CHAPTER - III

LOOK BACK IN ANGER
Despair in a Society beyond Repair
Look Back in Anger as a play took not only the English Theatre but also the English society by storm and the sensation it created left an indelible impression. The play became a fertile ground for presenting the predicament of the contemporary English society in the post-war scenario with a kind of honesty that could be rivalled only by itself. Jimmy Porter, the protagonist of the play, was regarded as the spokesman, a cult figure for the youth of post-war generation who turned around only to find everything futile.

The end of the Second World War signalled the end of an era in the history of Great Britain as well. The Labour Party was voted for power in 1945. There were celebrations even in India when the British Soldiers nailed a red flag to the roof of the mess at the foot of Anand Parbat in Delhi anticipating the beginning of a new era which ushered a Socialist Paradise. The Labour Government slowly dismantled the British Empire. Great Britain was shrunk to Little England and the entire energy was turned inwards as the Clement Attlee Government began building up a Welfare society which was primordially centered on nationalisation of utilities. It guaranteed health care, free education, subsidized housing, social insurance, old age pensions, sickness benefits and unemployment benefits, most of which were covered by the newly introduced National Insurance.

Britain, however was in many respects unable to afford such radical changes and the Government had to cut down on expenditures. Britain was forced to give independence to many overseas colonies, beginning with India in 1947 and Burma, Ceylon during 1948-1949. There were acute shortages of rationing in the late 1940’s. The pace of economic growth was hampered, inflation rose, and the administration lost its credibility leading to the waning of the euphoria generated and subsequent disenchantment. J.B.Priestly, in an article entitled “What is wrong with Britain Today?”, stated:
The dream was deferred. The Conservative Party which came to power in 1951 continued most of the post-war reforms of the Labour Party, thus indicating to the people that there was hardly any difference between both the parties. The English people felt that they were devoid of any choice as such. As John Russell Taylor points outs, "the Labour and Conservative Parties were essentially not very different and this led to disillusionment with national politics and the possibility of any political change."2

The Suez Crisis of 1956, in addition to it, lowered Britain's reputation as a world power. Soviet Union triggered the arms race by manufacturing the atom bomb and then the hydrogen bomb challenging the supremacy of Western nuclear monopoly. The automation in industries led to a repetitive, stereotyped, unhygienic work regime cutting off workers from their traditional social moorings.

Another casualty of the new era was the Church of England which could not instill hope and faith in the people. The open support of the Bishops of the Church extended to nuclear weapons, particularly at a time when the movement of CND – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was gaining momentum, tangibly antagonized the progressive opinion for peace. The class distinctions, though marginally diminished during the Labour Government, were pronounced. Snobbery and middle class morality also acted as deterrents. There was wide spread discontent, depression and disillusionment, all of which not only contributed to but also constituted the climate of opinion in England as seen in 1956.

The youth in their 20's were seeking desperately to unlock the doors that were shut or to remove even the doors. Alan Carter noted:
The movement, if it could be called anything as definite as that, was in its essence an expression of disillusionment. Many people were fed up, they were bored, and had little opportunity for achievement. They were searching for a world they could believe in, and even get angry at. All they needed was a call to arms. Osborne sounded that call. He did so in the theatre, and from there it echoed round the land.\(^3\)

Kenneth Tynan's great outburst of enthusiasm in the *Observer* ended as:

I agree that *Look Back in Anger* is likely to remain a minority taste. What matters, however, is the size of the minority. I estimate it at roughly 6,733,000, which is the number of people in this country between twenty and thirty....I doubt if I could love anyone who did not wish to see *Look Back in Anger*. It is the best young play of its decade.\(^4\)

Jimmy, the hero of *Look Back in Anger*, became a kind of folk-hero for the young generation. Kenneth Tynan views that he amply demonstrated all the characteristics of post-war youth, "...the drift towards anarchy, the instinctive leftishness, the automatic rejection of the "official attitudes", the surrealistic sense of humour, the casual promiscuity, the sense of lacking a crusade worth fighting for, and underlying all these, the determination that no one who dies shall go unmourned."\(^5\) Jimmy, in short is the very embodiment of disillusionment and rebelliousness. John Russell Taylor views:

*Look Back in Anger* is demonstrably a muddled play – muddled, that is, in what it has to say and the way it says it – but this naturally is only a very minor consideration: a play is about people, not necessarily about ideas, and what matters is not that Jimmy is a mass of contradictions (most of us are), but that Osborne has managed to make them into a convincing dramatic representation of a complex human being, and one who offered a
rallying-point for a number of people from the post-war generation who felt that the world of today was not treating them according to their merits.  

The main reason for the great impact of this play was the immediacy of its subject matter. Osborne displayed his feeling for the contemporary scene, and the temper of post-war youth, by his awareness of the contemporary idiom, and his pungent invectives on aspects ranging from ‘posh’ Sunday newspapers and ‘white tile’ Universities to bishops, hydrogen bomb, class disparities, and middle class morality.

Jimmy Porter is a young University graduate with working-class background running a sweet-stall and is described as a “disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty; restless, importunate, full of pride, a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike. Blistering honesty, or apparent honesty, like his, makes few friends.” (p.53). He is married to Alison who belongs to the upper middle class, much against the wishes of her parents and stays in one-room flat in a large Midland town along with his friend Cliff Lewis who also hails from his own class. Alison is described as “the most elusive personality to catch in the uneasy polyphony of these three people.”(p.54) She is shown ironing the clothes, which is a symbolic representation of mechanized life.

Jimmy is full of boredom in his life. He feels that nothing can offer him anything new, anything substantial. In fact, in the very first scene of the Act I, he is shown lashing at the monotonous books and newspapers -

Why do I do this every Sunday? Even the book reviews seem to be the same as last week’s. Different books - same reviews. (p.54)

He calls Cliff an ignorant peasant as he is unable to comprehend the newspapers. Jimmy considers himself intellectually superior to others and always wishes to ascertain it. When Cliff tries to read a newspaper, Jimmy satirically says, “What
do you want to read it for, anyway? You've no intellect, no curiosity...” (p.94).
He even tells Helena, “…Perhaps you’re not as clever as I thought.” (p.100)
He tries to elicit an opinion from Alison regarding the ignorance that is cultivated by
reading the ‘posh’ newspapers. This “rather derogatory word”\(^7\) indicates that
Jimmy considers certain things as both socially superior and foreign to himself
and hence denounces them vehemently.

“Osborne, when telling his own story, uses the word more than once”\(^8\).
The very titles of Osborne’s autobiographical writings, A Better Class of Person
and Almost A Gentleman are an indication of Osborne’s preoccupation with
class, social mobility and social values. Having found Alison say that she has not
read them, Jimmy feels aggrieved with not only the inexpressiveness of others
but also for not listening to him properly.

You bet you weren’t listening. Old Porter talks, and everyone turns
over and goes to sleep. (p.55)

He is against the Bishop of Bromley who had made a moving appeal to all the
Christians to do whatever they want to manufacture H-Bomb. Dyson aptly said,
“the play is subtly aware of the psychological impact of the Bomb on men of
Jimmy’s temperament.”\(^9\) He creatively ridicules a woman who had gone to the
Mass of a certain American Evangelist and got kicked off in the crowd when she
wanted to propose love. He thinks that only he is awfully conscious of the
incessant frustration that looms so large on him and others around him and hence
he desperately says:

God, how I hate Sundays! It’s always so depressing, always the
same. We never seem to get any further, do we? Always the same
ritual. Reading the papers, drinking tea, ironing. A few more hours,
and another week gone. Our youth is slipping away. Do you know
that? (p.59)
It is this realization that he wishes to create in others. It is this alarmed consciousness of the fading youth that he wants others to become aware of. He is deeply anguished seeing that he himself and others are persistently being engulfed by incapacity or what he calls, “delicious sloth” (p.59). We find him shrieking-

Oh heavens, how I long for a little ordinary human enthusiasm. Just enthusiasm - that’s all...Let’s pretend that we’re human beings, and that we’re actually alive...Let’s pretend we’re human. (p.59)

and again, almost defeatedly, he says:

Nobody thinks, nobody cares. No beliefs, no convictions and no enthusiasm. (p.61)

Jimmy craves for the feeling of ‘being alive’ and feeling of ‘being responsive’ and above all the feeling of ‘being human’. In fact, this very feeling constitutes one of the prime motives with which John Osborne had written plays. Osborne himself had stated the object that he wished to give to his audiences, “I want to make people feel, to give them lessons in feeling. They can think afterwards.”

Michael Anderson observes that “… the expression of feeling is always central to Osborne’s successful plays. What constitutes that ‘feeling’ differs from play to play, for although Osborne’s principal characters conform to a general type they are nevertheless an astonishingly diverse crew; but some kind of distress is always there, a helpless fury against the insufficiencies of the everyday world.”

It is again this lack of ‘feeling’ or ‘incompatibilities in the intensity levels of feeling’ that create a gulf between Jimmy and Alison and speaking to her friend Helena Charles, Alison says, “... But I still can’t bring myself to feel the way he does about things...” (p.87) It is this kind of fury, agony and despair that reverberates and manifests in several forms throughout the play. True to the
contemporary scenario, Jimmy represents that generation of Post-war youth that was battered, bewildered and above all felt betrayed.

Jimmy realized that the much trumpeted and conceited 'Welfare State' ended up in nothingness and the 'Brave New World' that was so fondly envisioned was being thwarted. The Imperial glory of England waned and the position of England was grossly reduced to insignificance in the International scenario. The Anglo-French armies faced major reverses in the issue of possession of Suez. Russia succeeded in suppressing the Civil Revolt in Hungary while the rest of the World, particularly England, stood and watched. As a last nail in the coffin, America’s rapid, undeniable and unchallenged ascendancy made things worse.

The disillusionment, cynical bitterness reached their apex levels and this is manifested when Jimmy says:

I suppose people like me aren’t supposed to be very patriotic....we get our cooking from Paris (that’s a laugh), our politics from Moscow, and our morals from Port Said.... But I must say it’s pretty dreary living in the American Age - unless you’re an American of course. Perhaps all our children will be Americans. That’s a thought, isn’t it? (p.61).

Jimmy, in a way has prognosticated the damning effect of Imperialism and subjugation as it kept steadily being transferred from England to America.

Jimmy has waged a war against class-distinctions. He vehemently condemns his wife and her affluent aristocratic family members as he considers them to be antagonistic to the working class which he represents and holds them responsible for the pretty sad state of affairs in his personal life as they had opposed his marriage to Alison. He was never able to forget and forgive them for this. The bitterest remarks are reserved for Alison’s mother Mrs.Redfern whom he calls a ‘bitch’ and “...she’d bellow like a rhinoceros in labour -
enough to make every male rhino for miles turn white, and pledge himself to celibacy...Mummy may look over-fed and a bit flabby on the outside...She’s as rough as a night in a Bombay brothel, and as tough as a matelot’s arm...” (pp.97-98) and again, “...I say she ought to be dead...She will pass away...leaving a trail of worms gasping for laxatives behind her - from purgatives to purgatory...” (p.99). His anger, in a sense, is justifiable as he is reciprocating the humiliation that he had been subjected to by his mother-in-law who considered him as “...a young man without money, background or even looks...” (p.97) She had even gone to the extent of hiring detectives to investigate into even the most trivial aspects related to his personal life like that of his having a long hair.

Jimmy considers the parents of Alison as “...Militant, arrogant and full of malice....” (p.64) His invectives are ceaseless and he directs them towards Nigel, the brother of Alison by describing him as,

…the straight-backed, chinless wonder from Sandhurst?...The Platitude from Outer Space - that’s brother Nigel. He’ll end up in the Cabinet one day, make no mistake...Nigel is just about as vague as you can get without being actually invisible. And invisible politicians aren’t much use to anyone - not even to his supporters! And nothing is more vague about Nigel than his knowledge. His knowledge of life and ordinary human beings is so hazy, he really deserves some sort of decoration for it – a medal inscribed ‘For Vaguery in the Field’...The only thing he can do – seek sanctuary in his own stupidity... Nigel and Alison. They’re what they sound like: sycophantic, phlegmatic And pusillanimous. (pp.64-65)

Osborne used the stage as a platform to depict every sphere of the contemporary scenario. His characterization of Alison’s brother Nigel, thus,
echoes J.B.Priestley, who, in an article entitled “What is wrong with Britain Today?”, stated:

... far too many of the men running this country today have the wrong background, the wrong education and training, the wrong outlook. They may be nice, honest, intelligent fellows, but they are no more fit to run an up-to-date Britain than lam to perform in the Royal Ballet....

Jimmy even elaborates the etymological significance of ‘pusillanimous’ as having derived from the Latin pusillus, very little, and animus, the mind and defines it as Wanting of firmness of mind, of small courage, having a little mind, mean spirited, cowardly, timid of mind. Jimmy explicitly calls his wife “Lady Pusillanimous.” (p.66) Alison is used to these “carefully rehearsed attacks” (p.67) and her perseverance is laudable. We find Alison re quoting Jimmy’s preference of calling her father as, “…just one of those sturdy old plants left over from the Edwardian Wilderness that can’t understand why the sun isn’t shining any more.” (p.113).

Jimmy in a way considers Colonel Redfem as a personification of the Imperialism of England that has rapidly and steadily declined and was becoming a thing of the past. He jibes at Colonel Redfem’s rumination of the fun and frolic, majestic days, the reverence he used to command as the General of Maharaja’s army in India, an exotic land where he was oblivious about the changing British reality and continued to cling to Edwardian values. Jimmy says:

... but I think I can understand how her Daddy must have felt when he came back from India, after all those years away. The old Edwardian brigade do make their brief little world look pretty tempting. All homemade cakes and croquet, bright ideas, bright uniforms. Always the same picture: high summer, the long days in the sun, slim volumes of verse, crisp linen, the smell of starch. What a romantic picture. Phoney too, of course... (p.61)
However, Jimmy still holds amused reverence to the past. His seething ambit contains even the modern girls towards whom he is full of aversion for slamming their doors, stamping their high heels, banging their irons and saucepans. He refers to the disturbing behaviour of the girls who used to stay upstairs “...With those two, even a simple visit to the lavatory sounded like a medieval siege...” (p.69) His repercussions towards the institution of Church are known when hearing the Church bells, he cries, “Oh, hell! Now the bloody bells have started! Wrap it up, will you? Stop ringing those bells! There’s somebody going crazy in here! I don’t want to hear them!” (p.69) and he also lashes at the grotesque and evil practices going on in the Midlands in the form of midnight invocations to the Coptic Goddess of fertility.

He passes condescending remarks on Alison for her inability to respond to his agony and despair and her indifference towards him- “...All this time, I have been married to this woman, this monument to non-attachment...” (p.66). He feels quite isolated and insecure to that extent where he stealthily goes through the personal belongings and correspondence that his wife keeps so as to find out whether he is being betrayed. He, in fact tells Cliff:

...living night and day with another human being has made me predatory and suspicious...when she goes out, I go through everything - trunks, cases, drawers, bookcase, everything. Why? To see if there is something of me somewhere, a reference to me. I want to know if I’m being betrayed. (p.81).

This is an apt illustration of the fact of the general betrayal that Jimmy as a Post-war youth felt because of the Government, Establishment and upper classes casting their influence even on the betrayal that he feels and experiences in his marital life. Jimmy’s uncouthness and roughness can be seen as expressions of his working class consciousness. He opens Alison’s drawers and reads her letters because the idea of respecting other people’s privacy is an essentially upper middle class concept. Osborne himself attacks in his ‘They call
it cricket' middle class virtues like 'restraint', 'good taste', 'healthy caution', reticent to discuss personal problems etc. Jimmy feels that he must defy the conventions of gentility and politeness to affirm the unpolished vigour of the working class.

The betrayal he is talking about is not in terms of any illicit sexual liaison that he conceives Alison might be having. In fact, strangely enough, he himself had taunted Alison for keeping her virginity intact till she got married to him and thus upholding the 'integrity' and 'middle class morality' which he thoroughly condemns. Alison tells Cliff, “...He was quite angry about it, as if I had deceived him in some strange way. He seemed to think an untouched woman would defile him.” (pp.74-75)

The betrayal that he is suspicious of, thus, is more of that of an ideological one or taking sides with the class of which he is such a hard core detester. He connects fidelity not so much with physical terms as he does with social or intellectual. The 'class consciousness' in the play gets further intricate by Jimmy’s university education which places him above his own class but still below the middle classes and he feels that his 'white tile' university lacks prestige. His attempt to better himself by getting well educated in his onward social progress is restrained as his university education has not enabled him to play a significant role in the public sphere.

Jimmy was not alone in getting his dream deferred owing to this connived scheme of the State which though provided education deprived them from playing any significant role in the society and hence rendered them impotent. Sinfield sees Jimmy belonging to “a new class fraction - educated and upwardly mobile but (as yet) without power.”13 Jimmy runs a sweet-stall which has not only deprived of his desire to wield power but also has demeaned him. He is unable to play a decisive societal role and hence the burden of establishing his masculine role as a way of compensating for the social deficiencies. Wandor points out that this is central to our understanding of Jimmy and the marriage:
It is Jimmy’s search for social class identity, and an individual male identity which is the central subject matter of the play.\textsuperscript{14}

Jimmy’s conception of a wife’s chastity is equated in terms of her adhering to everything that her husband believes in. When Helena tries to confirm whether Jimmy approves the intimacy that Alison has with Cliff, Alison almost conducting a psycho-analysis of Jimmy says:

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 his future, but his past as well. All the people he admires and loves, and has loved. The friends he used to know, people I’ve never even known - and probably wouldn’t have liked. His father, who died years ago. Even the other women he’s loved. Do you understand? (p.87)

It is to be noted that Jimmy’s concept of ‘owing to allegiances’ is unidirectional. He expects Alison to side with everyone whom he thinks are his own but he does not wish to get associated with or have any allegiances with those belonging to his wife Alison. This attitude, he feels should be unquestionable because he thinks that he is the ultimate authority on such subjects. This is a violation of the ‘Natural Justice’ or ‘Principle of Relative Equality’.

Alison finds it immensely hard to become a part of this ‘scheme of allegations’ except in the case of Cliff because he is not complicated like Hugh who is educated working class youth, a co-sufferer of Jimmy from the ‘pathogenic deprivation’ of a respectable, recognized life in the public sphere because of the class barriers. Cliff is also working class youth but is not educated and hence lacks the ‘enlightenment’ or that he simply lacks ‘the consciousness of deprivation’. He is completely devoid of intellectual ambitions, pressures and expectations. He does not have the psychological demand to establish himself
like Jimmy has in the private life of his household because of his failure in the public sphere. It is for this reason that Cliff is capable of giving pure, unrestrained, uncomplicated affection to Alison and is comfortable with her and makes even her feel comfortable with him.

Jimmy diatribes the tribe to which Alison belongs and Alison referring to the ruthless behaviour of Jimmy and his friend Hugh says to Helena, "...They both came to regard me as a sort of hostage from those sections of society they had declared war on." (p.89) An interesting insight is that it is he who condemns the family of Alison so much but again it is he who feels bitter and remorseful over the absence of his reference in the correspondence that Alison maintains with her mother and vice-versa. He tells Cliff, "...She gets letters. Letters from her mother, letters in which I’m not mentioned at all because my name is a dirty word. And what does she do? She writes long letters back to Mummy, and never mentions me at all, because I’m just a dirty word to her too." (p.81)

There is a part of Alison’s mind which resists Jimmy’s ways. If Jimmy is savage to her, it is partly because he doubts her commitment to him and his values. Alison keeps on maintaining correspondence with her mother Mrs.Redfern, though she knows that Jimmy does not like it. Jimmy, naturally suspects that some vicious conspiracy is going on behind him just like Hamlet suspects that Ophelia is employed for spying on him by her father Polonius. If Alison is Ophelia, then Mrs.Redfern is Lady Polonius, in the context of the play. Dyson says, “She has never given herself to her husband with the honesty which she knows he demands and needs.”

Jimmy, thus, feels quite ‘left out’. It is this neglect, disparity, demarcation and discrimination that he witnesses between his own deprived working class of which he deems himself as a representative and the privileged aristocratic class of which his wife is a representative that makes him fume with anger. However, it cannot also be entirely true to assume that Jimmy would have felt patronized merely if his name would have been referred to or included in the
correspondence that Alison maintains with her mother and thereby would have dissolved all his antipathy and would have befriended them. Primordially, in the core of his heart, he is against his wife staying in touch with her aristocratic family and also as he feels quite deprived because he, on the other hand does not have a family of his own. It is this insecurity which is a cause for his indignation and rantings.

Jimmy considers himself a loner. He himself tells in the end "... The heaviest, strongest creatures in this world seem to be the loneliest. Like the old bear, following his own breath in the dark forest. There's no warm pack, no herd to comfort him..." (p.141) Jimmy in a way suffers from an acute sense of lovelessness but even more is his class consciousness which he does not like to trade or bargain with anything however personally it may be benefiting. Even if his name would have been referred, he would not have ceased to combat in the Class warfare.

Jimmy is distinctively the one who is full of self-pity. He is very much a prisoner of his own ideas and vehemently fulminates anything that is against his beliefs and having known it, Alison prefers to share the news of her conception with the affectionate, care-taking, nurturing Cliff rather than with her husband Jimmy for the reason, "... He'll suspect my motives at once." (p.74) This clearly presents the kind of psychological estrangement, the gulf of faithlessness that is existing between them. A kind of Predator-Prey relationship also prevails between them - the victimizer being Jimmy bullying with his invectives and the victim being Alison forbearing them. Jimmy, however reverses the roles in this relationship when he says:

Do you know I have never known the great pleasure of love making when I didn't desire it myself. Oh, it's not that she hasn't her own kind of passion. She has the passion of a python. She just devours me whole every time, as if I were some over-large rabbit. That's me. That bulge around her navel - if you're wondering what
it is - it’s me. Me, buried alive down there, and going mad, smothered in that peaceful looking coil. (pp.82-83)

Jimmy reveals himself to be, “very insecure with women.” He attacks Alison for the intensity of her sexual passions but at the same time, he himself has sexual uncertainty; he craves for it and at the same time dreads it. Jimmy, the victimizer himself is seen as a victim here. Dinnerstein’s observation that men are “more frightened than women of the crucial realm of personal feeling which sex offers” gets revealed in several of Jimmy’s speeches, which touch on sexuality. Jimmy may not be exactly a misogynist as some critics opine as he cares lot for his friend Hugh’s mother Mrs. Tanner or even for his girl friend Madeline. But, somewhere he is not entirely comfortable with women. This may be because Jimmy feels that his mother did not have genuine ‘care’ for his ailing father and just ‘looked after him’ only as a part of her wifely obligations,

My mother looked after him without complaining, and that was about all. Perhaps she pitied him. I suppose she was capable of that. But I was the only one who cared! (p.104)

Jimmy never says anything more about his mother, thus indicating that he felt ‘deprived of love’ since the death of his father, who himself died quite miserable and forlorn. There is some sort of profound abandonment, distress and isolation experienced by the central characters of Osborne. This may be because as Hinchcliffe observes in Osborne’s autobiographies, “lack of love comes over very strongly.” Osborne, himself gave dismissive references of his mother Nellie Beatrice:

I am ashamed of her as part of myself that can’t be cast out, my own conflict, the disease which I suffer and have inherited, what I am and never could be whole.

Jimmy, in a way, considers woman as the symbol of frustrating society. Raymond Williams’ view that in the play, “the woman is seen as the society”
holds itself to be quite relevant. It is not just a matter of sexual disturbance that he is trying to suggest or the female domination in sex that he is trying to refer but the entire society in the guise of a woman trying to trap, engulf and swallow. However, this role playing represented through animal imagery has also got positive implications where Jimmy considers Alison as a ‘beautiful, great-eyed squirrel’ and she considers him “a jolly super bear” (p.79) and they both play bears and squirrels game and make themselves happy.

The fantasy world is like a mist which clears itself off as the end of Act I creates a kind of embarrassing, gloomy, tensed ambience, for Alison informs that her actress friend Helena Charles, whom Jimmy considers as one of his “natural enemies” (p.80) is coming over to them to stay for a few days. Helena is described as “…the gracious representative of visiting royalty…” (p.84). She is a middle-class woman not just by birth but by instinct. She has an exalted sense of responsibility and a dignity of her own. Alison feels comfortable in her company and admires her. She arouses all the rabble-rousing instincts in Jimmy.

The idea that a man should be “looked after” in marriage is perpetuated through out the play. Jimmy, speaking about the times when his father was seriously affected says, “My mother looked after him without complaining…” (p.104). The beginning of Act II, Scene (i.) shows both Alison and Helena busy in the process of cooking food for all of them, particularly the men. Helena while “tearing up green salad” (p.85) or “crossing to food cupboard for tomatoes, beetroot and cucumber” (p.86) talks to Alison regarding the business of “looking after” men:

Looking after one man is really enough, but two is rather an undertaking. (p.85)

Alison’s quick reply indicates that Jimmy does not engage in the domestic work and likes to relish the privilege conferred on him, if not by his class, then by his patriarchal role as the head of the family:
Oh, Cliff looks after himself, more or less. In fact, he helps me quite a lot. (p.85)

Cliff does not have any such inhibitions to help Alison in her domestic work as he does not suffer from the conferred inherited privileges as Jimmy does. But even he, at the time of parting from Jimmy, as he thinks of bettering himself by getting married and then settling down, says, “Anyway, I think I ought to find some girl who’ll just look after me.” (p.130) This in a way is an answer that Cliff did not have (he had just vaguely answered that he does not know) for the question asked earlier by Jimmy:

What do you think you’re going to do when I’m not around to look after you? Well, what are you going to do? Tell me? (p.60)

The intense yearning for ‘getting nurtured’ remains a constant theme in Osborne’s plays. It is constantly sought and if not given or not adequately provided with, eventually turns into distress. Even in the end, when Alison and Jimmy decides to play the bear and squirrel game, Jimmy says:

And you’ll keep those big eyes on my fur, and help me keep my claws in order, because I’m a bit of a soppy, scruffy sort of a bear. (p.142)

Jimmy, when ceaselessly and defeaningly plays his jazz trumpet, Helena, ponderingly says, “It’s almost as if he wanted to kill someone with it. And me in particular. I’ve never seen such hatred in someone’s eyes before. It’s slightly horrifying. Horrifying and oddly exciting.” (p.86) The horrifying but odd excitement that Helena finds in Jimmy is something like sado-masochism in her as she has that tremendous fascination for a man who hates her so intensely. This perhaps makes her fall for Jimmy at a later stage. As Banham writes, “Helena, attracted to Jimmy more physically, perhaps, than emotionally, copes better than did Alison.” Even Jimmy allows her to cope better because he demands less of Helena partly because he regards their affair as essentially erotic, devoid of the
Helena is curious to know about various shrouding mysteries right from the kind of relation that Alison has with Cliff to the reasons that had driven her to marry Jimmy. Alison tells her that she and Cliff are simply fond of each other and there isn’t any consuming passion between them so as to be termed lecherous. Alison, recollecting her early days after marriage tells that she felt quite alienated, “For the first time in my life, I was cut off from the kind of people I’d always known, my family, my friends, everybody...” (p.88). She begins to live a nightmarish kind of life with Jimmy and his friend Hugh who was more ruthless than Jimmy and fairly reveled in the role of a barbarious invader. In her name, they used to gate-crash the aristocratic friends and relatives and break every code of decency before them. She ultimately had to inwardly bear the brunt of this humiliation.

Alison says that she had seen him having come to a party on a bicycle with oil all over his dinner jacket. He was looked by men with distrust and by women with contempt. He looked quite young and frail. He appeared to be coarsely attractive with his glistening hair, burning face, blue eyes full of sun. In the teeth of opposition from the parents, Alison says, “Jimmy went into battle with his axe swinging round his head – frail, and so full of fire. I had never seen anything like it. The old story of the knight in shining armour – except that his armour didn’t really shine very much.” (p.91). This imaginary romantic chivalry made Alison susceptible and fall for him. Helena finds that Alison dreads even to reveal to Jimmy the fact that she is going to become the mother of his child, and hence says that she has to tell him to behave normally, “Or you must get out of this mad-house. This menagerie. He doesn’t seem to know what love or anything else means.” (p.92) Helena, with a sort of aggressive motivation says, “Listen to me. You’ve got to fight him. Fight, or get out. Otherwise, he will kill you.” (p.93)
Jimmy’s consistent insults heaped upon his wife grow more and more bitter, “...My wife – ... Sweet and sticky on the outside, and sink your teeth in it, inside, all white, messy and disgusting.” (p.96). Bamber Gascoigne feels, “The real reason for Jimmy’s cruelty to his wife is his own excess of energy which he cannot use in a sweet-stall.” Alison is used to these derogatory remarks but Helena retaliates by saying, “Do you have to be so offensive?” and “I think you’re a very tiresome young man.” (p.96). When Jimmy finds that Helena is taking Alison to Church, he rages saying that her mother had locked her up in eight-bedroomed castle and played several foul, mean tactics to see that he does not take away her daughter but he succeeded in foiling all her attempts and hence he is her protégé, thus, implicitly saying that she should oblige him. Alison, realizing his expectation satirically snaps out, “… You rescued me from the wicked clutches of my family, and all my friends! I’d still be rotting away at home, if you hadn’t ridden up on your charger, and carried me off!” (p.97)

Jimmy, believes that he has “liberated the fair maiden from her privileged position.”

Jimmy’s anger reaches its height and with a grudge on Alison’s mother, he fumes out, “...That old bitch should be dead!...” (p.99) and further says that when he is no longer spending his days running a sweet-stall, he would write a book about them all and that it will be, “…Written in flames a mile high. And it won’t be recollected in tranquility either, picking daffodils with Auntie Wordsworth. It’ll be recollected in fire, and blood. My blood.” (p.99). It is aptly remarked that Osborne’s characters mostly experience “emotions felt in isolation” They are not ‘emotions recollected in tranquility’ or in a state of bliss, peace and happiness. The feeling of isolation is one of marked bitterness and thus the emotions recollected in it will be far more bitter.

Helena perplexed at the incredible outburst of Jimmy says, “You think the world’s treated you pretty badly, don’t you?” (p.100) This is almost the crux of the matter, the reason for the persecution complex developed in Jimmy. Alison immediately tells, “Oh, don’t try and take his suffering away from him – he’d be
lost without it." (p.100) This remark though ironically made has got its own freight and significance as Jimmy really does hold his suffering so dearly to him that he does not want to part with it. He innately feels that he is nothing in its absence. It is this suffering that he wants everyone to feel, to experience as he believes that only then one will be chastened, refined and ennobled. It is a sort of Catharsis that is a dire requisite to become a human being.

Jimmy rants at Helena calling her a “genuflecting sin jobber” (p.98) who is bent upon winning Alison to her side by influencing her, a “saint in Dior’s clothing….She is a cow. I wouldn’t mind that so much, but she seems to have become a sacred cow as well!” (p.101) He sarcastically says, “…She’s an expert in the New Economics - the Economics of the Supernatural. It’s all a simple matter of payments and penalties. She’s one of those apocalyptic share pushers who are spreading all those rumours about a transfer of power.”(p.101) On being intimidated by Helena who says that she would have slapped his face, Jimmy says, “I’ve no public-school scruples about hitting girls. If you slap my face - by God, I’ll lay you out!” (p.103) Another deep insight that we get for Jimmy’s repugnance and his frustration is an incident of personal disaster that had struck him at a tender age from which he hardly seems to have recouped as time and again the effect of it seems to prick him and which he relates in a lengthy tirade,

...For twelve months, I watched my father dying - when I was ten year old. He’d come back from the war in Spain, you see...he didn’t have long left to live. Everyone knew it - even I knew it. But, you see, I was the only one who cared...As for my mother, all she could think about was the fact that she had allied herself to a man who seemed to be on the wrong side in all things...We all of us waited for him to die...But I was the only one who cared! Every time I sat on the edge of his bed, to listen to him talking or reading to me, I had to fight back my tears. At the end of twelve months, I was a veteran. All that feverish failure of a man had to listen to him was a small, frightened boy...He would talk to me for hours,
pouring out all that was left of his life to one, lonely, bewildered little boy, who could barely understand half of what he said. All he could feel was the despair and the bitterness, the sweet, sickly smell of a dying man. You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry - angry and helpless. And I can never forget it. I knew more about - love...betrayal...and death, when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life. (pp.103-104)

Jimmy’s childhood has offered him nothing but giant despair. He is hardened by the circumstances in which he grew up. He had a traumatic experience and is a child casualty of the war (and in a deeper sense of the callousness of the Government in taking care of the families of the poor soldiers who fought for its interests abroad), a victim of the incompatible marital relation of his mother and father, a lone companion for his father who was a defeated man and a silent, helpless witness to his death. It will, therefore, be quite natural that such a boy bearing all these psychological scars, on growing up, tends to behave with indignation towards the ills of all the institutions - socio, political and religious and neurotically towards his own wife. Jimmy has been embittered and has grown up to hate and mistrust the world. According to Mary McCarthy, “Jimmy’s profoundest, quickest, most natural instinct is mistrust”

Alison is disgusted with the tantrums of Jimmy and appeals, “All I want is a little peace.” (p.105) Jimmy says, “Peace! God! She wants peace!...I rage, and shout my head off, and everyone thinks ‘poor chap!’ or ‘what an objectionable young man!’ But that girl there can twist your arm off with her silence” (p.105). Alison is basically a quiet, well-bred person who in the style of her class refuses to ‘stoop’ to Jimmy’s level, to retaliate against his provocations. Katherine J.Worth talks of “Alison withdrawing behind a façade of detached indifference.” When Helena accuses Cliff for being a mere spectator, sitting and watching and doing absolutely nothing, for the first and the last time in the play, he quite alien to his nature, breaks out, not more so because of the
allegations of Helena but because of his innate pain that he is unable to set right the things that have gone wrong.

...Helena - I don’t feel like Jimmy does about you, but I’m not exactly on your side either. And since you’ve been here, everything’s certainly been worse than it’s ever been. This has always been a battlefield, but I’m pretty certain that if I hadn’t been here, everything would have been over between these two long ago. I’ve been a – a no-man’s land between them. Sometimes, it’s been still and peaceful, no incidents, and we’ve all been reasonably happy. But most of the time, it’s simply a very narrow strip of plain hell....I love these two people very much. And I pity all of us. (p.106)

This is one of the most pathetic and moving scenes in the play. The miserable marital life of Jimmy and Alison is depicted through the emotional outburst of Cliff. It has become so deplorable and vulnerable that its sustenance depends on the arbitration and good humour of Cliff. It also speaks much about the magnanimity and concern that Cliff shows for the couple. He really has got a big heart. If revenge becomes the motive for marriage, if class barriers prevent the couple to scale the wall of marital bliss, if tirades become the cannon and fire and the household becomes, on the whole, a battlefield, a war zone, then the importance of a truce, a cease fire, a no-man’s land has to be valued as a great treasure. Cliff has been that safety valve preventing an explosion. His habitual reconciliatory role has been exemplary. His pitying all of them in the end is like an existential doctrine indicating that they are all helpless creatures, waiting to be damned in a universe, which is very hostile.

The reason for all this unpleasantness is the gross misuse of power vested in Jimmy, the bread-winner in a patriarchal set up. His affections are seldom expressed but anger is frequently. Jimmy struggles with his unresolved,
ambivalent feelings towards women. There is a great deal of imbalance in his marriage. Osborne’s portrait of Jimmy Porter exemplifies Miles’ contention that,

> In the close combat zone of marriage, for many men violence and destruction are the only logical, indeed richly merited response to the provocation that is woman.\(^{27}\)

Alison’s apparent detachment and apathy need not be perceived only as indications of tolerance and acceptance. They may also suggest a superior contempt towards the rowdy and boorish ways of her working class husband. Banham, on the other hand, writes that Alison’s “toleration of him seems rather like...the patronage with which society has given him a white tile education, pretensions to usefulness, and then denied him an effective role, reserving that for its natural aristocrats.”\(^{28}\) At yet another level, Alison’s quietness may simply indicate lack of life, spirit and personality: she may simply be a ‘Lady Pusillanimous’.

Worth says that Jimmy was ‘drawn to her by what seemed her “wonderful relaxation of spirit.”’ But as he puts it, “In order to relax, you’ve first got to sweat your guts out’’, and this, as he soon discovers, is an experience Alison has never had. Her calm is that of a Sleeping Beauty.”\(^{29}\) Jimmy feels that ‘Peace’ is an incredible state when the entire scenario is so violent and loathsome.

The domestic strife reaches to the level of extremity when Jimmy reports about the cardiac arrest of Mrs. Tanner who is the mother of his friend Hugh and whom Jimmy holds very dear. It was she who was primarily responsible for making him start the stall. He has that intense ‘feeling of Comradeship’ for her. In the words of Alison, “…Not that I dislike her – I don’t. She’s very sweet, in fact. Jimmy seems to adore her principally because she’s been poor almost all her life, and she’s frankly ignorant. I’m quite aware how snobbish that sounds, but it happens to be the truth.” (p.92) Jimmy wants that Alison should come along with him to see Mrs. Tanner. Alison really expresses her grief over it but she instead decides to go to Church along with Helena.
This infuriates Jimmy who throws the teddy bear with a thud sound, thus, making it rattle. This act of Jimmy has its own symbolic significance as he feels betrayed, back-stabbed over the disloyalty of his wife who has turned down his request of a good cause and that he no longer wants to play the role of bear as his squirrel Alison has become obstinate and is moving away with Helena. Alison knows that somewhere Mrs. Tanner feels that had she not entered in the life of Jimmy, he and her son Hugh would have been together and everything would have been alright. Alison, hence feels a bit embarrassed to face her though she is actually not hard-hearted.

Alison finds that her father Colonel Redfern, after receiving the telegram of Helena has come to pick her. The authorial comments present him as “...a large handsome man, about sixty. Forty years of being a soldier sometimes conceals the essentially gentle, kindly man underneath. Brought up to command respect, he is often slightly withdrawn and uneasy now that he finds himself in a world where his authority has lately become less and less unquestionable. His wife would relish the present situation, but he is only disturbed and bewildered by it...” (pp.109-110). He feels that Jimmy speaks a different language and his ideas, viewpoints are entirely different from theirs.

Colonel Redfern is perplexed to think of the very idea of an intellectual University educated young man running a Sweet-stall. Alison replies, “Oh, he tried so many things – journalism, advertising, even vacuum cleaners for a few weeks. He seems to have been as happy doing this as anything else.” (p.111) Jimmy appears to be whimsical and tries doing different works and his whim is a resultant of the fact that he does not succeed in anything or in a way he is a misfit. He cannot think and do the way the world thinks and does.

Colonel Redfern is genuinely disturbed by the happenings around and tries to trace the roots for these and honestly admits it though he knows it is too late, “…I know, but your mother and I weren’t entirely free from blame… I did my best to stop her…She seemed to have made up her mind that if he was going
to marry you, he must be a criminal, at the very least. All those inquiries, the private detectives—the accusations. I hated every moment of it.’’ (p.111) and again goes on to say, “I think it would have been better, for all concerned, if we had never attempted to interfere. At least, it would have been a little more dignified.” (p.112).

Thinking in another way, he feels that he and Alison were also blameworthy for sitting on the fence as it is comfortable and more peaceful. They were, thus neutral, watching like spectators. Their mistake was that they failed to be at the helm of affairs and exercise control on the things. They both were ‘more acted upon than acting’. Alison gets startled and says that it was she who married Jimmy and got involved in the act with total commitment and hence cannot be accused of inertia. It was she then who had been actually blamed for acting and taking impulsive decision without discretion.

Colonel Redfern does not understand the decision of Jimmy to marry Alison if he hated all of them so intensely after knowing that they are aristocrats. Alison says, “…Perhaps it was revenge. Oh yes. Some people do actually marry for revenge. People like Jimmy, anyway…Well, for twenty years, I’d lived a happy, uncomplicated life, and suddenly, this—this spiritual barbarian—throws down the gauntlet at me. Perhaps only another woman could understand what a challenge like that means—although I think Helena was as mystified as you are.” (p.113) An insight into Alison’s sordid domestic predicament is provided suggesting that her conjugal life turned out to be full of confrontations and challenges. It is beyond doubt that she had a tough time in the company of Jimmy.

The relation, perhaps seemed to be more of a Prosecutioner and the Prosecuted than that of husband and wife. Her painful appeal, “Oh, Daddy, please don’t put me on trial now. I’ve been on trial every day and night of my life for nearly four years.” (p.113) substantiates this. Colonel is mystified at the odd perspectives and motives of the younger generation and remarks, “…I
always believed that people married each other because they were in love. That always seemed a good enough reason to me. But apparently, that’s too simple for young people nowadays. They have to talk about challenges and revenge. I just can’t believe that love between men and women is really like that.” (p.114)

He contemplates the kind of England that was when he left it in 1914 for India to command Maharajah’s army and live a blissful life, everything purple and golden to the England he sees after returning from India in 1947. He says:

...Oh, I knew things had changed, of course. People told you all the time the way it was going - going to the dogs...But it seemed very unreal to me, out there. The England I remembered was the one I left in 1914, and I was happy to go on remembering it that way...I think the last day the sun shone was when that dirty little train steamed out of that crowded, suffocating Indian station, and the battalion band playing for all it was worth. I knew in my heart it was all over then. Everything. (p.114)

This brooding of the Colonel really justifies Jimmy’s remarks about him that he is “…just one of those sturdy old plants left over from the Edwardian Wilderness that can’t understand why the sun isn’t shining any more…” (p.113)

Alison, sensing that her father is hurt and deeply aggrieved for losing that England which was the paramount focal point of the world and which had offered him so much power and glory, says, “You’re hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it. Something’s gone wrong somewhere, hasn’t it?” (p.114) This remark of her mirrors the contemporary post-war scenario of England which was utterly chaotic, confused and was at cross-roads with lack of coordination between the yesteryear generation and the youthful one that was existing. If Colonel Redfern represents the conservative yesteryear generation, Jimmy represents the youthful reactionary and both were holding each other responsible for the debacle that England was witnessing after losing its position of pre-eminence.
Alison leaves with her father handing over to Cliff a letter addressed to Jimmy and asks him to take care of him. Helena tells her that she likes to stay there only for that night owing to her attending a job interview the following day. Cliff, however, hands the letter to Helena and asks her to give it to Jimmy as he cannot do it, “I’ve had a hard day, and I don’t think I want to see anyone hurt...You give it to him! He’s all yours...” (p.118) Cliff loves Jimmy and Alison so much and is a friend, in its truest meaning and cannot see Jimmy in a distress after reading the letter and so naturally decides to stay away. He also appears to be intuitive when he says that Jimmy will be her’s and that is what actually happens.

Jimmy comes back after attending on Mrs.Tanner and gets the letter of Alison. He, as a convention, fumes out saying that Alison cannot be anything except being phoney and she has made a polite, emotional mess in the letter,

My dear- I must get away. I don’t suppose you will understand, but please try. I need peace so desperately, and, at the moment, I am willing to sacrifice everything just for that. I don’t know what’s going to happen to us. I know you will be feeling wretched and bitter, but try to be a little patient with me. I shall always have a deep, loving need of you – Alison...(p.119)

Jimmy adversely feels that this reflects middle-class morality which he detests to the core. Alison, in reality has abundant affection on Jimmy. She, however has broken out for the time being and feels that Peace is the need of the hour as its absence will not only impact on her but even on the baby in her womb. Apart from that, Alison has not exercised any deception and there is no artificiality in her letter, as Jimmy conceives. Jimmy by nature is furious and remains annoyed with everything and in addition to that he has returned after watching the bitter suffering of Mrs.Tanner whom he loves so much and under these prevailing circumstances, it is quite natural for him to conceive Alison’s departing from him as a kind of betrayal. It is not that had he known about her
conception he would have treated her considerately. In fact, even after Helena says that Alison is going to have a baby, Jimmy does not express any feeling of warmth or even an iota of expiation over his maltreatment of his wife and on the other hand says, "...I don't care if she's going to have a baby. I don't care if it has two heads!..." (p.120).

Jimmy, after learning that Helena was going to come and stay with them, had directed his invectives towards Alison in what appears to be the most savage and inhuman attack a husband can have on wife and a father can have on his progeny, "...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. Let it grow, let a recognizable human face emerge from that little mass of India rubber and wrinkles..." (p.82) He is over-engrossed with his own world of 'Anger' and 'Suffering' that he is unable to understand the gentility and real love of Alison for him and he remains in a state of fanaticism.

Jimmy, unmindful of anything else, begins to dispense of all his pain,

...For eleven hours, I have been watching someone I love very much going through the sordid process of dying. She was alone, and I was the only one with her. And when I have to walk behind that coffin on Thursday, I'll be on my own again. Because that bitch won't even send her a bunch of flowers – I know! She made the great mistake of all her kind. She thought that because Hugh’s mother was a deprived and ignorant old woman, who said all the wrong things in all the wrong places, she couldn’t be taken seriously. And you think I should be overcome with awe because that cruel, stupid girl is going to have a baby! I can’t believe it! I can’t... (p.120)

Jimmy calls Helena an evil-minded little virgin and she slaps him savagely and drags him down on to the bed and has sex. There is close resemblance between the opening of Act I and the opening of Act III or final
Act which is set on a Sunday evening several months later. Everything remains the same – Jimmy and Cliff sprawled in their respective armchairs and immersed in the Sunday Newspapers, the stinking old pipe of Jimmy, the ironing-board, a pile of clothes with the only exception that Helena stands ironing in the place of Alison. She has not only replaced Alison in the ironing work but even in the role that she used to play. Jimmy as usual laments over his wasting the time reading the newspapers. Helena, unlike Alison keeps on responding cheerfully to the comments and satires of Jimmy.

Jimmy attacks ‘posh newspapers’ by saying that they carry either unnecessary correspondence like whether Milton wore braces or not or like publishing the information regarding an American Professor from Yale or somewhere who believes that Shakespeare had changed his sex while writing *The Tempest* and had married a certain Warwickshire farmer after having three children by him. It is a biting ridicule on the way the journalists and editors work and the way the paper policies are framed. An inner layer of all this mocking contains the bewailing of the failure of the Newspapers, believed to be the Fourth Estate and which have upon their shoulders the noble task of creating consciousness in the society on various maladies but tragically enough they are unable to do it as they are indulging in issues of gross insignificance and unquestionable absurdity.

Helena is wearied about all this talk and says, “Jimmy, can we have one day, just one day, without tumbling over religion or politics?” (p.125) This explicitly shows the consistency and quantum of ceaseless invectives that Jimmy used to pour out on religion and politics. When Helena is away, Jimmy asks Cliff whether he cares for Helena. The answer of Cliff is like the question posed by Jimmy that even he once upon a time did not seem so keen about her. Jimmy is irritated at this and says, “No, of course it’s not the same...Today’s meal is always different from yesterday’s and the last woman isn’t the same as the one before...” (p.129) Jimmy in a semi-serious mood says to Cliff, “...I suppose people of our generation aren’t able to die for good causes any longer. We had
all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids. There aren’t any good, brave causes left…” (p.131)

These remarks of Jimmy, particularly the last one stating that there are no good, brave causes left worth fighting for, made several critics ponder over its veracity. In every age, the causes worth fighting for always arise and they do not ever become exhaustible leaving people in void and vacuum. The world is always in need of social, religious, political reformers. Even during the times of Jimmy, there was a brave cause of fighting against Russia’s suppression of liberty, there was the issue of threat of total extinction through a nuclear holocaust and hence a growing body of enlightened opinion in the West was taking an anti-bomb stand. There was a cause of fighting against Imperialistic designs of England and extending solidarity for the freedom movements taking place in African Nations and their liberation from colonial yoke, thus ascertaining the broad perspectives of ‘Liberty’, ‘Equality’ and ‘Fraternity’ (the ‘trinity’ values that had inspired the French Revolution). Jimmy could have taken up all these or at least one of these causes and could have fought. However, he appears to be in a disheveled frame of mind, at times even disenchanted.

Helena, in fact says, “… Sometimes, when I listen to him, I feel he thinks he’s still in the middle of the French Revolution. And that’s where he ought to be, of course…” (p.136). But, it is only limited to pouring out his vitriolic anger in words without driving them into action. Jimmy, unlike Jean Rice of The Entertainer who takes part in a protest march at Trafalgar Square, does nothing concrete to effect a change in the national policy by creating a suitable, dynamic climate of opinion. However, even this appears to be a feature of post-war youth who were so disillusioned that they were incapacitated for action. Jimmy, thus, embodies not only the lost youth who imagined that there were no causes left worth fighting for and content with their imagination but also an armchair crusader for every mishap around him.
Osborne provides an insight to Jimmy, “To be as vehement as he is to be almost non-committal” (pp.53-54) It is remarkably interesting to observe that Jimmy does nothing to change the world he so ceaselessly and bitterly condemns. According to Dyson, “His trumpet can mock the universe, but not sound a call to battle,” and also goes on to say, “his sense of outrage is so little controlled by either selflessness, stoicism, or any clear discipline of the mind, that it readily degenerates into moods profoundly and dangerously maladjusted.” This even reminds of Matthew Arnold’s criticism of P.B.Shelley calling him “ a beautiful ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void.”

Jimmy, at this juncture is compared by critics to Jim Dixon, the hero of Kingsley Amis’ Lucky Jim, who is a lecturer at a small redbrick university, who limits his anger to ‘the pulling of funny faces’ behind the backs of those who do him injustice. His frustration is portrayed by an air of detachment and by ‘indulgence in alcohol’. He is indifferent to “the fate of those around him. He has given up hope, and sees no answer to be found in social or political improvement.” Jimmy, like Jim dwells upon sniping at social conventions and class limitations. “They never suggested that they knew the answers to the problems, simply that the answers of the Establishment might well be the wrong ones. There was no program of social reform.” It will be wrong again to consider that Jimmy is a replica of Jim.

Jimmy differs from Jim in some ways. “Amis’ Jim is a confident individual working from a basis of assurance; Osborne’s Jimmy Porter is lost in a world that seems to offer him no clear status and which he certainly does not find funny.” Jimmy and Jim are cynical in their own way. However, Jim lacks Jimmy’s ‘aspirations’ and ‘involvement’. Jimmy has not left his concern for the suffering people. In the end, when Helena tries to make realize the condition in which Alison is, Jimmy says, “I don’t exactly relish the idea of anyone being ill, or in pain…” (p.139) Jimmy may be angry but he is not certainly detached like
Jim Dixon, whose opposition to ‘idealism’ and ‘involvement’ is a distant cry from Jimmy’s deep concern.

Osborne’s characterization of Jimmy here suddenly becomes ambiguous and confusing as Jimmy was made to appear to be the one who is very firm in detesting anyone outside his class and very rigid in drawing lines between his own and the other. Jimmy had declared earlier that Helena is his “natural enemy”. He no longer feels the same kind of abhorrence that he once had for Helena. But, when Cliff says that he has decided to do something better or seek his fortunes elsewhere, Jimmy acclaims him, “...You’ve been loyal, generous and a good friend. You’re worth a half a dozen Helenas to me or to anyone...” (pp.130-131) This shows that Jimmy still does not consider her to be above everyone, at least not certainly above Cliff. Hence, Jimmy’s proximity with Helena is sensual, erotic and she serves as a mistress only responding to his carnal desires. Jimmy applauds Helena saying, “...You stood up, and came out to meet me. Oh, Helena - Don’t let anything go wrong!’ (p.133) and again he says, ‘...If you’ll help me. I’ll close that damned sweet-stall, and we’ll start everything from scratch. What do you say? We’ll get away from this place.” (p.133).

This kind of appealing, assurance for Helena inviting her with a fervent hope of beginning a new future throws everything in a daze as Jimmy never was so assuring and optimistic of starting a new bright life with Alison. All the time, it was drudgery and squalor with her. This may be perhaps because he finds Helena equally expressive and as savage as him and hence a suitable match for him. Jimmy himself says, “I think you and I understand one another all right...” (p.103) However, Jimmy also knows pretty well that she cannot be an authentic companion for him as he says to Cliff, “...And all because of something I want from that girl downstairs, something I know in my heart she’s incapable of giving...” (p.131)
Jimmy, though has his mistress Helena, is sure that she cannot give what he expects from a wife as he knows that she is sensual and not sensitive. He loves Alison but she is the other way round, sensitive and not forceful and she too has her own limitations and cannot meet his expectations as he blames her of lack of “wonderful relaxation of spirit.” (p.141) or ‘toughness to endure and suffer’. Jimmy, as with all his other convictions and idiosyncrasies, has also got his own perspective regarding his sexual companion, something like a riddle or a sphinx or perhaps a human paradox. His complexity of mind regarding the kind of choice he would like to have in a woman or in a wife is best known by Alison’s remarks, “…we’re neither of us right – ” (p.138) and again in a more elaborate manner, “He wants something quite different from us. What it is exactly I don’t know – a kind of cross between a mother and a Greek courtesan, a henchwoman, a mixture of Cleopatra and Boswell…” (p.138)

Jimmy, as Roy Huss feels, due to his oedipal tendency cannot relate naturally to a young woman of about his age. Huss says, “his anger and feeling of ‘defilement’ because Alison was a virgin at the time of their marriage were doubtless based on his uneasy feeling that she resembled more the sexually tabooed mother figure than the acceptable courtesan figure. It is Helena, another mother figure, who becomes Jimmy’s mistress. Huss concludes that “Jimmy Porter is prompted by some abnormal urge to be an habitual “collector of injustices” - especially from women.”35 “Hence his impossible demands on women.”36

Jimmy’s bright anticipation of the future along with Helena can then be considered to be momentary optimism to relax out just like the bear and squirrel game that he used to play with Alison. As far as the relation is concerned, there is no sanctity in the relation of Jimmy and Helena. Jimmy knows it and hence, says, “Do I detect a growing, satanic glint in her eyes lately? Do you think it’s living in sin with me that does it? Do you feel very sinful my dear? Well? Do you?” (p.124) Jimmy’s relation with Helena is full of lust and the testimony of it is when he says, “…We’ll get pleasantly, joyfully tiddly, we’ll gaze at each other
tenderly and lecherously in ‘The Builder’s Arms’, and then we’ll come back here, and I’ll make such love to you, you’ll not care about anything else at all.” (p.133) It is beyond doubt that their relation is profane and such relations cannot withstand the rigours of life and can be wrecked at any time. This is what happens when there is a dramatic twist in the play, as Alison suddenly makes her appearance in a forlorn condition.

Alison feels that it was cruel and unfair on her part to come back and ruffle their peace. In fact, she says that she had tried several times not to revert to that place in vain. Helena says that she has more right to be there than her and she feels so ashamed of herself for the deed that she has done. Above all her guilt gets accentuated when Alison does not even reproach her. Alison still feels uncomfortable and says, “But I did not come here in order to gain anything. Whatever it was - hysteria or just macabre curiosity, I’d certainly no intention of making any kind of breach between you and Jimmy. You must believe that.” (p.135) Helena, on being asked by Alison, confesses that she has indeed loved Jimmy but still she is conscious and penitent of the sin that has been committed, “At least I still believe in right and wrong! Not even the months in this madhouse have stopped me doing that. Even though everything I have done is wrong, at least I have known it was wrong.” (p.136)

Helena makes a revelation about Jimmy that he is a misfit to live in the then prevailing social or political contexts or times. He has his own set of thoughts, values, ideas and ideals which do not conform to the ongoing events. Helena says, “…He was born out of his time” (p.136) and again, “There’s no place for people like that any longer - in sex, or politics, or anything. That’s why he’s so futile. Sometimes, when I listen to him, I feel he thinks he’s still in the middle of the French Revolution. And that’s where he ought to be, of course. He doesn’t know where he is, or where he’s going. He’ll never do anything, and he’ll never amount to anything.” (p.136) Even Alison concurs to this. She too adds that he appears to be like an “Eminent Victorian” (p.137) Helena decides to break away by saying:
Alison - it's all over between Jimmy and me. I can see it now. I've got to get out. No - listen to me. When I saw you standing there tonight, I knew that it was all utterly wrong...How could I have ever thought I could get away with it! He wants one world and I want another, and lying in that bed won't ever change it!...And, by everything I have ever believed in, or wanted, what I have been doing is wrong and evil. (p.137)

Here the nature of Helena is brought under the scanner and she can be viewed as being unconsciously jealous of Alison’s domestic life. Alison, in her own way loves Jimmy though he tortures her. Helena goes out of her way to break up the marriage. As a professional actress, she is able to conceal, perhaps even to herself, her real intentions and conveys the impression of being Alison’s genuine well-wisher who separates the man and the wife for the latter’s good.

Helena tells Jimmy, “I’ve always wanted you - always!” (p.133) This explicitly shows that her love towards Jimmy was not a resultant of spontaneous passion that has developed after Alison left him. It was there from the very beginning. Hence, it cannot be entirely regarded that she had given an affectionate counsel for Alison to leave Jimmy. It was partly promoted by her own interests. E.G.Bierhaus, Jr. “finds no trace of any consistency in Helena’s character, especially in her behaviour towards Jimmy and feels that “‘Helena is a series of poses, a personified self-contradiction.’”37 She also tells Alison that she is not taking that decision as a part of the scheme of sacrifice to let her get accommodated.

She is willfully doing it and she does not believe in the business of sacrifice, thus conforming to Jimmy’s own view of sacrifice:

...After all the whole point of sacrifice is that you give up something you never really wanted in the first place...People are doing it around you all the time. They give up their careers, say - or their beliefs - or sex. And everyone thinks to themselves: how
wonderful to be able to do that...It's not awfully difficult - giving up something you were incapable of ever really wanting. We shouldn't be admiring them. We should feel rather sorry for them...(pp.122-123)

She also says that it is the will of Alison to do what ever she likes to do. She is not insisting even Alison to stay there as Alison would be a fool if she does so.

Helena, though tries to give the indication that it is her willful exeunt, it cannot be accepted, as just before Alison steps in, she and Jimmy were sharing intimate love, very happily and were actually dreaming about their own ‘New World’ after getting away from there very soon. The fact, however, is that Helena suffers from a sense of guilt buried deep down and it got painfully activated on seeing Alison who has the legal and more than that moral proprietary rights on Jimmy as a wife. Her sense of guilt eclipses her sense of hope when she discovers the pathetic condition of Alison as she has lost her baby, “...When you came in at that door, ill and tired and hurt, it was all over for me. You see - I didn’t know about the baby. It was such a shock. It’s like a judgement on us.” (p.137) Helena, as a staunch believer in God, feels that the loss of child of Alison is an indictment of God, a penalty for the Sin of adultery committed by Helena and she cannot therefore continue to do it.

It is again not that Helena does not love Jimmy but that love is overpowered by the morality, the values, the God-fearing goodness, the honour for divine judgement – all of which had been dissolved for a period of time resurface in her. Critics like E.G.Bierhaus, Jr. might very well consider her as a trickster and opine that the guilty feeling that she herself has confessed should have made her leave Jimmy earlier itself but she does not do that. Hence there is nothing like guiltiness in her. However, it might also be conceived that the feeling of guilt she has was not strong enough to make her resort to the action of departing from Jimmy until Alison arrives.
Dyson says, “she takes Jimmy for herself because she finds that she desires him, and wants to have him for a time. At no stage, however, does she allow her values to be questioned by Jimmy.” It gets reinforced only after she finds Alison in a wretched condition. Helena feels that one cannot be really happy when one really knows that one is really wrong. “…It’s just that suddenly, tonight, I see what I have really known all along. That you can’t be happy when what you’re doing is wrong, or is hurting someone else. I suppose it could never have worked, anyway, but I do love you, Jimmy. I shall never love anyone as I have loved you. But I can’t go on. I can’t take part - in all this suffering. I can’t.” (pp.139-140) Helena, thus, decides to quit the triangle.

Jimmy in a resigned voice speaks as if he is analyzing the reasons for all the problems of the human race - lack of concern, lack of empathy, lack of guts to experience pain and suffering:

They all want to escape from the pain of being alive. And, most of all, from love…It’s no good trying to fool yourself about love. You can’t fall into it like a soft job, without dirtying up your hands. It takes muscle and guts. And if you can’t bear the thought of messing up your nice, clean soul, you’d better give up the whole idea of life, and become a saint. Because you’ll never make it as a human being. It’s either this world or the next. (p.140)

He feels that one can either lead a full-blooded life of the senses or lead a purely spiritual life. Jimmy fulminates ‘divided loyalties’. He wants that people should be absolutely loyal to him and accept him as he is. He elsewhere had said to Helena, “Either you’re with me or against me.” (p.133) He also suffers from a futile sense of separation all the time, “ I seem to spend my life saying goodbye.” (p.130). He feels that he is a loner and loser in his life. When he knows that Alison has lost the child because of a miscarriage, he says, “It was my child too, you know. But it isn’t my first loss.” (p.139). He has lost his father at a tender age, lost his mother-like Mrs.Tanner, Cliff, his dear friend has departed,
Helena, his mistress is ready to desert him and above all, he feels that he has become rootless. A sense of futility engulfs him.

Alison was so grieved over her own suffering and agony that she had failed to pay proper homage to the death of Mrs. Tanner. Jimmy, naturally gets aggrieved with it and says, “You never even sent any flowers to the funeral. Not – a little bunch of flowers. You had to deny me that too, didn’t you?” (p.141) Jimmy, as a part of his characteristic way of looking at everything on a panoramic canvas of class struggle and class suffering says, “The injustice of it is almost perfect! The wrong people going hungry, the wrong people being loved, the wrong people dying!” (p.141)

Jimmy wanted to marry Alison because when he saw her for the first time, he felt that she has that “wonderful relaxation of spirit”. (p.141) which he was in search of. However, he has discovered that she does not have that as she cannot sweat her guts out. In order to acquire that relaxation of spirit, one needs to be really very strong, one has to suffer, and only then one can achieve the strength to relax. She lacks that fire in her and hence he is disappointed. Jimmy’s remarks testify this:

Was I really wrong to believe that there’s a – a kind of – burning virility of mind and spirit that looks for something as powerful as itself? The heaviest, strongest creatures in this world seem to be the loneliest. Like the old bear, following his own breath in the dark forest. There’s no warm pack, no herd to comfort him. That voice that cries out doesn’t have to be a weakling’s, does it? (p.141)

The symbolic reference to the predicament of the bear is very much the same as that of Jimmy’s. He has been alone, alienated, forlorn and desolate. He yearns for real comradeship. Inspite of his tremendous energy of mind and spirit, he is lonely. From the viewpoint of Karen Horney’s theory of personality, Jimmy can be seen to be a victim of ‘basic insecurity’. His family experiences
and struggles have made him perceive the world as a cold, unsafe, insecure place. His most usual response to this anxiety in terms of the alternatives listed by Karen Horney is that of moving against people. His aggression and verbal violence are reflections of this attitude.

Jimmy also suffers from a kind of social complex as he has come from a working class background and added to that he has married a girl belonging to an upper strata of society. He feels quite inferior psychologically too and this has its own impact even on the sexual marital life. The Flanagan and Allen that Jimmy and Cliff do while singing a song reveals the struggle, the embarrassment, the trepidation that Jimmy undergoes with Alison, particularly in the lines where he almost counsels himself to boost up his own sagging spirits and build courage while in bed with Alison. As it has always been observed that the insecurity generated by extreme inferiority drives people to dominate, become irritant, restless, importunate and regulate others whom they feel are better than them.

"Mary McCarthy rightly compares Jimmy’s vaudeville routines to Hamlet’s turning to players for ‘relief from the real world’"39 In another way, it can be thought as a jester’s way of providing revelry with unprecedented pain inside. Jimmy sings:

Now there’s a certain little lady, and you all know who I mean,
She may have been to Roedean, but to me she’s still a queen.
Someday I’m goin’ to marry her,
When times are not so bad,
Her mother doesn’t care for me
So I’ll ‘ave to ask ‘er dad.
We’ll build a little home for two,
And have some quiet ménage,
We’ll send our kids to public school
And live on bread and marge.

\[90\]
Don’t be afraid to sleep with your sweetheart,
Just Because she’s better than you.
Those forgotten middle classes may have fallen on
Their noses,
But a girl who’s true blue,
Will still have something left for you,
The angels up above, will know that you’re in love
So don’t be afraid to sleep with your sweetheart,
Just because she’s better than you…
They call me Sydney,
Just because she’s better than you. (p.128)

Jimmy is not oblivious that Alison is not intellectually superior to him but is fully conscious that socially she is. Jimmy feels that Alison is better than him and the repetition of it several times in the song establishes it. The song is like the kind of counsel of self-assurance that he gives to himself by saying that just because she is better than himself, he should not be scared to sleep with her. This goes on to show that though the ‘self’ and the ‘society’ are two different entities, they are not mutually exclusive. Jimmy suffers from sexual complexes due to his low social constitution and on the other hand his wife Alison’s upper class. The social discriminations, stratifications have their inescapable influence on the psychological constitution whose impact falls on the sexual dynamism.

This, in Freudian terms, reveals the kind of ignominy Jimmy might have felt all the time when he was in bed with Alison who is socially better than him. The Man is beyond any doubt influenced by the milieu around him. If the class distinctions in the post-war society would not have been so glaring, Jimmy’s domestic life would not have been so disastrous. The societal segmentations, preoccupations and its very many ills would definitely impact on a man and in the case of Jimmy, it was irredeemably extreme.
Jimmy opens out completely by admitting that he knows he has failed but says that he would not have mind that so much if he would have succeeded in winning Alison and her undivided love completely on to his side and if she would have cast herself completely in his moulds, “I may be a lost cause, but I thought if you loved me, it needn’t matter.” (p.141). Alison is moved with these words and in a way understands his expectations of her and how she failed to respond by being passive and neutral. She breaks out saying that she had wronged him and she now wants to be like him, ‘a lost cause’.

Alison also reminds him that he had always wanted her to suffer some misfortune and as he once had his prophetic curse, she has lost their child; his curse has boomeranged and cost him his own child. Faber refers to “the whole business of Jimmy’s attachments to older women, to mother surrogates as well as his tendency to transform his younger mistresses into mothers.” Faber goes on to point out that Jimmy’s wish that Alison’s child should die means “that Alison the childless mother, would then become his mother.”40 He can then also be contented to learn that she has at last come to know what real suffering is, the pain of losing one’s own dear ones, the pain of being alone and helpless. Alison, almost hysterically shrieks, “…This is what he wants to splash about in! I’m in the fire, and I’m burning, and all I want is to die! It’s cost him his child, and any others I might have had! But what does it matter - this is what he wanted from me! Don’t you See! I’m in the mud at last! I’m groveling! I’m crawling! Oh, God – ” (p.142)

Jimmy seeing her collapse at his feet is frozen and picks her up and feels sympathetic towards her and with a kind of consoling, considerate, mocking, tender irony says that he and she will be together again in their bear’s cave and their squirrel’s drey and will live on honey and on lots and lots of nuts. Both of them are now in a chastened mood on account of the suffering. In his mood of renewed tenderness, Jimmy has gone back to the bears-and-squirrels game. He goes on to say that, as animals, they will sing songs about themselves, about warm trees and cosy caves basking in the sunshine.
Jimmy adds that Alison, the squirrel will keep her big eyes on his fur and acts as a custodian by helping him to keep his claws in order because he is a rough and untidy kind of bear, while he will see to it that she keeps her sleek, bushy tail shining as it should, because she is a very beautiful squirrel. However, Jimmy still offers her a premonition of danger, a word of caution by saying, “...There are cruel steel traps lying about everywhere, just waiting for rather mad, slightly satanic and very timid little animals...Poor squirrels!” (p.143) Alison too says, “Poor bears! Oh, poor, poor bears!” (p.143) and slides her arms around him. This brings about their reconciliation.

Alison’s abject surrender to Jimmy is considered by some critics as improbable and equally improbable is Jimmy’s acceptance of her especially after the way in which she had deserted him. However, Alison’s surrender is not something incredible as she has lost her child and is in deep pathos. She has come to recognize what true suffering is, what befalls on a human being when some one or something so dear is lost; all of which Jimmy had already experienced and wanted even Alison to experience. Hence, in a way, even his wish is fulfilled. Moreover, Alison always had a deep, loving need for Jimmy as she had mentioned in the letter when she was getting away.

Jimmy, as far as he is concerned, begins to feel isolated with Mrs. Tanner’s passing away, Cliff’s moving away and Helena’s resolution to leave and also that behind all his denunciations and fulminations, he has a tender, loving care for Alison and as Alison, herself is in chastened frame of mind and makes repeated appeals, he could not fail to respond. The end of the play is ambiguous only in so far as it offers two possibilities: the harmonious relation may continue forever or the same life of bickerings, with occasional excursion into their fantasy world may resume.

Bamber Gascoigne supports the latter possibility. He said the climax, “seemed a painfully good ending, admirable in its irony. The pattern of the play was clearly a circle; we were back where we started and tomorrow the agony
would begin all over again. However, as the tone of the ending of the play is not one of exuberance or euphoria but a solemn and tender one with a ray of hope, relief in the present and with a rumination over the good of the past (playing bear and squirrels game). With a fair degree of enlightenment and maturity achieved by both sides, it can be considered that they will be able to discover the marital bliss.

According to some critics, *Look Back in Anger* as a play was not intended to mirror the state of post-war society but to dissect a perverse marriage. Jimmy’s problem is not the vicious injustice and hypocrisy of the social order but the desire to possess a woman’s complete, unquestioning love, and his simultaneous inability to get along with anyone. If that is so, it is also to be remembered that woman in the play is seen as a symbol of the frustrating society. Hence, whatever the woman does to Jimmy including the suffering that she gives by not responding to him with equal vigour or enthusiasm or even by betraying him, it is to be deemed then that it is all done by the society itself. As such, in the end when Jimmy strikes a reconciliation with Alison, it should be thought that Jimmy has made a peace pact with the society as well and hence there will be no more tirades.

The play, however, is not just about the problem of domestic disharmony. Harold Hobson noted in his review of the Royal Court production, “there are really two plays in *Look Back in Anger*” The first is of social protest which thrusts itself forward in every word that Jimmy Porter utters about the institutions of society while the second emerges purely regarding the domestic life of Jimmy and Alison and their maladjustment.

The first theme explores the nature of relationship between man and society and the second theme between man and woman. Both these themes are intertwined with an exceptional dexterity. “Harold Hobson preferred the second, while Kenneth Tynan nailed his influential colours to the mast of the first. In his judicious account of the play, Simon Trussler returns, by and large, to the
second, labeling it 'basically a well-made problem play of considerable psychological insight.' "43

However, it will be too unjust to discard the societal angle, too flimsy, far too easy to dismiss *Look Back in Anger* as just a play regarding the life being led by the pair in despair; it is also equally about the society that has gone beyond repair. In fact, in a way, the effect of the second is the cause for the first. Jimmy finds no certainty anywhere, outside himself or within. This uncertainty makes him appear neurotic sometimes. “Doubts about Jimmy’s sanity are inescapable. In this sense he is like Hamlet, though in a smaller, a domestic setting. Like Hamlet, he sees something rotten in the state, and the rottenness is not all of his own imagining.” "44

Jimmy’s response, like that of Hamlet, is to use words as a lash, killing everyone, whether loved or despised ones, indiscriminately. His insight is mingled with illusion, his idealism with cruelty. Meenal Agrawal observes:

Critics suggest that Jimmy ought to have found a job at a provincial university, instead of torturing himself and his nice wife by running a sweet stall. Hamlet, too, might have settled down in the court of Denmark, married Ophelia, and waited for the succession. Both have no fixed purpose beyond that of awakening the people around them from their acceptance of the wrong and obliging them to be conscious of the horror and baseness of the world. "45

Jimmy was condemned by many a critic on moral rather than personal grounds. His behaviour was not only annoying but also reproachful. If Allsop calls Jimmy’s treatment of Alison “offensive and obscene” "46, Mark Roberts explicitly remarks that his behaviour is unacceptable and therefore should not be considered to evince our sympathy:
...I do not believe that many people, faced with a Jimmy Porter in real life and suffering from his actions will really be prepared to make the indulgent judgements of him that Osborne asks us to make in the course of the play.  

Jimmy, inspite of all his savagery is not a loathsome character. For Alison, he is a knight in the armour, for Helena, he should have been in the middle of the French Revolution championing the cause of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and for Cliff, an affectionate model of friendship and intellectuality. They all feel that Jimmy is basically a worthwhile character. They may not be convinced about his ideas and they suffer his torments but they never doubt that his torments are at root those of a good man and that he deserves success, even if he seems unlikely to find it. They also sense that his anger has in it the elements of honesty and courage that might be recovered if it could ever be released into effective action.

Jimmy is certainly a despairing victim of the milieu around him, as John Russell Taylor puts it:

...Jimmy is the saint like witness to right values in a world gone wrong, the mouthpiece of protest for a dissatisfied generation. And finally, what really makes this interpretation stick in the playgoer's mind is the burning rhetoric of his great tirades: even if their motivation is to be found in petty personal disputes and minor skirmishes in the battle of sexes, once Jimmy gets going they generate their own force and conviction...  

Jimmy might have been very well condemned by Banham when he wrote, "Jimmy's anger, his bitterness, his hysteria, and his cruelty are cries from the heart for recognition, and nothing more." but it will be too unjustifiable to consider Jimmy as a self-centered or even as a paranoid personality. The basis of Jimmy's anger is of that of love and compassion which has lost its meaning. Alan Carter says:
To be angry is to care.... Jimmy Porter earned the title “angry young man” for Osborne, and he certainly was opposed to many aspects of modern life, striking out, in turn, at the church, the press, the bomb, the older generation, women, marriage, sex, and the “Establishment”. Yet one should remember that Jimmy’s anger is not simply revenge for the injustices he has suffered. He is capable of vicarious suffering, and much of his anger does indeed come from his love of others and his helplessness to change things.50

Jimmy says, “…I suppose people of our generation aren’t able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids. There aren’t any good, brave causes left.” (p.131) Jimmy was sixteen when the war ended; he was not old enough to be a soldier, but old enough to have endured evacuation, shortage of rationing, and all the dreariness that the war brought into social life in England. The elders had forgotten or rather did not realise that after the war ended, a generation was coming of age. This generation, which Kenneth Tynan fondly calls it as the “minority” was ready to create tremors in the “majority”. This generation which grew to manhood in the fifties began to ask what had been gained at the expense of what had been lost.

The end of the war did not usher in peace rather it paved a way for the nuclear age with the menace of cosmic destruction. It had brought into the great cities more over-crowding and sordidness. The younger generation had a baffled sense of purposelessness, a feeling that it had no roots in the past, and no hope for the future. These young rebels, as a last resort, atleast wanted the Empire, not to admire it but to protest against it. However, with the empire going, if not gone, they found themselves angry and disillusioned. Osborne had intuitively realized all these and depicted the mood of the generation. Here lies the topicality, the immediacy of the play.
Jimmy also says, “... If the big bang does come, and we all get killed off, it won’t be in aid of the old-fashioned, grand design. It’ll just be for the Brave New-nothing-very-much-thank-you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus...” (p.131) Jimmy’s predicament is that he will never find his cherished ideal of his ‘brave new world’ and he knows it. He also knows that he is a lost cause. The exhausted, defeated, broken up and finally speaking incomplete sentences about his cherished ideal reveals that the dream has failed. He will spend the rest of his life bathed in self-pity, ranting impotently about the ills of the society and suffering because of the misfortunes he himself to a great extent has created by being ‘right’ in a ‘wrong’ world, by having ‘an intense feeling of care for a cause’ which no one else has.

Tynan confers the status of a hero on Jimmy, a character who is “‘simply and abundantly alive’ with a ‘desperate conviction that the time is out of joint’”51 Though Tynan while trying to establish the objectivity of the portrayal of Jimmy by saying that “nothing could be more false” than the assumption that Osborne’s sympathies are “wholly with Jimmy”, makes it vibrantly clear that Jimmy is a noble representative of a suffering class:

The Porters of our time deplore the tyranny of ‘good taste’ and refuse to accept ‘emotional’ as a term of abuse; they are classless, and they are also leaderless52

Alan Carter sums up the kind of strategy that Osborne has and the reason for it:

Osborne, knowing that his characters can never win their battle against society, spins a protective web around them, making a moral implicit rather than explicit, a hero human rather than symbolic. The heroes’ failing is that they maintain idealistic purposes which are impossible to achieve, but their refusal to surrender to the social forces which threaten them is always plausible. Unless conditions are suitable (and they are not yet) ideals like theirs are meaningless in the practical sense. Such a
high moral purpose endangers life, and ensures conflict and ultimate defeat."\textsuperscript{53}

This defeat stirs us to dwell on the reasons which brought it about. The 'cause' and 'effect' are known. The answers may not be readily available. Nevertheless, the play has succeeded in creating a deeper level of understanding of the complexities of human life, particularly when things are not as they should have been. In fact, the very title of the play \textit{Look Back in Anger} determines the underlying theme, as the play is "motivated by outrage at the discovery that the idealized Britain, for which so many had sacrificed themselves during the war years, was inauthentic."\textsuperscript{54} Jimmy could no longer live within this kind of society and he got isolated and alienated. Heilpern regarded the original handwritten manuscript of \textit{Look Back in Anger} and concluded that "Osborne had considered six other titles for the play: \textit{Farewell to Anger, Angry Man, Man in a Rage, Bargain from Strength, Close the Cage behind you} and \textit{My Blood is a Mile High."}\textsuperscript{55} Osborne finally chose \textit{Look Back in Anger} as the title as it was certainly "looking back in anger" at the futility of the sacrifices done for upholding the glory and grandeur of their nation which just left everything in the lurch.

Alan Carter makes an appraisal of Osborne and his play as:

Osborne's greatest achievement in \textit{Look Back in Anger} was that he managed to recreate on the stage the everyday problems of a period and to match to them the right kind of contemporary hero. Jimmy was an articulate young man who expressed in direct colloquial language, easily understood, the feelings of ordinary people when confronted by those problems. The play brought to the theatre a sense of dissatisfaction with the social inheritance we so unquestioningly accepted, and one of the best acting parts of the modern theatre - Jimmy Porter, angry young man.\textsuperscript{56}
Look Back in Anger, as a play can be an “undeniable masterpiece”\textsuperscript{57} or a “feeble period piece”\textsuperscript{58}, it is beyond all doubt that it was a milestone in the English drama of the twentieth century. Jimmy’s role in the public sphere becomes convoluted by his class, education, establishment, and generation. A resultant of all these is confusion which spills over into his domestic sphere. Jimmy’s predicament was clearly not unique as many shared their fate along with him; only the thing was that he chose, unconsciously and unknowingly to become their grand representative:

Jimmy Porter was talked about as the personification of the thwarted threshings of a three-quarters educated post-war Briton who has seen a social revolution half take place and his own opportunities economically cut to about a quarter of what he had hoped for.\textsuperscript{59}

The play not only broke the theatrical conventions by making remarkable use of the contemporary idiom, a language that could unnerve people but also by employing a new kind of voice, a ‘Voice of Protest’ which could wake up the entire post-war generation out of their slumber.
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5. Kenneth Tynan, Quoted in Alan Carter, *John Osborne*, p.27.


49. Martin Banham, Osborne, p.16.

50. Alan Carter, John Osborne, pp.150-151.


53. Alan Carter, John Osborne, p.194.


56. Alan Carter, John Osborne, p.66.

