

PATRIARCHY, GENDER, AND FEMALE AGENCY IN *LOOK BACK IN ANGER*: A FEMINIST READING

Ijaz Ahmad,

M.Phil. Scholar English Linguistics, University of Okara.

Email: ijazlink35@gmail.com

Shumaila,

M.Phil. Scholar English Linguistics, University of Okara.

Email: shumaylchohan5@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

The present study views the concept of patriarchy, gender relations and female agency in John Osborne's Look Back in Anger from a feminist perspective. The study investigates the depiction of female characters, mainly Alison Porter and Helena Charles, in a male dominated society and their reaction to the male domination. The study employs the qualitative text analysis to explore interactions among characters, conversations, power dynamics in the play. The results reveal the emotional marginalization and social restrictions that women face, but also show expressions of resistance and self-determination. The study suggests that Osborne's representation of gender relations can be seen as the result of a conflict between traditional male and female values and women's aspiration for independence within post-war British society. This feminist analysis helps to better understand the politics of gender and the portrayal of women in contemporary British theatre.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, Gender Relations, Female Agency

1.INTRODUCTION

Literature has been a medium of representation and challenge for social structure, power relations and gender ideologies for times immemorial. The feminist literary criticism became a theoretically important movement that analyzes the representations of women in the text, the construction of gender, and the reinforcement of or opposition to patriarchal ideology. Tyson (2015) argues that feminist criticism aims to illuminate the ways in which literature mirrors and mirrors the gender inequalities and examines possibilities for women's empowerment and resistance. Feminist perspectives remain useful today in literary studies for their contributions to the issue of gender, power and social institutions.

The feminist notion of patriarchy continues to be influential in feminist scholarship. Patriarchy is a social system in which men occupy positions of power and authority, and women are marginalized and subjected to control in a variety of ways (Walby, 1990). While the world is becoming more equal in many societies, there are still many patriarchal attitudes that affect social, cultural and interpersonal relationships. The articulation of gender roles in literature, which is a key area of study for feminist scholars, is shaped by these power dynamics (Moi, 2021).

British theatre of the 20th century offers plenty of background to analyse gender relations and social change. There were significant shifts in class, family and gender roles that occurred after World War II. This period saw a shift towards social realism and the conflicts arising from the transformations in society. These developments opened up space for the representation of conflicts between traditional notions of male identity and notions of female identity and autonomy (Aston & Reinelt, 2021).

John Osborne is a very important figure in contemporary British theatre. *Look Back in Anger* (1956) is considered one of the most important texts to come from the post-war period in British drama. The play depicted the challenges and concerns of the "Angry Young Men" movement through the character of Jimmy Porter, whose discontent with society is manifested in anger and sarcasm, as well as in emotional aggression. Although class conflict and social alienation have been the focus of much critical attention in the play, the treatment of female characters and gender relations are also significant areas of investigation (Taylor, 2019).

Both female characters in the film, Alison Porter and Helena Charles, are in multifaceted roles in the story. Jimmy's attitude and behavior cause emotional pain and mental strain for Allison, and a response from Helena is to question some of Jimmy's powers. They demonstrate the constraints that women face in patriarchal social systems and how women assert their power and identity through various means. However, feminist critics have been increasingly claiming that these characters shouldn't only be understood as passive victims but as agents and/or resisters with different extents of agency and resistance (Goodman, 2018).

The presence of women agency has been a growing issue in the modern feminist criticism. Agency is the ability of an individual to have choices, to be autonomous and to act independently in the context of social constraints. The agency of women can manifest differently, such as in resistance, negotiation, adaptation and self-assertion (Butler, 2020). Female agency in literary works gives researchers the ability to shed light on the multifaceted ways in which women interact with and navigate patriarchal spaces that are not necessarily oppressive, nor liberating, but multiple. Looking at female agency in literary works enables researchers to offer insights beyond the simple conception of women as oppressed or liberated and the complex ways in which women interact and navigate within patriarchal spaces.

In recent years, feminist literary studies have ushered in a shift in critical approaches toward the re-evaluation of canonical works, and a re-evaluation of the Great Books tradition is a welcome development. These re-readings help to uncover new aspects of gender politics and power dynamics. A feminist analysis can show the workings of patriarchy in close relationships and how women characters react to social and emotional constraints in the case of *Look Back in Anger*. This approach helps to paint a fuller picture of Osborne's work and its enduring significance in the context of gender and power (Plain & Sellers, 2022).

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the role of patriarchy, gender relations and female agency in the context of feminist reading of *Look Back in Anger*. The interaction between male and female characters is examined in order to investigate the role of gendered power dynamics in the life of women and the way female characters negotiate their identity in a gendered context. This sort of analysis plays a part in the current debate about the role of feminist criticism in literary interpretation as well as the representation of women in writing.

1.1 Problem Statement

While *Look Back in Anger* has been explored extensively as a play of class struggle and social frustration and post-war disillusionment, relatively little has been written about the role of patriarchy and female agency in the play. Other works tend to examine Jimmy Porter and his experiences more closely than that of the female characters and their reactions. Therefore, there is need for a feminist study that is more focused in unpacking the role of patriarchy in the story and the way in which Alison and Helena deal with, challenge or try to cope with the oppression of the males. In doing so, this gap will be filled to get a better understanding of gender relations and gender representation in Osborne's influential drama.

1.2 Research Objectives

- a) To examine the representation of patriarchy and gender relations in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*.
- b) To explore the manifestation of female agency through the characters of Alison Porter and Helena Charles in the play.

1.3 Research Questions

- a) How are patriarchy and gender relations represented in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*?
- b) How do Alison Porter and Helena Charles demonstrate female agency within the patriarchal environment of the play?

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study could make some contribution to feminist literary criticism by focusing on patriarchy, gender relations and female agency in the novel *Look Back in Anger*. It deepens scholarly knowledge of the portrayal of women in Osborne's male dominated social structure and of the negotiations of female characters in terms of power and identity. The study is important because it takes a canonical play of British drama and examines it from a contemporary feminist perspective, thus adding to the literature on gender politics. Moreover, the results could be of interest to researchers, students and literary critics studying feminist theory and gender issues, as well as modern British theatre, as they will be able to gain insight into the relevance of the patriarchy system and women's resistance in the literary story.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 Feminist Literary Criticism and the Study of Gender

In the twentieth century feminist literary criticism became a theoretical movement, seeking to analyse the portrayal of women, gender relations and power differences in literary works. Literature tends to be steeped in patriarchy, feminist scholars say, placing men in the privileged and women in the subordinate position. Tyson (2015) defines feminist criticism as a critical practice that aims to uncover the gender injustices found in literary narratives and examines the ways in which female characters confront oppression in these narratives. Feminism has become one of the most important fields of literary analysis in the present day, as over time feminist literature has progressed to the point of examining questions of identity, agency, subjectivity, and resistance.

Gender is at the core of feminist criticism. Gender is viewed not only as a biological difference, but as a social and cultural difference that is influenced by power relations and societal norms. Butler (1990) insists that gender identities are not essential categories, but are continually manufactured in social practices and performances. This viewpoint has allowed the study of texts in the context of their ability to shape masculine and feminine genders and how they reinforce or contest the power of the patriarchy. As a result, literature has become taken up as a place of production, contestation and transformation of gender ideologies.

2.2 Patriarchy and Gender Relations in Literature

Patriarchy is a social structure in which the power and authority are mainly held by men. Walby (1990) has defined patriarchy as an elaborate system of social institutions and practices which perpetuate male dominance and female subordination. Feminist scholars argue that literature has been reproducing such power structures in the domain of family relationships, social institutions and gender roles. Male characters are often in positions of power, and female characters are expected to follow the roles of the society that they have been assigned to, which is one of obedience, dependence and domesticity.

Literary analysis of patriarchy has been given a lot of attention, as it offers much insight into the functioning of power in society. According to feminist critics, there are various ways in which patriarchy is perpetuated, such as emotional manipulation, social expectations, and cultural norms. Be Beauvoir (1949/2011), women have been historically defined as the "Other" and not as autonomous individuals, but in opposition to men. This Othering restricts women's power and strengthens man power. Such dynamics are often captured in literary narratives, and a feminist analysis is needed to make sense of these power relations as they are gendered.

The situation of genders in literary texts is seldom fixed. Rather, they typically have to do with conflicts between control and opposition. However, current feminist critique focuses not only on women as victims of patriarchy, but on women as agents, challenging and negotiating oppressive institutions. This awareness has turned the focus of scholarship toward a greater consideration of the agency of female characters in contexts of limited social space. This kind of interpretation is especially useful for when the dramatic text is dealing with interpersonal conflict that may indicate larger social inequalities.

2.3 Female Agency in Feminist Literary Studies

The feminist scholarship's significance of female agency is growing. Agency is the capacity to act on decisions, to be self-determining and to shape social contexts within limits. While early feminist criticism was primarily concerned with women's oppression, contemporary scholars have emphasized the need to consider women's capabilities of resisting and determining themselves in their own rights. Mahmood (2005) notes that agency cannot be limited to open opposition, but also be the capacity to negotiate and navigate the social order in a variety of ways.

Female agency has often been discussed in literary studies when characters defy gender roles. This can be manifested in opposition to the masculine, independence, or finding other ways to negotiate the oppression of men. There is no such thing as an "agency condition," scholars argue; agency can exist on a continuum. Women can be subordinate and yet they can wield power in particular social circumstances. The study of literature instead tends to look at the complexity of women's experiences and not their oppression or complete liberation.

In the study of modern drama, the female agency has come into its own. Dramatic texts are frequently used to represent conflict between personal aspirations and societal expectations for women and allow for a discussion of how women react to patriarchy. The female characters in the play demonstrate different ways in which they try to assert themselves in terms of power and identity through dialogue, action and interpersonal relationships. This approach can help in looking at the female characters in *Look Back in Anger*.

2.4 John Osborne and Post-War British Drama

John Osborne is a man who can be said to stand in the middle of modern British Theatre. The turning point in post-war British drama is attributed to his play *Look Back in Anger* (1956). The play was an innovative challenge to traditional modes of theatre, raising the issues, frustrations, anxieties and disillusionments of the post-war British society. Osborne's work is often linked to the "Angry Young Men", who were critical of social inequalities and the lack of social mobility, and who were opposed to cultural conservativeness.

Early condemnations of *Look Back in Anger* were largely about its social and political aspects. Jimmy Porter was analysed as a symbol of post-war frustration and the play's criticism of British class divisions. According to Taylor (2019) Jimmy's anger can be attributed to the general social tensions brought about by the changing economic and cultural environments. But, feminist critics have been focuses on gender relations as a second major part of the play, but one that has been largely under-researched.

There are recent attempts to rethink Osborne's work from a feminist point of view. Widely held racial stereotypes may cause readers to miss the identity of female characters in key roles in the story, argue researchers. The feminist readings are thus concerned with the gender and power relationship and how it intersects with class struggle, thereby uncovering another layer of meaning in the text.

2.5 Representation of Women in *Look Back in Anger*

Look Back in Anger has been the subject of much criticism by literary critics. Jimmy's wife, Alison Porter, is seen as the victim of emotional pain and social repression. She is verbally mistreated and emotionally assaulted by Jimmy all throughout the play. Some critics have read her silence and apparent passivity as a sign of patriarchy oppression on her. Some other scholars, however, suggest that there are more nuanced forms of resistance that are expressed through Alison's actions, making it difficult to make a simple reading of her character.

Helena Charles is a contrasting figure for the females of the play. Helena is a bit more critical about Jimmy than Alison is and is not completely a follower. Because of her assertiveness and resistance to the dominance of males, some feminist critics have suggested that she is a more active and independent character. However, Helena is constrained by social norms and

expectations, and gendered norms. Therefore, her character represents the complexities of woman agency in a man's world.

It is noted by scholars that both Alison and Helena traverse the patriarchy in different ways. Their responses illustrate the importance of their agency in both action and negotiation and the variety of women's experiences. This complexity renders this play ideal for a feminist interpretation.

2.6 Feminist Readings of *Look Back in Anger*

Feminist critics have begun looking at *Look Back in Anger* as a text in which the conflicts between traditional gender roles and the newfound female autonomy are evident. Others believe that Jimmy's attitude toward women is an example of the patriarchy which attempts to keep the men dominant in intimate relationships. His constant verbal abuse and emotional manipulation is an example of the ways that patriarchal power can be exercised in daily life, beyond formal power structures.

Others argue that the play both reveals and condemns the attitude of the father. Viewed from this angle, Osborne is not only approving of Jimmy's attitudes, he is also showing the harmful results of attitudes on men and women. It shows the emotional toll of unequal gender relations in the case of both Alison and Helena. This reading places the play more as a complex examination of the conflict between genders than as a simple affirmation of man's authority. Contemporary feminist scholarship also stresses the need to explore female agency in the play. Recent scholarships have focused more on the negotiation of identity, autonomy and resistance in the characters of Alison and Helena than on considering them victims. The choices that they make, relationships that they have, and the way they respond to Jimmy's behavior demonstrate agency that defies the easy assumption of power and oppression. This reflects some of the larger trends in feminist literary criticism which focus on the multidimensionality of women's experiences.

2.7 Research Gap

While there are many social, political, and class-related studies that delve into *Look Back in Anger*, fewer studies explicitly explore the intertwining threads of patriarchy, gender relations, and female agency. Previous feminist interpretations tend to focus on women's oppression, but not so much on the multiple ways in which female characters react and relate to a male-dominated authority. Moreover, there has been only a few studies that have focused on the two characters in tandem as opposing conceptions of female agency. Hence, the present study aims to fill this lacuna by approaching the play with a feminist perspective examining the role of female characters within the play and the multiple forms of agency they exhibit.

3.METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design for this study is qualitative because it aims to explore the portrayal of patriarchy, gender relations and the woman's role in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. Qualitative literary analysis is deemed appropriate as it provides the opportunity to examine the themes, characters, and power dynamics of the text in great detail.

3.2 Research Approach

A qualitative interpretivist approach is used in the study, in which meanings that are interpreted in the context of literature will be the focus. In this way the researcher will be able to investigate the portrayal and formation of gender identities and patriarchal relationships in the play.

3.3 Research Method

The literary work is then analysed using a textual analysis method. The selected literary work is then analysed using a textual analysis method. The analysis concerns dialogues, character interactions and events, and that show problems of patriarchy, gender relations, and female agency.

3.4 Data Source

The main source of material for this study is John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956). To complement the analysis, relevant secondary sources such as books, journal articles and scholarly studies on feminism, patriarchy and literary criticism are also consulted.

3.5 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Feminist Literary Theory. The framework is based on the major feminist ideals of patriarchy, gender inequality and female agency, which are used to explore the experiences and representation of female characters in the play.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Information is gathered by reading the text. Gender related passages, dialogue, character actions related to patriarchal authority and how women respond to oppression are identified, selected, and organised for analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis is used to analyze the textual data that is collected. The researcher notices the themes that appear repeatedly, which are related to patriarchy, gender relations and the agency of women and interprets them with the perspective of feminist literary criticism.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Patriarchy and Gender Relations in *Look Back in Anger*

John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* can be analysed as a feminist text, as patriarchy is one of the most prevalent social forces within its context. The whole story is about the power imbalance between the sexes, and the relationship between Jimmy Porter and Alison Porter. Class frustration and post-war disillusionment is a common interpretation of the play, but a feminist perspective reveals that gender conflict is a theme just as strong. Jimmy is clearly a voice of patriarchal power in his language, behavior and attitudes while Alison and Helena find themselves seeking to find a balance of identity within a male-dominated environment.

Jimmy's dominance is asserted from the first scene via the use of language. He dominates the conversation and speaks in long speeches whilst Alison almost never speaks. The control of discourse is frequently associated with social power, according to feminist critics. Much of the time, Jimmy is verbally attacking Alison, and is seriously silencing her, which means that she cannot have an equal voice in the relationship. He, for instance, disparages her family, intelligence and emotionality. His words are not only expressions of frustration – they are devices of control. Jimmy's verbal aggression is a way to keep up his authority and superiority over Alison.

One of the most noticeable instances of patriarchy is when Jimmy says that women just don't experience emotions. In this play he depicts women as being weak in heart and incapable of understanding his suffering throughout the play. Often tells Alison that she is not passionate or “deep” emotionally. Such allegations are based on outdated gender-stereotypes which are limiting the identity of women by labeling them as per the male perspective. Alison is not judged as an individual, but as one who is able to meet Jimmy's needs as an emotional being. This is indicative of a pattern seen in patriarchy where women are often devalued and treated as a second-class citizen whose worth is derived from a man (Beauvoir, 2011).

The way that Jimmy treats Alison is another example of emotional patriarchy. Emotional patriarchy operates differently than physical domination and consists of manipulation, humiliation and psychological control. The privileged background of the upper class constantly reminds Jimmy of the privilege of Alison, and he treats her with hostility because of this difference. It is thought that much of his anger is directed at his class, but a feminist view might suggest that some of his anger is directed at a relatively powerless woman in the relationship. Alison is his prime victim of emotional attack because she's his wife and her situation is precarious.

The setting of the play, the household, also supports the representation of the power of the father. The vast majority of events take place in a small apartment; a space which is traditionally linked to female domesticity. Alison often is seen doing chores like ironing clothes, while Jimmy is seen having intellectual conversations and political debates. Such a contrast mirrors the norms and expectations surrounding the division of the spheres, which place domestic duties primarily on the shoulders of women and intellectual and public power primarily on the shoulders of men. The constant scenes of Alison ironing represents the restrictions and limitations on women's opportunities, and her being stuck in the traditional roles expected of women.

In addition, the friendship between Cliff Lewis and Jimmy aids the traditional constructions of masculinity. The bond between Jimmy and Cliff is a close one both emotionally and in terms of understanding and companionship. Ironically, Jimmy gets more emotional support from another man than from his wife. This dynamic leaves Alison marginalised and puts her out of place in her marriage. Such a feminist analysis states that patriarchy often has a focus on male relationships and sees women as second-class citizens. As a result, Alison is unable to be a part of the emotional life of the family.

The objectification of women's experience is another significant facet of patriarchy in the play. A good example is when Alison became pregnant. When she needs emotional support and understanding, Jimmy's mind is preoccupied with his own problems. He barely seems to notice how Alison is psychologically and physically vulnerable. Feminist academics have been saying for some time that in a patriarchal society women's bodies and reproductive experiences are frequently ignored. This is a typical case of gender discrimination that Jimmy doesn't understand Alison's situation.

Helena Charles challenges Jimmy's authority and provides a different image of womanhood. Alison takes her crap from Jimmy, but not Helena. She openly attacks his treatment of Alison and faces him head-on. With Helena, Osborne is showing a woman who does not take passive action and who actively defies patriarchy. Her appearance challenges the gender order that exists at home, and reveals the fragility of Jimmy's power.

But the play is not an unproblematic or successful system of patriarchy. Though Jimmy tries to control people around him, he's emotionally insecure and finding his life to be a miserable failure. His perpetual rage implies a lack of satisfaction and stability in the context of patriarchy. Theories of feminist thinkers have suggested that patriarchy may have negative consequences for women as well as for men who are caught up in the narrow definition of the masculine. The negative and harmful impact of these expectations is exemplified in Jimmy's emotional instability.

The analysis thus suggests that patriarchy is present in the play at many levels. It influences language, domestic relationships, emotional interactions and social expectations. Osborne reveals through Jimmy's attitude and the experiences of Alison and the Helena the disproportionate power dynamics in gender relations in post-war British society.

4.2 Female Agency through Alison Porter

Although Alison is often seen as a passive and submissive character, there are ample signs of her femaleness in action. Don't assume that a supposed neglect of speech is an equivalent to weakness. Rather, her activities point to a complex negotiation and opposition to an oppressive environment.

Alison's biggest strength as an agent is her ability to stand up to Jimmy's verbal aggression. But instead of reacting with the same kind of hostility, she may go unreactive. This quietness could be interpreted as passive, but can also be seen as a refusal to accept Jimmy's confrontational behaviour. Alison doesn't play the emotions, so he preserves a certain personal

autonomy. When women lack power, feminist scholars said that silence can be a form of resistance.

Yet another form of agency is played out throughout the play through Alison's endurance. She has experienced a relationship of emotional abuse, criticism and mental pressure. It shows great strength that she maintains her dignity in spite of this. Since this is a feminist discussion, it is important to note that resilience can also be a form of agency, especially in contexts where overt opposition is not feasible or safe.

Alison's agency is best felt when she chooses to abandon Jimmy. This change of events is a pivotal moment in the story and directly challenges patriarchy's expectations of marriage and female submission. During the social setting of the 1950s, women's duty was to stick with their husbands no matter what harms them. Alison's leaving, then, is an act of self-determination and resistance.

Alison suffers from miscarriage, which is yet another change in her character. This traumatic event causes her to come to terms with the truth of her relationship and helps her develop emotionally. In the beginning of the movie, instead of being the silent woman, Alison becomes more conscious of her needs and experiences. Her suffering is part of her education and awakening to herself, giving her a sense of agency once again.

4.3 Female Agency through Helena Charles

Helena Charles is a contrasting female character to Alison Porter, and a more overt and assertive type of female agency. Unlike Alison who is taciturn and patient when he is being aggressive, Helena openly defies his authority and does not accept his attitude as normal. Her character offers an alternative vision of womanhood, one that challenges gender norms and patriarchy.

From her first appearance in the play, Helena demonstrates confidence and independence. She openly criticizes Jimmy's treatment of Alison and is concerned with the emotional abuse Alison suffers. Helena isn't afraid of Jimmy's verbal aggression like Alison. Rather, her response is confident and forceful, setting up a battle of dominant power that challenges Jimmy's supremacy. In Helena, Osborne depicts a female character who is willing to fight for herself and others against the oppression of patriarchy.

Helena is the most vocal instance of a female action in the play, urging Alison to leave Jimmy. Helena fully understands Alison's emotional plight and does something about it, challenging the unhealthy marriage on the surface, while providing support for her friend. This is a manifestation of the awareness that women need to stand together against patriarchy. Feminist academics have drawn attention to the ways in which relationships between women can be a source of support and opposition to male dominance. Helena's action is inspired by this: she helps Alison discover herself and her worth.

An important part of Helena's character is her willingness to challenge Jimmy in his intellectual thinking. Jimmy tries to take over the conversations with his extended speeches and outbursts throughout the play. Helena isn't silent when it comes to these encounters, and she blows her technical skills and direct criticism to the highest level. She is challenging Jimmy verbally and is making it clear that women are not inferior and can join men in intellectual and emotional discourse.

But Helena's character is complex and contradictory as well. She criticizes Jimmy but ends up falling in love with him after Alison leaves. This is a feminine point of view, which shows the complex dynamics of gender relations and personal desire. Helena and Jimmy's relationship can be seen as a potential detriment to her role of a female character who resists the sexual advances of men. Helena and Jimmy's relationship may at first seem to be a liability in her role as a resistant female character. However, it also illustrates some of the challenges faced by women in dealing with emotional relations in patriarchy.

Significantly, Helena ultimately leaves Jimmy, realising the moral and emotional nature of her relationship with him. This is another case of agency, as it shows independent judgment and self-awareness. Helena stands up for her own principles and values even if it makes her question her identity more in relation to Jimmy. Her departure is a sign of the resistance to oppression and also the capacity to make decisions for one's own personal relationships—agency before oppression.

Thus, Helena becomes a good instance of agency for women in the play. She exudes confidence, independence and engages in challenging patriarchal authority which is an alternative model of femininity as opposed to the traditional model of females being obedient and passive.

4.4 Comparative Analysis of Alison and Helena

A feminist interpretation of *Look Back in Anger* shows that there are two types of female agency in the play: Alison and Helena. Both characters are affected by patriarchy, but deal with their challenges differently. Their differing experiences emphasize the multiplicity of response to oppression among women and the ways in which agency can manifest.

The agency of Alison is primarily embodied in her endurance, emotional strength and withdrawal from a burdensome relationship. She doesn't face Jimmy head-on but slowly builds the confidence to take control of her life. She is not assertive, but resistant. In contrast, Helena is a much more visible and self-assertive agency. She openly questions Jimmy, challenges his behavior and actively intervenes in Alison's situation.

Such differences suggest that there is no universal resistance model for feminists. There are both overt ways and covert ways of confronting oppression, and women may choose one or the other method, or a combination of both. Both the methods break the authority of patriarchy. Alison's leaving and Helena's confrontations each are important acts of resistance to male dominance.

Alison and Helena's comparison is also an indication of the constraints placed on women in a male-dominated society. Both women suffer emotionally due to Jimmy's actions although they have diverse personalities and approaches. What they have learned from their experience indicates that patriarchy impacts women from various levels of social status and individual situations. The play thus conveys the message that gender inequality is a system problem, not an individual problem.

4.5 Symbolism and the Representation of Women

Other symbolic components of the play also highlight the theme about patriarchy and gender relations. The apartment is the most significant symbol, representing the domestic space. The small space highlights the social constraints on women as well as the emotional strife among the cast members' relationships. Alison's regular involvement in activities such as ironing represents the traditional role of women in a patriarchal society.

The act of ironing has a number of feminist connotations. Alison continually is linked to domestic chores and chitchat, while Jimmy reads newspapers, indulges in political debate and intellectual discourse. This contrast strengthens the traditional division of labour into domestic and social-mental roles, which are allocated to women and men respectively. Thus the symbolism of ironing points to the disparity of responsibilities and opportunities between men and women.

Another significant symbol is Alison's pregnancy and miscarriage. These experiences reflect the physical and emotional struggles that women may experience. The exclusion of the female experience from patriarchy culture is evident in Jimmy's lack of understanding and appreciation for Alison's suffering. Within the context of patriarchy culture, the female experience is not considered, as illustrated by Jimmy's lack of understanding and appreciation for Alison's

suffering. Miscarriage is a metaphor for emotional loss, isolation and the repercussions of unequal relationships.

Moreover, Jimmy's ongoing verbal assaults are a symbolic representation of the patriarchal control. His language is used to uphold class and gender hierarchy. These verbal attacks are Osborne's examples of how power can be exercised with words, rather than bullets.

4.6 Findings in Relation to Research Questions

The analysis proves that the patriarchy is the dominant factor that affects the gender relations in *Look Back in Anger*. Jimmy Porter's conduct is a representation of patriarchal attitudes: Emotional control, using aggression in language, unequal power balance. Social realities of post-war British society mean that women tend to be marginalised and expected to play a traditional gender role.

The study also shows that the character of both female agents, Alison and Helena, stands for the agency of females. A key way that both characters show agency is through their resilience, their self-awareness, and their ability to end an oppressive relationship; Allison does this, and Helena does that. These characters together defy the portrayal of women as helpless victims and show the multifaceted nature of the ways women cope with patriarchal structures.

As a whole, the results show how Osborne's play both reveals and relates to the power of women's resistance against patriarchal oppression. *Look Back in Anger* is a complex examination of gender relations that continues to be a central literary work when examining the intersections of patriarchy, identity and female agency.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study have shown that there is a strong presence of patriarchy influencing the genders in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. The play's character of Jimmy Porter offers a picture of a social world where male voices are seen as normal and female voices often unheard. This discovery reinforces Walby's (1990) idea of patriarchy as being manifested in social institutions and interpersonal relations that keep male's dominant and females subordinate. Jimmy's emotional aggression and verbal hostility and controlling Alison's behavior illustrates the operation of patriarchal power in the home. The study therefore validates the claim that the play is a reflection of the unequal gender relations of post-war British society.

The analysis also shows that, in her marriage, Alison is in a subordinate role, which aligns with Beauvoir's (2011) belief on woman as the "Other." Beauvoir suggests that in a patriarchy women are defined by men and have no subjectivity. Alison's experiences in the play are very similar to this condition. Much of the way throughout the story, her identity is formed by Jimmy's expectations, judgments and emotional demands. Her ideas are seldom heard and she is often treated as a homemaker and caretaker. The results indicate that the marginalisation of Alison is not just a product of personal struggle but also a result of a larger patriarchal system which constrains the autonomy of women.

The results also reflect work by feminist literary critics that suggests that home is frequently a place of gender inequality. *Look Back in Anger* is an apartment play, in which the confining nature of women's traditional roles in society is encapsulated. Alison's connection with stuffing and stuffing is a reflection of the traditional stereotype of women and household duties. This is consistent with feminist literature which sees domestic work as one of the ways in which patriarchy keeps gender inequalities in place. The play thus demonstrates the social and cultural nature of gender inequality that is not just present in personal relationships, but also in everyday social practices.

Another significant discovery has to do with the way in which language is used as a tool of the patriarchy. Alison doesn't speak a lot throughout the play, and Jimmy dominates the conversations. The link between discourse and power has been stressed by feminist scholars

and the proposition has been put forward that the dominant person determines the reality. The results suggest that Jimmy's verbal aggression is used to assert his dominance and silence opposition. His long speeches and constant criticisms restrict Alison's freedom of expression. This reinforces feminist notions of the power of patriarchy being signaled through communication, representation, and discourse in addition to physical means.

But its results do not support the image of a passive victim as a focus of interpretation for Alison. While Alison is not a character who challenges Jimmy directly, there are nevertheless ample indications of female agency within her. She isn't the one to blame for leaving Jimmy; she is placing herself in a state of self-determination and resistance in doing so. This discovery aligns with Mahmood's (2005) explanation that agency need not be viewed as only open rebellion, but it can also be negotiated, endured, or even decided upon by the individual. Alison's actions are an example of women's agency in an environment with limited freedom. The analysis thus extends previous readings of Alison, with an attention to the intricacies of her resistance.

The results of Helena Charles also fit in with the modern feminist views of female self-determination and empowerment. Helena is not like Alison as she openly defies Jimmy and does not bow to his way of doing things without making comments. The confidence and challenge of male dominance is a more conspicuous expression of her agency. This discovery connects with the contemporary feminist theories focusing on the power of women to challenge oppressive structures and to establish independent identities. Helena's actions show how women can stand up to the expectations of patriarchy by confronting and expressing themselves.

Concurrently, the research shows that the role of the agency of the feminine in the play is not simple or definitive. Alison and Helena exist in social systems which tacitly reinforce male dominance. Even the more independent Helena faces restrictions due to emotional ties and social norms. This discovery reinforces the position of Butler (1990) who had claimed gender identities are socially constructed and constantly negotiated within a given power structure. The women are not fully free and not entirely helpless, they are not free to do whatever they want and they are not helpless at the hands of men, but they are in a more complicated position, one of both limitation and opposition.

Alison's and Helena's comparison enhances the current feminist scholarship that acknowledges that there are various modes of female agency. Traditional feminist criticism tended to examine women's opposition to oppression in isolation, while current criticism studies the different ways women respond to the patriarchal setting. The results illustrate that quiet agency (as displayed by Alison) and direct confrontation (as displayed by Helena) are both forms of agency. This is in line with recent feminist arguments that talk about women's experiences in dichotomous terms of oppression and liberation are too easy.

Moreover, the results suggest that Osborne's play not only reflects patriarchal values, but also reveals their shortcomings and effects. The problem with Jimmy's personality is that his constant anger, emotional instability and inability to maintain healthy relationships point to a problem with the concept of a patriarchy masculinity. This is in line with today's feminist interpretation of the situation where the strict role of women can have a negative impact on both men and women. The play therefore reflects a critique of the social expectations which influence notions of masculinity and femininity.

The results are also consistent with previous research which has already established gender conflict as a major theme in *Look Back in Anger*. This study, however, builds upon earlier research by specifically examining the interplay of the concepts of patriarchy, gender relations and female agency. Though the class struggle and social frustration have been central to scholarship on the play, the present analysis shows that gender politics is another strand of the

play which cannot be ignored. The study foregrounds the experiences and reactions of women to the study, contributing to a more balanced view of Osborne's dramatic work.

In general, it may be concluded that *L.B.A.* is a complex portrayal of gender relations in post-second World War Britain. The play reveals the patriarchal systems that limit women's agency and also depicts the different forms of negotiation, challenge and resistance faced by women to such systems. Osborne has given Alison and Helena as two different models of female agency, which are a reflection of the complexities of women's lives in a male dominated society. The study, therefore, validates the present day importance of feminist literary criticism in the study of power, identity and gender concerns in contemporary literature.

6. CONCLUSION

This work analyzed the patriarchy, gender relations and the participation of women in John Osborne's work: *Look Back in Anger*, using a feminist approach. The analysis showed that the infiltration of patriarchal power is a very strong element in the social and personal relationships depicted in the play. Osborne's use of the character of Jimmy Porter affords a glimpse of the exercise of power in his verbal violence, emotional management and the silencing of women's voices. The attitudes behind these behaviours are patriarchy that influenced gender relations in post-war British society and led to the unequal treatment of women.

The results also show that the oppression faced by the female characters, Alison Porter and Helena Charles, is different in kind and the way they react is different. Alison's resilience and endurance, and her final choice to leave Jimmy, are an indirect but powerful expression of resistance, whereas Helena's confidence, direct confrontation and autonomy in her own choice of action is a more visible one of female agency. The different experiences of their lives demonstrate their different ways of dealing with the patriarchy, not just one way.

The study also points to the importance of family space, family language and relationship in strengthening the gender inequality. Meanwhile, the play highlights the constraints and effects of patriarchy, notably in the emotional volatility and failure to form healthy relationships of Jimmy. The text is therefore not only based on patriarchy but also challenges the effectiveness of and legitimacy of the patriarchy.

In general, this feminist reading has proved that *Look Back in Anger* is not simply a play on the frustration of class and the disillusionment of social classes. It is also a serious examination of gender politics, gender experiences and the fight for autonomy in a male dominated society. The study examines the intertwining of the concepts of patriarchy, gender relations and female agency as a way of better understanding Osborne's work and confirms that feminist literary criticism is still relevant to the study of contemporary literary texts.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Future research could include looking at the play *Look Back in Anger* with another feminist perspective, perhaps Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism or Postmodern Feminism, to broaden their understanding of how the women are represented in the play.
- 2) Comparative analysis can be extended to other modern British dramas such as *Look Back in Anger*, to look at similarities and/or differences in the ways in which patriarchy and female agency are represented.
- 3) Finally, class and gender should be explored in Osborne's works, as these elements are significant in the lives of male and female characters, and should be explored further.
- 4) Scholars can also examine the image of masculinity in the play, to gain a better understanding of the impact of the expectations of masculinity on both men and women in literary texts.

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