their alienation.

One of the factors in the Rice's discontent is that they all, including Archie, want to succeed at something, and they all fail. Archie seeks



fame as a performer and fails. Billy was a star of the music hall, but he is old now and his career is over; he misses being a respected professional and constantly harkens back to the past when he was a success. Phoebe, dreaming of social position and material success, admires the Duchess of Porth whose social career she follows in newspapers. Jean has a comfortable material future in her engagement to a rising young lawyer, but she foresees a barren life and longs for a different future wherein she will be useful to her fellow man. Frank defies the draft and, although he has no definite dream, his actions proclaim that his vision of success is not to be found in killing. Mick, Archie's other son, finds success in military heroism, but his failure is perhaps the most emphatic one, for he dies in his efforts. The Rices' dreams are modest--a place in the world, some meaningful work to do, and a few human comforts. But for various reasons they fail to achieve their dreams; time defeats Billy and Archie in the music hall; the dime store and Archie's failure defeat Phoebe; Jean, like Jimmy Porter, is dismayed by the lack of feeling and charity in the world; Mick is betrayed by man's inhumanity to man; and Frank is defeated by prison. The Rices all dream of success, but whatever their personal dream, each is denied it.

Although the failure of their dreams of success creates moments of disillusion for them, the Rices, with the exception of Archie and sometimes Frank, do not become skeptical realists; instead, they persist in thinking that their situation will improve. This romantically optimistic note is in sharp discord with the naturalistic oppressiveness of their environment and Archie's realism. That the Rices strive for success despite their failures to achieve it and persist in hoping that they can attain it is evident in their constant references to "pulling ourselves

together." In the same romantic vein Billy exhorts Jean to "make something of yourself, you're not like the rest of us." In the Rices' discontent with the present and their desire for a different, successful future, and even in their blind optimism, one is reminded of the American dream. The Rices' concern for normalcy is also evocative of the American dream. From Archie's "Thank God I'm normal" lyric in his songs to Billy and Jean on both ends of the age spectrum, "normal" is a household word. Perhaps they are reassuring themselves, but it is one more example of their romantic escapism.

In addition, the Rices take more immediate escapes from the sordid reality of their lives. Archie's escapades with women are an escape because as he seeks sexual prowess to boast about to relive the monotony of drab reality. Phoebe escapes through the movies; any picture will do, and, when she returns, she does not remember the title or the players. Reminiscing about beautiful women and "What James Agee said about me," Billy escapes into his memories of the past which are his solace for the degenerate present as well as his ideal for the future. Jean tries to escape through involvement, attending rallies in Trafalgar Square and volunteer-teaching at a youth club. Mick escapes by joining the army and pursuing glory. Frank escapes his misery through humor and song. All try to dissipate their emptiness and failure, but from each sexual adventure, each movie, each memory, each rally, each battle, and each song, they must return to the bleak reality of their lives.

The Rices have one escape device in common: alcohol. "Every night is party night," and in every scene where the Rices gather, someone is drinking. Any excuse for a party will do, for a festive atmosphere relieves the bleakness of their lives. When Archie first enters, he car-

ries a bottle to celebrate twenty years of not paying income tax. Jean is already drunk, having had too many on the train from London. Phoebe gets tearfully drunk. Billy imbibes too heavily and righteously sings "Rock of ages, let me hide myself in thee." The party scene is repeated endlessly, even when the family gathers after Mick's funeral. Liquor is an escape from reality and a crutch the Rices use to cope with their various failures, but this escape too is temporary, an illusory pleasure garden from which they must return to failure.

The failures of the Rices are interdependent, with Archie as the focal point, but their failures are also highly individual as evidenced by their separate dreams of what constitutes success and their individual escapes from the reality of failure. Each then is ultimately isolated in his own failure and dream. The Rices are not specifically isolated by the social establishment, but they are alienated from the common dream of success by their failures. The ubiquitous "they" which pervades the play refers not to society, but to individuals or groups who have achieved success rather than failure.

Perhaps the best illustration of the isolation which results from failure is in the development of the non-communication theme, a constant in all of Osborne's plays. The structure the play contains one aspect of Archie's isolation in his music hall turns: Archie's numbers are soliloquys. By definition, communication is a twofold process, an utterance and a response; since Archie directs his songs to an audience which does not respond, there is no real communication, and his isolation is dramatically clear.

The soliloquy is also apparent in conversations between members of the Rice family. At first glance their talks seem to be about normal

family concerns: "Where is Archie?" or "What is Billy doing?" When their conversations center around the crisis of Mick's being taken prisoner, they appear to be about Mick. But upon a closer look, these surface subjects are merely polite phrases or opening gambits for a particular conversation aim. These family conversations are not communications, but are soliloquys by each character on subjects of personal interest. No one listens to anyone else, because they are all too intent upon delivering their own statements. Billy always turns the conversation from the present to the past. Phoebe muses about movies or her own childhood. Frank and Archie break into song and dance routines in the midst of others statements. The resulting dialogue is a series of non-sequiturs with each participant only conscious of his own particular contributions to the melee. However, the Rices are bothered by their communication wilderness, as evidenced when Archie implores Jean to "talk to me" after one of their alienated celebrations. He means this in the sense of a real conversation, not just polite phrases or a set speech on the self. The fact that communication has deteriorated into soliloquys or abstract utterances, with no response forthcoming or even sought, is one more facet of decay in the lives of the Rices.

As the Rices' failures with their corollary isolation, alienation, and inability to communicate illustrate the decay of the human condition, so too the deterioration of their sense of values dramatizes it. It is not that traditional values per se have failed; it is that, because of their own failures, the Rices can no longer achieve them or believe in them. Billy still holds his Edwardian values, but time has changed society's acceptance of them and he is an anachronism. Archie can recognize art in the singing of the Negress, but cannot himself achieve it.

Phoebe escapes into the romance of the movies where in fantasy she finds the love she lacks in reality. The values are still there and are still dreamed of, but it is modern man's moral dilemma in the play that in the circumstances of his life, he can no longer believe in these values because he has not been able to fulfill himself through them. The gulf between the ideal of their values and the reality of the Rices' lives results in a cosmic disillusion which gives rise to either nonacceptance or an escape into a brief utopia, a dream, as their varying reactions to their lives indicate. Thus, the problem of commitment for the Rice family is solved in diverse ways, with some, (Archie, for example) seeming non-committal because there is no longer anything for him to be committed to, and others, such as Billy and Phoebe, still being committed to values which are not viable in their lives. But, regardless of their individual choice, their need to be committed is clear, and their problem of finding something they believe in enough to be committed to is equally clear.

Osborne does not select a particular value which has lost its capacity to inspire belief in The Entertainer as he did in Look Back in Anger, but perhaps the degeneration of the value caritas again best exemplifies the playwright's treatment of the theme of the absence of values, because it is the value upon which the Rices' individual dreams and values are predicted in this play. Caritas, or caring, is what Archie means by "feeling." When he says he doesn't feel anything, he means that he doesn't care about anything. The most explicit statement on the state of the value of feeling or caring in modern society is in Frank's warning to Jean:

You'd better start thinking about number one  
Jeanie, because nobody else is going to do it  
for you. Nobody else is going to do it for you

because nobody believes in that stuff any more.  
(p. 78)

Jean in her idealism negates this advice, but the effects of the failure to care are all too obvious in the Rices' lives. Jean recites an imaginary conversation which epitomizes the world of non-feeling surrounding and within the Rices. A woman being interviewed on the subject of Christ's dying for mankind replies: "Oh yes, I heard all about that." That Christ, the supreme historical example of caritas, should be so prosaically dismissed is a radical example of the failure of feeling in the modern age, or more correctly, the failure of man to achieve it.

There also appears to be a cyclic equation underlying the relationships of the play; with the failures of men comes the loss of their values causing a failure to be committed which in turn reinforces their personal failures. If the cycle of failure is man's reality, then man is reduced to one last resource; as Jean puts it: "We've only got ourselves, somehow, we've got to make a go of it. We've only got ourselves." (p. 105). The Rices, or one of them at least, have finally realized this and abandoned seeking success in terms of the decaying values by which they formerly lived. But the optimism of Jean's declaration is undercut by the portrait of that self depicted in Archie. Given his inner emptiness, his lack of feeling or anything to believe in within himself, the chances of his "making a go of it" are slim; for there is little in himself for him to rely on. However, there is also the fact that in spite of his limitations, he persists rather than giving up. The ambivalence between Jean's optimistic statement and the negative shadings of Archie's character is left in balance and unresolved. In this context, a cycle of failure with a dubious escape possibility, Archie's "Why should I bother to care" takes on yet another dimension. It is not bravado or flippancy

or stoic acceptance; it is a serious question and its portent shakes him.

Thus John Osborne's vision emerges in The Entertainer. It is obviously a refining of his earlier view in Look Back in Anger, but there are subtle differences. In The Entertainer Osborne does not even remotely castigate special social institutions for the failures of individuals; instead he is simply stating the condition of modern man in his society where failure seems to be the universal human condition. He presents us with a much wider spectrum of humanity through a more complex protagonist and his more integrated relationships with the other characters. Perhaps this is a result of Osborne's growing awareness of the scope of man's reactions to disillusion and his growing perception of the gestalt of cause and effect in modern society. As a craftsman, Osborne gives us a more cohesive play, combining an epic-realism structure, decay images, isolation, alienation, and non-communication themes, and integrated characterizations to convey his vision. This tight structure, the epic qualities, and the use of the play's own audience as Archie's burlesque audience all tend to involve the theater-goer directly in the play for by making the patron a participant, Osborne abruptly demolishes complacency and thrusts Archie Rice from a mere character in a play into a life-size epitome of the human condition.

The focal point of Osborne's vision in The Entertainer is Archie Rice, surrounded by decay as he seeks to cope with his emptiness, failing in all his endeavors on all levels, growing more and more isolated and alienated as he fails to elicit a response from his various worlds, and unable to feel or believe in the values which have traditionally guided and soothed man. Through Archie Rice, Osborne creates "the texture of ordinary despair"<sup>3</sup> that is central to his vision. But, in spite of his

despair, Archie is somehow undaunted; he never gives up as his curtain line witnesses: "You've been a good audience. Very good. A very good audience. Let me know where you're working tomorrow night--and I'll come and see YOU" (p. 109). Archie is a mixture of despair and buoyancy in the face of failure, and it is Archie's response to his failures, his shifts in feeling, that centers Osborne's vision. The values that have gone wrong, or that men can no longer achieve are not specified, but the specific values are not important: it is the feeling for them and the feeling of their absence that is important. Through Archie's felt absence of feeling Osborne realizes his credo in dramatic form: "I want to make people feel, to give them lessons in feeling. They can think afterwards."<sup>4</sup> Osborne shows Archie's need for feeling by showing the effects of its absence and by the paradox of Archie's keenly feeling the absence of feeling. The question of whether Archie feels committed or not ceases to be of real concern; the central problem is that in his feeling of lack of feeling he has nothing left to be committed to, and Osborne again portrays man's need for values, or feeling for them, in a paradoxically positive manner by showing the effects of their absence. The effects are grim, as clearly revealed in Archie's last turn; yet, he is still trooping:

Why should I care  
 Why should I let it touch me,  
 Why shouldn't I sit down and cry(sic)  
 to let it pass over me?

(He begins to falter a little) . . .  
 (He stops and stares ahead of him. The music  
 goes on, then he picks up) . . .

So why oh why should I bother to care? (p. 109)



## Notes and References

## Chapter III

<sup>1</sup>John Osborne, The Entertainer, (New York, 1958), p. 21. Subsequent references to this edition appear in the text.

<sup>2</sup>John Osborne, Look Back in Anger in Masters of Modern Drama, eds. Haskell Block and James Sledd, Jr. (New York, 1962), p. 1070.

<sup>3</sup>John Osborne, "They Call it Cricket," Declarations, ed. T. Maschler, (New York, 1957), p. 69.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 65.

## Chapter IV

### Luther

In Luther, John Osborne shifts from the contemporary scene to the milieu of history, creating a modern drama in the mode and scope of the Elizabethan history play. Taking full advantage of the historical dramatist's liberality with fact which allows him to select from the material only those points which reinforce his thematic vision, Osborne structures the play solely around Luther's inner crises. Osborne's shift in Luther away from a contemporary setting is unique in his canon, but his use of the setting to reinforce his central character and concurrently his moral vision is characteristic of his works as is his skillful use of dramatic structure, language symbolism, and the leitmotifs of alienation, isolation, and non-communication.

The tortured Luther who emerges from the play is true to the historical Luther, but through Osborne's careful focus and selection, he is also an extension of the legendary public figure into a flesh and blood man in spiritual crisis. The focus of the drama is not upon Luther in the context of history, but upon Luther, the private man; Osborne molds the hopes and fears, desires and guilts, and above all, the doubts which beset Luther and thrust him into history. Luther, the political and religious leader, appears only in contexts which illuminate the public man as the outgrowth of private torments. Thus Van Eck's public debate with Luther over his heretical works is dramatized only because that moment

is a climactic crisis of Luther's private agonies. Since the inner Luther is the reality and center of the play, John Gassner's contention that the historical, epic Luther is not characterized is at once valid observation and negligible complaint.<sup>1</sup> The historical Luther in an epic world scene is not Osborne's focus; he portrays the psychological reality of a man's spiritual crisis, and he does this by presenting the inner individual, not epic mankind. Gassner wants both an epic view of man and an epic structure, as Brecht advocates, while Luther is a non-epic view of man dramatized in an epic structure. One can ask no more of a drama than that it be effective within the limitations of the author's selection of focus, and both John Osborne and Luther are victorious on this count.

Osborne structures Luther in the epic mode for his own non-epic dramatic ends. Structurally, Osborne pares the externals of his drama, the exposition and rising action, to present the inner Luther at his moments of crisis and in this he is more akin to Strindberg's Quatre Heures dramatic compression and to Beckett's stripped down plays than to Brecht's epic sense. But Osborne does owe much to Brecht's theater; and this influence is obvious in the expressionistic settings with the Durer-like backdrops, the use of color such as Tetzle's red cross, the presence of music to underscore emotion in the portions of the mass chanted during Luther's epileptic seizure, and the shattering of the unities. The distortion of the classical unities results partly from the structural spareness, in that each scene presents only the stark necessities without exposition, but this distortion is also in keeping with Brecht's structural theory of alienation. Brechtian alienation is based on antithesis, or opposition; it is not the opposition per se which molds the

structure; it is the relationship which grows out of opposites in juxtaposition which is the structural principle.<sup>2</sup> Luther is young when the play begins in 1506 and old when it ends in 1530, an antithesis of time and state of mind; the settings range from the cloister to the market place and back again to the monastery, an antithesis of place and of public and private space; the events move from the contemplative life of the monastery to active revolution and back to quiet family life, an antithesis of action and repose and of the internal and external man. The resulting panorama suggests the spectacle of medieval pageantry and instantly brings Brecht's Galileo to mind since it contains the same qualities of time and space.

But Osborne is no mere imitator; he uses an antithetical structure explicitly to create the psychological reality of his protagonist. He is not presenting epic mankind, but the inner epic of Luther's spiritual crises. The disparities of time, place, and action are present because they portray Luther's psychological reality. The only chronological moments of his life depicted are those significant to Luther's inner reality, and this approach creates great gaps in time, place and action. As James Joyce and Proust fictionally demonstrate in Ulysses and A La Recherche du Temps Perdu, the inner reality of man may have little to do with the chronology of external reality, and any memory will prove that the signposts of inner reality are not chronological or spacial. They are fragmentary rather than continuous, selective rather than all-encompassing, and subjective rather than objective; they are unified by psychological association rather than by time, space and action. Thus, the apparently disjointed scenes in Luther are not really scattered at all but are unified by the fact that they are associationally linked as Luther's moments

of inner crisis, and, as such, they organically grow from one another. Here is no orderly series of plot events but a collection of high and low points in Luther's spiritual crises; hence the triumphant scene of Luther inciting the mob to riot in the name of faith and scriptural authority while his books burn is followed immediately by the disastrous spectacle of Luther ashely confronting the Knight burdened by a peasant's bloody corpse. These and other antithetical scene pairings are welded together more by associational reality than by the messenger Knight who appears briefly on stage to announce each scene. Juxtaposition of the alternate peaks and depths of Luther's inner state structures the play to obtain the maximum dramatic impact from his conflicts, showing their terrible immediacy for Luther, and creating a sense of veracity and immediacy in the audience. The series of ephanic scenes that result suggest the medieval morality play for crucial events of Luther's dilemma become abstractions of all men's spiritual crises.

Osborne's Luther is a tortured man, a paradox of strength and frailty, a passionate desperate man, frightened and brave, caught between the certainty of his doom and his need to escape it. He is a man who both triumphs and fails while he seeks a stronghold by turns in monasticism, scholarship, faith, revolution, and marriage, and who ultimately finds himself bereft by all of them, albeit a wife and family is the most satisfactory. Luther's psychological quest is for something to believe in which will bridge the abyss of doubt, relieve the anxiety of guilt, and abate the fear of living. His whole effort, both internal and external, stems from his driving doubt and his need to believe; as he expresses it, "Oh Lord, I believe, I believe, I do believe. Only help my unbelief."<sup>3</sup> The agony of doubt, or unbelief, impels Luther to

seek the solace of belief, but he cannot find it; always, after a moment of confident belief, he is cast back into doubt. This, then, is the source of his public actions and the root of his private spiritual malaise, as the dramatic structure with its parallel triumph and failure emphasis so brilliantly reveals.

Luther's doubt forces him into the cloister, but he fails to find faith there. He seeks belief through the logic of theology only to find despair. He then searches for belief in the scriptures, and he finds it momentarily. As a result, he attempts to reform the Christian church so that belief through faith will be possible for all, but his reformation becomes mass revolution resulting in riot and murder, and he is again thrown back into doubt. Abandoning the love of religion, he seeks solace and belief in the love of a woman and the birth of his son. But he finds this last as fleeting as all of his previous solaces:

Seems to me there are three ways out of despair. One is faith in Christ, the second is to become enraged by the world and make its nose bleed for it, and the third is the love of a woman. Mind you they don't all necessarily work--at least only part of the time.  
(p. 116)

In his doubt Luther constantly sees and fears the apocalypse, despair, but he fights it with all the weapons he can summon. He seeks certainty in an uncertain world, and his indomitable courage in the face of despair and his frenetic efforts to defeat it time after time comprise his epic inner struggle.

"Now you must choose one of two ways . . ." intones the prior of the Ermite Order of St. Augustine as the first act opens; this line focuses the dilemma Luther faces. He must always choose between doubt and belief, but he can never completely accept the results of either choice. Luther

chooses to leave the world and join a religious order, seeking a sanctuary of belief in the company of holy men. But no living man can really leave the world, and it yaps behind Luther in the form of bodily desires. "The Lord divest you of the former man and of all his works. The Lord invest you with the new man," the novitiate ritual continues. Martin embraces the order with the fervor and spirit of a dying man; indeed, his inner being has been close to spiritual death and he seeks a new spiritual life in the monastery. But Luther soon finds in the brilliant mass confession that holy men are as venal as worldly men, and only regard themselves as more guilty in their sinfulness. There is also a hideous quality of being the "best bad boy" about the confessions which ironically underscores the futility of the "new" man. Martin finds that he is not invested with a new man and that he still retains the stamp of his old sinfulness as he recounts a dream to one of the brothers:

I was fighting a bear in a garden without flowers, leading into a desert. His claws kept making my arms bleed as I tried to open a gate which would take me out. But the gate was no gate at all. It was simply an open frame, and I could have walked through it, but I was covered with my own blood, and I saw a naked woman riding on a goat, and the goat began to drink my blood, and I thought I should faint with the pain and I awoke in my cell, all soaking in the devil's bath. (p. 19)

Thus, as Martin is metaphorically caught between his old desires and his new ones in his dream, so he is caught in all his choices. His new decisions provide a momentary surcease from doubt, but they always prove insufficient and the old doubt and despair return. The past cannot be banished, so doubt returns to haunt Martin in his dreams and in his wakeful days. He says of the monastery: "All you teach me in this sacred place is how to doubt" (p. 29). There is no sanctuary of belief here;

Martin must look elsewhere and make another equally futile and impossible choice.

From the opening to the final curtain, Martin is faced with the choice between two ways; he must make choices between his doubt and his need to believe as he attempts to alleviate his inner crises: choices between the world and his order, the rule and his conscience, the Church and Germany, the peasants and the princes, celibacy and his sexual urges, the Pope and scripture; and the most compelling choice underlying all others, between belief and unbelief. Always he must decide to follow one of two ways. He makes his choice because of his doubt and need, and since each result is unsatisfactory, each choice leads only to greater doubt and greater need.

That Luther's choices are not simply clear cut alternatives between belief and heresy, or salvation and damnation is shown in his interview with Catejon, papal legate to Germany. Here all the shadings emerge as Catejon points out that by not recanting Luther will hurt his friend, Staupitz, damage his university, offend Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, and cause disaffection from the Mother Church in many of the parishoners. Luther's decision to reform the church by advocating faith through the scriptures rather than church authority, potentially constructive action, has destructive consequences as well. But, whatever sacrifices they entail, none of his complex choices leads to absolute belief; thus, Luther is always thrust back into doubt and to the agony of making yet another choice in his search for the certainty of belief.

Perhaps the best example of the complex choices Luther must make is in his alternatives among fathers. Luther chooses to deny his mortal father in order to accept both his titular father, the Pope, and his



spiritual father, God. But this is an impossibility, as Hans points out, and Luther finds that he cannot deny his physical father and his flesh; he is a man, not a spirit. In another choice among fathers, he says, in his speech at Worms: "I have come to set a man against his father" (p. 102), meaning that he has come to set mankind against the Pope, the titular father of the Mother Church. Here Luther is choosing between his fathers, the Pope and God; he chooses God and is thrust out of the Church. Each choice of a father momentarily alleviates his doubt and allows him to believe in his chosen father figure, but then, ironically, each choice, like all his choices, creates greater doubt. Luther's choices among fathers clearly illustrates his isolation which both results from and reinforces his doubt. He chooses a father, an attempt to break his isolation and find the security of belief, but each choice of a father isolates him from his other fathers, and as each choice fails, he again is isolated in his doubt.

Luther is an Ishmael figure forever outside the human community and is keenly aware of his position. Some aspects of Luther's isolation are voluntary: his cutting himself off from his family and worldly society in choosing the monastic life, and later his heresy and denial of the church as he burns his books. But these voluntary isolations are symptoms of a spiritual isolation rooted in a doubt that is not voluntary but, rather, is overwhelmingly, compulsively and constantly present. Luther's physical entry into the cloister is voluntary, but it is also symptomatic of his existing spiritual isolation. He has not been able to negate his doubt and find a community of belief in the social world; perhaps he can alleviate his terrible loneliness in the cloister. But the monastery is as profitless as the secular world, so Luther is still alone with his

doubt. There is a parallel between Luther's doubt and his isolation throughout the play because they are mutually reinforced. Perhaps the most concrete illustration of this occurs in Act III, scene 2 when Luther is confronted by the accusing Knight after the peasant's massacre. His isolation is evident as the Knight places the responsibility squarely upon him. Luther is cut off from the mainstream of humanity by the events he has inspired and so must doubt again; he is isolated spiritually, physically, and socially by these events. Whenever doubt plagues Luther, he falls into the chasm of isolation.

In keeping with Osborne's antithetical structure, Luther's periods of isolation and doubt contrast with his fleeting moments of communion with his fellow men and with God. These moments always occur during his moments of belief. He feels communion with the brothers in the monastery when he feels that belief is to be found there. But, as he is disillusioned and doubts again, his isolation returns. As he says: "I am alone. I am alone and against myself" (p. 20). The pattern recurs throughout the play: in Luther's moments of doubt, he is isolated; in his moments of belief, he is in the community of his fellows and God. Thus, the alternate motifs of isolation and communion illuminate and reinforce Luther's doubt/belief antithesis just as the cited contrasting scene pairings do.

Luther struggles to find something of spiritual value in a decadent church and in a sixteenth century Europe which he feels is "the last age of time we're living in. There isn't any more left but the black bottom of the bucket." Luther is not only isolated; he is alienated from both the secular and temporal worlds of his time because he cannot find anything of value in either of them. The Church should function as a bastion of belief, but, ironically, the traditional custodian of spiritual

richness is a valueless, barren force. Tempting as it is to discuss the social aspects of the efficacy of religion, the focus of the play is not upon the social relevance of the church but on the effects of its failures in the spiritual life of mankind. These failures and their effects are evident in the sterility of the Church, its meaningless rule, its empty ritual, and its pasteboard figures of a decretalist, boar-hunting Pope and the pitch-man Tetzle. But despite its hollowness, the Church does not allow doubters. Thus, the symbol of the Church as a social and spiritual force is turned into a symbol of alienation against which Luther's crises are projected in bas-relief.

Luther's alienation is evident in his isolation from his family, the Church, and God, and is explicit in the image patterns he and Osborne choose to express his doubt. Perhaps the most obvious alienation image in the play is Luther's constipation. The references to Luther's blocked bowels are too numerous to overlook; they are also too persistent to dismiss as simple shock technique. They are shocking, particularly when used back to back with references to the Pope, the Holy Offices, and Salvation; they also characterize Luther's inner state. Osborne has justified the references to constipation, somewhat too readily, by the fact that this correspondence was the very one Luther himself used to describe his spiritual conflicts. Luther too knew the value of shock tactics. Sensationalism, historical accuracy, and rhetorical power are not the only motives behind the constipation references; Osborne and Luther both want to shock their audiences out of stock responses to conventional symbols and force them into a thinking perspective on a serious moral situation, and both want a symbol which will show the alienation caused by the moral problem in earthly terms. Osborne chooses to extend Luther's own analogy

of constipation, placing it in a symbolic pattern illustrating Luther's alienation in his doubt/belief crisis.

Luther's constipation recurs throughout his novitiate, and, as a priest, when he says his first mass, his doubt and blocked communication with God are symbolized by his blocked bowels. He suffers a gripping of his bowels in his interview with Staupwitz when he is trying to resolve his doubts and communicate with God through theological argument and allegory. Theology does not help, for Martin still suffers spiritual doubts and physical constipation. He does momentarily find belief through the scriptures of Saint Paul: "For therein is the rightness of God revealed from faith to faith" (p. 74). He describes his release from the confines of doubt and the freedom of belief in the metaphor of flushing bowels. His sermon is an ironic, twisted allegory on doubt and belief in which God's temple is an outhouse. One would assume that thereafter Luther's spiritual and alimentary problems would be solved. But the constipation pattern follows Luther's spiritual states of triumph and despair, recurring whenever Luther's doubts return. In the last act his "old trouble" still comes to bother him; physically he is still constipated and spiritually his belief is still blocked.

Concurrent with the physical image of constipation, the antithetical one of vomit (a physical purging of things one's body cannot accept) has a corollary in Luther's spiritual state. On a spiritual level vomiting can be likened to Luther's purging himself and much of Germany in an Italian Church they cannot accept. To Martin the rule, the empty ritual, of the Church is indigestible. He cannot spiritually accept it, or make himself subservient to it because he cannot believe in it, and his spiritual rejection of meaningless dogma is physically portrayed through his

queasiness and vomiting in the first Act. After he says his first Mass, his physical reaction is to throw up; it is more than fear or nerves; it is a rejection of the empty ritual of the Mass, a purgation of that which leads to doubt and alienation.

Throughout the play there is a strong correlation between Luther's physical and mental states, between his constipation and vomiting and his alienation. His epilepsy as a violent physical reaction to an intolerable psychological situation is one example. His sweating, his strong smell, his paleness, and his headaches, as well as his constipation and vomiting, all have their counterparts in his spiritual crisis. When doubt is dispelled, his physical condition is robust; and, when doubt inevitably returns because a new choice must be made or the results of an old one faced, his physical ailments return. Luther's alienation is reflected in his physical condition as his spiritual malaise has its counterpart in his physical ills.

In his efforts to end his isolation and alienation and resolve his doubt, Luther seeks some communication of valid belief. He does not find it in the material world; his dialogues with Hans, his father, illustrate this since wary fencing matches are the best they manage as conversation. They cannot communicate because they have different values; Luther has rejected his father's worldly values and is seeking an ideal outside the scope of his father's view which is unattainable through his father's means. Thus, Luther's alienation and isolation from the secular world are reinforced through Luther's inability to communicate.

In his quest for a communication of a viable belief Luther joins the Eremite order to speak directly with God through the medium of the ritual of the mass. But this too fails, since all ritual communicates to Luther

is doubt. For example, when Luther is saying his first mass, he forgets a portion of it. He explains his momentary lapse:

When I entered the monastery, I wanted to speak to God directly, you see, without any embarrassment, I wanted to speak to him myself, but when it came to it, I dried up--as I always have.  
(p. 45)

The portion of the mass forgotten is part of the communion service, the ultimate symbol of communication of Christian belief in ritual form, but it communicates nothing to Martin. Failing to find a communication of belief through ritual, Martin tries theology, but this too fails: "Allegories aren't much help in theology--except to decorate a house that has already been built by argument" (p. 62). Since argument, or reason, hasn't communicated belief any more than ritual, Luther turns to the Word itself and finds a momentary communication of belief there in writings of St. Paul. But he eventually finds that in the discrepancy between the Word and fact a vast empty space exists which fills with doubt as the result of his dependence on the Word manifests itself in the massacre. Like the secular world, the scriptural world fails to communicate a belief to Luther, and he remains alienated and isolated in doubt.

Abandoning ritual, reason, and words as communication media, Luther turns to feelings as a means of communicating belief: "Heart of my Savior deliver me; Heart of my shepherd guard me; Heart of my Master teach me; Heart of my King govern me; Heart of my friend stay with me" (p. 111). Traditionally the heart is the center of the human faculty of feeling, and in his pursuit of communication through feeling Luther takes a wife and seeks a communication of belief in the feeling of love with another human being rather than in the abstract love of God. Rejecting the spiritual world and returning to the secular one, Luther comes full circle in

his quest. But, feeling ultimately fails to communicate a permanent belief also, and Luther still has moments of doubt.

Luther, then, depends on the standard formal processes of communication to reveal belief, only to find them barren vehicles, forms deprived of meaning, which communicate only doubt. His formal debate with Van Eck, a formal communication process, illustrates this. The two never reach the dialectical exchange which should result from a debate, rather they are polarized and remain isolated in their individual positions. Many of Luther's attempts at communication are soliloquies, a one way communication form, and are therefore suspect as genuine communication. An excellent example of this is the Mass. It is a series of responses on the part of the priest with no direct stimulus from the other side, and Luther's solitary outbursts in this situation underscore his isolation. The play closes on a personal soliloquy as Luther speaks to his infant son, who obviously can neither speak nor understand; this suggests that Luther still has not resolved his dilemma, for he is not yet communicating with anyone directly. But, it also suggests that he may succeed yet, for his son has a potential communication ability. The normal modes of communication: conversation, ritual, and scripture are empty and Luther seeks to break out of them in order to communicate and find belief.

Thus, Osborne's Luther is a unified play dramatizing a man's doubt/belief crisis through antithetical structure, scenic settings, symbolism, and leitmotifs of alienation, isolation, and non-communication. Osborne's focus on the protagonist as the medium for his vision is characteristic, but in Luther he welds the dramatic structure together more consistently than he has in Look Back in Anger and The Entertainer so that all the dramatic elements function organically to illustrate Luther's inner crisis.

Thus, the dramatic tension of the play derives from Luther's internal conflict, and this conflict informs not only his consciousness but the totality of the play as well.

Through the historical Luther, a powerful figure motivated by doubt to seek something to believe in, and through Luther's failure to find it permanently, Osborne illuminates modern man's dilemma. On one level Luther rebels against the Church, the ruling social institution of his time, because he cannot find fulfillment in its empty forms, as modern man rebels against aspects of his society for the same reason. But the focus of the play is not on Luther as rebel and social reformer; it is on Luther, the man, on his inner dilemma which results from his failure to find values in his society and his need to find something in it to believe in. It is here that a more important corollary to modern man lies, for he, like Luther, fails to find moral stability in his society. As the play presents Luther's doubt/belief conflict, his search for a valid belief, his fragmentary fulfillments followed by a return to doubt, so the odyssey of modern man is also presented. Again Osborne, as in Look Back in Anger and The Entertainer is effectively showing modern man's need for something of value through decrying its absence.

In Luther, however, Osborne fully develops a facet of his vision suggested in Look Back in Anger and stated by Jean in The Entertainer: in the search for value in a valueless world, "We've only got ourselves." Ironically, in Luther it also becomes painfully apparent that the individual self isn't adequate. Herein lies the crux of modern man's position. Not only does man need to believe in something which is acutely absent, it is also something he cannot ever find in himself alone; hence, since he only has himself, he is doomed to be always unfulfilled. Like



Camus, Osborne shows the impossibility of self-fulfillment through the self alone. Thus, man is caught in the irreconcilable paradox of not having anything of internal value but of needing something to believe in which, ironically, he cannot find within himself. Since sterile society has nothing to offer and modern man has nothing himself, only the absence and need remain, and he is perpetually torn between the two.

The value Luther seeks is again a form of caritas. Jimmy Porter seeks caritas in his relationships with others, particularly his wife. Archie Rice seeks a sign that someone cares, either his audience or his family. Luther seeks a sign that God exists, and Divine Love or Grace is perhaps the supreme example of caritas for Christian man, for God is defined as love and the Christian God cares about His children. In the late Middle Ages, the greatest virtue in man was caritas as it was the way to achieve God's perfect caritas, his greatest-all-inclusive attribute. And, correspondingly, the greatest sin in man was cupiditas, the antithesis of caritas. Thus, Luther's search for caritas is historically accurate as well as a continuation of a key factor of Osborne's vision, man's need for caring. Luther, cannot find evidence of God's caritas and thus cannot find belief and ease his doubt. Since he cannot find the abstract, Platonic value of caritas to commit himself to, he seeks a concrete, Aristotelean caritas instead. Luther takes a wife and finds caritas in the love of a woman. In the absence of evidence of an abstract caritas, God's love, evidence that someone outside your own being cares may be evidence of a viable moral universe because it is evidence that caritas does exist in some form. The efficacy of caritas is explained by Luther as he describes the effect of his wife's love on his moments of doubt:

. . . Seems to me there are three ways out of despair. One is faith in Christ, the second is to become enraged by the world and make its nose bleed for it, and the third is the love of a woman. Mind you they don't all work-- at least only part of the time. 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. Poor Katie, fishing about there in bed with her great, hefty arms, trying to haul me out. (p. 116)

Thus, the value Luther needs (and by analogy modern man) is caritas. Man needs a sign that someone cares, that he is not isolated, and that there is something in his world which is a source of strength. Osborne continues to develop his vision of modern man's need for something to believe in and its absence through the parallel of Luther's need and doubt in his search for caritas.

Critics have called the domestic last scene of Luther a dramatic failure and an anticlimax. The last scene does not depict a triumphant Luther secure in belief and the love of his wife; rather it portrays a Luther who still doubts and fears despair but who calmly hopes that there is something to believe in; it presents his way of coping with his uncertainty. Luther does not succumb to despair after the failure of his faith and commit suicide, a gesture of despair in classical, Christian and existential terms. He goes on in the face of defeat, much as Archie Rice indomitably goes on in the face of an indifferent audience. The two currents, triumph and failure, or belief and doubt, which are presented as separate entities moving closer together, in the manner of planes of granite in a fault in the earth's crust, in the increasing tension of the antithetical scene pairings, come together in the last scene, and the structural rhythm encompasses both attitudes. Doubt and

belief exist simultaneously and triumph and failure exist concurrently in Luther's spiritual being as he comes to accept his dilemma and his choices, coping with them through hope. In accepting both doubt and belief, Luther reaches a kind of peace in the balance of the antithesis; hence the frenzy of his seeking abates. This change in tone contributes to the charge of an undramatic final scene, but the tone accompanies the dramatic resolution of the tensions, and, moreover, it contributes to Osborne's vision as it is rendered in Luther.

The last scene presents Luther's antidote to despair, and perhaps Osborne's at that moment. It is a remedy which Luther has continuously used, as has Osborne in varying degrees in his previous plays: hope. Luther always seeks again, even in his resignation in the last scene, when he acknowledges his frailty and weakness by accepting both his doubt and his need to believe. Luther copes with moral uncertainty through hoping that a valid belief exists somewhere. The play ends on this very positive note which is, perhaps, Osborne's most positive "truth" of the human situation: in this exploration of modern man's moral condition he suggests that man dare to hope. Luther, still bothered by his "old trouble," his constipation, holds his sleeping son and advises him and all mankind:

A little while, and you shall see me. Christ said that, my son, I hope that'll be the way of it again. I hope so. Let's just hope so, eh? Let's just hope so. (p. 125)

## Notes and References

## Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup>John Gassner, Theater at the Crossroads: Plays and Playwrights of the Mid-Century American Stage (New York, 1962), p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Brooke, "The Rough Theater," The Empty Space (New York, 1968), pp. 66-67.

<sup>3</sup>John Osborne, Luther (New York, 1963), p. 123. Subsequent references to this edition appear in the text.

## CHAPTER V

### INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE

In Inadmissible Evidence Osborne returns to the contemporary age and his convention of the despicable protagonist. There is little that is noble about Bill Maitland and nothing that is likable. There is nothing admirable about either the public or the private man, and the audience agrees with Joy when, near the end of the play, she pronounces: "You know what? I think they're all right. I don't like you either."<sup>1</sup> This indictment of Maitland is not unwarranted; however, it is only one judgement of Maitland resulting from the play; for Maitland is on trial throughout and is judged by his consciousness and that of his peers and the audience on several levels, only one of which is his likability.

Through Maitland's relationships to his society, to individuals around him, and to his own past and his dreams, the judgement of Maitland takes place. Like Jimmy Porter and Archie Rice before him, Bill Maitland's thorough-going odiousness is symptomatic of the malaise afflicting both himself and modern humanity, and, if there is little that is appealing about the man, his situation is compelling. By means of the structural motif of a trial Osborne again explores the isolation, alienation, and, in this play particularly, the lack of communication resulting from the absence of values for modern man. Osborne continues to develop his dramatic vision through the stark, brutal portrait of Bill Maitland as he awaits the verdict.

William Henry Maitland, a 39 year-old practicing solicitor and commissioner for oaths at 34 fleet chambers, E.C. 3 is on trial as the play opens, being both the plaintiff and the prosecutor before the bench. The drama's central metaphor is explicit in Maitland's bizarre dream trial. In his nightmare he stands in the dock defending himself against the unspecified charge of "having made known a wicked, bawdy and scandalous object" (p. 9). This unnamed object is Bill Maitland and he does have the designated attributes.

As the grotesque trial continues, it becomes clear that the charge is not the only peculiarity. From the nature of the proceedings it is apparent that this is a kangaroo court rather than a social ritual with fixed procedures. Maitland elects to defend himself; his counselor becomes the prosecutor; and the defendant testifies first rather than second, thus becoming the plaintiff as well as the defendant. These violations of courtroom procedure establish that the norms are reversed and procedures are arbitrarily shifted.

The arbitrariness of the trial exists not only in terms of procedures. Maitland questions the judgement that he "should begin," and the judge replies: "That is my ruling. It is possible that it may be reversed or re-interpreted at another time elsewhere" (p. 13). The absolute norm of justice too is undercut: it is as arbitrary as any other aspect of the trial. The norms of all accepted values and standards of judgement are reversed; justice, historically conceived as an absolute, is revealed as relative. These relative values form the world view Maitland must cope with in his dream, and there is only one way to cope with such arbitrariness; he must deal with it in like manner.

In his dream, Maitland struggles to cope with these relative trial

standards through the evidence he presents while defending himself. In Maitland's nightmare, the traditional norm of evidence is also undercut. In conventionally "real" trials impartial, absolute judgement is based on empirical evidence for and against both plaintiff and defendant, and that evidence is assumed (by nature) to be factual, concrete, and logical; in other words, it is assumed to be "true." All other evidence is deemed inadmissible. In Maitland's dream trial, however, he cannot seem to summon any evidence which is admissible to this arbitrary court. Since the standards of judgement may be reversed at any time, he lacks all absolute guidelines for presenting his evidence. In his defense the only evidence he can summon is therefore his own relative evidence, which is as arbitrary as the court's standards and procedures are. The "facts" which he "swears and affirms" are an amalgam of current events, history, memories of his law clerk days, catalogues of physical ailments, analyses of his work, and citations of his strengths and large failures up to the present moment in his life. These facts are not the concrete logic of admissible evidence; they are, instead, the subjective, personal "facts" of Maitland's life, psychological associations, hopes, fears, contradictions, and paradoxes. But in a world of relative standards and in the absence of absolute values and procedures, these "facts" are the only evidence admissible. Again the play reverses as normally inadmissible evidence becomes the only possible admissible evidence.

In his dream trial, then, Maitland's situation and his way of coping with it reveal much of his character. His inability to function under a relative value system and his need of guidelines is apparent in the confusion of his ecstatic monologue where he complains: "I seem to have lost my drift," and "I wish I could see more clearly." He also confesses

the cause of his disorientation, his deep need: "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" (p. 20). It seems a small enough desire but it has not been fulfilled: "With the first friendship I hardly succeeded at all. Not really. No. Not at all. With the second, with love, I succeeded, I succeeded in inflicting, quite certainly inflicting, more pain than pleasure" (p. 20). He concludes his testimony with a summation of the effects of inhabiting a world where human needs are not met because even the smallest desires, or beliefs are negated. "I am not equal to any of it. But I can't escape it, I can't forget it. And I can't begin again. You see?" (p. 20). And, indeed, at the end of the nightmare as Maitland struggles to wakefulness, the audience/jury does see.

The essentials of Maitland's dilemma and his character are revealed through the dream trial. The first expressionistic scene contains the kernel of the play, presenting the idea of judgement, the standards to be used in that judgement, the relativity of the world enclosing Maitland, his way of coping with it, and, in the inadmissible, confessional testimony of his feelings and desires, Osborne's vision of modern humanity. The trial is a microcosm, fore-shortened in the manner of dreams, which serves as a prologue to the reality of Maitland's waking life. In Maitland's work-a-day world the same relative qualities of judgement pertain--the same timeless time and relative values--and here too Maitland is adrift; here too he has lost his sense of values, perspective, and meaning. As he struggles to defend himself, find his place, and evaluate his life in his dream, where the prop of the absolute of justice has been taken from him, so he struggles in his waking world, where the prop



of viable values and beliefs does not exist.

The continuity between dream and reality is structurally concrete as the setting for the dream trial, the prisoner's dock and the realistic detail of the green benches commonly found in British courtrooms, surrounds the other setting of the play, Maitland's office, and remains on stage throughout the play. The audience still sits before the trial as jury, reminded of their duty by the setting. A further structural continuity between the dream sequence and the body of the play arises as the Judge doffs his robes, becoming Hudson, Maitland's managing clerk, while the prosecutor strips his vestments, revealing himself as Jones, Maitland's fledgling law clerk. The dream would both continue and is penetrated as the masks are dropped. The concept of judgement by peers is also suggested as the former trial officials are now Maitland's fellow-workers. As Hudson and Jones abandon their disguises to reveal their ordinary reality, Maitland awakes to don the mask of his daily reality. He assumes the grating personality traits, flip responses, and vaunting egomania of his daily mannerisms. These traits have not been present in the dream Maitland where the "jury" has been privileged to see the essential man, stripped of his defenses, who resides behind the caricature of bravado he now assumes.

Maitland is a solicitor, a servant of the law. But the traditional, impartial absolute of the law is undercut in his real world as it is in his dream world. His legal specialty is divorce, a sordid, seamy side of the law, and he is not above tampering with evidence to secure a favorable verdict. When he interviews Maples and finds that there were no witnesses, he is undismayed; he blithely assures: "Don't worry, we'll get someone" (p. 10). The absolute of justice is relative to acquittal

as the ideal of justice is servant to its servitors. Maitland's assessment of the law reveals his disillusion with that ideal: "I don't think the law is respectable at all. It's there to be exploited. Just as it exploits us" (p. 26). And, although Maitland himself subverts the ideal of justice, he feels the effects of the value's failure because he is unable to work any longer. He shoves the bulk of his work off onto his associates and, when he must confront a client, tries to get out of it. He constantly iterates "We must get on with it," but he gets on with nothing. His inability to work is one result of not having definite values to believe in.

Socially, Maitland is in the mainstream of the Establishment and, according to its code, has achieved the good life. He owns his own firm, lives in the suburbs, and provides the requisite advantages for his children: his son attends boarding school while his daughter studies voice production in Dramatic Arts classes. He has a mistress, a social plum from his point of view, and countless other sexual liaisons. On professional, social and economic levels, he has that desirable entity, a success. Why then his discontent, his paralysis, his escape attempts through sexual feats? The norm of success is as mythical and relative in Maitland's life as justice is in his dream and his work. His success is marred by the fact that he is a solicitor, not a counselor, (a significant distinction in England) that his clerks do all the real work in his office, and that his social success is mainly attributable to his wife. His idyllic suburban family life is shattered: he and his wife don't get along, his mother-in-law crosses the street to avoid him, and his children barely tolerate him. On another social level, his relationship with his mistress is strained and deteriorating. Thus, although Maitland must be judged a

success by the traditional standard, he is not a success as an individual within that framework. Success is not a tangible reality; the only tangible reality is Maitland's less than satisfactory relationship to it. For Maitland success is only a hollow appearance; reality is the discontent and paralysis of a successful failure. Maitland finds himself as confused and disoriented by the relative nature of success as he is by the relative nature of justice.

Since there is nothing of value in his professional or social worlds, Maitland seeks something of value in his personal world. The phrase from his dream: "I never wished for anything more than to have the good fortune of friendship and the excitement and comfort of love, of women in particular" (p. 20), sums up his desire and hope in his personal relationships. This statement is a colloquial, personal definition of secular caritas, the generous caring of one individual for another. For Bill Maitland it would be a sign that he matters to someone, that someone values him, and that he can value and trust someone. Bereft of other values, he still seeks this core of solid value, but it is a jaded quest, for Bill Maitland is wary, he needs caritas but is afraid of failure after many years of being bruised.

He seeks friendship from Hudson, his managing clerk, for one. Hudson is his closest friend and it is not a very rewarding relationship. Maitland plays the role of sycophant to Hudson's cool exterior. Maitland cossets and entices him, holding himself up for admiration and Hudson's warmest response is: "Well, we all have our different methods, as I say. Different ways of looking at things" (p. 26). He confides his confusion to Hudson in a plea for understanding:

. . . I don't have any idea of where I am. I

have tried not to cause pain, I really have, you think I haven't, but I do try, I ought to be able to give a better account of myself. But I don't seem to be functioning properly. I don't seem to retain anything, at least not for very long. I wish I could go back to the beginning, except I wouldn't do any better. They used to say I had a quick brain. (p. 40).

"Well, you have that," is Hudson's evasive response to Maitland's confession. Finally, Maitland bribes Hudson with a partnership, which pleases Hudson, but he hems and haws about committing himself to it, and Maitland asks:

Bill: You're not thinking of leaving?

Hudson: No. Not exactly.

Bill: You mean you are thinking of leaving?

Hudson: I wouldn't say that exactly. (p. 51)

This inconclusive debate ends with Hudson's agreeing to think about it. Neither flattery, plea, nor bribery has any effect, and Maitland's friendship with Hudson is tenuous at best.

His relationship with his wife, one instance of his seeking the love of a woman, is no better. He shows his need of her love:

Sometimes I think you're my only grip left, if you let me go, I'll 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, putrifying womb . . . (p. 64)

And, in the same conversation he belittles and degrades her:

Must you say mistress? It's a very melodramatic word for a commonplace archetype . . . yes well she said something almost identical about you-- with a little more wit I may say, Oh something about your gold lame hairstyle, and your, yes, your dress; what did she call it; chintz and sequin collage . . . (p. 64)

His ambivalent response to his wife is characteristic. Both his need of

love and his keeping it at a distance are clear, and this ambivalence reflects his need and his skepticism.

The same is true of all his personal relationships. His conversations are at once a plea and an affront containing an appeal and the fear of rejection. His cheeky offhandedness, which offends everyone, is both a mask and a plea for attention, as is his bravado; and his flip, stinging speeches are really as much a bid for recognition as his confessions of his need are because they communicate the same thing in reverse. Both the need and the fear of rejection are vast if one can measure it by his scatological vehemence. Like Porter and Rice, he wants a response from others, a sign of caritas, and failing to elicit it through direct appeal, he tries to arouse it through shock tactics. Also, because he fears that others will not respond, his vituperative invective serves him equally well as defensive camouflage. Clearly his responses to others are ambivalent, communicating both his desperate need for love and friendship, for caritas, and his desperate fear that it will not be forthcoming.

His fears are justified, for his direct appeals to people not to leave him or to "be in" when he telephones are not fulfilled. People leave Maitland, ironically, because the intensity of his facade drives them off, and on one level the play is a progress of Maitland's ever growing isolation as one by one the other characters in the play abandon Maitland to his loneliness. The unifying characteristic of the antagonists is that they all leave Maitland: first Shirley, then Hudson, Jones, the clients, his wife, Joy, his daughter, and finally Liz. As they leave him, Maitland's isolation in his personal world is clear. His isolation from his relative social world is equally clear when he complains to Hudson: "I couldn't get a taxi. That's the first time I've never got one. All got their

bloody lights on and all going home. I don't know what they're doing." (p. 21). Taxis with their lights on are for hire, so it is odd that Maitland can't get one. It is as though he doesn't exist for them, a clear sign of his isolation in his social world. Thus, Maitland is isolated from both his personal and social worlds, but this isolation is twofold, partly imposed from the outside through people leaving or ignoring him, and partly imposed by himself. For example, he cuts himself off from others at the end of Act Two scene one when he tells his telephonist to keep trying Mrs. Eves:

Joy: Will you speak to her?

Bill: No. But say I'll be around this evening.

Joy: What time?

Bill: Tell her to expect me when she sees me.  
(p. 57)

Not surprisingly, Maitland's response to his isolation is two-pronged also, on the one hand he retreats from Mrs. Eves out of fear of rejection and possibly out of a desire for revenge; and on the other he entreats her to "be there, you will be there," to await his next phone call. He tries to alleviate his isolation through reaching out to others, yet at the same time he further isolates himself by cutting himself off from those he reaches out to.

Maitland seeks to escape his isolation through sex, a twisted pursuit of his goal of love. Hudson describes Maitland's use of sex:

. . . It's just that some people seem to use things like sex, for instance, as a, a place of, of escape, instead of as objects, well-- in themselves. (p. 35)

Maitland tries to deny this in his conversation with Shirley over their relationship, but he is unsuccessful:

Bill: . . . I don't think I let you think it was an enduring love affair--in the sense of well of endless, wheedling objections and summonses and things. But if you think back on it, detail by detail, I don't think you can say it was fraudulent. Can you?

Shirley: One weekend in Leicester on client's business. Two weekends in Southend on client's business. Moss Mansions--remember them? Four days in Hamburg on client's business. One crummy client's flat in Chiswick. And three times on this floor. (p. 49)

Maitland fails to find solace for his isolation through sex because he tries to make it function for him in ways which it cannot, and he is constantly reminded that it cannot and does not offer him either escape or fulfillment. The futility of sex as an escape or as a substitute for love is evident from the sheer numbers involved in Maitland's sexual escapades. There have been four Bettys, two Sheilas, and many more. This is not "love of women in particular" in either number or quality, and the very emphasis on numbers destroys any possibility of caritas. The numbers also indicate the futility of escape through sex because each incident is quickly over and Maitland must return to his isolation, only to try to escape again.

Another avenue of escape is open to Maitland, that of the mind. Through memory he can recall the happier past, the moments of sexual conquest and the time when his ideal of caritas seemed viable; he can recall his youth. He frequently lapses into reverie about his past sexual escapades:

I remember Maureen. She always, well not always, but most times I went out with her, wore hand knitted suits, knitted by her mother. They'd always shrink and they were in horrible colours and her skirts would be too short be-

cause of it, which worried her. It worried me, but she always seemed to be in some pain, some funny pain, physical pain I mean. It was never any good. (p. 77)

But memories of sexual escapades offer no better escape than present ones because his memories are painful, serving only to remind him of his shattered idealism by pointing up the emptiness of his present life. Maitland's past offers no surcease from the present and like alcohol and sex, he must return to his present from each respite.

The mind offers no refuge in fantasy either. He recalls that he once imagined his wife's death and what his life would be like after that:

. . . 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 might have gone mad and bought myself a new suit. Something a bit too sharp for someone my age and size, but I'd have stalked into some popular camp store and got something off the peg. And some shirts. I'd make up my mind to throw out all my old shirts and buy new ones, clean cotton shirts with that new smell, and lots of large handkerchiefs. All new . . . .

. . .

I'd have had dinner alone, very very slowly. I'd have had a cigar and a calvados or Marc de Bourgogne. Or--and, or I'd have gone to the pictures or a theater with no one beside me except my new overcoat and new book to read at home in bed, a new novel, by some woman perhaps . . . . Something new. (p. 87)

His fantasy offers no surcease from his isolation, and contains no communication, no love and no friendship, only solitary dining and entertainment. The main characteristic of his memory is its emphasis on the new--new clothes and new restaurant--but ironically the newness only describes his old isolation. Maitland's bizarre utopia differs from



his present life in that it has a kind of peace, a tranquil acceptance of the conditions which he cannot tolerate in his present world. It is a grim vision which, in its distorted acceptance of the unbearable, shows Maitland's loss of his former value, caritas.

The past and the future offer Maitland no release from the confines of his present. Additionally, he is viewing his past and his imagined future through memory from his present. Thus, not only does the past illuminate the present, but his present illuminates his memory also. In seeing his past from the vantage point of the present, Maitland realizes that the past had the same isolation as his present, only he didn't recognize it then. In this perspective he finds himself cut off from his own past, for it is not what he thought it was. He is, then, cut off from his own youth. This is evident in his conversation with Jane, whom he addresses as a personification of youth. In this conversation he clearly separates himself from her and from his own youth. The figure of Jane is a figure of Maitland's youth and with her exit he relinquishes all the implications of his own youth.

In his isolation Maitland is not only cut off--he is alienated and not just from the world around him and others, but even from himself. His alienation is reflected in the images he uses to describe himself and others. He sees his energy, his being, as a worm, and his condition as the slow agony of being munched and diminished. His juxtaposition of the bright newness in the frame of his old isolation in his fantasy of the future ironically phrases his alienation. His memories of sexual escapades recall the pain and disillusion involved rather than the pleasure, showing his alienation from his own past. His alienation from himself is clear when, because his thumb pains him, he describes it as one

tumor on the end of another, announcing that he probably has cancer. The image indicates that not only does he think he has cancer, but that he is a cancer, a festering tumor. These images of corruption and disease are the black, bitter images of a disillusioned man, one who has lost his values, and has, through that loss, become not only isolated, but alienated.

Maitland's alienation from himself is also evident in his physical ailments and his preoccupation with his health. He constantly complains of headaches "boring like gimlets right behind the eyes." In his dream he complains that he cannot see properly; in daily life he complains that he cannot hear properly. Here Osborne makes use of body states as equivalents for mental states, as he did in Luther. Maitland tries to cure his body through pills, at least three at a time, but pills are a poor substitute for a cure, and health escapes him. Luther's self-image is presented in terms of Freudian images; Maitland's is given in Jungian ones of health and non-health. Maitland's absence of inner health is rendered in part through his poor physical health; it is a symptom of his alienation, and that too is a symptom of Maitland's disease.

Maitland is paralyzed by his malaise and its symptoms, his alienation and isolation, because of his ambivalent reaction to his condition; his need for love and friendship is balanced by his avoiding intimacy. Suspended between the poles of his ambivalence he is unable to act to alleviate his condition. Liz points out his "usual state of catatonic immobility" near the end of the play. His frenzied inaction is the core of the play, as he operates on the level of conversation rather than of action. The entire drama is a series of Maitland's conversations and phone calls. His single activity throughout the play is talking. Because he cannot act,

he can no longer do his work, only talk about the need to do it; he cannot keep people from leaving him, only talk about his need of them. His entire effort is devoted to communicating his need and his fear that it won't be fulfilled. But ironically, Maitland fails to communicate on any level in spite of his variations from direct appeal to shock tactics and his range from very formal to highly informal speech patterns. His inability to communicate, let alone act, strongly conveys his alienation and isolation. Friendship and love are themselves communications and are partly achieved through verbal communication; thus his inability to communicate to anyone strikingly communicates to him the failure of caritas, and his continual attempts at communication reflect his need of it.

Maitland's conversations with his family and fellow workers are not communications, they are either merely polite exchanges or outpourings of his desires. The aforementioned examples with Hudson and Shirley clearly convey this. The same is true of his interviews with his clients. They start on a very formal level, and quickly disintegrate from empty formulas of greeting to the equally barren forms of testimony as the clients recite their evidence in admissible legal jargon. Maitland, rather than conducting the interview (by definition a verbal interchange) moves off into his own memories, while the two participants deliver intercut monologues which never intersect.

In his interview with Mrs. Tonks, he does not contribute his own musings but reads her husband's testimony in stichomythic counterpoint to her evidence. The testimonies are on the same incident, the pair's inability to live together, but have completely different tones and points of view. Since they never intersect at any point to achieve communication they vividly illustrate the wide gulf between the pair. Mait-

land, by taking the husband's part, is trying to understand and bridge his own isolation, but all he finds is his isolation more firmly depicted in the analogous lack of communication between Mr. and Mrs. Tonks. The interviews show the lack of communication between people, and point up Maitland's lack of communication with his clients, family, friends and mistress. Each attempt at conversation and each interview ends the same way, with both parties unable to communicate, both realizing it, and each left in isolation.

Maitland's inability to communicate is sharply emphasized by the fact that most of his conversations are indirect. They are telephone calls rather than face to face confrontations. These conversations are even more obviously one-sided because the audience never sees or hears the other party; we hear only the pauses in Maitland's monologue which indicate that there is someone at the other end of the line. In his reliance on the telephone Maitland limits his ability to communicate and shows his diminished sphere of action. He shouts his despair into a machine, and gets no satisfactory response. Maitland, however, in spite of the emptiness of his phone calls, relies on the telephone as his link with people. He attempts to use it as his way out of the small space of himself and his shrunken office to a larger, fulfilled state of being. The telephone chord is his lifeline, his umbilical chord, and he uses it as such. But it is equally open to control from the other end. People can be gone when he calls, or they can decide not to answer. The medium itself, then, allows for an ambivalent response, and one can choose whether to accept or reject communication through it. Maitland's ambivalence toward communication is clearly evident in the opening of Act Two when he literally stalks the ringing telephone as if it were a predatory

beast, finally decides to answer it but is defeated by the technology of the switchboard, and then, because his need is great, dials a number.

One more communication experience is thwarted for Maitland, that of touch. He holds his daughter, his only instance of reaching out and touching someone, but fails to communicate because she remains aloof from him. In the last act Liz touches Maitland, the first time in the play that someone has reached out to touch him, but it is too late; he no longer can respond; he rejects it by not reacting to it. Part of Maitland's inability to communicate, then, lies in the absence of meaningful touch. He is conscious of physical elements of communication: he wants his clients to move closer to him, and tells Liz to move the chair forward, not to be halfway across the room. But there is little direct touch, and what occurs is painfully inadequate. Touch does not serve to communicate and like his telephone conversations is a one-sided reaching out with no response.

All of Maitland's attempts to communicate fail. But his immense need outweighs his failure and he keeps the potential of communication open. He never formally concludes any conversation. He concludes his interviews with his clients with: "Would you mind going into the other room?" (p. 81). When Hudson leaves his office he asks him to stop in later because he has something to say. He never formally concludes any phone call; he ends with "I'll ring you back," or very informally with the slangy "bye", which in its colloquial nature implies merely an interruption not an end. Thus, although Maitland finds no meaningful communication on any level, he keeps hoping to find it and so never formally or emphatically ends any conversation.

Maitland's inability to communicate is the link between his dream

and his daily life, for he has the same difficulties in his waking hours as he has in his dream--the same inability to make others understand, the same inability to understand, the same unanswered questions, and the same inability to act. Both the long soliloquys in his conversations and the ecstatic monologues of his phone calls have the flavor and form of his rambling dream testimony. The long, unbroken, associational, one-sided speech patterns of his dream are clearly like his conversations, particularly in the opening of Act Two when he calls Liz and then Anna. Sometimes he is the prosecutor as he attacks:

Hullo . . . Hullo . . . . Are you there? . . .  
 Oh . . . I keep thinking you're not there . . .  
 . . Well you weren't anything and I suddenly . . .  
 . . Hullo . . . Hullo . . . . Oh, hell's bloody  
 bells . . . . Well, as I say she turned up here  
 . . . . I know, well it's not something you'd  
 do . . . . You're too clever for that . . .  
 (p. 61)

Sometimes he is the counselor as he advises and directs procedures:

"Look, I know I should have phoned but I didn't and I couldn't . . . .  
 Well, I'll tell you what happened . . . . only no more jolly, barbed  
 jokes about Joy" (p. 60). Sometimes he is the judge as he evaluates  
 himself and those around him:

--and Jane, well just bad luck . . . . 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  
 . . . Sure, she'll not get into any mess like  
 us . . . . (pp. 61-62)

But predominately he is the defendant as he tries to explain himself:

Liz . . . I'm frightened . . . . It was as if  
 I only 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'd turned it off I'd have been dead . . . .  
 They would have passed me by like a blank board-

ing or a tombstone, or waste ground by the railway line or something . . . . (p. 62)

The same discontinuity and confusion, the same language forms and phrases pervade both his dream and his daily conversations. He has the same difficulty defending himself and finding and evaluating the evidence in both situations. The trial atmosphere of the dream becomes the conscious reality of Maitland's daily life and is conveyed to him and to the audience through the similarities of expression in the repeated forms and phrases of the two situations. As he grows more and more aware of the similarity, the nightmare and reality become one.

Inadmissible Evidence is the communication of Maitland's evidence; all of it is inadmissible in a court of law, but it is the pertinent testimony in Maitland's suit against himself. The play is the testimony of his desires, needs and fears, of his hopes and the failures. These are the only realities in his life, and he presents and evaluates them, awaiting the verdict on the meaning of his existence. Guilt is not the issue. Maitland is both guilty and not guilty, both needy and fearful; simplistic judgements of either/or cannot be drawn. The audience judges Maitland on grounds far beyond the realm of guilt or innocence, of acquittal or condemnation. We judge Maitland on the continuum of his guilt and innocence, on the paradoxes and ambivalences which make his being. We judge the man in his circumstances and find sentence already imposed--Maitland must live in those circumstances within the paradoxes which confine and torment him. His sentence is his life.

The audience/jury finds Maitland an isolated man who cannot bear his isolation, but who cannot remedy it. We find Maitland an alienated man who partly imposes his own alienation. We find Maitland a man who seeks

caritas and destroys it at the same time. We find a man whose need of love and friendship has never been fulfilled, and who fears that it never will be. We find him polarized between the paradoxes of his existence. We find Maitland a man whose quest for something of value, has failed. The failure of his value system is not just documented; its effects are revealed in his disorientation and paralysis. The loss of his value of justice in the social world and of his value of love and friendship in his personal world leave him adrift. At the end of the play we find the dilemma of his dream to be the dilemma of his reality: "I am not equal to any of it. But I can't escape it, I can't forget it. And I can't begin again" (p. 20). He feels that he "should have been able to cope," but he cannot. The result of his failure is his fear and terror. A keen edge of hysteria is very near the surface of both Maitland's spleen and confessions. Maitland is afraid, terrified of what will happen if he continues to fail. He shrieks at his daughter: "How much do you think your safety depends on the good will of others? Well? Tell me. Or your safety? How safe do you think you are? How? Safe?" (p. 105). He might be asking himself, for his fear and terror at not finding safety through others or in himself is the undercurrent of his search for caritas. Maitland stands before the audience/jury, bereft of anything of value in terms of his world or himself. The play is testimony to his position. He reaches desperately out for something of value, for someone, seeking a sign that someone thinks he is of value, and nothing is forthcoming. There is no caritas. Maitland is caught in the unbearable position of wanting and not having, of wanting and not wanting, of needing others and having no others, of needing values in himself and not having them. His agonizing paradoxes result in his barely



contained fear, paralysis, and terror.

As the audience/jury judges Maitland, we judge ourselves, evaluating our own lives to see if friendship and love, or our own particular values, rest safely within us. The results of the comparison are often uncomfortable; for Maitland is close to the theater audience, closer than any other Osborne protagonist. The theater audience is inevitably "establishment," like Maitland, and has money, education, and social position, like Maitland. Thus, in judging Maitland, we judge ourselves; this is indeed Peter Brook's "rough theater."

The audience/jury must also judge that in creating the portrait of Bill Maitland, Osborne has again dramatized an aspect of his moral vision. Osborne's greatest strength, and point of controversy as a dramatist is his verbal skill: the exact phrase, the pithy statement, and fluent dialogue; and in Inadmissible Evidence he makes use of his strength, proving that it is a strength and not mere facility, by structuring the play through the dramaturgical and thematic use of the non-communication motif. The play is a series of conversations or rather non-conversations, from the static dream sequence through Maitland's final phone call. The verbal structure underscores Maitland's inability to act because he can only talk about actions, it shows his isolation through his inability to communicate; it contains his alienation in both the image patterns and the emptiness of present day communication conventions. The play is a tight unity of form and content with the dominant element of both being the communication motif. Through Maitland's failure to communicate, Osborne again dramatizes man's need of something of value to believe in by showing the effect of its absence in his protagonist's isolation, alienation, and inability to communicate.

It is important to note here that Osborne is not blaming society for Maitland's condition. In spite of the trial atmosphere, the play is not an indictment of society. The sham of social values is exposed but not castigated for failing to provide man with anything of value to believe in. The play is not a judgement of the world of men, but of man's place in it. The play, then, as is characteristic of Osborne's plays, is not a piece of social criticism; rather, the social aspects provide a glimpse of the world in which Maitland operates. The focus of the play is on the Maitland, the individual, who is on trial for the way in which he lives in a hollow and valueless world. Maitland does not have a reserve of private values within himself which enables him to cope with his existence, and he is unable to find them through love and friendship with others. Like Jimmy Porter, Archie Rice, and Luther, his dilemma is that of needing something outside of himself for fulfillment while being limited to himself; the social factors of the play are used, therefore, to illustrate this aspect of Maitland's moral vacuum!

Finally, the audience/jury must judge Inadmissible Evidence, Osborne's bleakest treatment of his vision. Gone is the vigorous defiance of Jimmy Porter in Look Back in Anger, the buoyant acceptance of Archie Rice in The Entertainer, and the cautious hope in Luther. By the end of Inadmissible Evidence, when the dream has permeated reality, the audience/jury sees Maitland completely stripped of his mask, a man filled with fear and terror and desperation, reaching, reaching, reaching, and never finding. In the last scene Maitland abandons even the seeking. He sits in his office alone, abandoned by nearly everyone. He calls his wife and relinquishes his last contact with another person. When he finishes the conversation with "I'll have to put the receiver down," he indicates that

he is reduced to complete inaction. He will no longer even talk; he is in a state of stasis, waiting. Then, for the first time, he ends a telephone call with the formal and very final--"Goodbye."

## Notes and References

## Chapter V

<sup>1</sup>John Osborne, Inadmissible Evidence (New York, 1966), p. 108.  
All subsequent references to this edition appear in the text.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Jimmy Porter, Archie Rice, Luther and Bill Maitland emerge from their plays as monuments of Osborne's vision. They are men of feeling, expressing the "ordinary despair" of men who live in today's world. They are moral rebels rather than social revolutionaries, and social protest is only one symptom of their moral condition--a state of crisis. As the previous chapters indicate, Osborne is not a playwright of social protest; he is a playwright of the human condition.

As Porter, Rice, Luther and Maitland evidence; Osborne's vision of modern man is a vision of man's moral crisis, the crisis of living in a world which offers nothing for man to believe in. The protagonists seek something of value to believe in through love, art, religion, and law, failing to find it in any of them. Society's traditional values are arid, rigid formalities offering no viable truth to believe in. Osborne's view of modern man's moral crisis is that man desperately needs moral values to believe in which are not available anywhere in his world. When his protagonists fail to find anything of value in their social worlds, they protest, turning to their personal worlds to find it, but then fail to locate it here also. It is at this point that Osborne begins his plays, this moment of crisis and despair; the plays are records of his protagonists attempts to alleviate their condition and solve their dilemma of needing something of value while not having it. What his pro-

tagonists seek in their personal relationships is some form of caritas, a generous, absolute caring, a rather quaint sounding virtue in these days, but its very quaintness implies that it is an artifact of a previous age not to be found in the present one. Some of the protagonists have more success than others in finding a sign of caritas or in coping with its absence, but none of them succeeds completely. Osborne affirms that men need values in the form of traditional, socially transmitted values, or the value of a response, a sign of caring, from someone around them in order to affirm their own worth. In the absence of traditional values Osborne's heroes are seeking a sign that they matter, that there is something of value in themselves, and their success is dubious. The crisis of Osborne's protagonists is that they can find no value, or sign of caritas which would suggest a scale of values, and so they cannot affirm their own positions and worth. All they find in their desperate search for values is isolation, alienation, and the inability to communicate.

Osborne's heroes are all isolated. Porter is physically isolated in his apartment and emotionally isolated in his marriage. He is literally estranged from living, and his response is his anger, used as both his shield and lance. Rice is isolated in the circle of the spotlight; the small chasm of the orchestra pit separating him from his audience is unbridgable, and his bravado is his defense and assault as he tries to cross it. Luther is isolated from the world in his monastery and is equally remote from God as shown by his vascilations between doubt and belief. Part of his effort at belief through scripture and allegory is to diminish his isolation. And Maitland is isolated in his office from the law and from his co-workers, who gradually abandon him, by his dream (his vision). His fear and terror impel him to attempt to alleviate his

isolation. All are isolated in different ways, and all try to abolish their isolation in different manners, but all are isolated because of absence of anything of value in their worlds, and all wish to find something of value which will diminish their isolation.

All are also alienated in their attitudes towards their individual crisis. Porter's castigation of the world as "pusillanimous," Archie's "why should I bother to care," Luther's agonies of doubt expressed in outhouse imagery, and Maitland's constant seeing of himself in terms of disease all show their alienation resulting from the absence of values in their lives. Their alienation ranges from vitriolic outrage to black despair, but whatever the tone, their alienation is clearly spoken.

In spite of their articulateness, they are not able to communicate with society or with others around them. Porter cannot communicate with his wife except in a fantasy world; Rice communicates only through his entertainer mask, a pretense rather than a reality; Luther tries to communicate through prayer, but receives no revelation of belief; and Maitland tries to communicate via the telephone, a secondary communication medium at best. They are crippled by the absence of values in their lives, and not the least mark of their maimed condition is their inability to communicate.

Osborne's vision then has its constants in his protagonists' isolation, alienation and inability to communicate. There is another constant in his protagonists' reactions to their moral dilemma and its symptoms: their simultaneous longing for release from it and withdrawal from situations which would alleviate it. Porter wants to establish meaningful communication with Alison, but his anger rebuffs her and inhibits any such communication; Luther wants to end his isolation but enters a monas-

tery, a choice of self-isolation. Bill Maitland wants desperately to end his alienation and prove the dream is not true, but his manner alienates everyone from him. In each instance there is an ambivalent reaching out and holding back which is the product of disillusion; the protagonists want and need to establish belonging rather than isolation, communion instead of alienation, and communication in place of a vacuum. But in each case, because they fear that it is not possible and that they will only be confronted with the impossibility of it again, they hold back. The protagonists are all, then, in a state of polarization resulting in frenetic stasis because of their crisis.

Osborne's vision then has its constant factors, but it is a dynamic vision, not a static one, and there are many striking differences between the protagonists in their responses to their moral position. Part of the vitality of his vision derives from the range of human response and feeling possible under the same circumstances of crisis.

The range of feeling evidenced by the protagonists towards their situations represents the progress of Osborne's exploration of modern man's condition of crisis. Jimmy Porter and Archie Rice are men looking for something of value who never find it. Luther seeks; momentarily finds; and then loses his value in successive instances. Bill Maitland feels he has had something of value in the past and seeks to find it again, only to find that he never did have it and it is an unattainable illusion. Porter and Rice seek something of value in society or the world around them. Luther seeks his value in God, in another world, and, failing to find it, searches for it in himself. He is terrified by the emptiness he finds there, and resorts to the love of a woman for his source of value. Maitland seeks his value in his relationships with others, and, failing



to find it, realizes that he only has himself, and that it isn't enough. The rhythm of the protagonist's quest for a value varies, then, from the disillusioned Jimmy and Archie who have never had anything of value to the progress of disillusion and possibility of faith in Luther's case to the black despair of Maitland who is left with nothing and the fact that he must face that emptiness alone. The resolutions of the protagonists' ways of coping with this state of crisis also vary as Osborne explores the moral position of modern man. Look Back in Anger and The Entertainer both end with ambiguities: Jimmy is safe in the refuge of fantasy with Alison and Archie has finished his final turn, but is not defeated. There is an open-endedness about the resolution of these plays which allows for an open-endedness about the results of man's moral crisis. Luther ends on a note of cautious optimism as Luther, still seeking belief, speaks to his infant son about hope, which possibly implies a hope for a way out of his crisis. Inadmissible Evidence is a swing of the pendulum to the darker possibilities of the resolution of man's moral crisis in that Maitland is trapped in the recognition of his irrevocable isolation, alienation, and inability to communicate as he says his final "goodbye." Osborne, then, is probing the crisis of modern man and its possible resolutions from positive affirmation to total annihilation. And these developments of his vision are conveyed in the feelings of his protagonists towards their condition, their outrage, flippancy, hope and fear, all of which are ways of coping with despair.

Osborne then is not writing set pieces from a fixed point of vision, but is exploring the condition of modern man through the perspective of his vision. His plays are not static but are dynamic reflections of that perspective, and the form of his dramas varies as the contingencies

of his vision demand. His dramaturgy conveys his vision through his protagonists as his plays focus on his central figures and the three motifs which express their dilemma as the previous chapters illustrate. Thus, his dramaturgy is not weak, but rather suits his purpose. But in spite of the variations of dramatic form he employs, there are constants in his dramaturgy as well as constants in his vision and these re-occurrences of dramatic conventions serve to convey the continuum of his vision. His emphasis in all his dramas on a strong, empty protagonist is one example of this and his reliance on the soliloquy as his dominant dialogue form is another. These two conventions are frequently cited as weaknesses of Osborne's dramaturgy. But these two conventions result not so much because Osborne cannot develop more than a single character at a time or because he is incapable of writing two-part dialogue, as has been suggested, but because focusing on a protagonist not interacting with the other characters and having him speak in soliloquys more aptly dramatize the isolation, alienation, and inability to communicate which is so integral to Osborne's vision. The soliloquy by its very form conveys these states. It is also the most appropriate form to reveal the characters' inner states of feeling as it allows the voice of the characters the freest reign to convey anger, bravado, hope and terror. These two together, a strong focus on a protagonist and soliloquy structures for dialogue, allow Osborne the greatest range to dramatize his vision. It is small wonder that he chose them. Thus Osborne's form suits his content, for his dramaturgy deftly displays his vision and the two unite to create Osborne's powerful, effective dramas.

Osborne's protagonists then, in their reactions to their condition present the spectrum of Osborne's vision in his four major works; a vision

which is also present in his other plays except Blood on the Bamburgs. It is a vision paradoxically positive and negative: positive because it shows man's need for something of value by dramatizing the effects of its absence, and negative because it shows that man's condition is one of isolation, alienation and an inability to communicate which is not changed in his plays. His view of the outcome of this crisis of need and absence is ambivalent, sometimes positive as in Luther and sometimes negative as in Inadmissible Evidence. But the strength of his vision is in the exploration of man's moral position and in man's responses to his position in his feelings of moral outrage or moral despair.

In creating his men of feeling, of moral sensibility, Osborne created a new convention of the hero in modern drama, a type in evidence in the dramas like Delaney's Taste of Honey and Ardens's Serjeant Musgrave's Dance, and in the films of the sixties like Lindsey Anderson's This Sporting Life. These are not heroes of nobility and refinement but of guts and muscle who in their visceral response to life reveal a depth of feeling and moral immediacy long gone from the stage. Jimmy Porter, Archie Rice, Luther, and Bill Maitland are among the first of these new men of stature who are all too frailly human in their nastiness and inability to cope with their situations but whose efforts in the force of their feeling transcend their weaknesses. Their vigor and power, at least in Osborne's works, come from the genuineness and truth of the vision of humanity which inspired them. Through his heroes Osborne succeeds in his effort "to make people feel" and through feeling to gain insight into the moral dilemma of our age.

## APPENDIX

## THE CANON

Play	Year of production
<u>Look Back in Anger</u>	1956
<u>The Entertainer</u>	1957
<u>Epitaph for George Dillon</u>	1958
<u>The World of Paul Slickey</u>	1959
<u>A Subject of Scandal and Concern</u>	1960
<u>Luther</u>	1961
<u>Plays for England</u>	1962
<u>Inadmissible Evidence</u>	1964
<u>A Patriot for Me</u>	1965
<u>A Bond Honored</u>	1966
<u>Time Present</u>	1968
<u>The Hotel in Amsterdam</u>	1968
<u>The Right Prospectus</u>	1970
<u>Very Like a Whale</u>	1971
<u>West of Suez</u>	1971

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