Look Back in Anger and Popular Culture

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The changes in popular culture between 1950 and 1960 in Britain have been called a "cultural revolution" (Marwick 127). Whatever was revolutionary about this era must have some bearing on both the genesis and reception of the ground-breaking play *Look Back in Anger*, by John Osborne. Appearing in the middle of the decade (1956) Osborne's drama initiated the cultural moment of the Angry Young Man. Precisely which young men were angry at this time and why are questions that lead back to this concept of the cultural revolution. Understanding Osborne's Jimmy Porter, the original Angry Young Man can take the researcher away from literary culture and deep into British popular culture. Not only will this journey provide insight into the causes of the phenomenon, but it might even provide a way to make the whole question interesting to contemporary teenagers who are studying *Look Back in Anger* in school.

The cultural historian Arthur Marwick highlights four distinct aspects to this cultural revolution of the 1950s--—permissiveness, cosmopolitanism , new class attitudes and youth, each of which is manifested by distinctive artifacts such as cinema, popular music, the daily papers and other texts that surrounded the ordinary person on an ordinary working day (Marwick 127-130) . These four areas encompass the change in social attitudes and behaviour between the end of post-war austerity and the onset of world recession in the 1970s (Marwick 129). By the end of this time, British society dressed differently, ate differently, even worked differently, and all of these physical changes indicated alterations in deeper emotional and intellectual attitudes (Marwick 129).

Historians will trace such social changes to a range of causes: the ending of war time rationing, increases in working class wages, the availability of new industrial and domestic technologies, rising living standards and the demolition of Britain's imperial role, as Empire shifted to Commonwealth. These comprise a useful list of enlightening facts; making such facts come alive for the student of Osborne's play is another matter. A way must be found to help students appreciate the gulf between a world of food rationing coupons, 1940s clothes and Edwardian morality, on the one hand, and Carnaby Street, Mary Quant and "All You Need is Love ," on the other.

Osborne's play itself addresses the problem of the passing of time and the changing of eras. Jimmy, while indulging in his usual criticism of his wife's upper-class parents, vividly expresses the old mythologies:

> The old Edwardian brigade do make their brief little world look pretty tempting. All home-made cakes and croquet, bright ideas, bright uniforms. Always the same picture: high summer, the long days in the sun, slim volumes of verse, crisp linen, the smell of starch. What a romantic picture. Phoney too, of course. It must have rained sometimes. (*Look Back In Anger*, Act I)

Even the cynical Jimmy admits regret and nostalgia for the haloed artifacts of a secure generation, because his generation seems to have no world of their own. Its artifacts, however, are all around him, literally at the moment he speaks, they are in his lap, where he has the daily papers. The mythology of the 1950s present permeates the play, in multiple references to popular culture—radio shows, TV shows, vaudeville acts, newspaper advertisements, cartoons, cinema ("the pictures") and, of course popular music.

Since the first production of *Look Back in Anger* took place in May, 1956, it is useful to sample popular culture consumption and production between the years 1955 and 1957 in order to get a cultural background against which to understand Osborne's staging of the Porter marriage. To this end, the discussion will open with TV, the coming young medium of the age, and then pause on print media to consider advertisements and cartoons, before dwelling at length on the role of popular music is shaping the ideology of the 1950s. This approach will not constitute a theory of

influences, but rather a synchronic cultural study documenting the flow of words, images, sounds and their energizing ideologies in the play's immediate era. 'Culture,' as used here, will refer to the system of meanings that was transforming British society in terms of "a constant succession of social practices" (Fiske 3), having both political and literary implications.

Although the 1950s remained the domain of the radio listening public (Karwonski, 281), television had already changed the leisure time of Britons. In 1953, record numbers of people had viewed the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. By the mid-fifties, Jimmy Porter's contemporaries were increasingly turning on the 'telly', and their favourite programmes reveal a great deal about their world views. One television programme in particular is of direct relevance to an appreciation of *Look Back in Anger*. In 1955 it was the third most watched programme in Britain, behind the variety shows *Sunday Palladium* and *Theatre Royal* (www.fiftiesweb.com). This American situation comedy about a husband and wife who argue, fight, scheme, deceive and kiss and make up all in one action-packed half-hour episode is, of course, *I Love Lucy* (CBS, 1951). *Look Back in Anger* shares the two-couple pattern of this show, as well as some of the comedy of Lucy, even its slapstick: Alison comments, for instance, at one particularly chaotic moment. "Oh, It's more like a zoo every day" (Act I). The disorderly domestic scene is common to both dramas, as is the prominent motif of the spousal shouting match.

Lucy and Desi argue about some of the same things as Jimmy Porter and his wife, but their problems are celluloid ones, the kind that evaporate at the end of each episode. Nevertheless, this show did pioneer increased reality and frankness in television shows—Lucy's real life pregnancy, for instance was written into the show, and Lucy was shown coping realistically, if comically with the problems of her expanding belly. This is not the tragedy of Alison's pregnancy loss in the play, but it was a new move in the direction of realism for prime time TV. However, Lucy and Desi's real life romance and marriage underpinned their show and reassured the audience even at the depths of their differences that the kiss and make up would really come. *Look Back in Anger* displays the pressure cooker atmosphere of the living room, with its focus on one couple, but denies the audience the easy happy ending. This is an instance where popular culture went ahead of high culture, to bring the working class living room, the ordinary housewife, the servant-less kitchen and the trivia of married life into cultural discourse. Early viewers of Osborne's play were struck by the ironing board that dominated the stage space, and by Alison's bondage to its demands. Ironing boards may not have been common on the stages of London, but they or their domestic equivalents certainly were in television fare such as *I Love Lucy*. Osborne brings the minutiae of the working-class flat to the attention of the audience—the radiator, the kettle, the cistern and the bathroom that is downstairs. In so doing, he follows popular culture, while leading high culture down a new path.

Popular culture also resided in the print media, which had enjoyed a much longer era of influence than had television in the mid-fifties. British daily newspapers featured cartoons that reveal a great deal about the shifting climate in Britain during the crucial half decade at the beginning of the 50s. And the Porters certainly do read the papers—several newspapers, both "posh" and otherwise. One particular newspaper cartoon provides in print what *I Love Lucy* does on celluloid: a parallel portrait of a working-class marriage. This is Andy Capp. Andy Capp is a phenomenally successful cartoon strip and character that was created in 1952 by Reg Smythe of Hartlepool. The strip later was carried by the *Daily Mirror* and embodied the new northeast England working man—permanently unemployed, living off the earnings of his cleaner wife Flo (www.bbc.co.uk). It is part of the new post-war social contract that Andy's lack of a wage does not lead to starvation. Like many others, he collects his weekly handout, drinks it up at the pub and, with what is left over, he buys cigarettes. A crumpled fag is always dangling from his curled lip. Andy despises authority—be it the police, magistrates or the upper classes—but is too comfortable with his life to really rebel. He accepts complacently that the rich society around him owes him a modest amount of its goods. His plaid cap is the badge of the lower classes and his mouthy dialogue and ironic wit gave a whole class of readers a voice in the morning paper. This (non) working class hero spoke for a new age, for a new stereotype to reflect a new reality and new class attitudes. This is not far removed from the postwar reality that Osborne depicts. Andy Capp would have been unthinkable during wartime. His loafing would have been unpatriotic and almost treasonous. It is

the steady prosperity curve of the post war years that allows and fosters Andy Capp.

Now Jimmy Porter is not Andy Capp, but his educated cousin, who has risen out of the 'ciggy and beer ' culture through the magic of a university education—Jimmy did not go to Oxbridge, of course, not even to the second tier of universities known as "red brick" universities. Jimmy calls his type of institution a "white tile" university (*Look Back in Anger* Act II Sc 1). White tile is commonly used for bathrooms, notably public bathrooms, so Jimmy may be disparagingly suggesting that his college was a toilet—a place where anyone could go for the most degraded purposes. Despite his education, however, the gates of privilege have not opened for Jimmy. He works hard at his candy store, but still lives in a cramped, shabby flat. He has married up the social scale, but spends his time mouthing off to his wife in a manner suspiciously like Andy to Flo. At one point in Act I, Jimmy complains of "the eternal flaming racket of the female," displaying the gender gap that is characteristic of the cartoon, where Andy kips on the couch all day while Flo cooks, cleans and goes out to work. Although Alison is not a charlady like Flo, she seems never very far from housework, including the endless ironing that dominates Act I. Jimmy condemns her for this residue of Flo within her, at the same time that he denies his responsibility for helping to turn her into a working-class charlady.

By looking at the cartoon, we can see in Andy's combative relationship to Flo one pattern of the working class marriage, that of spouses locked in a duel over money and sex. This working class marital battle had been a staple of the vaudeville show with its urban lower class appeal. As with the much earlier Punch and Judy routines of street theatre, it was funny on the vaudeville stage to beat or abuse your wife, but Osborne dignifies the condition by revealing the tragedy within it. At the same time, there is the fact that Alison can never be Flo because she is not working class. The class system had been firmly in place in the bringing up of this child of the British military and imperial classes. Her father's class, however, is on the way down, towards cheaper and cheaper suburban villas and boarding houses. Jimmy's class is on the way up. The old way and the new way meet and clash and work out their destiny in the Potter's flat.

The battle is even more explicitly expressed by Jimmy in terms of a popular newspaper and magazine advertisement of the time. In this exchange, Jimmy reveals that he had been reading the fine print in the non-posh papers and that he remembers an advertisement for Charles Atlas's home bodybuilding course:

> *Jimmy*: Do you think some of this spiritual beefcake would make a man of me? Should I go in for this moral weight-lifting and get myself some over-developed muscle? I was a liberal skinny weakling. I too was afraid to strip down to my soul, but now everyone looks at my superb physique in envy. (*Look Back in Anger*, Act III Sc 1)

Charles Atlas was an American entrepreneur who sold mail order kits for bodybuilding, using a series of advertisements featuring a skinny man (the 97 pound weakling) who is unlucky in love and pushed around by more macho types. The most famous of these advertisements uses a cartoon strip set on the beach, where two muscular louts kick sand in the faces of the hero and his girl. The caption is "The Insult that Made a Man out of Me" (www.charles.atlas.com). The young woman complains that the is ashamed to be seen with such a "skinny weakling," but changes her mind after he signs up for the Charles Atlas course and is physically transformed. .

As readers of Osborne's play, we don't know Jimmy's weight, but both the stage directions and the dialogue inform us that Jimmy is as skinny as they come. He shares this characteristic, at least, with the Atlas hero; moreover, it is precisely shame, resentment and the resulting anger that propelled the original 97 pound weakling into seeking more muscle. In the passage above, Jimmy is explicitly speaking of moral muscle, but there is more than a hint of the truculence of the skinny weakling in his attitude. This is not the only place in the play where he mentions beefcake, and he is not at all impressed when the stockier Cliff removes his trousers in Act I. Perhaps Jimmy is a perpetual sand-kicker himself in order to preempt sand kicking by others. From another perspective,

Jimmy's mouthing off could be the intensive verbal exercise he requires in order to build up the special type of 'muscle' needed by a working class man who has risen just sufficiently out of his class to be in danger of falling back into it. Whatever one makes of the allusion, this reference to the Atlas advertisement is further evidence of how deeply Osborne's play is embedded in print culture and popular media images of the time, despite its learned references to Shakespeare, Milton and Eliot. That's not what we see Jimmy reading—he reads the newspapers where such advertisements appeared.

The Atlas advertisements provided only one limited role for women, but another popular medium was obsessed with women: popular music. To establish what was popular at the time the play first appeared, I looked at popular music from between 1955 and 1957, and in particular at the British Pop Charts for that era, to see what was playing on that all important medium, the radio. In order to get closer to the play's milieu, I focused on the charts for Birmingham radio stations of that era, WSGN-AM and WYDE-AM (the play is set in the Midlands, somewhere near Birmingham

Now, although there is some evidence in the play of popular music, there is none at all of rock and roll. Music does, however, enter the play in Jimmy's aggressive trumpet playing, his previous ambition to be a band member, and his two improvised sets of lyrics for what are intended to be blues songs (Act III). Music on the radio in the Porter flat is exclusively classical. In real British society of the time, however, the picture was very different. I theorized that, despite the lack of rock and roll in the play (perhaps even because of it), a synchronic survey of the music that formed the soundtrack to the lives of Jimmy and Alison's real counterparts might reveal assumptions about how young people conducted their lives at that time. Additionally, such an approach would also serve to catch the attention of teenagers reading the play in an academic context, and struggling to understand how someone like Jimmy might have lived, thought and felt. Looking at the titles of a selection of the popular songs from 1955 to 1957 will help us to develop the ideological background of popular culture.

Students can quickly be introduced to the era with a list of the most popular song titles from the mid-fifties. These can be found on sites such as the BBC's Radio I Chart (www.bbc.co.uk), or on www.everyhit.com, or, in the Birmingham version, at http://hiwaay.net/-mdsmith/fifties.htm . For classroom play, a CD compilation of the era's top hits would also be useful. For the purposes of this project, the popular song titles were analyzed by theme, with particular attention to what was revealed about attitudes to love, romance and marriage. Five main themes emerged, each one providing a clue about fifties couples and how they became and stayed couples.

Theme 1 is **Love for a beautiful woman.** This is the commonest theme in popular music of the era leading up to the writing of *Look Back in Anger*. Popular songs and their titles present love as an exclusive, destined heterosexual mystery. According to this mythology, everyone has his or her match out there somewhere, and it is just a matter of waiting for love at first sight to strike. It is always sudden, always exclusive and always an earth-shaking experience to fall in love. Moreover, either all women are beautiful, or this particular type of love comes with rose-colored glasses, for the act of falling in love is always triggered by physical perfection. In the three-year period around the play's production, one can find the following titles: “Love is a Many Splendored Thing,” The Four Aces (1955), “Only You,” The Platters (1955) and “True Love,” Bing Crosby and Grace Kelly (1956). This last, from the film of the same name, sums up the then current concept of the destined love and gave it a popular face in the beautiful countenance of Grace Kelly.

Theme 2, **Unrealistic idealization of the woman** is visible in several predictable motifs, of which angels are one of the most common. Titles that illustrate this obsession include “Earth Angel,” The Penguins (1955) and 1957's “My Special Angel “by Bobby Helms.

In its third theme, **Permanence of love and romance**, pop music mythology promised that love would keep the angel an angel and the love intact permanently—no matter what the future brought. Songs that make this promise either in the title or the lyrics include “Melody of Love” by the Four Aces (1955), with its image of lips permanently entwined, “Memories are Made of This,” Dean Martin (1955) and “Moments to Remember,” The Four Lads (1955).

A particular contrast emerges between this popular illusion of constancy and Alison's confession to Cliff: "I don't want to have anything more to do with love" (Act I). This polite, romantic love from the song lyrics is not relevant to what goes on between Alison and Jimmy, which, although obviously still involving sex, includes a disturbing component of role playing, horseplay and even violence.

Most of this pop music, then, glorified romantic love (not, at this period, sex), promised a destined mate, along with permanence, loyalty and eternity, and all against a background of an exotic, pretty world of unrealistic imagery. This assigned setting for love emerged as theme four: **The pretty world of romance**. A glance at titles from the charts reveals the characteristic imagery backdrop of love to be completely unrealistic even for America, and certainly for Britain. In this category fall titles such as "A Blossom Fell," Nat King Cole (1955), "Cherry Pink And Apple Blossom White," Perez Prado (1955), "Sand And The Sea," Nat King Cole (1955), "Hummingbird," Les Paul & Mary Ford (1955), "Autumn Leaves," Roger Williams (1955), "Wayward Wind," Gogi Grant (1956), "Soft Summer Breeze," Eddie Heywood (1956), "Jamaica Farewell," Harry Belafonte (1956), "Moonlight Gambler," Frankie Laine (1956), "Love Letters In The Sand," Pat Boone (1957), "White Silver Sands," Don Rondo (1957) and "Shangri-la," The Four Coins (1957).

What has emerged so far from the popular music on the charts is a picture of women, of romance, of youth and of a world that is pretty, exotic and lacking the things of everyday life—such as kitchen sinks, kettles and ironing boards. At the beginning of the fifties, then, to be a man was to inspire devoted love in a young woman and to adore her in return. The ideal outcome was marriage, which shows up in the popular songs in the mention of churches or wedding rings, and becomes the fifth theme in the analysis: **Marriage as happily-ever-after**. Myriads of song lyrics sang the praises of marriage, but just a small selection will represent this abundance: "Love and Marriage," Frank Sinatra (1955), "Band of Gold," D. Cherry (1955), "The Church Bells May Ring," The Diamonds (1956) and "To the Aisle," The Five Satins (1957).

In the fifties, however, a new type of music was introduced, one that had particular appeal to youth and would redefine the genre of popular entertainment. The lyrics of rock and roll shifted emphasis away from the conventional ideals of love and marriage, and stressed instead the desirability of having a good time in the here and now. Mention of partying, dancing all night and staying out all night became normal in the new style of music. Initially these new themes came from black American music, out of rhythm and blues, with a short stop in country. The indigenous equivalent in Britain was called Skiffle, and did not catch the world's ear or imagination as Rock and roll did. Many titles from the 1955- 1957 charts exemplify this fifth theme: **Rock and Roll's new hedonistic mood**. Some familiar titles that fall into this category include "Rock Around the Clock," Bill Haley and the Comets (1955), "Honey Babe," A. Mooney (1955), "Let The Good Times Roll," Shirley & Lee (1956), "Party Doll," Buddy Knox (1957), "All Shook Up," Elvis Presley and "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," Jerry Lee Lewis (1957.)

These titles drop broad hints about the changing ideal. A good girl, for example, is now a party girl, not one headed down the aisle. A good time is not a croon in the sunset, but a spine-jarring night on a crowded dance floor. The body has been written back into popular culture. Rock and roll asserted that good times, post war times were here and were to be enjoyed.

This kind of lyric enshrined another kind of escapism, Instead of sunsets, hummingbirds and angels, these lyrics permitted dreams of a mindless physical jolt. In parallel with this escapist element, however, a certain type of realistic detail was beginning to appear in rock music: the trivia of working-class lives. This motif is relevant here because of *Look Back in Anger's* status as part of the kitchen sink school, the new drama that dealt with the everyday details of the most mundane lives, and dwelt on the concrete properties of a working class life: iron stove, cistern, kettle and so on. Such highbrow drama did not, of course, invent the kitchen sink or bring it into cultural discourse. Similar themes had been evident in popular music for some time, especially in some music genres. At first, only black American musicians and some country singers, for example, ever mentioned realities such as being on social assistance or out of a job. Rock and roll songs from this

new wave all bring up previously taboo matters such as sex, prostitution, unemployment, manual labour, poverty and violence. The pop charts reveal that Britons enjoyed listening to the songs that comprise the sixth and last category of the analysis: **The Nitty-gritty in popular music.** Here I have included titles such as "Long Tall Sally," Little Richard (1956), "Rip it Up," Little Richard (1956) and "Sixteen Tons," Tennessee Ernie Ford (1955). The lyrics of this last song in particular recall Jimmy Porter's assertion that "muscle and guts" (Act III Sc 2) are needed to survive contemporary life.

Elsewhere in white American music, the lovesick young Americans always seem to have Cadillacs and money for sodas ("Sippin Soda," Guy Mitchell, 1954) and drive in movies. "Maybelline" (Chuck Berry, 1955) has a Cadillac and a V8 Ford. "Seventeen", (The Fontane Sisters, 1955) features a jukebox, peroxide hair and blue jeans. The Rover Boys' "Graduation Day" (1957) mentions a senior prom and ivy walls, certainly marks of the privileged sector of American society. The singer Georgia Gibbs sums this all up in the title of her song "Happiness Street" (1957). The singer answers the question of why she is so happy by explaining that "[m]e and my baby just moved out today / To Happiness Street, corner Sunshine Square" (lyrics by Edward White and Mack Wolfson).

Happiness Street is the location of the earlier type of music. Rock and roll, on the other hand, takes place in a location more accurately characterized as Heartbreak Hotel. Even with its new rhythms and themes, rock and roll did not make the older style of music disappear instantly. Moonlight and love at first sight persisted throughout the 50s. The two types of music sat side by side at the top of the pop charts. Youth, however, identified with rock and Roll; the music and its implicit ideology would affect how the next generation of young people, danced, dressed, loved and courted.

In the Porter's flat however, Osborne never lets rock and roll through the door, despite the fact that a type of angry young man had already made his appearance on the pop music scene. In September and October of 1955, one of those chart hits was a growly ballad titled "Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots", recorded by The Cheers (http:fly.hiwaay.net/-mdsmith/fifties.htm). Its denim-clad biking hero is a modern rebel who updates the western outlaw figure that a previous generation had idolized. In the new musical image, you don't have to rob a bank to be an outlaw. Anyone can be a rebel; you don't need a cause.

This reference points directly to the cinema, for which there is no lack of references in the text of *Look Back in Anger*. The Porter's may not listen to rock and roll, but they do (at least Alison does) go the cinema, the pictures, as they call it. And here they would have found clear images of masculine anger and rebellion in James Dean, *Rebel without a Cause* and Marlon Brando in several early movies. Looking at the famous poster image of Dean with his lean frame, and aggressive stance, his cigarette wielded like a weapon, his hand aimed like a gun, one can understand that Jimmy Porter is not the only nor even the first Angry Young Man. Across the Atlantic, Dean and Brando are already identified with this role. When teaching *Look Back in Anger* to high school students, the teacher should provide the opportunity for the class to see reproductions of the cinema posters and still shots of these actors in their roles. Such poses are directly relevant to the images and self-images of youth in the fifties.

Dean and Brando were the faces that young people saw in their mirrors when they looked—pouting, sullen, rebellious, dissatisfied, truculent and beautiful. Such people benefited from the prosperity of the post war years while simultaneously despising its lush promises. This film iconography reaches even into the Porter's flat, for when Cliff takes off his shirt for it to be washed by Helena, Jimmy says that Cliff looks like "Marlon Brando or somebody" (Act 3 Scene 1). Presumably in his undershirt, the stocky Cliff may well resemble the icon of Brando similarly clad. The comparison, once voiced however, ricochets to shed light on Jimmy. He sees Marlon Brando because he knows that image—has seen it perhaps while going to the pictures with Alison. Perhaps Jimmy compares the image with his own 97 pound weakling self. As in his reference to Charles Atlas, Jimmy here reveals both sensitivity about body image and an immersion in popular culture that contradicts his declared intellectuality.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this brief survey of pop culture and its relevance to Osborne's play is that Jimmy Porter, of all the denizens of that flat, may be the most sensitive to the influence of popular culture and its iconic imagery. This sensitivity may be one cause of the anger that he expresses in domestic abuse. Since the message of popular culture in the mid-fifties spoke of a new youth movement—vital, rebellious and hedonistic—one could understand Jimmy's yearning in some way to be part of it, but knowing that he is too old and settled ever to have a part in it.

To illustrate Jimmy's dislocation from the new rock and roll age, one can consider what he does for a living—selling sweets. Jimmy has the wrong kind of shop, selling the wrong kind of goods for the coming age. Sweets may have been good for the treat-starved years of the immediate post-war period, but soon a society with more pocket money would demand more sophisticated luxuries on which to spend it. Carnaby Street would redefine how the world dressed and spent money on dress. In economic terms, Jimmy has already missed the boat to success.

On the personal level, Jimmy also finds himself outside the rock and roll world looking in. Already married, he has lived out the dream inscribed in popular music of the earlier style: fated love that crosses all barriers, followed by marriage. The happy duo of the songs, however, has not resulted. The play opens, not with a duo, but a trio: Jimmy, Alison *and Cliff*. That was not how it was supposed to go. The Brando role has been appropriated by someone else. The pretty world of romance is buried under the ironing board, the Sunday papers and the gas meter.

At just this time (1956), an American wrote a book to explain the personal and corporate phenomena of the fifties: William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man*. Although primarily concerned with the growth of American corporate culture, Whyte does contribute to our understanding of the era's idolization of the Dean/Brando rebel. Whyte theorized that the fifties saw a gap between the mythology of success and integration and the reality of their ordinary lives: "The reality is that people grow restive with a mythology that is too distant from the way things actually are" (Whyte Ch I; see online at www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/505/whyte-main.html).

The setting and manifest action in Osborne's play show us "the way things actually are;" the play's allusions provide clues to the contrasting mythology. One can trace the mythology carried by early pop culture—especially to its strong message about the place of love and romance in people's lives. According to the ideology of the earlier music, Jimmy and Alison have done the right thing and should be living in Shangri La. According to the emerging rock and roll ideology, however, Jimmy has married too soon. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he was born too soon. Helena makes a similar realization in the final scene of the play: "He was born too out of his time." But she, in contrast, thinks he ought to have been born into an earlier time. Jimmy, on the other hand, already has the feeling that his youth is slipping away (Act I). He is getting old in his twenties, and this could be the cause of an anger that is partly his own and partly that of a placeless generation.

Five years later, Jimmy Porter could have been part of the Swinging Sixties, Carnaby Street and free love. His wife would have been on the pill, and shacking up with Helena would have been not unusual at all. The Old Empire as epitomized by his despised father-in-law would have vanished as an issue, and being Indian would have become cool. Hare Krishna would roam the streets of London, even of Birmingham; Nehru shirts would be the rage; the Beatles would visit gurus in Nepal, and all the world would suddenly want to look as Indian as possible. The Empire would take its long deserved revenge, and people like Alison's father, Colonel Redfern, would have passed finally through anger and comedy to irrelevance.

Thus the couple in *Look Back in Anger* are living the dream of the earlier era (romance which ended in marriage and a place of their own), while coming into contact with the desires of the new one—to limit these to sex and rock and roll would be to simplify too much. Ironically, Jimmy has already found his earth angel, but doesn't want her any more. He wants something else to distract him from his anger at having been excluded from the fading class monopoly on money and power. Jimmy is angry because he is caught on a wave of popular anger and rebellion, which buoys him up. He is part of the wave, not its major contributor. Nevertheless, we must credit Osborne with having given the movement a name and a face in high culture. Given, however, the play's revealing

background in the popular culture of its time, it is vital for contemporary students to be given access to popular artifacts of the fifties to complement other approaches to studying this play.

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