CHAPTER TWO
CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS AND FAMILY

Class system is characterized by tremendous diversities not only in regard to observable features, but also in respect of language, religious beliefs and practices, traditions, rituals and ceremonies. Members of a particular stratum have some awareness of common interests and common identity that, to some degree, distinguish them from those of the other strata and develop class-consciousness in terms of certain norms, attitudes and values distinctive to them as a social group. Hence, class-consciousness is a feeling of inferiority in relation to those above in the social hierarchy; and a feeling of superiority in relation to those below. *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* defines class-consciousness as:

Classes in modern societies may be described as groups of individuals who, through common descent, similarity of occupation, wealth and education, have come to have a similar mode of life, a similar stock of ideas, feelings, attitudes and forms of behaviour and who, on any or all these grounds, meet one another on equal terms and regard themselves, although with varying degrees of explicitness, as belonging to one group.\(^1\)

Class system is not a recent phenomenon in the world. Its roots can be traced to the ancient world where in the cultural history it was backed by the old religious myths such the Biblical story of Ham, or Vedic Hymns explaining the genesis of the fundamental castes where the vertical system of social strata was justified by giving an anatomical illustration. The Koran holds that social stratification originates in the Will of Allah: “We have exalted some of them above others in degrees, that some of them may take others in subjection....”\(^2\) The same thought was expressed in a medieval English verse, inspired by the philosophy of the Church:

The rich man at the castle,
The poor man at the gate,
God made them high or lowly
And ordered their estate.\(^3\)
Karl Marx held that society in every age has divided itself into two main hostile classes differentiated by economic conditions—one is the small privileged class owning the means of production and the other the larger class of toilers who work up the raw material. These two economic classes "stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an interrupted, now hidden, now open fight...." In his view, classes are economically constructed, not naturally.

It is generally suggested that Britain is particularly a class-ridden society where the upper-class is remarkably preoccupied with the social standing, and with the language and manners that demark social rank. Sensitivity of people to gradations of prestige, the rituals and the etiquettes of inter-personal relationships within and across the lines divide the population in some sort of hierarchy. British literature throughout the modern period in general but in the Victorian age in particular is a reflection of this facet of British society. Albeit, it remains true of the twentieth century as well, through this century it is associated with such features of social change which could have rendered this consciousness superfluous if not completely irrelevant. This consciousness or class structure has persisted through these turbulent years and is still phenomenon to reckon with.

In the twentieth century, mass education, war experiences, discoveries in the field of science and technology, ideological influences of Marx, Darwin and Einstein, and the increasing living standard enabled the masses to challenge the hegemony of the upper classes. Darwin's discovery and later on the genetics made it clear that all the human beings are descendents of the ape, and there are no biological differences in their built-up at least in the perceived features. Influenced by such discoveries the masses started reacting against the age-old superiority of the upper classes; Marxist ideology simply reinforced it and also quickened and sharpened the pace and forms; methods and strategies of reaction and resistance. Moreover, the war experiences also blew the myth of the believed superiority of the higher classes and shattered many of the illusions of the infallibility and invulnerability of the upper classes and of any accepted right to rule that birth and breeding might take for granted.
It was against this backdrop, in the post-war period, the Government sought to create a new social order through a vast extension of social services such as health and safety in the workplace, social security benefits such as old age pension and employment and sickness insurance and wider education facilities. Earlier, education in Britain used to be an exclusive affair of the privileged classes, but implementation of *The Education Act of 1944* speeded up the process of bringing education to the masses. Carter and Mears commented: “A whole series of changes was effected by the Education Act of 1944, which brought nearer the era of equal opportunity for every child, no matter what his or her family circumstances.”^5^ The establishment of many new educational institutions, provision of free universal school education and benefit of scholarships to the meritorious working-class children created the impression that it would diminish the inter-class disparities. The newly educated youth of the working or lower middle classes, whose psyches were profoundly shaped by these socio-economic changes, naturally started dreaming of a golden future of upward social mobility. This impression was further reinforced by the promises of the Labour Government to change the social structure from an old conservative and hierarchical framework to a new and egalitarian society commensurate with the ideas of the Welfare State.

It was taken for granted that the rising income level, the redistribution of educational opportunities, the spread of home ownership and marketing for mass consumption of material and cultural elements were progressively blurring the traditional class-cleavages. E.A. Johns observed: “Social changes in the working class have been leveling up than a leveling down.”^6^ During the fifties, working class living standards were undeniably improved by nearly full employment and comprehensive welfare provisions. Ferdynand Zweig noted: “Working-class life finds itself on the move towards new middle-class values and middle-class existence....the change can only be described as a deep transformation of values, as the development of new ways of thinking and feeling, a new ethos, new aspirations and cravings.”^7^ Similarly, Michael Young asserted: “The lower classes no longer have a distinctive ideology in conflict with the ethos of society.”^8^ This impression gathered force after the Conservatives' third straight electoral victory in 1959. D.E. Butler and Richard Rose
observed: "Class hybrids—working class in terms of occupation, education, speech, and cultural norms, while... middle class in terms of income and material comforts" were thought to have played a crucial role in the Conservatives' success. It was explained that Britain as a nation was moving inexorably towards a post-scarcity and conflict-free society.

But prosperity, significant though it was, could not herald the demise of the systematic poverty. Indeed, poverty of familiar and structural kind was ‘rediscovered’ on a large scale in the sixties. In this way, affluence was partly an ideological term, and it had effects on social and political processes. Such ideologies came to be thought of as ‘myths’. ‘Myth’ in the sense in which it was used by Ronald Barthes, as it suppresses “the historical nature and antagonistic content of what it signifies, the temporary conditions of its existence, the possibilities of its historical transcendence,” transforming what is argumentative, contradictory and ideological about post-war changes into self-evident truth. Britain in the fifties could in common parlance be represented as a society unified by a profound consensus coloured in traditionalist terms. The Conservatives adopted much of the social programme put in place by the Labour. The continuity between the two parties in the government was particularly evident in the sphere of economic policy. The Economist coined the term ‘Butskellism’, conflating the names of two chancellors from the opposing political parties, to denote the similarity between them. Stephen Lacey remarks that “there seemed to be little opposition from the left to the emerging consensus.” Moreover, The Labour seems to be “a willing partner in the consensus.” Though Allen Sinfield perceives: “Consensus was an aspiration rather an achievement.”

In fact, the British society was still distinctly compartmentalized into two antagonistic camps—the ruling class and the subject class. The various reform measures under the Welfare State could not alter the basic structure of inequality. Despite the background of generally rising affluence for the population at large, property, profit and market, the key institutions of a capitalist society, “retained their central place in social arrangements, and remained the prime determinants of inequality.” John Scot contends that “the upper class network has managed to retain
control of substantial wealth and income from the old rich (the aristocracy) has been invested in industry by merchants bankers such as the Rothschilds and the Barings, who are themselves linked to the landowning aristocracy. In the post-war era, there had been little redistribution of wealth despite an abundance of legislations aimed at improving the lot of the poor. Abercrombie and Warde comment: "There has been a degree of distribution within the first half of income earners but little gain to the bottom half."

Despite the provision of universal education, still there continued three types of education according to social status, not to individual ability and aptitude. Pupils' chances of getting a place at grammar schools "did not depend solely on the ability but was also influenced by their social origins." As a result of this pitfall, the number of university educated working classes' youth remained more or less the same in the post-war period. Kenneth Roberts commented: "Since 1930, the proportion of all university students from working-class backgrounds has remained fairly at constant 25 and 30 percent. Successive innovations have been heralded with hopes of improving working class children's prospects, only for the idealism to turn sour."

Moreover, the educated working-class boys could not breakthrough the fortification around jobs which were held in reserve for the upper-class university graduates. They were rudely shocked to find that the welfare measures had failed to move the jarred gates of the compartmentalized British society. The operation of educational system was "by no means egalitarian and did not produce as much social leveling as might have been hoped." There was still "an arbitrary educational system barring a larger number of young children in schools from higher studies and condemning them to a life of drudgery and mediocrity." At the higher places, "Public School and Oxbridge backgrounds predominated... there was no trend over time towards ex-public school boys becoming less prominent"

*The Mass Education Act of 1944* created a kind of dichotomy in the social system of Britain because it "provided an entire generation of graduates too educated for the working classes, yet not aristocratic enough for the upper crust: the Jimmy Porters, Jim Dixons, and Charles Lumleys of this era." The working classes,
allegedly middle class in financial terms, were still denied social recognition by the old middle classes. The newly educated youth soon found themselves confronting the recognition that the new eliticism was no more palatable than the old one. Meritocracy never had anything to do with equality. Ronald Bryden remarks: "It simply proposed a redistribution of society’s rewards in such a way to recruit a new kind of elite based on a new set of values." The assumption that meritocracy would supersede the rein of the Old School Tie turned to be false. The fundamental structure of this society based on the archaic and rigid notions of the class deeply influenced every aspect of Britons. The British society has been plagued by class-divisions for centuries influencing the “consciousness of the people.” Class continued to be an important and relevant feature in the British society which Lindsay Anderson calls as “one of the most class consciousness societies in the world.” The young idealists "were still left feeling that there must be something more" which could help bulldoze the stiff class composition of British society. Eventually, it generated a feeling of despair and despondency among them, which is manifest in the reactionary mood of defiance and protest against the values of an obsolete social structure.

It is precisely this mood of bitterness and frustration of the disadvantaged classes that finds a ready reflection and reverberation in the literature of the post-war period. In John Wain's *Hurry on Down*, the state sponsored education system fails to provide the hero, Mr. Lumley with a decent job, and he is forced to take up manual work for his sustenance. In Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim*, the protagonist rails against a shallow social snobbery. Like the novelists, the new dramatists like John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, Harold Pinter, Shelgah Delaney and Brendan Behan also reflected in their works the shaping up of new working class culture and stirring of new moods in consciousness. The dramatists were chiefly “state-educated lower-middle classes” who were dubbed as “new malcontents” because they expressed in their works the mood of disenchantment and protest of their generation. Largely, they presented a revitalizing transformation from the tepid drawing-room comedies which dealt mainly with “the upper and upper middle-classes, speaking and behaving charmingly.” In these comic plays, the working-class was portrayed chiefly as an object of humanitarian propaganda or as a source of comic relief.
In the post-war decade, the new playwrights not only selected the working-class world as their subject matter, but also remained tied with this depressed and neglected class by their umbilical cords. The “heyday of nobility revivals,” as Osborne called it, supposedly came to an end only when *Look Back in Anger* boldly rent the veil of decency that stifled dramatic creativity. These dramatists represented, reconstructed and appraised sincerely the world they found themselves born into. Morton Kroll observed: “Their works dealt realistically with the life of young, usually male heroes in contemporary society.” These playwrights have belief in the importance of passion rather than reason, and trust in direct and vigorous speech rather than an ornate language. In fact, Osborne seems to have initiated this movement with his play, *Look Back in Anger* unveiling his “prickly discontent with the let-down of Welfare Britain.” The playwright brought the lived realities on the stage not only in substance but also in sensitivity.

A critical study of Osborne’s plays reveals that he is not concerned merely with the depiction of class-consciousness in the post-war British society; rather he goes deeper to expose the roots of the acute class-consciousness which haunts the psyche of his representative characters. He delineates skillfully and convincingly the effects of intense class-conflict upon various aspects of individual’s life and his relations with people around him. Going further Osborne lays bare the disenchantment and the reaction of the contemporary working-class youth towards the established social institutions like press, religion, politics, public schools, etc. His plays are a vigorous articulation of the conflicts, contradictions and frustration engendered in the psyche of the working-class intelligentsia by the hypocrisy, insensitivity, presumptuousness and snobbishness of the ruling class. As a humanist, Osborne’s sympathy lies with the ordinary, the deprived and the dispossessed which is strikingly evidenced in the way he develops his “economic ash-can” theory and castigates the upper classes for their conceitedness, greed, hypocrisy and snobbishness. He declares that it “only needed a very reasonable decency to stand up and shout about it.” The playwright’s heartfelt wish was “to pull down sham facades” and “to explode the psychologically crippling Establishment myths.” A close analysis of the theme of class-conflict brings out Osborne’s essential and
undaunted commitment to the humanistic ideals of equality, freedom, justice and sincerity which make human life and relationships meaningful and significant. The attempt of the playwright is not to glorify the working class or to malign the upper class, but rather to place both these classes in a critical perspective through his treatment of class-conflict. He critically analyzes the modes of behaviour, patterns of thinking, attitudes, beliefs, convictions of both these classes in the context of family. He shows how the working classes, acutely conscious of their low origin, react towards the ruling class. He further shows how class-consciousness generates the feelings of anxiety, bitterness and frustration in the individual from the lower class and how it makes inroads into the intra-family relationships.

In *Look Back in Anger*, Osborne dramatizes the devastating impact of various socio-economic and psychological factors on marital relationships between the spouses from the strikingly different cultural backgrounds. Jimmy Porter, a working-class graduate and Alison Redfern, an upper middle-class girl, enter into a hasty marital alliance, perceiving the prospects of realization of their emotional and material needs. It is assumed that the marital alliance is a part of Jimmy’s attempt to ascend the ladder of social hierarchy. Conversely, Alison seems to anticipate chances of companionship in Jimmy, as she feels herself lonely and neglected in her own family, finding her brother “busy getting himself into parliament,”37 and her father “remote and rather irritable”(p.45). Their love affair is understood to be a revised version of medieval romance with Jimmy taking on the role of “a knight in shining armour”(p.45) to liberate his lady love from the confinement of “eight bed-roomed castle”(p.51). But the unacknowledged aspect of the alliance is that they are too preoccupied with their individual concerns to recognize the striking disparities between their socio-cultural backgrounds which ultimately are found to have serious repercussions on their relationships. They fail to develop mutual trust and understanding, as they get tied in nuptial knot in a hurry, without finding “much opportunity”(p.30) to understand each other’s nature, temperament, attitude, interest and lifestyle. As a result, they find it hard to appreciate concerns, beliefs and convictions of each other. Class-differences are rooted too deep in the British society to have an easy reconciliation. Temporary truce may be possible between them, but
the feelings of class-consciousness come to the fore as and when their interests clash. Alan Carter comments: "In Britain they have inherited a society riddled from top to bottom with class barriers and petty snobberies, an establishment still powerfully entrenched, and a royal family still regarded as a British status symbol long after the rest of the world that had got rid of even laughing at our pretensions." It becomes very obvious that class-consciousness in the British social system is firmly reflected in their tastes, beliefs, attitudes, modes of behaviour, traditions and convictions, and it has become an integral part of their lifestyles. The play suggests that marital harmony between the spouses from the strikingly different backgrounds is not possible until and unless they acknowledge and appreciate the feelings of each other.

The marriage creates a storm in the social circle of Alison. Conscious of their social superiority, her class people “did just about everything they could think of to stop” (p.45) the marital alliance, as they take it as molestation on the modesty of their class superiority. Alison’s mother, Mrs. Redfern crosses all the limits of indecency to rescue her delicate daughter from him. Jimmy laments: “There is no limit to what the middle-aged Mummy well do in the holy crusade against ruffians like me…she wouldn’t hesitate to cheat, lie, bully and blackmail” (p.52). Her sneering hatred of Jimmy is not a specific one, but it is an extension of the indifferent and snobbish attitude of the upper classes towards the lower classes, which is conspicuously perceptible at the party where Alison and Jimmy meet the first time: “The men there all looked as though they distrusted him, and as for the women, they were all intent on showing their contempt for this rather old creature” (p.45). This bizarre and hostile demeanour of “Dame Alison’s Mob,” (p.46) especially that of Mrs. Redfern, intensifies Jimmy’s class-consciousness and engenders in him a fiercely convulsive attitude towards the upper middle class. She “hires detectives” to look at the behavior of her daughter’s lover whom she considers as a “ruffian” (p.52). Redfern’s class-consciousness could have been made inconsequential only by the virtue of love and broad-mindedness on the part of the upper classes she represents. The failure has far-reaching consequences not only for the relationships between her and her son-in-law but also spill over beyond this infected social arena in turn causing further complications in psycho-social dimensions of the drama.
The newly-wed couple lives happily for a few months, but soon their cultural differences come to the fore as they undergo the harsh realities of day-to-day life. With little money in possession, they have "a little wedding celebration" (p.43). Alison laments: "...for the first in my life, I was cut from the kind of people I'd always known, my family, my friends, everybody" (p.43). At Hugh Tanner's house, Alison's disillusionment is further compounded by the uncivilized and rowdy behaviour of Jimmy and Hugh Tanner. Alison tells Helena:

Those next few months at the flat in Poplar were a nightmare. I suppose I must be soft and squeamish and snobbish, but I felt as though I'd been dropped in a jungle. I couldn't believe that two people, two educated people could be so savage, and so—so uncompromising. Mummy has always said that Jimmy is utterly ruthless, but she hasn't met Hugh. He takes the first prize for ruthlessness—from all corners. Together they were frightening. They both come to regard me as a sort of hostage from those sections of society they had declared war on. (p.43)

Alison is frequently invited to attend the parties held by Alison's people, and there Jimmy and Tanner behave rudely as if it were "just enemy territory to them" (p.44). Ronald Bryden remarks: "Jimmy Porter's pirate raids into the semi-stately homes of Alison's acquaintances indicate that it is not the incumbent ruling class's prerequisites that he disapproves of, only the people currently in respect of them."39 The scenes they create at the parties cause her so much humiliation and embarrassment that she wishes to go back to her parents, lamenting her decision of the marriage: "And I've burnt my boats" (p.43). These feelings of class-consciousness when influence the conjugal pair directly (between Mrs. Redfern and Jimmy are less direct) naturally have a direct impact which leads to a continuous social friction between the lead characters---Jimmy and Alison. These feelings are symptomatic of an extension of the conflict on the larger scale. The working-class youth desperately attempt to become a part of the upper classes, but fail to detach themselves from the culture of their origin. On the other hand, the upper classes try to keep distance from the lower classes to maintain their exclusiveness.

Jimmy too becomes conscious of their class-differences, finding that Alison is utterly indifferent to his aspirations and needs. He tries to win not only her love, but also demands an absolute loyalty from her in all respects. Alison tells Helena:
It isn’t easy to explain. It’s what he would call a question of allegiances, and he expects you to be pretty literal about them. Not only about himself and all the things he believes in, his present and future, but his past as well. All the people he admires and loves, and has loved. The friends he used to know, people I’ve never known—and probably wouldn’t have liked. His father, who died years ago. Even the other women he’s loved.... (p.42)

But Alison finds it hard to offer what Jimmy asks for: “I tried to. But still I can’t bring myself to feel the way he does about things. I can’t believe that he’s right somehow” (p.42). Mary McCarthy accurately observes that “solidarity, a working class virtue, is for him, the only virtue that is real; he exacts complete allegiance and fealty from anyone who enters his life.”[40] Alison’s refusal to extend the absolute allegiance to Jimmy indicates that class-conflict is still rampant in the contemporary British society. The way Alison takes his demands acts as “a constant thorn in his side.”[41] With this, their flight into the realms of romance gets decelerated, leaving them more conscious of the seemingly unbridgeable cultural gulch between them. The cultural isolation between Jimmy and Alison leads to misunderstanding, suspicion, disharmony and denial. Acutely conscious of their high or low origin, they suspect each other’s motives, and, as a result, they refuse to embrace ideas, beliefs, attitudes and convictions of each other. A close study of the play suggests that mutual trust, tolerance and understanding between the spouses from the different cultural backgrounds can go a long way in shaping lasting marital ties because without temperamental compatibility, emotional and sexual compatibilities do not last long.

The deepening consciousness of class-disparities between them makes Jimmy “predatory and suspicious” (p.36). Thinking that he is “being betrayed” he furiously rifles through her handbag “to see if there is something of me somewhere, a reference to me”(p.36). He gets shocked to find that even after the marriage she is persistently clinging to her upper-class ethos: “She gets letters... from her mother, letters in which I’m not mentioned at all because my name is dirty word....She writes long letters back to Mummy and never mentions me at all, because just I’m a dirty word to her too”(p.36). Later on, Alison admits to Helena: “I used to have to dodge downstairs for the post, so that he wouldn’t see I was getting letters from home. Even then I had to
hide them" (p. 65). For Jimmy, the continued correspondence between Alison and her mother amount to "conspiracy and betrayal." Having realized that he is being deprived of any recognition, he becomes angry and strikes back at Alison for her "obnoxious social origins." Martin Banham remarks: "Jimmy's anger and bitterness are cries from the heart for recognition, and nothing more." Frustration that emerges out of incompatibility between Jimmy and Alison has a bearing on other aspects of their marital life. It engenders the feeling of suspicion and bitterness in Jimmy and affects their marital life. It frustrates not only the prospects of marital happiness, but also the relations with other members of the family.

Jimmy's anger, with the passage of time, assumes the shape of taunts and tirades against everybody and everything from the upper class. Most of his vicious remarks and spleen are directed against his mother-in-law as a sentinel of the class structure that he has tried to break down by marrying Alison. Against her, he wages a verbal war—a war of class structure and values, one fought like a "holy crusade" (p. 52). Jimmy feels no love and respect for her: "Mummy and I took one quick look at each other, and from then on, the age of chivalry was dead" (p. 52). He crosses all the limits of indecency by using exceedingly mucky language against her: "She'd bellow like a rhinoceros in labour—enough to make every male rhino for miles turn white, and pledge himself to celibacy" (p. 52). Also, he calls her "well-bred guzzler" and "as rough as a night in a Bombay Brothel" (p. 52). Jimmy seems to be rather considerate towards his father-in-law, Colonel Redfern, and, therefore, does not make him the target of his verbal attacks, but he reserves his scorn for his mother-in-law, who would willingly "kick you in the groin while you're handling your hat to the maid" (p. 21). The verbal war between Jimmy and Mrs. Redfern puts negative repercussions on the marital relations between Jimmy and Alison.

Jimmy's verbal assault on the upper middle class and its habits is intensified by the disgusting and snobbish attitude of Mrs. Redfern. His behaviour towards the higher classes is now wrought by this acidic and censored anger. The barrenness of their life turns into an arena of reciprocated bickering and bantering. The spouses wage an open verbal war of "challenges and revenge" (p. 67) against each other.
Alison tells her father: "Well for twenty years, I’d lived a happy, uncomplicated life, and suddenly, this—spiritual barbarian—throws down the gauntlet at me" (p. 67). Patricia Meyer Spacks rightly observes that “nothing in Osborne’s play affirms the reality of any other sort of relationship between the sexes than one of challenges and revenge.” One can afford to agree with the critic’s observation that Alison’s switch over to Jimmy amounts to an act of revolt of “vitality over safety.” But the critic fails to analyze the factors leading to Alison’s present predicament. Not only that, but also she fails to notice the changes in Jimmy’s attitude towards Alison after the marriage. To be more exact, it is only after the marriage that Jimmy starts looking at Alison as a representative of his adversary camp and like a barbarian he tries to ground her from the pedestal of gentility and wreak revenge on the upper class by harassing and humiliating her. Class-differences in the long-run create antagonistic relations between the spouses. As a result, they try to humble and underestimate each other as and when they find opportunity. Things of appreciation between them become things of contention in the form of bickering and brawling. This position not only increases emotional void between them, but also frustration in the individual.

It is distinctly significant that the plot of the play is constructed on the dynamics of tension in the psyche of Jimmy between his aspiration to mount the ladder of social hierarchy and, at the same time, his wish to stay loyal to the class of his origin. His sentimental clinging to working class reflects his painful awareness of his low-class origin. It is not only Jimmy, but Alison also is acutely aware of the marked disparities between their cultures. Physically, she comes to him, but mentally seems to be reluctant to disaffiliate herself from the class of her birth. Alison’s frosty and unresponsive behaviour towards Mrs. Tanner speaks a lot of the indifferent and apathetic attitude of the upper classes towards the lower classes. Evidently, the play portrays the tension between Jimmy and Alison generated by the consciousness of their class-differences vis-à-vis there is cordiality between the members of Jimmy’s own class. Cliff tells Alison: “Well, I suppose he and I think the same about a lot of things, because we’re alike in some ways. We both come from working people... he gets on with me because I’m common....Common as dirt, that’s me” (p. 30). Jimmy tells Cliff: “You’re worth a half dozen Helenas to me or to anyone” (p. 84). Jimmy’s
sentimental attachment and Alison’s snobbish attitude to Mrs. Tanner are evident in Alison’s version to her father: “Oh---how can I describe her? Rather---ordinary. What Jimmy insists on calling working class. A charwoman who married an actor, worked all her life, and spent most of it struggling to support her husband and her son. Jimmy and she were fond of each other”(p.64). It is evident that animosity, apathy, hatred and mistrust between Jimmy and Alison lead to marital disharmony.

It is more than conspicuous that they, being representatives of extensively different class cultures, differ drastically from each other in terms of tastes, beliefs, attitudes, interests, lifestyle, language and socio-sexual conventions. These differences are so rigid and impermeable that any intermingling seems to be difficult that constitutes the prime factor that sows the seeds of marital disharmony between them. Jimmy seems to be too harsh and too heartless to recognize and satisfy her psycho-sexual needs: “He is a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty; restless, importunate, full of pride” (pp.9-10). On the other hand, Alison seems to be too selfish and introverted to share his sorrows and sufferings. They are so much locked in their respective shells that they refuse to recognize their individual differences. The play seen from this perspective suggests that marital happiness can be lasting one provided the spouses acknowledge and appreciate their individual differences.

The emotional discordance between Jimmy and Alison increases further when he realizes that she has not only failed to sever her emotional affinities with people of her class whom he so strongly despises, but also that she has not developed any emotional rapport with him or his people. Alison’s stubborn refusal to accompany Jimmy to London to see the ailing Mrs. Tanner and her return to her parents later on, leave him alone to suffer the emotional void created in him by the death of Mrs. Tanner. This tragedy leaves him an utter emotional wreck with nobody to recognize and alleviate his woes. He pours out venom against Alison when he wishes an embryonic destruction in her: “...if only something---something would happen to you, and wake you out of your beauty sleep!...If you could have a child and it would die...If only I could watch you face that”(p.37). Such a cruel and contemptible verbal
assault stuns Alison into silence, making her more insensitive and indifferent to his convictions. Alison tries to ignore Jimmy’s scolding even when he punches her, accusing her of suffering from “White Woman’s Burden” (p. 11). He strongly resents his wife’s emotional sterility, lack of response and understanding. Alan Carter comments that Jimmy’s increasing viciousness has its roots in his inability “to burrow into her love and hide himself from a world which he finds hostile.”

Alison’s unresponsive behaviour and Jimmy’s corrosive outbursts make it “impossible” for them to utter such “easy things” of endearment to each other: “Yes, darling, I know just what you mean. I know what you’re feeling” (p. 28). The communication gap between the husband and the wife arising out of a lack of mutual understanding and adjustment makes it difficult for the couple to enjoy conjugal harmony. In this context, the observation of Asha Kadyan is pertinent: “The feelings of class-consciousness are so intensely fixed in the minds of Jimmy and Alison that it results in sexual incompatibility of the couple generating frustration and despair.”

Alison’s indifference and insensitivity to Jimmy’s physical and psychological needs is responsible for the estrangement between the two. A. E. Dyson rightly observes: “She has responded to physical love, but not offered it; listened to ideals, but withheld enthusiasm; submitted to the attraction of Jimmy as a knight, but clung obstinately to the security of well-bred indifference in the face of his onslaught.” They do need reciprocal adjustment and compromise to achieve a truly harmonious relationship. The play suggests that unless and until the husband and the wife are emotionally attached to each other, their love will fail to transcend the social barriers, resulting in miserable sexual frustration which will further alienates them from each other. The playwright’s purpose is to bring out how the consciousness of the different characters is finely conditioned by their respective backgrounds.

Alison’s cold and indifferent attitude towards Jimmy reminds him of his own mother’s unresponsive and unfeeling attitude towards his father and himself. Jimmy’s “freebooting cruelty” (p. 29) finds its roots in his childhood experiences. It is Alison’s unresponsiveness that makes Jimmy more fidgety. He tries to draw her into conversation, but as usual she seems to be detached and reluctant. Alan Carter
comments: “She remains indifferent to both Jimmy’s attacks and pleas, for in being so, she is able to retain something of the earlier ‘self’ which annoys and irritates Jimmy so much.”50 The more Alison displays aversion to Jimmy, the more strongly he asks for response from her. The cultural-cleavages between them lead to emotional sterility and unresponsiveness to the genuine needs of each other. Until and unless they achieve emotional compatibility, intellectual or sexual harmony is impossible. In the absence of emotional harmony, sexual relations amount to a mechanical affair that comes to an abrupt end, breeding frustration and sense of loss, laying down the idea that emotional compatibility can go a long way in shaping marital ties between the spouses from different cultural backgrounds.

Jimmy’s diatribes are not so much aimed at Alison as a person as directed against the class which she should have abandoned with the marriage. Osborne’s primary anger is directed against the class-distinctions which still exist in the British society. Walter Wager describes Osborne as “a simmering enemy of the still not quite dead British class stratification, a bitter of hypocrisy and the establishment.”51 Jimmy comes to realize that the upper class is responsible for his deprivations and sufferings since his childhood. In fact, his indispensable grievance is that “despite his having had all the benefits of a higher education, society does not appear to need him and his brains.”52 Like Stendhal’s heroes, “he resents the society that has brought his talents to flower but plants them in a sunless garden.”53 All this stuffs his mind with bitterness, which finds a corroding reflection on his marital relations.

Jimmy castigates everything that Alison’s class represents—the political system, the education system, the Church and the Press. All these constituents of the British Establishment, joining hands together, ignore the issues of the masses. Jimmy is an energetic young man of twenty-five with an ardent zeal to do something meaningful, but he is trapped in the situation where he can do nothing except that of denouncing the things, persons and happenings responsible for his predicament. John Elsom comments: “He is loaded down with longings and aspirations totally at odds with his circumstances in life.”54 Despite the tall claims made by the successive political parties in the governance, the Welfare State fails to dispense justice to the
deprived ones in terms of distribution of jobs. In spite of having intellectual ability and aptitude, Jimmy ends up running a sweet stall in the Midlands after having tried his hand at a series of odd jobs like journalism, advertising and vacuum cleaning. Elsom remarks: "Failing any other outlet for his energy, Jimmy's frustration turns into self-loathing and are then re-directed outwards into aggression against Alison." Jimmy finds Alison a soft target of his bitterness against the unjust system. It is evident that the lack of commitment on the part of politicians to the causes of the masses upsets Jimmy which makes inroads into his marital relationships.

Jimmy’s education does not provide him with a B.B.C. accent or put him on the Old School Tie network. He realizes lack of the possibility of social recognition commensurate with his education. He finds the education system arbitrary and biased upholding hegemony of the upper classes. Martin Banham remarks: “Education had not caused him to ingratiate himself into a way of life suitable for his talents.” He does not identify even a single worthwhile cause through which he can effectively make right use of his supposedly heroic passions: “I suppose people of our generation aren’t able to die for good causes any longer....There aren’t any good, brave causes left” (p.84). He obviously seems to imply that human bravery and heroism are no more the winners. He laments that an individual has no parameters to gauge personal identity and development: “It is always depressing, always the same. We never seem to get any further....Always the same ritual. Reading the papers, drinking tea, ironing...our youth is slipping away” (p.15). Ronald Bryden observes: “Jimmy Porter’s anger with his country and countrymen is his sense of having been lied to, of having been fobbed off with an inauthentic inheritance.” The failure of education system to provide Jimmy with the due status and recognition that he aspire for fills him with so much bitterness against the system that prevents him from concentrating on his work and family affairs.

Jimmy finds the value system of the post-war British society largely the same as it was earlier. In order to be successful, one has to adjust oneself to what society asks for. Young men like Jimmy feel let down by this dual standard, whereby society claims to have changed, but in fact sinisterly operates to change people. Education.
however, is perceived as endorsing the same old values of a class-ridden society and constructing new areas for consideration to subvert the real issues. Public Schools are “a continuing preserve of reality.” Jimmy dismisses the socialist rebuilding of post-war Britain as “the brave-new-nothing very-much-thank you” (p. 85). During the two international holocausts and the economic slump, they underwent incalculable miseries, hoping that, once the war was over, their lot would be improved, but they are still undergoing the same ordeals. Jimmy “is hurt because everything is the same” (p. 68) since his childhood, as the ruling class has failed to assuage the prolonged agonies of the masses. Apart from this, Jimmy digs at the Church for its utter failure to provide any succour to the deprived ones. He castigates the Bishop of Bromley for supporting “the rich against the poor,” (p. 13) and making an appeal to all Christians to assist in manufacturing the H-Bomb. Alison’s class-consciousness is reflected in the way she takes the appeal:

Jimmy : Are you moved, my darling?
Alison : Well, naturally. (p. 13)

Jimmy vehemently criticizes the politicians for their hypocrisy and spuriousness. They pose to be “patriots and Englishmen,” but in reality, they “have been plundering and fooling everybody for generation…” (p. 20). They are too dim-witted to see to the troubles and tribulations of the poor people. Though Nigel deserves a medal inscribed “For Vaguery in the Field,” (p. 20) he enjoys the position of power and privileges merely on account of his high-class origin. Jimmy helplessly watches his brother-in-law drift effortlessly towards a political career: “He’ll end up in the Cabinet one day, make no mistake.” and calls him: “The straight-backed chinless wonder from Sandhurst?” (p. 20). Osborne’s criticism of the political class underlines his conviction that “class remained an obstacle to opportunity and blocked initiative.” Bryan Magee observed: “…the cachet of being an Etonian and the magic of the Old School Tie could still take the chinless wonder into the highest places.” Nigel, representative of the political class which goes on to mouth platitudes, is symbolic of Britain’s new leaders who are no different from those they have displaced. They still rule the nation, not by virtue of merit, but by virtue of class origin. They are so absorbed in their selfish ends that they become blind to the needs
and plight of the subject class. Moreover, they do not hesitate to exploit the masses in the name of nationalism or patriotism, as their purpose is to stay in the power to upkeep their position of privileges.

Jimmy denigrates "the dishonesty of the press" for publishing funny and insignificant things to cater to the tastes of the upper class, thereby ignoring the socioeconomic status of the masses. He expresses his disgust with the snobbish tone of the "posh" papers (supposedly the fourth pillar of the democratic state) for their discussion of the stereotype book reviews: "Even the book reviews seem to be the same as last week's. Different books---same reviews"(p.10). He decries the "posh" Sunday papers for publishing articles in the language which is virtually unintelligible to the common people, and looks up at Alison for an approval of his remarks, but she pretends to be ignorant and says: "I have not read them yet"(p.11). But the real problem that she faces lies in the fact that the paper is owned and widely read by the upper-class people. His criticism of the book reviews underlies his determination to destroy this kind of injustice and hypocrisy. Because for him the Press has failed to be a democratic and secular institution in the handing out justice; rather it has become parochial and partial in its attitude towards the welfare of general humanity. It caters to the tastes and interests of the affluent classes with an aim to perpetuate its own vested interests. Finding Alison irresponsible in a detached way, Jimmy furiously bursts out: "Old Porters talks and everyone turns over and goes to sleep. And Mrs. Porter gets' me all going with the first yawn" (p.11). Katherine J. Worth comments on Jimmy's frustration and its effect on his marriage:

His irritation with the absurdities of the class-system does of course colour his whole view of life and enters into the frustration of marriage. But what he feels himself to be up against is not simply a class system but something less assailable and more frightening, a kind of intellectual inertia which cuts right across class distinctions, affecting the common Cliff as much as the well-bred Alison.

Alison refuses to appreciate and share Jimmy's beliefs and convictions, maintaining her upper-class exclusiveness and indifference to the pains and privations of the lower classes or it may be that she perceives no substance in his anger. Even if Alison holds the better position, Jimmy will remain justified in his angry attitude.
towards her, for this position practically amounts to the former position. But, whatever it may be, it pierces him beyond endurance, and he calls Alison and Nigel "sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous" (p.21). He uses the word "pusillanimous" for Alison to sum up not only her attitude but the state of mind the Welfare State has helped to promote. The more he punishes her, the more he thinks of his revenge on the "overfed, over privileged" (p.66) people of Alison's class. Alison is regarded by Jimmy as "hostage" (p.43) from a class on which he has declared war. With Jimmy's taunts and tirades, Alison feels so sick and suffocated that she finds the house "more like zoo every day!" (p.26). It is clear that marital problems between Jimmy and Alison are entrenched in the sociological context of their lives as is observed by Samuel A. Weiss: "The achievement of Osborne is that he has probed into personal relations and bared their social determinants, that his image of private tensions adumbrates profound public issues." 53

In all their domestic fights, Jimmy's rancour is directed at the upper class of British society. He finds Alison as an easy target of his anger and verbal assaults. To escape his tirades Alison seeks defence in imperturbability, but the strategy that she devises to diffuse his anger goes contrary to her own wishes, making him more angry and insensitive. Their day-to-day verbal skirmishes make the family environment tense beyond endurance, leaving Cliff in a bitter mood. Cliff gets hurt on finding them always at loggerheads: "I cannot go on watching you two tearing the insides out of each other. It looks pretty ugly sometimes" (p.28). Derek Granger comments: "The play delineates breakdown of marital relationships between an immensely resentful graduate of working-class origin and passively resilient young woman he has snatched against all odds from a middle class home." 54 It is evident that the temperamental incompatibility between them leads the marriage towards breakdown.

Jimmy's purpose behind the denigration of the "posh" people is to pull down them from the ivory towers to recognize powers and potentialities of the masses, and provide them due opportunities to utilize their education and talent. He disparages not only Alison and her class, but also criticizes his own relatives who are supposed to be highly positioned. Cliff tells Alison: "Oh I know some of his mother's relative are
pretty posh, but hates them as much as he hates yours” (p.30). Jimmy’s aim is not to harass Alison, but to awake her from the state of lethargy and smugness as chief behavioural pattern of the upper class. Afraid of Jimmy’s bitter mood, Alison ceases to be honest with him as far as their marital matters are concerned. She conceals the news of her pregnancy from Jimmy, and gives the reason that he “he’ll suspect my motives at once,” (p.29) if she discloses it to him, but she shares the same with Cliff and Helena. A.E. Dyson comments: “She has never given herself to her husband with the honesty with which she knows his demands and needs.” What Jimmy demands Alison refuses to offer in the way he expects from her.

Jimmy’s castigation of upper class does not mean that he has no love for Alison. He wishes to see her blissful, but he is without adequate means to relieve her of the continuous drudgery at the ironing board: “There’s hardly a moment when I’m not---watching and watching you....I still cannot stop my sweat breaking out when I see you doing---something as ordinary as leaning over the ironing board” (p.33). He loves her intensely and expects her to love him in the same degree and manner, but she fails to respond to his love in the desired way, as she is still having attachment, in lesser or greater degree, to her own people: “Trouble is---Trouble is get used to people. Even their trivialities become indispensable to you” (p.33). She continues to bestow more importance even on the frivolities and trivialities of the upper class than the urgent and genuine needs of Jimmy. She maintains a certain distance from Jimmy and his class, but at the same time, she also wishes to have him: “I shall always have a deep, loving need of you” (p.72). She ends up staying with both her husband and her parents, aligning fully to neither of them. Her father, Colonel Redfern, rebukes her for the lack of commitment: “You like to sit on the fence because it is comfortable and more peaceful” (p.66). Colonel Redfern comes to realize that it has been disloyalty on the part of Alison and mistake on the part of his family that have worsened the situation: “I think it would have been better, for all concerned, if we had never attempted to interfere. At least it would have been little more dignified” (p.65). It is evident in the way he recognizes the worth of Jimmy: “He must have had a certain amount of right on his side” (p.65). Besides, he scolds Alison for keeping secret communication with her mother: “Perhaps, it might have been better if you had not
written letters to us” (p.66). Colonel Redfern in a way is a spokesperson of Osborne the playwright, and underscores the philosophic proposition of the play.

Alison is still staying with Jimmy and her own people at the same time, allying fully with neither of them. It is evident in the way she extends hearty reception to Helena Charles, as the latter seems to provide a great solace to the embittered heart of the former. With the arrival of Helena “every thing seems very different”(p.40) to her, but to Jimmy, she is an additional problem in the guise of one of his “natural enemies”(p.35). Jimmy rebukes Alison for receiving Helena without anticipating her intentions: “Oh, my dear wife, you’ve got so much to learn. I only hope you learn it one day”(p.37). Alison leaves Jimmy alone to suffer the emotional wounds that he has received from the death of Mrs. Tanner. He turns to Helena and establishes sexual relations with her to seek emotional support. In the beginning, he seems to be relaxed with her, but fails to get a lasting relief, as she also maintains a certain distance from his genuine needs. She is middle-class not only by birth, but also by instinct and conviction. She pretends to be in love with him, but abhors sharing his woes: “I do love you, Jimmy, I shall never love anyone as I have loved you. But I can’t take part in all this suffering.” (p.93). A. E. Dyson remarks: “…her loyalty to conventions—whether through the conviction, or fear, or even thoughtfulness scarcely matters—comes even before her loyalty to people makes this pretty inevitable.”66 It becomes very obvious that Jimmy and Alison do not have the amount of love and loyalty which can neutralize the impact of the cultural differences that impede the smooth course of marital relationships.

Jimmy, dejected at the betrayal of Helena, needs more stable and lasting emotional support to protect him from further emotional crisis. Now he comes to realize that emotional harmony is much more important than intellectual one. Alison, having suffered personal loss in the form of miscarriage, can be presumed to have realized her own defects, and to have returned with the intention of a deeper commitment to Jimmy’s values. Alison confesses to Jimmy: “It doesn’t matter! I was wrong, I was wrong! I don’t want to be neutral, I don’t want to be saint. I want to be lost cause. I want to be corrupt and futile!” (p.95). Alison draws Jimmy’s attention
towards the realization of her fault: “Don’t you see! I’m in the mud at last! I’m
groveling! I’m crawling!”(p.95). It is their common loss that brings them close to
share the woes and sufferings of each other. The lack of true emotional interaction for
a long time forces them come closer to seek solace and support in each other.

In the end, the couple reverts to their private phantasy world of bears and
squirrels, but rather than just admiring each other’s strength or beauty, these furry
creatures now admit to being in need of constant mutual support. The squirrel will
help maintain the bear’s furs and claws just as the bear will look out for his “none too
bright” (p.96) squirrel. Now the man who has so vehemently derided the prevalent
timidity of mind acknowledges that he and his wife are both “very timid little
animals” afraid of the “cruel steel traps that lie everywhere around” (p.96). Matt Wolf
puts that it is: “a harrowing play, fame for making an adult of the British stage, turns
out to be about two very sacred, overgrown children.”67 This time they play the game
with more mutual understanding, disregarding their cultural differences. Jimmy tells
Alison: “We’ll be together in our bear’s cave, and our squirrel’s drey, and we’ll live
on honey, and nuts---nuts and lots of nuts. And we’ll sing songs about ourselves---
about warm trees and snug caves, and lying in the sun” (p.96). The way they express
emotions indicates the realization of their mutual needs. He calls her “poor squirrels!”
and she calls him “poor bears!”(p.96). But Bamber Gasocigne remarks: “This seemed
a painfully good ending...we were back where we started and tomorrow the agony
would begin all over again.” 68 The game informs us that reconciliation between them
is possible only when they commit to one another through thick and thin crossing all
the barriers of class and conventions. It establishes the fact that the lack of trust,
tolerance and understanding substantially owes to marital disharmony between them.
This play, thus, clearly and unequivocally presents Osborne’s concerns and emphasis
on the value of fidelity, honesty, love, loyalty, mutual understanding, sincerity and the
virtues of sacrifice and allegiance for marital happiness and well-being of family.

The intense feelings of class-consciousness not only mar the prospects of
marital harmony in the nuclear families, but also upset the feelings of solidarity and
belonging in the extended families. The Entertainer examines the fortunes of the Rice
family during the Suez crisis, the lowest ebb in the fortunes of the British Empire. Acutely conscious of their low origin, all the members of the family denounce the ruling class for its indifferent and snobbish attitude towards the legitimate needs of the masses. They are languishing in appalling living conditions where they can do almost nothing except that of holding rounds of beer and denouncing the ruling class. The stage direction of the Act 1 provides us, through the Rice family, a close view of the deteriorating living conditions of the masses:

The house where the Rice family live in those tall ugly monuments built by a prosperous business man at the beginning of the century....This is the part of the town the holiday makers never see---or, if they do, they decide to turn back to the pleasure gardens. This is what they have spent two or three hours in a train to escape....It is not residential, it is hardly industrial. It is full of dirty blank spaces, high black walls, a gas holder, a tall chimney, a main road that shakes both dust and lorries.69

The tattered and filthy conditions of the locality with poverty peeping from every nook and corner with its ugly face speak volumes of hollowness of the Welfare State. The squalid existence of the Rice family illustrates the fact that the social measures to the entire nation have produced regressive results. In this connection, Abelsmith commented: “The middle classes get the lion’s share of the public social services. The elephant’s share of occupational welfare privileges and in addition can claim generous allowances to reduce their tax liability.”70 This indicates that the Welfare State has failed to provide the lower classes with opportunities to ascend the ladder of social hierarchy. The Welfare state has failed to end poverty, or overcome inequality because it favours the middle classes. R.H. Tawney observed: “There is a small class which wears several men’s clothes, eats several men’s dinners, occupies several houses, and lives several men’s lives.”71

In this play, Archie Rice, the music-hall comedian, “gets worried” (p.27) failing to do “right at the theatre” (p.36) due to the marked decline of the music-hall tradition. It is not that he is unaware of the fact that this tradition is no longer a lucrative vocation to pursue, but he is sentimentally clinging to this working-class tradition to win bread, repudiating the concerns of his father, Billy Rice: “It was all
over, dead when I got out" (p.18). About the decline of the music-hall tradition, Osborne himself writes: "I have been to the music hall all over the country where during an evening; you can see a part of England dying before your eyes." The part that is dying is also a death of working class vitality, endurance and resistance. In the absence of due opportunities, the lower classes find nothing worthwhile to earn their livelihood except that of pursuing the ancestral vocations, which are gasping for a breath in the face of technological advancement. As a result, they fail to earn enough to lead a dignified life. It creates a sense of loss and mistrust in the individual which finds a ready reflection on her or his intra-family relationships.

In the face of the sagging morale of the working class, Archie tries to survive by giving the audience what they want, i.e. “female impersonators,” “rock ‘n’ roll,” but rather than launching the fads, he keeps running behind them and so always ends up losing. Though he is heroically attempting to go on performing an act that is “dying,” he is not earning enough to support his large family. In his latest venture, Archie attempts to surf downward wave by investing money in a road show with nudes; but he has no business sense, and that venture too is doomed to fail. The inevitability of failure is his only remaining certainty, and so his life consists of continuous compromise and humiliation, a wild scramping for survival. No “Rock of Ages” for Archie, but only “the RocklitTe,” a pub where he seeks the company of “a lot of third-class sluts standing about in the nude,” which Billy describes as a “meat market” (p.18).

Archie's music hall programmes not only consume what he earns, but also devour the money that he borrows on credit. About the plans that he makes at the music hall to seek fame and fortune, his wife, Phoebe expresses her fear: “That’s Archie’s trouble. He always builds everything up. And never turns out” (p.45). In the pursuit, sinking deeper and deeper, he gets himself drenched in the pool of debt from the top to the bottom, failing to pay income-tax for the last twenty years. The financial condition of the family is so terrible that they rent out their absentee son’s room to some “black fellow” (p.15). Archie’s predicament is the upshot of the ill-conceived
and lopsided economic measures initiated in the post-war Britain. In this connection, the observation of William A. Robson is quite pertinent:

Fiscal policy since the end of the Second World War has not brought about as much redistribution between rich and poor, or between richer and poorer as some people expected. We have recently become aware of the existence of the poverty trap; of the fact that the highest marginal rates of income tax were falling on the poor; that persons with incomes well below the poverty line have been liable to direct taxation. Capital wealth is still concentrated in a relatively small proportion of the population.73

British economy between 1950 and 1958 was blamed to be lagging behind the continent not because of deficient material infrastructure but because of a rigid "state of mind."74 Self-control, reticence, compromise, diplomacy and the ideals of cautious bureaucracy managing a world empire were quickly becoming barriers to increased productivity. What was needed to combat the "debilitating inertia and conformity" was more spontaneity and creativity---in short more emotivity.75

Archie, with the decline of the music-hall tradition, loses not only the means of livelihood, but also healthy relations with his family. He is seen as a desperate failure not only in his profession, but also in his intra-family relationships. John Russell Taylor writes: "Archie's bitterness over his failure to communicate artistically is shown to affect, and in turn to be affected by his failure in his private life."76 At home he tries to maintain reserve from the members of family for being shamed by his failure, and embarrassed by his pathetic wife. His children try to upkeep some of his pride, but seem to be infected by his letdown too. Martin Banham remarks: "Archie's tragedy is not his failure, but his awareness of failure. He sees very clearly just how bad he is."77 Archie fails to get any relief from his professional frustration in the drooping atmosphere at home where "everybody's tired, everybody's standing about, loitering without intent whatsoever, waiting to be picked up by whatever they allow to happen"(p.62). They are too overwhelmed with their respective concerns to have genuine concerns for one another.

Archie's wife, Phoebe is very pathetic and the sad chronicler of the lopsided British economy, that has always neglected that section of the society to which she belongs. She had to leave school at the age of twelve, because, as she says, her mother
could not afford even the little money for her education: "We had to pay six pence a week and most weeks my mother couldn’t find it" (p.53). There has never been a let up in her hardships and sufferings ever since. She gets “bored stiff just sitting indoors” (pp.25-26) in the dull and monotonous environment. She is averse to leading a miserable life for ever: “I don’t to end up being laid out by some strangers in some rotten stinking little street in Galeshead, or West Hartlepool or another of those dead-or-alive holes!”(p.40). She hides in the darkness of a movie theatre to muster the necessary strength to face the light of the reality, but she can not escape the feeling that everything in life is going down-hill, the gin and the movie included; whereas, for Archie, Phoebe is a “poor, pathetic old thing” (p.54). Archie tells his father in her presence, “…she’s worried about who’s going to keep her when she can’t work any longer” (pp.54-55). Archie satirizes her expectations from the welfare state: “This is welfare state, my darling heart. Nobody wants, and nobody goes without, all are provided for” (p.53). It is manifest that the poor people have always stayed on the periphery of the economy despite the provision of the welfare programmes. Peter Lane comments: “Welfare State does not provide beyond the necessities of life for a large number of people in this crowded island.”

Archie’s younger son, Frank, though, has been a weakling since infancy; he suffers in prison for six months for his refusal to join the forces in the Middle East. Haunted by the ordeal he underwent in the prison, Phoebe cries: “I’ll never forget it…I’ll never forget it—ever” (p.31). But Archie, through Frank, satirizes the social measures initiated by the Welfare State: “…you great weedy boiler stoker you! I’ll bet the patient in that hospital all freeze to death—he must be saving the National Health thousands” (p.58). After trying hand at various odd jobs, Frank plays “the piano in one of these late-night drinking places” (p.31) for a pittance. Disgruntled and disillusioned with the existing socio-economic conditions in Britain, he intends to fly to Canada to lead a dignified life. Frank tells Jean:

Look around you, can you think of any good reason for staying in this cosy little corner of Europe? Don’t kid yourself anyone’s going let you do anything here, Jennie. Because they are not. You have not got a chance. Who are you—you are nobody. You are nobody, you have no money, and you are young. And when you end up it’s pretty certain you’ll still be nobody, you’ll still have
no money.... Nobody is going it for you because nobody believes in that stuff any more. Oh, they may say they do, and may take a few bob out of your pay packet every week and sticks some stamps on your card to prove it, but don’t believe it—nobody will give you second look. (p.67)

Frank, acutely conscious of his low origin, laments the rich for their complacency and absorption in their self-seeking pursuits at the cost of the people at the other end of the social scale: “They’re all so busy, speeding down the middle of the road together, not giving a damn when they’re going, as long as they are in the bloody middle” (p.68). It is not that Frank is an idler, and does not want to do anything, but the fact is that the structure of British economy does not permit a young man like him to do anything to alleviate his miserable lot. Harold Ferrar comments: “Frank’s bitter departure is part of the unarrestable process of waste that corrodes England….But on the other hand, persons like Graham are with the decent little careers lined up”79 who stay and begin to march the next Suez.

Archie’s daughter Jean, an educated girl, tries her best to meet her personal expenses by teaching art to a bunch of abnormal kids, but she is underpaid by “a lot of robbers” (p.20) for this arduous assignment. Jean tells Phoebe: “I’d never been good enough to paint myself....Even if it was just battling a gang of moronic teenagers” (p.29). Failing to find a meaningful opportunity to utilize her education and talent, Jean gets so greatly peeved with the ruling class that she can not help satirizing it: “They’re all looking after us. We’re all right. God saves the queen! Blackout. Draw tabs” (p.31). Her ire with the ruling class also finds reflection on her relationship with her fiancé, Graham Todd. She breaks off her engagement with him with the words: “We live differently. You and I don’t even draw breath in the same way” (p.84) when he objects to her getting “steamed up about the way things were going,” (p. 28) and taking part in political demonstrations in the Trafalgar Square. Graham tries to woo her by offering prospects of a decent life, but she refuses to give in to his allurements. Jean’s closing lines: “Somehow, we’ve just got to make a go of it. We’ve only ourselves” (p.85) have a drunken intensity, sarcastically implying that it is because Britons like the Rice family have allowed themselves to be “duped by the reassuring platitudes of politicians that they have colluded in creating a value system based on selfish complacency that has effectively destroyed the possibility of idealism that may
have existed in the pre-war society.”80 The politicians, irrespective of the parties, have created the value system that helps them in maintaining the status quo, breaching the trust of the masses. No one in the play is deceived by the Welfare State’s promise of a more just society. Surrounded by domestic misery, Jean remarks sarcastically: “They’re looking after us. We’re all right, all of us. Nothing to worry about. We’re all right. God save the Queen! (p.31).

Archie’s father, Billy Rice sees no difference between the “Government and Opposition,” (p.18) as both have failed to alleviate the pains and privations of the masses. His cynical view of the politicians is evident in the blunt statement: “What is that? Like the Government or the other lot. Grubby lot of rogues. Want locking up” (p.19). He gets embittered with them for their shifty stance: “This is what comes of giving them the bloody vote. They start breaking their engagements” (p.28). In The Suez, both conservatives and socialists still held hands.”81 During the post-war period, the Labour and the Conservatives alternately came to power, but the condition of the poor and the unprivileged remained more or less the same. Referring to this situation John Russell Taylor writes:

What after all was the point of politics if it did not seem to make any noticeable difference, what party one voted for? Consequently this dissatisfaction with life was aimless and had no obvious focus....Clearly something was brewing. So much localized, unorganized resentment must find expression in some way....82

Billy satirizes the expectations of his family from the Welfare State: “No use: leaving it to the Government for them to hand out a lot of bleeders who haven’t the gumption to do anything for themselves” (p.21). The Welfare State, despite the provision of social measures to establish an egalitarian society, did not help the deprived in real terms. Disillusioned with the state of affairs, they cursed it for its lack of commitment and irresponsibility. It induced in them materialistic outlook, but failed to cater to their aspirations for comfortable life. In fact, it was least concerned with the welfare of the masses, as the social measures were aimed at silencing their protest against the Establishment. It was only a ploy of the politicians to win the support of the masses to stay in the power. It becomes easier to appreciate some of the patterns of behaviour of Billy and Archie when seen from this vantage point.
Besides, being absorbed in their respective problems, each member of the Rice family is overwhelmed with the fear of impending death of Mick in the Suez War. The ruling class plays havoc with the lives of the young poor kids by thrusting them into the mouth of mortar to preserve its privileged position. Mick submits to the authority and goes to the battlefield: “No arguments, nothing. He just went” (p.30). Concerned about Mick’s safety in the Suez War, they drink to his health, and curse the politicians for exploiting the young kids in the name of nationalism. They are well aware of the fact that Mick is going to meet death in the existing circumstances, yet they nurse illusion about his safe return, but fail to conceal the concern which looms large in their conversation. Phoebe laments: “Why they send these boys out to do the fighting? They’re just kids, that’s all” (p.30). Jean is greatly perturbed about Mick’s safety, but she tries to be hopeful: “I hope to God he comes back safely” (p.30). Archie takes the case of Mick deeply, but tries to conceal it by posing to be unconcerned. Phoebe tells Jean: “Archie worries about him. He doesn’t say so, but I know he does” (p.30). He encourages the family to keep poise: “We’ll try to be a little normal for once, and pretend we’re happy, respectable, decent family. For Mick’s sake...I’m sure he thinks we’re rather dreadful. Worse than the wogs really” (p.58).

Archie expresses his ire against the ruling class for its value system that is based on selfish complacency:

We’re dead beat and down and outs. We’re drunks, maniacs we’re crazy, we’re broken....We’ve problems that nobody’s heard of, we’re characters out of something that nobody believes in. We’re something that people make jokes about....We don’t ever succeed in anything. We’re nuisance, we do nothing but make a God almighty fuss about everything we ever do. All the time we’re trying to draw someone’s attention to our nasty, sordid, unlikely little problems. (p.54)

Archie’s comments testify to the fact that the subject class has a vegetative existence; whereas the ruling class is siphoning off the welfare funds in the name of reinstating England’s supremacy over the world. He registers his protest against the ruling class which has gone deaf to the painful cries of the deprived ones: “They won’t listen, but you tell’em” (p.60). Archie’s ire is that the ruling class is so much selfish and snobbish that it refuses to acknowledge the worth of the common people in
the peace time, but it looks to them when the nation faces any crisis at national or international level:

We're the country's flower.
And when the great call comes, someone will gaze on us.
And they say: They made no fuss---
For this was their finest shower. (p.61)

The blue exposes stupidity and roguery of the politicians in exploiting the emotions of the masses in the name of nationalism, or patriotism. The dishonesty of the social system is typified by the way in which the death of Mick is concealed from his family until his body is flown home to England. The army allows the family to live in a state of optimistic self-delusion by informing that he has been taken prisoner, which is articulated through elaborate rituals of pretence that exploits the Rice family's unwillingness to face up to the truth. The habitual duplicity that characterizes the values of the Establishment is signified when Jean exposes the good manners of Archie's brother Bill as insincere play acting. Phoebe appears as a cheap snob, sentimentalizing the gentlemanly Bill by making his charming politeness for genuine affection:

Jean: He's barrister—that's why you like him so much. He's like that actor on the pictures who's always in a wig and gown in every other---
Phoebe: I like him because he's a gentleman. (p.49)

Archie exposes the camouflaged self of the politicians who shift their allegiance as and when they find opportunities to perpetuate their vested interests. He paraphrases this sentiment in an anecdote related to the family: “There was a chap at my school who managed to get himself into the Labour Government, and they always said he was left of centre. Then he went into the House of Lords, and they made him fish monger” (p.62). He denounces the Public School education for producing “some raffish middle class adventures as well as bank managers and poets” (p.34). He has turned his back on his private schooling and as a gesture of defiance, pursues his father's profession as a music-hall entertainer. But still he pins faith on his daughter Jean, a spirited young meritocrat of the post-war school system, determined to overthrow the old men responsible for Britain's humiliation at Suez. Ronald Bryden remarks that Archie “has an agenda of his own, even it is more radical than Jimmy’s.
He would replace the curriculum of Britain's discredited educated class with a culture even more down to earth than that of Bunyan, Wordsworth, and Lawrence.”

The sudden news of Mick's murder plunges the family in an angry grief that further strains the bonds of allegiance that holds them together. Though the death destroys whatever little trust these people may still have had invested in their leaders, they try to compromise with the compensation of Mick's death by exaggerating his bravery: “He must have killed at least seven of the attackers” (p.44). When the dead body of Mick is flown to Britain, Frank sings a blue to satirize the existing education system for its failure to improve the lot of masses:

- Bring back his body, and bury it in England...
- Those playing fields of Eton
- Have really got us beaten.
- But ain't no use aggrieve
- 'Cos it's Britain we believe in. (p.74)

Jean discharges rancour on the non-descript politicians, whom she holds responsible for the death and suffering of the youth of the country: “You need to look at me! I have lost a brother too, and just lap it all up why do boys die, or stroke boilers, why do we pick up these things, what are we hoping to get out of it…” (p.78). Osborne's feeling of revolt against the upper classes is apparent even in his attitude towards the British Royalty. He was particularly unsparing of the Royalty for its extravagance and wastefulness, particularly at the expense of the social welfare. The playwright declared that “my objection to the Royalty symbol is that it is dead; it is the gold filling in a mouthful of decay.” The playwright was equally contemptuous of the naïve and sentimental attachment of the common man with the anachronistic and meaningless symbol of the Royalty. Martin Benham comments on the post-war society: “A society that rejected tradition, and found the class system both laughable and abhorrent, built its world alongside another society and that found its stability and sanity only in a comfortable perpetuation of these very things.”

In the Rice family, relationships are characterized by doubt, fear, anxiety, dryness, uncertainty, depression, mistrust, inertness, tension, frustration and selfishness. Absorbed in their individual concerns, they like to escape the company of
one another: "nobody likes to anyone" (p.78). The play is about society's failure to create a culture that might offer its members any degree of authentic self-realization. John Peter writes: "The play is about personal failure, individual desolation, the frustration of the soul into which we are entitled to read the frustration of a community." It is not only the predicament of the Rice family; it is the predicament of the entire working class. The play suggests that sincere efforts on the part of the ruling class can save the subject class from the untold misery that is responsible for the latter's strained intra-family relationships.

It is generally assumed that class-consciousness came to an end in the sixties with the growth of affluence, emergence of 'youth culture' and advancement of technology, but it still persisted there, may be in a lesser degree or a dormant state, in the psyches of the constituents of the class system. In his plays of the sixties onwards, Osborne touches upon the theme of class-conflict, but it does not emerge as an overriding concern of the plays. In *Inadmissible Evidence*, Bill Maitland, an "irredeemably mediocre" barrister utterly fails both as barrister and as head of the family. On the domestic plane, he suffers at the hands of the high-profile in-laws, and on the professional, he falls a victim to the Law Society dominated by the rich and high-profiled barristers. His consciousness shaped by his rejection at the hands of his in-laws leaves him disgusted and depressed with the upper-class people": "They're all pretending to ignore me. Not they're not pretending, they are!" (p. 102). He is ignored and despised because he does not belong to a distinguished class of persons.

Maitland marries an upper class girl, Anna, after divorcing his first wife, Shiela with a view to ascend the ladder of social hierarchy, but his aspirations get frustrated as he finds his in-laws adopting an open and hostile attitude towards him. He meets the same callous treatment at the hands of his upper class-in-laws as Jimmy meets from his in-laws in *Look back In Anger*. He is greatly underrated and despised by his in-laws for his lower socio-economic status as and when he meets them. Maitland tells his daughter, Jane:

Your other grandparents can hardly bring themselves to acknowledge me. The old woman crossed to the other side of the road when I was pushing you in the pram so as to avoid speaking to me....They have you over there and your
mother goes. I know, and they will give you generous presents Christmas and birthday, but do you know when they write to your mother, they never even mention me by name. (p.103)

Maitland is usually not invited to attend the ‘posh’ parties held in his wife’s family circle. Whenever he happens to attend the parties, he is not only overlooked, but also despised. At these parties, he is so much humiliated and alienated that he finds himself hapless, helpless and frustrated, and is compelled to think that he “only existed because of” (p.62) his wife. Maitland tells his mistress, Liz:

Yes, we went to the party, don’t ask me why, I think I’d even have rather gone home...of course I had too much booze...It was strange, as if I were there on tolerance....Sure, they’re sorry for Anna and think I’m a boorish old ram but it was more to it than that...They would have passed me like a blank hoarding by the railway line or something.... (p.62)

On the professional level, Maitland, being a mediocre barrister, “depended almost entirely on other people’s efforts” to go ahead with his assignments. He is conscious of the fact that it is only “that kept” him “alive and functioning at all” (p.19). His conclusion is his self-perception of entrapment: “I can’t escape it, I can’t forget it. And I can’t begin again” (p.20). At the age of fifteen he joined the legal profession as a petty caretaker, but, instead of learning the technicalities of the profession; he kept himself busy plying non-legal activities. Maitland says: “I was... running for jugs of tea, packets of fags for the other clerks or calling in the chemist for the telephonist” (p.17). Consequently, he suffers from certain inadequacies and is afraid of being “found out” (p.19) for the same. It is generally believed that Maitland has “fairly a quick mind, not profound,” but in reality, he is “indecisive” (p.18). Though, he works “pretty hard,” he does not “get a great deal for it” (p.35).

Moreover, amidst the glow of affluence and technology, fearing extinction, Maitland finds it quite difficult to lead a life of certainty. Anticipating the impending fear of being jobless with the introduction of “clattering brute of a computer” (p.29) in the legal profession, he is haunted by the anxiety that the profession “won’t do him a damn bit of good in the long run” (p.28). Maitland laments the myopic attitude of the Government for generating a sense of uncertainty and fear of losing job in the lesser beings: “They won’t need us more longer” (p.29). Maitland mocks at the rhetoric of
Harold Wilson promising the salvation of Britain by the crack commandos of scientists, technocrats and administrative wizards. The play gives the impression that mindless use of technology is creating social disharmony by sweeping job prospects for the mediocre. Osborne highlights the problem of unemployment for the lesser beings in the face of mindless use of technology.

Maitland is so much haunted by the anxiety and frustration that he resorts to drinking and debauchery to have a relief. With the passage of time, for him sex becomes a casual thing. The more he indulges in sexual activities, the more he gets frustrated. By and by his position goes from bad to worse then worst. Anticipating his inevitable downfall, his staff members desert him one by one for greener pastures, leaving him alone to fight the oddities of the professional life. Hudson, office secretary, intends to join the Pififards, the wealthy legal firm, which is supposed to be occupied by “very high class crooks” (p.51). Maitland satirizes his decision: “I think they are crooks...still you want to wear stripped trousers and work for Cabinet Ministers’ wives” (p.51). Not only the staff members, but the members of his family also overlook his existence. His wife does not even think it necessary to involve him in the household affairs and manages their daughter’s birthday party on her own. His daughter does not like to see him and feels suffocated when he happens to meet her. Maitland laments: “I see Jane everyday of the week and no one could be more relieved to be rid of me when her friends are around” (p.64).

The more Maitland feels emotionally insecure, the more he depends on others for solace and support. The more he craves for excessive attention and care, the more he gets isolated as people slip away from him one by one. At this critical juncture of life he is in a dire need of emotional and moral support from the members of his family to save himself from further disintegration. He tries to communicate his tortured self to his wife, but, fearing further rejection, his voice staggers:

Sometimes I think you’re my only grip left, if you let me go, I’ll disappear, I like to be made to disappear, nothing will work, I’ll be like something in a capsule in space, weightless, unable to touch anything or do something, like a groping body in a removed, putrifying womb....No I’ll not leave you...you’re leaving me. (p.64)
In the end, Maitland fails in all capacities—as son, as husband, as father and as barrister. He stays in the office alone groping for emotional support to survive. He appears a pathetic figure. He is "a man to sympathize with. He doesn't ask for sympathy, but he gets it because the audience recognizes in him the human condition."88 Fredrick Lumley suggests that Maitland's failure is not a personal one, "it presents the failure of his generation, the failure of the Welfare State...."89 This failure is not only restricted to the state of affairs, but it has also a corroding reflection on the intra-family relationships. Through Maitland's unhappy marriage, Osborne dramatizes how social disharmony tends to mar the conjugal love, resulting in a complete dissolution of the family.

In the postwar period, especially in the sixties the ancestral pursuits were disappearing in the face of senseless use of technology. In *Time Present*, Pamela, the stage actress, aspires to ascend the ladder of social hierarchy through serious stage acting by following in the footsteps of her actor-father, Gideon Orme, but finds it extremely difficult to succeed in considerable terms. She attended "about twenty expensive schools" and "never learnt anything in any of these. Except to play tennis."90 Her education fails to meet the challenge that cultural changes pose to the traditional means of vocation. Despite the daughter of a famous stage actor, she is left with almost no means of subsistence to lead a meaningful life. Pamela tells Constance: "I'm even unemployed. My father will leave nothing but debts.... He's left me what's left of his wine cellar, all his just junk that nobody wants and he asked me last night, to leave his empty bottles to the Inland Revenue" (p.28).

Having failed to find a due role, Pamela helplessly makes herself a sort of parasite on her wealthy politician-friend, Constance and gets her "life in a bit of mess" (p.15). It does not mean that she is "unintelligent," (p.15) hopeless and passive, and does not want to do anything, but she is trapped in the situation where her talent is relegated to the background. Besides, with the emergence of the new forms of popular entertainment, Pamela's "formidable qualities...haven't been exploited" (p.33). Failing to utilize her talent, in the absence of due opportunities, she gets more and
more frustrated. Constance’s failure to help Pamela in real terms increases the frustration in the latter.

Pamela is so disgusted with the existing state of affairs that she gets frustrated and does nothing except that of consuming liquor and sleeping most of the time. It seems that she is “sleeping away” (p.26) her youth and talent. Though she shares an apartment with Constance, except a few common tastes, she is widely different from her in terms of nature, outlook, interest and taste. The stage direction of the Act I reveals their differences: “…CONSTANCE’s flat in Pimlico. For the present she is sharing it with PAMELA. There is some evidence that it is lived in by two people with different temperaments and interests.” (p.13). Constance, being engaged in the political pursuits, fails to render the amount of help and support that Pamela needs to win bread. Constance herself admits it to Edith: “I hate to feel there’s so little I can do to help her” (p.20). They seem to admire and respect each other in some respects, but, in reality, they “inhibit different worlds” (p.34).

Pamela gets angry with the Establishment for creating messy situation: “They don’t bring out the best in me. If there’s a best nailed down under somewhere. Not even you, not much” (pp.26-7). She laments that the politicians do a lot of paper work to devise plans to improve the condition of the deprived ones, but they do nothing in concrete. With the passage of time, she gets so much exasperated with the ruling class that she refuses to give any subscription in the name of nationalism, fearing its misappropriation: “I won’t give money to take full page ads about Vietnam or organize them like Mamma…. I’m too mean. Too mean and too poor. Just because I share a bath and inside lavatory doesn’t mean I’m not poor. Well, does it” (p.28). The play indicates how militarism in the post-war multiplies the hardships of the lesser beings, increasing their mistrust in the ruling classes.

Pamela is almost driven to a mad rage sometimes even at the sight of the affluent people like Garbo. She holds that they seem to be harmless “like honeymoon nights and mothers-in-law,” (p.35) but, in real terms, they misappropriate the funds meant for the public. Pamela further digs a biting sarcasm at the politicians like Garbo for their invisible, aggrandizing proclivity: “She is spending my money, and I haven’t
got any, you sit up there all the hours of the night debating about how to spend my money. How to get hold of my money” (p.32). The way the public money is squandered on the private sector makes Pamela satirize the economic policies:

...Going into Europe Sounds like getting into the pudding club. Public spending, the price we have to pay, private sectors, incentive and exports, both---guess---both sides of the industry, productivity, exploiting our resources to the full, readjustment. I suppose they're like words you're supposed to believe in, like your catechism, I believe in god the father, the Holy Catholic Church, forgive us our trade gaps. (p.41)

In the post-war Britain, mismanagement of economic affairs increased the miseries and privations of the masses. Primarily, the economic policies were devised, keeping in view the interests of the privileged classes. Besides, a great amount of money spent on militarism broke the back of British economy, incurring heavy burden of loans. The politicians talked of the welfare of the deprived ones and prepared plans, but were reluctant to implement them. Their chief concern was to upkeep their position of power and privileges even at the cost of general welfare. Excess of funds were pumped into the private sector only to benefit the rich.

Pamela’s ire is that nothing has changed since her childhood, and she makes a passionate protest against the recurring mismanagement of British economy: “Ever since I have been born there has been an economic crisis. We went off something called the gold standards. I think when I was born, there has been no confidence in sterling, crashes, devaluing, loans…” (p.41). She finds it extremely difficult to pace up with the time, as she is deprived of the adequate means to utilize her potentialities. She mocks at Constance’s campaign slogan, “Striding into the seventies with Labour!” protesting, “I haven’t got used to hobbling about in the sixties yet” (p.97). For Constance, a politician’s duty is to look forward and be prepared for the challenges of future, “Time is in short supply in the present,” and she warns Pamela. But for Pamela that is precisely why “we should keep [time] in its place. Whenever we can. Just because we can’t win” (p.97).
Pamela finds herself helpless in the situation where she is allied neither with the working class, nor with the wealthy one. In frustration, she punishes the members of her family with her bantering tongue. It is a sort of defense mechanism on her part to cover her poverty and failure. She comes down heavily on them: “Oh, the old plunder’s back from the cleaners. At last. What’s left of it” (p.21). She expresses her displeasure: “She’s modern Distress Fund, my Mamma. Calling her Mamma is better than Edith. Edith almost makes her sound dignified” (p.26). Though she herself reels constantly under the financial strain, she does not let pass any opportunity to humiliate her step-sister, Pauline for her poor life-style: “Lying about mostly getting high in her pad, which is just a bed-sitter full of unappealing modish junk and old laundry” (p.25). She humiliates Pauline and her hippie boy-friend, Dave: “I won’t offer you any, Pauline. She doesn’t approve her alcohol, do you? Haven’t got any L.S.D. to offer you,” (p.22) and makes derogatory remarks against the hippie: “Does he have a name or is he a group? It was a bit difficult to tell if he was one or several” (p.22). She mocks at her step-brother, Andrew, also for his cheap life-style: “He’s a part time poufe’s waiter” (p.47). Poverty makes Pamela almost a recluse, as she has not “any work, any aim hardly and friends now, except a few…” (p.57). After her father’s death, she gets fully disillusioned with life and snaps almost all the communications from the outside world. She stays “indoors, sleeping all day for weeks on end, living on champagne” that she “can not afford” (p.58). Disgusted with her life, she abandons the idea of marriage. It is evident that the feelings of disillusionment and frustration ruin the prospects of familial harmony.

The foregoing analysis reveals how the forces behind social disharmony lead to familial disharmony. It reveals how the class-consciousness causes fissures in the intra-familial relations in the dramatic world of Osborne. In the post-war period, the newly educated working-class youth, who aspire for a better life, get disillusioned in the face of shattering of the idea of a just and egalitarian society under the Welfare State. They try to ascend the ladder of social hierarchy, but find themselves stuck in the same class in which they were born. On the other hand, the governing classes enjoy the position of power and privileges by manipulating the political system, economic policies, education system, the Press, the Church, the legal system and
technology. The newly educated youth, acutely conscious of their miserable plight, express their anger, bitterness and protest against the prevalent system. The playwright shows how the feelings of class-consciousness shape the work patterns, modes of behaviour, thought processes and sensibilities of his characters. It frustrates not only an individual, but also puts adverse impact on those who are linked to him or her by familial relations. Briefly speaking, Jimmy, Alison, Archie, Phoebe, Jean, Graham, Maitland, Anna, Pamela and Constance—all are covertly or overtly not merely influenced by the class-consciousness but the core of their being is finely shaped by this consciousness. In this state of their being they all deflect from given their social roles. Hence these plays of Osborne are best understood when these characters are seen as an unfolding of the psychological being that man has become at this particular historical juncture. Osborne’s treatment of the theme of class-consciousness reveals his aversion to arrogance, hypocrisy, snobbery and apathy towards human beings, and underlies his vision of a better world where such anti-life forces will not have any place.
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