**Images and Symbols in Look Back in Anger**

*Look Back in Anger* abounds in recurrent images which gather meaning as the action of the play proceeds. Jimmy Porter’s flat is set in a large Victorian house which obviously indicates Victorian primness and the prudery of English society that he so vehemently attacks. His denunciation of individuals like Alison, Alison’s mother and Helena is couched in beast imagery of substantial variety. Thus Mrs Redfern is called a ‘rhinoceros in labour’, ‘a female rhino’, ‘an old bitch’ ‘an overfed, overprivileged old bitch’. Helena too is seen as a ‘bitch’ to which Jimmy adds, ‘…she is a cow… she seems to have becomes a sacred cow as well’. Alison is referred to contemptuously as a ‘stupid bitch’, ‘that bitch’. She is also a ‘python’. She just devours me whole every time, as if I were some ‘over-large rabbit’. Again in his lyric in act 3 scene 1, he sings, ‘avoid that old python coil’ when he refers to women in love. Here it is relevant to call M D Faber’s article on ‘The character of Jimmy Porter’ in which he refers to his oral fixation and his ‘fear of being eaten or devoured’. So Alison becomes the devouring python. Jimmy’s ‘orality’ is also emphasized when once, for a change, Cliff uses beast imagery to denigrate Jimmy, calling him a ‘bloody pig’ for his hunger. However, Cliff uses the same image in a different sense when he says that Jimmy is ‘too much of a pig’ to appreciate Alison’s beauty.

At the same time Jimmy, Alison and Cliff refer lovingly to each other as the bear, the squirrel and the mouse respectively. The ‘heavy chest of drawers’ has a ‘large tattered toy bear and soft woolly squirrel’. As Jimmy, Alison and Cliff have fun, Jimmy points out that ‘he gets more like a little mouse everyday doesn't he?’ Alison explains ‘That’s because he is a mouse’. Even Cliff responds by squeaking, I’m a mouse, I’m a randy little mouse’. He soons tells Jimmy, ‘you’re a sticking old bear’. Within a few minutes of Cliffs Jimmy tells Alison, ‘You’re very beautiful. A beautiful great-eyed squirrel.’ Alison responds by calling him really ‘marvellous bear’, their sounds and gestures culminate in the statement, ‘Bears and squirrels are marvellous’. In the second act Alison explains it to Helena, ‘You see that bear and that squirrel? Well, that's him and that's me. When much against Jimmy’s wishes Alison goes to church with Helena, as he feels that She no longer cares for him, ‘he picks’ the teddy bear ‘up gently, looks at it quickly, and throws it downstage.’ When Alison, having finally decided to leave, starts packing her things ‘She picks up the squirrel from the chest of drawers, is about to put it in her suitcase, hesitates, and then puts it back’. The squirrel, which symbolises her role as Jimmy’s wife and beloved, cannot be hers when she leaves him. Even Helena ‘picks up the toy bear’ and holds it when waiting for Jimmy to break the news of Alison's departure. She is reflecting on Jimmy and perhaps unconsciously preparing for her future with him. Quite appropriately Jimmy and Alison’s reunion is again dramatized with the images of the bear and squirrel. Jimmy says, “We’ll be together in our bear’s cage and our squirrel’s drey, and we’ll live on honey, and nuts - lots and lots of nuts...” These animal images thus suggest love, cosy intimacy and profound concern even as they indicate an escape from a mental or conscious comprehension of the nature of their relationships.

In their flat, the ironing-board is prominently displayed, for both Alison and Helena use it for extended periods. The work of ironing represents the domestic chores and perhaps the attempts of these women to iron out the domestic difficulties. Jimmy’s trumpet which sounds in parallel situations is an organ of defiance. On both the occasions, Jimmy plays alone on the trumpet in Cliff’s room as Helena and Alison are engaged in conversation. In act 2 scene 1 when Helena tells Alison emphatically ‘you must get out of this madhouse’, we hear ‘trumpet crescendo’, as if in total defiance. Jimmy further challenges the church bells. The bells ring, and Alison under Helena’s influence responds to them and goes to church much against Jimmy’s wishes. She has gone back to her traditional background. As Helena firmly sets out to leave Jimmy towards the end of the play, the church bells toll again, indicating the triumph of traditional religious values.

All these images are confined within the parameters of realism. Thus the verbal imagery which consists principally of brute images quite suits the unconventional conversional style of Jimmy and his associates. On the other hand, the visual and the oral symbols limited to the sets and the properties do not distract verisimilitude. Osborne by using imagery in dialogues and state symbols as like Ibsen and Checkhov, effectively enriched his realism instead of disrupting it.