



Ф И Л О Л О Г

часопис за језик, књижевност и културу
VI 2015 11
универзитет у бањој луци
филолошки факултет



POPULAR CULTURE IN JOHN OSBORNE'S PLAY LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Abstract: *This paper analyses Look Back in Anger (1956) – a play written in the style of social realism by English dramatist John Osborne – from the point of view of popular culture. Popular culture is seen here as a number of material and non-material aspects of everyday life in the first half of the twentieth century. The notion of popular culture is largely taken from John Fiske (2001), who maintains that the instruments of everyday life are crucial for the development of popular culture. The analysis is divided into three sections: the first one deals with anger as a popular feeling of the 1950s, which is also the dominant mood in the play; the second one is concerned with popular industrial products, such as newspapers, the iron, toys for children, etc., which serve emotional rather than industrial, practical ends; the third one is devoted to the usage of certain popular elements as a means of communication with art, mostly with the aim of escaping from harsh reality or fighting against it. The final aim of the paper is to prove that popular culture plays one of the leading roles in the realism of this drama.*

Keywords: *popular culture, John Osborne, Look Back in Anger, anger, 1950s, modern, industrial products, art.*

1. Introduction

Popular culture relates to a wide range of material and non-material products of the first half of the twentieth century or, in some cases, of the 1950s – the very age of *Look Back in Anger*, a play written by English writer John Osborne (1929-1994). The material aspect of popular culture refers to various products of different kinds of industry, as the instruments of everyday life, which, as John Fiske says in his theoretical work *Understanding Popular Culture*, are fundamental to the development of popular culture (2001: 44). The non-material part of it relates to the spiritual climate of the middle of the century (the spirit sometimes mirroring its beginning years), both in England, Osborne's homeland, and the rest of the world, as reflected in the dominant mood of this play. The popular elements also refer to the sphere of modern art and the means of communication with art in general.

John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* was first staged in 1956 and published in the following year (<http://www.britannica.com/EB-checked/topic/347727/Look-Back-in-Anger>, 13

August 2014). Generally characterised as belonging to the genre of social realism and introducing a new era into English drama, this work may be said to have become popular itself. Katherine J. Worth claims that, up to that time, the so-called English realism had had very little to do with real life, and it was Osborne who brought the true realism up to date (1968: 101-102). Worth says that “[t]he one thing the realistic drama cannot afford is to be out of date” (1968: 101-102). Accordingly, no realistic drama can *get* old-fashioned. Similarly, Arthur Miller calls *Look Back in Anger* “the only modern English play” (1968: 193). Its form may be conservative, but “what matters is what’s inside, and that is blazingly radical” (<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n14/david-edgar/stalking-out>, Edgar, D., 13 August 2014).

Look Back in Anger has been termed a “kitchen-sink drama”¹ (Worth 1968: 102), show-

¹ The term “kitchen sink” was first used by critic David Sylvester in his article “The Kitchen Sink”, to describe a painting by John Bratby (1928-1992), which showed an image of a kitchen sink (<http://www.unz.org/Pub/Encounter-1954dec-00061>, Sylvester, D., 15 August 2014). This is how the name “The Kitchen Sink School” was

ing the ordinary life of ordinary people. It is set in a rented one-room flat in the Midlands, occupied by a young married couple – Jimmy and Alison Porter. The two come from different social backgrounds. Jimmy is a working-class, yet educated man, while Alison originates from an upper-middle-class family. The love they cherish for one another has seriously been masked by their social differences and Jimmy's inability to cope with his painful past and underprivileged position in the present. This play, among other things, reveals how a wider social context can exert a fierce influence on a marriage.

When we talk about the wider social context, we have in mind the sociopolitical atmosphere the post-war generation lived in. As J. R. Taylor puts it, the post-war generation in England was eager "to celebrate the return of a Labour government in 1945 and then gradually became disillusioned when a brave new world failed to materialise" (1968: 77). It is a society of class struggle in which lower-class young people were allowed to be educated at prestigious universities but denied any academic career or a life of substance.

In order to provide a more logical connection of popular culture to the content of the play, popular elements are here classified into three categories, each one dealt with in a separate section. The first section is concerned with the popular spirit of the 1950s, which Osborne brought to the theatre; the second with industrial products and their function in the lives of the characters; whereas the third is devoted to those cases in which the heroes engage in various kinds of art, sometimes converting popular elements into artistic creation, but mostly with a view to seeking escapism and/or catharsis, to finding somebody to identify with, or to voicing social protest.

2. Popular Spirit of the 1950s: Anger

As George E. Wellwarth says, in spite of a possibility that Osborne may have only attempted to write a study of a psychotic marriage, his

created to refer to British social-realist artists (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/319646/Kitchen-Sink-School>, 14 August 2014).

character Jimmy Porter (together with the dramatist himself) became the leader of a revolutionary literary movement named "the angry-young-man movement" (1968: 119). The criticism of society may not be here of first *Popular Culture in John Osborne's Play Look Back in Anger* dramatic importance (Worth 1968: 102) as Jimmy's sharp outbursts are always triggered by his personal anguish related to his past and present, yet his principal feeling is that of a general (and popular) one of his time – anger. In this section, we will detect popular aspects of and reasons for such an old emotion inherent in all human beings. We will pay attention to the dominant instances of Jimmy's rage, whether aimed at his listeners, his society, the whole world, or all three at the same time. As for the immediate causes of his anger, we will see that the rage is at times provoked by other feelings, also meriting to be called contemporary and popular.

The sole attitude of an angry young man, we have stated, is itself popular. Referring to the play as a "myth of anger" (myth is another old element revived and recreated in the twentieth century), Aleks Sierz is right to notice that "it is clear that the idea of anger was not Osborne's alone – it was in the air, a sign of the times" (<http://www.inyerfacetheatre.com/archive13.html>, Sierz, A., 1 April 2010). It seems both redundant and never enough to enumerate all the possible causes of the post-war generation's rage and frustration. Still, the feelings can be summed up in the manner of Wellwarth quoting Taylor as the "generation that felt itself betrayed, sold out, and irrevocably ruined by its elders" (1968: 118). As Wellwarth says, the elders made mistakes impossible to correct and what the younger ones could do is only withdraw and nurse their resentment in a society of inverted values (1968: 118). Here we recognise Jimmy as a university graduate forced to support himself by operating a sweet-stall business. Although in reality the majority of the disappointed are in their middle to late thirties (Taylor 1968: 77), Osborne and his hero (both in their middle to late twenties) easily fall into this category.

If we focus on some specific instances of angry reactions, we can say that in most cases the

main motive of Jimmy's anger is his inability to stand a lack of emotional reactions from the people around him. His wife Alison and his friend Cliff are only two examples of a rather contemporary state of lethargy and indifference. Naturally, after periods of huge sufferings, disappointment, physical and mental exhaustion, political and personal havoc, people lose reactions and reflexes; they simply ignore everything and everyone, since no reaction could change anything for the better. As Jimmy desperately says, it is a world without "any good, brave causes left" (Osborne 1980: 84). All great causes were fought for by the elders, yet turned out to be only great massacres. Unnatural imperturbability is something that affects all classes, a working-class Cliff and a middle-class Alison. As Lee Jones remarks, it is visible even in politics, against whose quiescence and a lack of a serious political contestation Jimmy also rages (http://www.dailyinfo.co.uk/reviews/feature/2453/Look_Back_In_Anger, Jones, L., 2 April 2010). On the Sunday in question, he cannot tolerate Alison's calm ironing routine and the fact that she pays no attention to his cynical tirades and offences intended only to provoke her emotional reaction. Cliff does not even listen to Jimmy's friendly advice to refrain from smoking because of his ulcers. Jimmy says: "I give up" (Osborne 1980: 16), although he never really does. He adds: "I'm sick of doing things for people. And all for what? Nobody thinks, nobody cares. No beliefs, no convictions and no enthusiasm. Just another Sunday evening." (Osborne 1980: 18-19). He calls his wife "pusillanimous [...] wanting of firmness of mind, of small courage, having a little mind, mean spirited, cowardly, timid of mind" (Osborne 1980: 22). Even when she gets burnt by Jimmy's fault, Alison hardly produces a stronger reaction than a mechanical cry. Her impassivity is such that it makes Jimmy wish for a cruel experience for her, one that would possibly cause a stronger reaction: to conceive a child that would then die. The only way for somebody to feel alive, in Jimmy's terms, is to feel pain caused by death. This Nietzschean idea of destruction as the only presupposition of creation (Grubacic 2006: 335) is dominant in the twentieth century spirit. In one of his climax-

es of desperation, Jimmy exclaims: "I've an idea. Why don't we have a little game? Let's pretend that we're human beings, and that we're actually alive [...] Oh, brother, it's such a long time since I was with anyone who got enthusiastic about anything." (Osborne 1980: 15). Jimmy hopes that at least a pretended liveliness could soothe his nerves. However, his listeners ignore him again.

Embedded in his dissatisfaction is Jimmy's hopeless remark that the world is getting increasingly Americanised: "I must say that it's pretty dreary living in the American age – unless you're an American of course. Perhaps all our children will be Americans." (Osborne 1980: 17). The fifties are already the American age. Jimmy laments the non-American rest of the world's living the American life, while at the same time he prophesies even larger globalisation soon to take place.

The peak of Jimmy's rage follows the moment in which he is informed that Alison's friend Helena, a middle-class woman and accordingly "one of [his] natural enemies" (Osborne 1980: 35), is coming over. It is just one example of an open aversion to the upper-class people whom Jimmy reckons false, hypocritical, selfish, snobbish, haughty, and responsible for the poor conditions in which the lower-class people live. In addition, an upper-class family – his wife's, has personally wronged him. Her mother strongly opposed their marriage, convinced that a lower-class man who wishes to marry her daughter must by definition be a moneygrabber. Furthermore, his long hair (another signifier of modernity and nonconformity) only added to her suspicion. She went so far as to hire private detectives to check on him. It is then totally understandable that he desires to undermine such a breed of people and jeer at their conventions as much as possible. He is contemptuous even of Alison's virginity, preserved until after their wedding, as her living up to the expectations of her class made him participate in their conventions as well. An excerpt (Jimmy's address to Cliff) which sums up Jimmy's detestation of Alison's parents and her brother Nigel, her class in general, and which is simultaneously intended for eliciting a reaction, goes as follows: "You know Mummy and Daddy, of course. And don't let the

Marquess of Queensberry manner fool you. They'll kick you in the groin while you're handing your hat to the maid. As for Nigel and Alison [...t]hey are what they sound like: sycophantic, phlegmatic, and pusillanimous." (Osborne 1980: 21). The anger of Osborne's characters reflects social annoyance as the general feeling of the age. Hatred between classes was definitely a popular emotion. As Sierz maintains, what keeps the myth of anger alive, is the audience's enormous need for it, and, as a rebel against repressive social conventions, Jimmy cries out all those words many spectators secretly wished to tell their wives or their in-laws (<http://www.inyerfacetheatre.com/archive13.html>, Sierz, A., 1 April 2010).

Another fuming outburst is provoked by Alison's announcement that she is going to church with Helena. For her husband, this deed is a downright betrayal of his wife, whom he thinks to be in league with religion (and the upper-class churchgoers), against him. Jimmy is a representative of a growing twentieth century sense of scepticism, of a rational view that if God really existed, He would not have allowed all those past disasters to happen. After all, according to this view, upper-class churchgoers do not believe in God either. They just call themselves God-fearing people but do not fear to regret years of colonialism and other nations' slavery. A paragon of such falsity is Alison's father, Colonel Redfern, a former officer in India, who now spends his time "dreaming of his days among the Indian Princes, and [is] unable to believe he'd left his horsewhip at home" (Osborne 1980: 55). He, unlike his wife, provokes pity rather than anger in Jimmy's memory.

Although Jimmy's cold reaction to the news of Alison's pregnancy is only a façade of a deeply hurt, yet not insensitive man, we cannot but observe it as a typical stance of a post-war pessimist. People who are disappointed in the past, crushed down by the present, and everything but optimistic about the future, have no desire for offspring. It rather fills them with anger, disgust, and indifference. Here we quote Jimmy's conversation with Helena:

HELENA: Your wife is going to have a baby. Well? Doesn't that mean anything? Even to you?

JIMMY: All right – yes. I am surprised. I give you that. But, tell me. Did you honestly expect me to go soggy at the knees, and collapse with remorse! Listen, if you'll stop breathing your female wisdom all over me, I'll tell you something: I don't care. I don't care if she is going to have a baby. I don't care if it has two heads! Do I disgust you? Well, go on – slap my face. (Osborne 1980: 73)

Finally, considering the very title of the play, we could draw an inference that Jimmy is a typical contemporary young man who, unnerved by the monotonous present and pessimistic about the future, can only look back on the past. However, the hindsight can provoke nothing but anger and malaise. In our hero's case, it is the piercing memory of his father dying from the wounds suffered in the Spanish Civil War,² and of his mother's indifference to his ill state, the state of the one who fought on the side of the losers. It is also the experience of being slighted by society because of his humble origin. Even the sedate Alison looks back in annoyance, tired of life with an angry man, feeling old although in her twenties, and unable to remember what real youth looked like. She and her husband are good proof of how the contemporary age has gone perverse. Alison is the one who willingly marries below herself, yet it is Jimmy, and not her, who will never be able to forget and stop talking about her origin. She is one of the many of her age who is forced to stop fighting for love as she realises that there is no way for such a feeling to survive in the modern world. Alison's is also an infuriated, yet low-voiced cry:

ALISON: I don't think I want anything more to do with love. Any more. I can't take it on.

CLIFF: You're too young to start giving up. Too young, and too lovely.

[...]

ALISON: I keep looking back, as far as I remember, and I can't think what it was to feel young, really young. Jim-

² The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) was a conflict in Spain between the democratically oriented Republican government (who received aid from the Soviet Union and International Brigades – volunteers from Europe and the USA) and the Nationalist forces (a fascist rebel group, who received help from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany). It ended with the victory of the Nationalists (<http://libro.uca.edu/payne2/payne26.ht>, Payne, S. G., pp. 645-662, 5 January 2015).

my said the same thing to me the other day. I pretended not to be listening – because I knew that would hurt him, I suppose. And – of course – he got savage, like tonight. But I knew just what he meant. I suppose it would have been so easy to say “Yes, darling, I know just what you mean. I know what you’re feeling.” It’s those easy things that seem so impossible with us. (Osborne 1980: 27-28)

Considering all the context of the time, it seems that a truly realistic play would have been a downright fiasco without at least one angry hero.

3. Popular Industrial Products and Their Function in the Lives of the Characters

As a play presenting the everyday life of ordinary people, *Look Back in Anger* abounds in material products of contemporary industry, either used on the stage or mentioned in speech. When the function of these elements is concerned, we will see that it is not always limited to the practical, instrumental, or entertaining aspects. They frequently bear symbolic meanings as well, fulfilling personal, emotional needs.

In the first scene of the first act, we are already presented with a huge number of objects made by various kinds of industry and typical of a working-class household of the fifties. We see a pile of Sunday newspapers and weeklies³ read by Jimmy and Cliff. All of the papers are full of up-to-date reports and articles about the latest issues in sociopolitical life. To both readers, they serve as the only action able to be performed on a boring Sunday afternoon, on what we can call “a travesty of a day of rest” (McCarthy 1968: 151). While the upper classes go to church, the lower-class non-believers read a radical newspaper snatching it from one another. To the “ignorant”,

³ One of the weeklies is undoubtedly *The New Statesman*, a British left-wing political weekly, founded in 1913. During the fifties, it was the left critic of the Labour leadership; it opposed the Korean War and initiated the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/412098/New-Statesman>, 13 August 2014). Although Jimmy will not find its articles pleasant, the mere fact that this magazine is his regular reading choice shows his political preferences and rebellious tendencies.

“Welsh ruffian” (Osborne 1980: 11) Cliff, reading is, as he says ironically but also half in earnest, a way to broaden his horizons and “better [himself]” (Osborne 1980: 11), whereas to Jimmy, this kind of reading is a confirmation of all his negative views on the contemporary world. These papers are unavoidably alluring, yet the texts they contain increase the degree of his anger. The piles of printed pages can easily be described as what Fiske terms the producerly text, as opposed to the readerly text and the writerly text. While the readerly text presupposes a passive, disciplined reader, and the writerly text calls for the reader to rewrite it, the producerly text does not require its recreation, but offers the clash of different voices and a bunch of undisciplined meanings. It is a text unable to control itself, one that cannot predict, let alone thwart the reaction of the reader (2001: 121-122). This definition can perfectly be applied to Jimmy and his reading. Irritated by almost every sentence he encounters, he not only launches into angry comments, but he crumples the pages and throws them to the floor. Even the radical weekly makes him regret the nine pence given in exchange for it.

A large part of the Porters’ rented household goes on certain modern appliances and gadgets, such as a gas stove, a small portable radio as another source of information and weapon to fight boredom, and, crucial for the action of the play, an iron and an ironing board used by Alison. For Alison, the ironing of clothes serves as a helpful ritual to avoid being moved by Jimmy’s sharp language, almost invariably directed at her class or the members of her family. Ignoring Jimmy is a skill she has acquired during nearly four years of their common life. The ironing board, however, has a wider symbolic reference to marriage and society. In both, Jimmy feels as though a hot iron is pressing down on him.

Another unavoidable element of the scenery is a pair of toys: a large tattered teddy bear and a soft woolly squirrel. These are typical middle of the century products for children, and as such, not likely to be found in a childless family. However, they symbolically relate, if not to what Alison and Jimmy possess, then to what they have lost, forgotten, or never had – youth and

childhood. The two of them are in their mid twenties, but listening to them, we get an impression that they feel old. We have already quoted Alison who claims that she cannot recall what it really meant to be young. On the other hand, Jimmy had to grow up suddenly at the age of ten, watching his father dying and learning through his stories what life, suffering, and courage really mean. Also, Jimmy (together with Cliff) is one of those whose entire childhood was more or less focused on the war – its preparatory years, the war itself, and its terrible consequences. Jimmy and Cliff's frequent bickering and fighting typical of children appear to be an attempt to compensate for the lost time. Accordingly, a game of bears and squirrels the married couple plays many times, pretending to be a bear and a squirrel, is a way to revive childhood, a period of life when relationships are much simpler and quarrels insignificant and temporary. They may not be children any more, but the toy industry has the means of making them feel that way. In addition, the toys prefigure what the two of them will lose in the near future, that is, what is to be Alison's first great loss – the loss of the child:

JIMMY: It was my child too, you know. But it isn't my first loss.

ALISON: It was mine. (Osborne 1980: 92)

One of the toys, however, has another, less romantic function. Having flown into a temper once, Jimmy takes the teddy bear and throws it to the floor. Not only does the bear here serve as a way for Jimmy to redirect his anger and attack a helpless dead object instead of the real enemies, it shows him to what extent modern industry has developed. As it hits the floor, the bear utters a groan just like the advertisement promised. The production has gone so far as to manufacture emotional reactions. Furthermore, a true cry can only be heard from a doll, as it seems more alive than a human being. Industry rarely makes any errors, whereas a human being is full of flaws.

We should not neglect Jimmy's working-class job of a sweets merchant and its direct connection to the industrial production, nor the fact that the job is also linked to a great paradox of

Jimmy's character. On the one hand, Jimmy is an inveterate critic of everything imposed by social institutions, be that the way of behaving, thinking, or believing. On the other, he participates in one of the aspects of social imposition on individuals. By obtaining sweets from a local factory and selling them to the mass customer, he is a mediator in the world of merchandise.

As a profoundly hurt person who thinks he will find relief in hurting others, Jimmy sometimes reduces the people around him to the level of industrial products. He warns Cliff that, by being too anxious to please, he will become like a chocolate meringue (Jimmy remains within the limits of his profession) – “sweet and sticky on the outside [...] inside, all white, messy and disgusting” (Osborne 1980: 49). In a similar way, we cannot avert our eyes from certain points at which a woman is considered a disposable product. The very fact that Jimmy (although unexpectedly and without planning) loses one woman only to replace her by another several moments later, reminds one of the process of production and consumption. The play therefore shows that in the modern world one generally swaps a love partner just like one swaps newspapers.

Looking back on the twentieth century, today's people will probably say that the car and the telephone were among the most formidable results of science and technology. Yet, in the life of Jimmy Porter, these two everyday tools only warm up the fury that never deserts him. The first phone call announces the arrival of a person he despises, the second one the illness of a woman dear to him. Jimmy's irritation by the phone may be his unconscious sense that there is nothing favourable in the contemporary fast flow of information, when all the news in a world turned into a hell must by definition be bad. As for the car, it provokes Jimmy's anger because it symbolises power and luxury reserved for the upper class people and denied to his lot. Alison's father uses a car to fetch his daughter and take her back to the upper-class life, while the vehicle nearly runs down Jimmy. What makes him even more livid is his impotence to do anything about it.

Also on the stage, there are many fashion industry products: make-up, brushes, lipsticks,

high-heels, dresses – all of them things that change in form and colour as they change their owner. The industry offers different types of accessories for different types of women: one blond, the other black-haired. Cigarettes are a part of everyday life, as one more empty habit. What seems new in the twentieth century when smoking is in question is the fact that not only men are passionate smokers, but women as well. In spite of the fact that the majority of shops are closed on Sunday, there is a local one on the corner selling this urgent necessity even on the day of rest.

By placing (directly or indirectly) modern industrial products in the script and then onto the stage, the author managed to bring out real life from behind the scenes, even if the missing parts of the realism of this kitchen-sink drama are, paradoxically enough, *a kitchen* and *a sink*.

4. Popular Culture Used as Escapism, Identification, Catharsis, and/or Social Protest

In the final section, we will deal with the usage of certain elements of popular culture as a means of communicating with art, with a conversion of such elements into a kind of art, and with some artistic performances (at times functioning as a play within a play) the characters engage in, so as to run away from the malevolent reality, unconsciously identify with someone, redirect their anger, and/or declare war on the corrupt world.

At the beginning of the drama, Jimmy expresses a desire to listen to music on the radio. In a paper, he finds information about a concert of Vaughan Williams⁴ and turns on the radio looking forward to hearing the sound of a classic. Apart from the fact that he starts listening to it out of boredom, music is a sort of escapism from the insupportable atmosphere, present both at his home – the apathy of his wife and friend – and in the world – classism, decadence, degener-

⁴ Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) was an English composer mainly known for his symphonies. He was also a collector of English folk songs (http://www.rvwsociety.com/bio_expanded.html, *The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society*, 13 August 2014).

ation of life by science. Jimmy is using a modern transmitter of sound to run away from it all, at least mentally. Furthermore it is not any kind of sound. It is a composer thought to be purely and traditionally English. This is another paradox Jimmy's character creates. Otherwise a harsh critic of conventional English values – religion, politics, social inequalities, he now approves of something traditional. It only shows that Jimmy is principally not against tradition as such, but against tradition gone rotten. His activity shows his view that there is no reason why good values should not be preserved and loved. However, Williams does not only stand for tradition and old Victorian values. As a man living through the whole first half of the century, he also had popular characteristics. Jimmy, as a knowledgeable man, must have had the opportunity to learn about them. For instance, although he was a middle-class man whose music bloomed with lyricism, Williams chose to fight in the war like an ordinary soldier by joining the Field Ambulance, whose members acted in harsh war conditions in order to help the wounded (http://www.rvwsociety.com/bio_expanded.html, *The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society*, 13 August 2014). These combinations of traditional and modern, high and low, rich and ordinary, educated and poor, and the like, make a popular new-age personality Jimmy may be able to identify with. However, his listening enjoyment is spoilt as the shuffle of the papers and the thuds of the iron interfere with the radio sound. Instead of soothing his nerves, his attempt to listen to music ends up by raising his anger. The degree of his fury can best be measured by saying that he cries out the name of the One he does not invoke so frequently: "Now let me hear the music, for God's sake." (Osborne 1980: 23). This interference can also be regarded as a metaphoric reference to all kinds of interference in Jimmy's life and modern world in general: the meddling of Alison's parents into his marriage; the interference of upper classes into the way of life of the poor; the intermittent sound of church bells that interrupt his tirades (and the voice of religion preventing any social changes for the better); and finally, popular art interfering with traditional art. In addition to all this,

Jimmy's wish to enjoy a piece of music is a counterblow to everything that causes his fury. In lieu of complaining (which is all he does for the rest of the time), he tries to answer by taking pleasure in a tiny grain of happiness, accessible to a lower-class man, if not in an opera house, than through a modern machine in a run-down attic room.

The conversion of a popular element into a sort of personal creation has already been analysed: Jimmy and Alison's usage of two toys made of industrial cloth and stuffed with sponge for playing a game, making theatre, imagining themselves as a bear and a squirrel. This is certainly one of the most beautiful dramatic illustrations of Fiske's definition of popular culture as culture springing from those products offered to everyone in the same form but received, modified, and recreated by every individual to suit their own needs and preferences (2001: 32). The need of these heroes is a dreamland, a stage (or even a cage) made only for the two of them with no one to interfere. Jimmy and Alison need a place where they can take on the roles of some other, happier beings. The escapism into the animal world is their refusal to live in the insane world of humans and their absurd laws. They long for a land in which a huge, slow-moving bear and a small, quick squirrel can find a common ground to dwell on, protecting each other and respecting their differences. They seem to fulfil this ideal in the final scene of the closing act, when Alison returns with a fresh knowledge of pain, having suffered her first loss. It is at this point that they again assume their animal roles, conveying the message that, if love can exist only in a dream, then let living in a dream be the only life they want to live:

JIMMY: We'll be together in our bear's cave, and our squirrel's drey, and we'll live on honey, and nuts – lots and lots of nuts. And we'll sing songs about ourselves [...] 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 sappy, scruffy sort of bear. And I'll see that you keep that sleek, bushy tail glistening as it should, because you're a very beautiful squirrel, but you're none too bright either, so we've got to be careful. (Osborne 1980: 96)

A conspicuous (musical) instrument in the play is by all means Jimmy's jazz trumpet. When-

ever the hero's rage reaches culmination, he goes offstage (to the room across the landing) and plays his trumpet. This is another attempt to forget his everyday problems, his excruciating past, and the idea of his bleak future – by transforming his anger into artistic energy used to produce melody. However, this is not just any kind of instrument or any kind of music. Not only is it the popular music of the twentieth century, but it is an American product spread to the rest of the world. Therefore, once again, Jimmy participates in the spirit he undermines. To copy American ways of life is wrong, yet to be fond of jazz is to know how to live and love:

CLIFF: That blinkin' trumpet – why don't you stuff it away somewhere?

JIMMY: You like it all right. Anyone who doesn't like real jazz hasn't any feeling for music or people. (Osborne 1980: 48)

From Alison we learn that Jimmy had his own jazz band once and would like to start another and do away with the sweet stall. Anyway, we must bear in mind that even in America during the golden age of jazz – The Roaring Twenties – this kind of music was seen as revolutionary and rebellious, which is the way Jimmy feels as well. Although later accepted and performed by all races, jazz was created by blacks, another underrated group of people. At the same time, the progressive features of jazz are proven by the mere fact that it has so many styles, and is constantly forming new ones, so that an attempt to define jazz as such appears futile. It is then quite evident that its instability and indetermination agree with those of our hero. Also, Jimmy's way of blowing on the trumpet does not appeal to the others, as is obvious in the just quoted text. The rest of the characters are seriously irritated (just the way he wanted them to be, but now ironically he cannot hear them, being in another room) by his performance, as if his anger has totally been transmitted to his nervous notes. What is a therapy to Jimmy is everything but relief to his wife, Cliff, and Helena.

Popular culture, it appears, can drive a man daft, yet it is also capable of being a remedial, dominantly artistic, treatment.

5. Conclusion

By analysing popular culture in *Look Back in Anger* – one of the most popular English dramatic works of the 1950s – we have concentrated on anger as the overwhelming state of mind throughout the age; on material products and the way they contribute to the physical and spiritual life of man; and last but not least, on a determined struggle of the middle-of-the-century man to penetrate art, either by enjoying someone else's or making his own.

Firstly, we have detected anger as a predominant and typical feeling of the middle-of-the-century man, wronged by war consequences and various kinds of social injustice. In this play, anger mostly speaks through the main character Jimmy and his ironic offences, yet it is also noticeable in his wife Alison's annoyance.

Secondly, we have interpreted some popular industrial products as being used for personal needs. For instance, offering "producerly texts", newspapers serve as a reminder of what has gone wrong in society and as an instrument of expressing social protest. Similarly, a modern appliance – the iron (which is hot and continuously presses clothes) – may function both as therapy for spousal quarrelling and as a reflection of the main hero's position in the contemporary world.

Finally, we have revealed the usage of certain elements of popular culture as a means of communication with art, a transformation of such elements into a kind of art, and some artistic performances – functioning as escapism, identification, catharsis, and/or social protest. In this respect, a noticeable instance is the main hero's jazz trumpet, used as an instrument of escaping personal and social problems, by redirecting his anger into an activity nobler than marriage conflicts.

Having accepted John Fiske's understanding of popular culture as a bunch of material and non-material aspects of everyday life, and having divided the way in which the popular is used here into three manners, we can derive that our short study confirms that this play is a truly realistic drama. What we can add to this definition is a modest, yet hopefully important contribution – its elements of popular culture are given one of the leading roles in the drama's stage realism.

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ПОПУЛАРНА КУЛТУРА У ДРАМИ ЏОНА ОЗБОРНА *ОСВРНИ СЕ У ГНЕВУ*

Резиме

У раду се анализира драма *Осврни се у гневу* (1956), енглеског аутора Џона Озборна, из перспективе популарне културе, под којом се овде подразумева широк спектар материјалних и нематеријалних аспеката свакодневног живота у првој половини 20. века. Наше схватање популарне културе у великој мери почива на одређењима Џона Фиска (2001), који сматра да су средства која човек користи у свакодневном животу сирова грађа од које се ствара популарна култура. Уочавајући три различита начина на које се популарни елементи манифестују или пак стварају у овој драми, у раду се кроз три поглавља бавимо сваким од њих. Први одељак приближава појам беса, указујући на то да је ово осећање доминантно, како у времену у коме је драма настала, тако и у самој драми, пре свега код главног јунака, али и код главне јунакиње. Друга секција разматра популарне индустријске производе који се у драми несвесно користе у емотивне пре неголи практичне сврхе. Тако се, на пример, новине читају не само ради добијања информација већ и ради прилике да се искаже лична љутња коју изазива социјална неправда, а одрасло играње двема играчкама служи као временски бег у безбрижну прошлост. Треће поглавље открива начине на које се популарно користи у сврху комуникације са уметношћу или пак претвара у саму уметност, а најчешће ради бекства од сурове стварности или могућности да се таква реалност индиректно осуди. Један од примера јесте свирање трубе коме главни јунак упорно приступа, сублимирајући свој гнев у цез музику. Долазимо до крајњег закључка да елементи популарне културе играју једну од водећих улога у приказу социјалне реалности ове драме.