

**T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**THE GENDERED VICTIMIZATION IN *LOOK BACK IN ANGER*
AND *SHIRLEY VALENTINE***

MASTER'S THESIS

Ece NOYA

**Department of English Language and Literature
English Language and Literature Program**

JULY, 2024

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(Y2112.020033)

**Department of English Language and Literature
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Thesis Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Muhammed Metin ÇAMELİ

JULY, 2024

THESIS EXAM REPORT

Istanbul Aydın University Institute of Graduate Studies Board of Directors 10.06.2024 date and The thesis of, whose thesis defense exam was held on before the jury members formed at the meeting no.* and** decision was made.

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APPROVAL

Istanbul Aydın University Institute of Graduate Studies Board of Directors
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(*) Unanimity/Majority vote will be written in writing.

(**) Acceptance decision will be written in writing.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study “The Gendered Victimization in *Look Back in Anger* and *Shirley Valentine*”, which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the References. (01/07/2024)

Ece NOYA



FOREWORD

I intended to make a meaningful contribution to confronting patriarchy's hegemony by addressing the detrimental impacts it has on women because I believe that women are still exposed to these kinds of victimizations through their marriages all around the world. Thus, through my current study, I hope to increase awareness about how patriarchal dominance contributes to social inequality by normalizing the victimization of women in various ways.

This study would not have been possible without the support of the people mentioned below. I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Muhammed Metin Çameli, for his motivation and valuable contributions. His faith in me has always been accompanied by a positive approach. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to my thesis jury members, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Arpine Mızıkyan and Assist. Prof. Dr. Yıldray Çevik, for their illuminating suggestions, insightful and constructive comments and contributions.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my family; my mother Nurten Noya, my sister Tuğçe Noya and my deceased father İskender Noya. Without my mother's and my sister's constant love, affection, support and encouragement, I would not have been able to complete this study. I would like to express my special thanks to my sister also for her guidance and contributions to this study.

I also owe special thanks to Prof. Dr. Hatice Gönül Uçele, who inspired me to choose the mentioned plays for this study through her lectures. Additionally, I thank my professors, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yıldız Kılıç and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Murat Seçkin, for inspiring and contributing to my intellectual growth both as a student and as a lecturer.

July, 2024

Ece NOYA

**THE GENDERED VICTIMIZATION IN *LOOK BACK IN ANGER* AND
*SHIRLEY VALENTINE***

ABSTRACT

This thesis, “The Gendered Victimization in *Look Back in Anger* and *Shirley Valentine*”, delves into women's victimization as a pervasive societal issue within the framework of patriarchal culture. It critically examines power struggles between genders in the plays: *Look Back in Anger* and *Shirley Valentine* through the lens of Kitchen-sink social realism. Based on the theoretical framework of cultural materialism, this study critically analyzes how these plays reveal the ideological underpinnings of gendered power disparities. The thesis looks into how women are portrayed as victims in these plays in an effort to disentangle the many ways that societal structures and conventions support the maintenance of patriarchal power. By doing so, this study examines power relations between genders from a cultural materialist perspective, focusing on the integration of insights into class dynamics, economic factors, discourse and power and cultural frameworks. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how gendered victimization serves as a mechanism for ideological control, particularly through patriarchal structures, by revealing the subtle yet profound ways in which the plays hold a mirror to contemporary society in terms of societal power dynamics.

Keywords: kitchen-sink drama, angry young men movement, cultural materialism, *Look back in anger*, John Osborne, *Shirley Valentine*, Willy Russell

LOOK BACK IN ANGER VE SHIRLEY VALENTINE ESERLERİNDE CİNSİYETE DAYALI MAĞDURİYET

ÖZET

“*Look Back in Anger* ve *Shirley Valentine* Eserlerinde Cinsiyete Dayalı Mağduriyet” başlıklı bu tez, yaygın bir toplumsal sorun olarak kadınların mağduriyetini ataerkil kültür çerçevesinde analiz etmektedir. Cinsiyetler arasındaki güç mücadelelerinin eleştirel bir şekilde incelenmesi yoluyla *Look Back in Anger* ve *Shirley Valentine* adlı tiyatro oyunlarını “kitchen-sink” sosyal gerçekçiliği üzerinden incelemektedir. Teori olarak kültürel materyalizme dayanan bu çalışma, seçili oyunların cinsiyete dayalı güç eşitsizliklerinin ideolojik temellerini nasıl ortaya çıkardığını eleştirel bir şekilde analiz etmektedir. Bu tez, toplumsal yapıların ve geleneklerin ataerkil iktidarın sürdürülmesini desteklediği birçok yolu birbirinden ayırma amacıyla, kadınların bu oyunlardaki kurban olarak tasvir edilişlerini incelemektedir. Bunu yaparak, bu çalışma, cinsiyetler arası güç ilişkilerini kültürel materyalist bir bakış açısıyla incelemekte ve sınıf dinamikleri, ekonomik faktörler, söylem ve iktidar ile kültürel yapıya dair fikirlerin bütünleştirilmesine odaklanmaktadır. Çalışma, seçili oyunların toplumsal güç dinamikleri açısından çağdaş topluma ayna tuttuğu ince ama derin yolları ortaya çıkararak, cinsiyete dayalı mağduriyetin, özellikle ataerkil yapılar aracılığıyla, nasıl bir ideolojik kontrol mekanizması olarak hizmet ettiğine dair kapsamlı bir anlayış sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öfkeli genç adamlar hareketi, kitchen-sink drama, kültürel materyalizm, *Look Back in Anger*, John Osborne, *Shirley Valentine*, Willy Russell

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I. INTRODUCTION

The 1950s were the years when the political, social and economic conditions were changing very rapidly all over the world. Following the Second World War, this era of rapid change witnessed a palpable impact on diverse facets of English society. The psychology of the war time had an impact on the playwrights of the twentieth century including John Osborne and his contemporaries. Witnessing such violence and persecution brought about by the Second World War and experiencing the social changes that occurred after the war shattered the beliefs of people, and eroded established beliefs and values, fostering a crisis of faith and existential questioning among individuals due to the effects of dehumanizing regimes. Osborne's seminal work, *Look Back in Anger* emerged amidst this severely deteriorating socioeconomic period (Mızıkyan, 2010: 44-45).

During World War II, women were exposed to a social change in terms of employment. Since the war created a gap in employment for women's labor particularly in the munition industries, this obscured the distinction between the social roles of men and women. Consequently, women partook in and contributed to the war economy. The lives of women were affected heavily due to the lack of employment during the Second World War. They had to leave their traditional roles to fill the gap in the industry. Nevertheless, after the war, pre-war attitudes towards women were maintained and women were expected to return to their traditional patriarchal gender roles in family structure by readapting to the pre-war standards. Hence, the Second World War resulted in a conservative return to old values, leading to feelings of insecurity and conflict along with confrontation among family members, particularly concerning gender roles and uneasiness, especially on the part of women, in terms of social and sexual roles. Women experienced confusion regarding their social and gender roles within the domestic sphere. Most of the women wanted to continue in paid work after the war. They had gone through a realization as a result of the mobilization during wartime. After experiencing freedom for the first time, it is not

easy to feel satisfied by just doing domestic chores again (Öztürk, 1993: 2, 11, 14). Fulfillment of femininity was integral to performing household chores to provide a warm, domestic environment back at home. This idea is even known to have been imposed on women by mass media, which has become a key site for defining codes, casting judgments and roles of a play for women. The media served as influential for establishing and disseminating idealized representations and standards of womanhood, frequently imposing constrictive standards of success and value derived from conventional roles as wives and mothers. Nonetheless, these portrayals frequently deviated from women's actual reality, emphasizing a gap between societal norms and personal experiences. Society continued to undermine women and present them as fragile, passive creatures by diminishing the agency and resilience of women. As Alan Sinfield asserts that this is evident as “[this] insistence on domesticity was a confusing pressure upon a situation that was already disturbed and complex” (2004: 234).

Society is divided into two in line with sex. At work, women are considered as stand-ins while married women are regarded as a secondary labor force. This perspective frames them as “working to supplement incomes primarily earned by their husbands, and therefore appropriate candidates for the lowest paying, least skilled work, with the lowest potential for promotion” (Summerfield, 1988: 96-97). Hence, the Second World War did not cause a liberation or a change in the position of women regarding their roles and social duties in society. For a woman, marriage was a must and priority for the fulfillment of her womanhood rather than working and earning her own money. Because man should be the chief breadwinner and the condition for married women to work was that as long as they could perform their domestic duties at home; such as managing the household chores, they could work.

In brief, the epithet for the period after the Second World War was a transition for both sexes and it stemmed from distinction in the domestic sphere between the time of the war and the time of the peace. Throughout the post-war decade, families underwent a change that put pressure on both men and women in terms of their positions in society. Both sexes were confronted with psychological, social, and spiritual challenges as a result of the post-war society's confusion over sexual ideals and goals. Consequently, both men and women had to face a gender conflict to re-adapt to the social circumstances of the postwar era and abide by the rules defined by

the media for them. Inevitably, most of the plays written during that time dealt with issues related to family structure, sexual and domestic relationships and gender conflict (Öztürk, 1993). Male dominance is presented in these plays and male figures directed their aggressive language towards women. Accordingly, Alan Sinfield in his *Literature, Politics and Culture in Post-war Britain* (2004) notes that a “repellent misogyny [in much of] Movement and Angry Writing” and he continues, “Feeling insecure, and marrying or seeking to marry upper-class women as a sign of their success, the upwardly mobile feel driven to emphasize their manliness.” He carried on: “In effect, the woman is taken as representing the hegemony of an effete upper class, and wooed and abuse accordingly” (92). In line with that, Osborne also reflects a misogynist attitude in *Look Back in Anger*. He portrays a similar picture of insecurity through Jimmy Porter as the “Angry young man” who is dominant and casts repulses towards his wife.

Kitchen-Sink Drama, as an offshoot of British drama, portrays a real and dismal outlook on family life under the effect of the social and political atmosphere of post-war Britain. Emphasis is put on the lives of the pessimistic working class and the social problems in an ordinary setting as well as on the erosion of ethical values caused by consumerism and the collapse of society by the plays of this sub-genre. This movement is known to have been initiated with Osborne’s influential play, *Look Back in Anger*, which is a milestone in postwar British drama since it opened a door to the realities of society as a part of a movement called “the Angry Young Men”. The Royal Court Theatre leaflet defined the play as an “intensely personal play” and “a disturbing comment on Osborne’s own generation”. Family conflicts are at the center of kitchen-sink plays with realistic clashes between spouses, parents, and siblings, reflecting society in general (Fowler, 2005: 38-40). Fowler also puts into words the underlying source of the anger of the pioneers of this theatrical movement as follows: “The young were adopting a socialist political outlook, directing their anger against the previous generation and power of the establishment: censorship, sexual repression, the proliferation of nuclear weapons and conscription” (2005: 38-40).

Dramas including John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*, portrayed the alienation of a generation stuck in a world full of pointless traditions. Their vulnerability caused shame that was expressed through anger as a result of postwar mood and class struggle

as outbreaks. The bleak and persistent negative viewpoint of these works earned their authors the epithet of “The Angry Young Men”, denoting their inclination to articulate discontentment through exploration of ongoing politics and previously taboo subjects. Consequently, the movement resulted in breaking the hypocritical attitude. This movement is against the traditions of any established order. Tecimer addresses how this theatrical current was initially welcomed as follows:

When *Look Back in Anger* first appeared, most of the critics of the time regarded the play primarily as a play of political and social rebellion and labeled the movement, as ‘angry young men.’ Jimmy Porter was considered as the mouthpiece for an angry man’s disillusion about the society he lived in (2005: 6).

The movement is a reaction and revolt against everything that is considered sacred. As a result, the movement helped the very conventional middle-class British conservatives to raise their awareness of reality by confronting the lifestyle of a large majority of people. One of the theories about the reason why these plays are valued is that these stories are reminiscent of the audiences’s own lives. Seeing oneself as a character onstage increases the effect of the theatre on the individual as well as increasing one’s understanding of society. Thus, the plays of this sub-genre might also create a cathartic effect for both the playwright and the audience as a means of alleviating the trauma and stress of a disadvantaged childhood (Fowler, 2005: 38-40).

The audience faces the suppressed emotions and exaggerated feelings that result from the acts on the stage. Consequently, these encounters have therapeutic effects on the audience. The aim of the depiction of unfortunate incidents and violent scenes is to enable the audience to face the harsh reality by presenting them with the circumstances that may happen to anyone. The character's place in life and response to the world around her/him alter with the drama of the second half of the twentieth century. Two major wars occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, and there have been and will continue to be conflicts all over the world as well as dictatorial, brutal regimes that dehumanize people. Hence, plays that reflect the grim atmosphere, trauma and psychology of wartime have been produced by the authors of the second half of the twentieth century (Karadağ, 2008: 3-8). However, while a major emphasis has been put on the realism suggested by this sub-genre, “the imperative of gender”

has been belittled despite its utmost and evident significance according to the critic Michelene Wandor. In her article, titled “Look Back in Gender”, her latest contribution to modern drama which is about Post-war British theatre, Wandor asserts her aim to fill a gap evident in theatre criticism, which is a lack of emphasis on the role of gender (Keyssar, 1988). Accordingly, cultural movements, such as The Angry Young Men Movement, not only reflected the change in the social-cultural environment but also explored the psychological influences of such changes upon individuals. However, this exploration is usually portrayed as only one-sided; that is to say, from the male perspective, merely. Nevertheless, women also went through the same public and personal traumas stemming from the war, suffered from alienation and all of which brought about a hopelessness about their future yet theirs were preferred to be ignored in comparison to men’s; for instance, *Look Back in Anger* focuses on Jimmy Porter’s problems. In addition, it could be considered that women were two times disadvantaged in this war-stricken world just owing to their gender. Apart from their confusion and search for identity in a post-war environment, they were also mistreated, neglected, exploited and even victimized by their husbands as it is given both in *Look Back in Anger* and *Shirley Valentine*. The labor and the struggle of the female characters that they are exposed to by the male figures in their lives are implied by the word: kitchen sink and this implication has been constantly disregarded (Mansbridge, 2017).

One of the reasons for these kinds of plays to be labeled as “Kitchen Sink Dramas,” is that they were often set in the kitchen of a flat in the city with an ordinary setting underlining the reality of life. Another significant reason is that this sub-genre emerged after the periods during which women had filled the gap in employment by replacing men and marrying fewer during the Second World War. However, after the war was over, the men were disillusioned and suffered from lack of employment and then women were asked to go back to their ‘kitchen sinks’ and give up their jobs by being obedient housewives, again. As a result, as Wandor pertinently argues kitchen-sink becomes a sarcastic title. Although there has been the kitchen sink on stage metaphorically or literally, a storyline around a woman has been rarely developed as it is expected (Wandor, 2014: 41-48). Nevertheless, *Shirley Valentine* recognizably diverges from this convention as it revolves around the life and metamorphosis of a woman. In contrast to the works of ‘The Angry Young Men,’ Willy Russell’s work

demonstrates that everyone is able to change, no matter what the obstacles are on their route. In addition, Russell makes use of humor, which is a technique that Kitchen Sink Realism frequently lacks. Although clear discrepancies are mentioned above, there is a strong link between this tradition and *Shirley Valentine*, which depicts the common problems of a working-class heroine in her kitchen. Russell releases her from the monotonous restrictions of the Liverpudlian kitchen sink. Moreover, at the very beginning of the play, the strong, disobedient and autonomous aspects of Shirley's character show up against the domestic environment surrounding her (Fowler, 2005: 38-40). In this respect, the struggle and oppression of the heroines by the established power relations of the patriarchal society between the two genders dominating the entire plot is a significant aspect of the chosen plays' shared characteristics. As a result, victimization and suffering became the forces of the male-dominated society of the twentieth century. In the aspect of the function of gender for victimization inflicted upon women by the patriarchal society of the twentieth century, there is a strong, common parallel between *Shirley Valentine* and *Look Back in Anger*, which has not been explored in comparison with each other.

The theoretical basis of this research is the cultural materialist approach, which emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s and arose as a critical response to the limitations of traditional literary analysis. Developed by prominent critics such as Raymond Williams, Jonathan Dollimore and Allan Sinfield, this framework advocates for a thorough examination of texts within their larger sociopolitical contexts (Taylor, 2013). Raymond Williams established the idea of cultural materialism, which became popular in the middle of the 20th century and marked a significant shift in the understanding of the relationship between literature, culture, and material realities. Williams created a theoretical framework that requires cultural works to be examined within the socioeconomic contexts in which they were created and received. He argued that cultural forms actively shape and are shaped by social interactions, rejecting the idea that culture is a static entity and emphasizing its dynamic aspect. Cultural materialism draws on a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating elements of Marxist theory, literary criticism, and cultural sociology. It challenges traditional distinctions between base and superstructure, suggesting a more fluid relationship between material conditions and cultural production by advancing a holistic understanding of culture as an ongoing and material process as opposed to a fixed, separate asset. In

general, cultural materialism rejects the idea that cultural artifacts are created in isolation and instead contends that they are intricately linked to the political social, and cultural currents of their day. The traditional idealist view, according to cultural materialists, is “that literary criticism exists in a privileged scholarly realm 'above' politics.” However, cultural materialists claim that “all readings are political readings” (Marlow, 2017: 2) as critics must take into account the socioeconomic and political contexts in which texts are written. As a result, they approach the texts from a materialist perspective. Cultural materialism explores the function of power and ideology in shaping cultural relationships. Raymond Williams suggests that literature involves all cultural forms including “history, philosophy, political and social theory, institutions, manners, customs” (1960: 272-273). Hence, literature is a dynamic component of the cultural system. Cultural materialism, which emphasizes the socio-political elements of texts, is linked to Marxism. Marx and Engels (2004) claim that, since individuals lack their ideologies, all ideologies, including moral, religious and philosophical ones, are only “[t]he phantoms formed in the human brain.” since the prevailing class forces its beliefs on people rather than the people having their own beliefs (47). Furthermore, according to Barker (2004), “the cultural 'superstructure' of ideas, politics, arts, and so forth” (39) is shaped by the economic reality.

Cultural materialists examine how power and ideology shape material and cultural interactions, drawing inspiration from Marxist and Foucauldian ideologies. Foucault believes that hierarchical structures underpin power relations. According to Foucault (1990), individuals at the bottom are “forced to remain ignorant,” whereas those at the top have “the right to know” and “a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state” are responsible for the creation and perpetuation of ideologies or issues, such as sexuality (94, 99). Foucault contends that shifting ideas cause power dynamics to shift, asserting the possibility of “ceaseless struggles and confrontations” that could reverse and replace the dominant culture (1990: 94). Ideology is “composed of those beliefs, practices, and institutions which work to legitimate the social order” (Dollimore & Sinfield, 2002: 213) and is controlled by the dominant culture to maintain its power. Likewise, in the chosen plays, the heroines are victimized through the institution of marriage, which is a social institution of the dominant ideology. Both plays depict how patriarchal institutions affect women and the dominance of men over them through the employment of

victimization. Victimization of women can be divided into three categories: physical, psychological and verbal violence. Verbal abuse becomes a common way of conversation in *Look Back in Anger* just as psychological and physical violence are in *Shirley Valentine*. These plays employ violence as a communication tool as well as a tool to dehumanize women. To understand how language creates and maintains gender norms, it is essential to consider Foucault's ideas of power as inherent in speech. The way that the plays depict women as victims might be understood as an expression of discursive formations that help to normalize patriarchal power relations. The concepts of Foucault urge readers to analyze how discourse modifies perceptions and affects the power relations between genders. Marx's observations on the material conditions of society enhance the study by emphasizing the relationship between gendered power inequalities and economic inequality and class differentiation. Williams' method promotes analyzing the cultural artifacts in the selected plays and examining how language, symbols, and daily life perpetuate social conventions. Cultural practices perpetuate and reinforce gendered power disparities, as demonstrated by an analysis of how women's victimization is portrayed within larger cultural contexts. Williams contributes to the knowledge of how gender hierarchies are maintained through the intersection of cultural representations and material constraints. This thesis aims to offer a comprehensive study of the power struggles portrayed in the plays through the lens of cultural materialism, which incorporates insights into class dynamics, economic factors, discourse analysis and cultural structures. This will enable readers to gain a much better understanding of the intricate web of gendered power relations and how discourse, economic structures, and cultural practices all play a role in structuring the alluded relations. To be able to understand the power struggles between the opposite sexes, this thesis will examine how women's victimization becomes a social issue in a patriarchal society as demonstrated through Kitchen-sink social realism within the domestic setting. From a cultural materialist perspective, this study will essentially concentrate on how these plays employ victimization to depict the ideological control of power with respect to gender. It attempts to invite contemporary readers to reflect on their own status in society by questioning the relation between power and gender, constructed gender roles and the function of gender in varying aspects.

II. PATRIARCHAL OPPRESSION THROUGH GENDER-POWER RELATIONS

Patriarchal oppression is a widespread social issue that stems from conventional gender roles and power relations. It is characterized by the deliberate marginalization and subordination of individuals on the basis of their gender. In essence, patriarchal oppression serves to perpetuate hierarchical structures in which men are frequently given authority over women, both in personal relationships and in wider social contexts.

Through the lens of cultural materialism, this chapter will examine the ways that gendered victimization is used by patriarchal institutions and societal conventions to maintain the power of patriarchy. Marriage, a social institution that supports the prevailing ideology, is the means by which the heroines in the selected plays are victimized. Both *Look Back in Anger* and *Shirley Valentine* emphasize how patriarchal structures are restrictive and have a significant negative impact on women's lives. This highlights the ongoing struggle for personal freedom and gender equality.

A. Alison as the Representative of Male Anger in *Look Back in Anger**

One of the striking issues revealed in *Look Back in Anger* is primarily the victimization of Alison, an upper-class woman who is subjected to male domination through her marriage, and it uncovers the patriarchal ideology of the twentieth century. Hayman (1972) also mentioned in *John Osborne*, "*Look Back in Anger* is a one-man play *par excellence*" (25). *Look Back in Anger* is a post-war play in which Jimmy's outbursts and rage are depicted as a result of post-war psychology and stagnation. When it comes to women in a post-war environment, they were not only affected by the war but also victimized by their husbands in addition to their alienation and identity

*My article entitled "A Cultural Materialist Approach to Gender through *Look Back in Anger*" published by *RumeliDE Journal of Language and Literature Studies* is a revised version of this chapter, incorporating certain information within the Introduction.

crisis as it is portrayed in *Look Back in Anger*. Alison struggles against suppressing traditional family dynamics since it prevents her from being able to express her individuality. Traces of this structure even start from the stage directions in the very first scenes. The stage directions are quite clear in depicting how traditional family dynamics are. Osborne makes effective use of stage directions to depict a traditional family structure dominated by male authority (Öztürk, 1993: 30-31).

The impression of traditional family dynamics is given within the domestic setting in terms of established gender roles and patriarchal male attitudes. The definition of female identity was reduced to domestic duties, being a housewife and rearing children in the twentieth century. Likewise, Alison is ironing as a female duty since she is the representative of a stereotyped housewife while the males are reading newspapers in the introductory part: "She is leaning over an ironing board. Beside her is a pile of clothes" (Osborne, 1960: 10). She is fulfilling her womanhood only when she performs her domestic duties such as "standing over the gas stove, pouring water from the kettle into a large teapot" (Osborne, 1960: 39). Household chores are seen to become so natural and inevitable preoccupation of women that they cannot avoid them. As a result, identities as male and female contribute to the maintenance of the patriarchal system. Jimmy Porter is depicted as an example of a typical patriarch whose views on gender have been influenced by the socio-cultural effects of the patriarchal ideology. Even if there are rare moments that he is able to stay silent, in those moments he blows his trumpet repeatedly to express his rage, he "seemed like he wanted to kill someone with it" (Osborne, 1960: 41). Wandor (2014) argues that he bothers those around him as a result by overlooking the responses that they give. This repeated sound from him underlines his dominating presence within the household as well. *Look Back in Anger* presents "dramatic conflict—the battle of the sexes, where one character psychologically devours another." (Rusinko, 1989: 39). It centers on a strained marriage of a couple. Alison is victimized through the institution of marriage, which can be considered one of the essential institutions of the patriarchal system that promotes and reinforces male dominance through gender-biased duties. Therefore, an individual's life is affected by their socio-economic surroundings. Raymond Williams (2006) claims that a cultural materialist perspective places more emphasis on social institutions than on the individual since socioeconomic systems are what determine an individual's fate. For instance, although Alison is an upper-class woman, she is to

endure her husband's ill-treatments and outbursts and to manage domestic affairs. Alison has attempted to challenge not only her husband but also the patriarchal system. However, she returned to him at the end of the play.

This narrative reflects the emphasis of cultural materialism, which examines how economic and material circumstances affect marriage and other aspects of culture. Examining marriage relationships requires taking into account variables like job opportunities, social class, and financial limitations that couples confront. Williams' (1960, 1977) cultural materialism offers a framework for analyzing marriages and marital relationships by taking into account the material and socioeconomic contexts in which they exist. The nature of the relationship between Jimmy and Alison can, therefore, be closely examined in accordance with Williams' contention. To illustrate, Jimmy is unable to provide for his wife both monetarily and psychologically. The reason for this kind of expectation from the male was that men were traditionally viewed as the primary provider by being the father figure. When they wed, he was unemployed and had nowhere to dwell. Hence, they had to reside with a friend of Jimmy, Hugh and his mother, as a newlywed couple. Jimmy takes her bride to somebody's flat that she has not met before and she does not like him as it is understood through Alison's description of Hugh: "He takes the first prize for ruthlessness". Jimmy and Hugh consider her as "a sort of hostage from those sections of society they had declared war on" (Osborne, 1960: 43). She felt quite embarrassed by their vulgar actions, "I felt as though I'd been dropped in a jungle. I couldn't believe that two people, two educated people could be so savage" (Osborne, 1960: 43). These words of Alison underlines their difference in terms of manners as she has grown accustomed to politeness and a life without any challenges in her parents's home. She struggled to fit in with their working-class culture as she was raised with certain standards in colonial India, where the locals treated her family as royalty. Her social sphere is drastically altered by her marriage to Jimmy. Prior to being married, Alison's life was free of stress and obligations. Afterward, she is poor in her marriage, which is an entirely unfamiliar circumstance for her. In this new life, she is required to carry out every domestic task and is unable to interact with her family, has little leisure time and lives a routine life. She was unaware of Jimmy's severe prejudice against upper-class people (Haque, 2014: 68-69). Even after Hugh left, Jimmy's prejudice against her social status has not stopped. Williams' approach emphasizes how social class

influences cultural norms. Different duties and expectations, determined by social status and societal norms, are frequently present in marriages. According to Williams, literature reflects the economic conditions of the time. Thus, economic reality is related to literature (1977: 52). This aspect seems to be quite fitting to depict the complexities of the couple's marriage as the enormous social gap between them is particularly a matter for Jimmy. He considers Alison's family as belonging to the conventional upper class. As a result, class differentiation between them can be considered as the basis of the conflicts in their marriage. Marx also claimed that the economy is the basis that constructs "the *superstructure* of social/political/ideological realities" (Tyson, 2006: 54). Based on Marx's postulation, it must be noted that because of their financial condition as a married couple, they had no other choice at that time due to the poverty and unemployment of Jimmy. Her marriage means a challenge for her, she compares it to medieval tournaments where knights throw the gauntlet on the ground as a challenge for their components to come and fight with them (Osborne, 1960: 67, 76). Jimmy's appeal as a knight was accepted by her, but she resolutely adhered to the safety of apathy in front of his assaults. She describes her relationship with Jimmy as going "into the battle with his axe swinging round his head-frail, and so full of fire" (Osborne, 1960: 45). Hence, his marriage with Alison could be interpreted as revenge by stealing someone from the upper-middle class and then an attempt to mold her to become a different person. Through getting Alison, Jimmy felt like he won a victory in the clash of the classes as Brooke (2001) also suggests: "An abusive and aggressive masculinity becomes replacement for a lost class identity" (788). He knows very well that she is above him in terms of class. After being married, she discovers that he has married in order to get revenge on the upper class. It emphasizes the influences of economic factors and social class on the choices that individuals make when deciding to get married, which aligns with cultural materialist approach, as well. It underscores the perpetuation of traditional gender roles, where women are viewed as tools for attaining specific social or economic objectives. This reflects the power dynamic within their relationship. When he reads a statement about the upper-middle classes, he immediately refers to and accuses Alison's father, just to force Alison into admitting something that she does not want to argue by uttering: "You don't suppose your father could have written it, do you?" "Sounds rather like Daddy, don't you think?" (Osborne, 1960: 14). He considers her as an enemy in his territory and he wages his own war.

Critic Taylor also suggests that “The principal sufferer from all this is his wife Alison, whom he cannot forgive for her upper-middle-class background and whom he constantly torments in order to extract some reaction from her...” (1978: 41). Jimmy's bias for the ones of higher social rank stems from his perception of himself as a member of the working class, and this puts him at odds with Alison, who suffers from his brutality. Thus, Jimmy's assaults on Alison are actually the assaults toward the class distinctions. As a consequence of this, their house provides an unhealthy environment in which Alison experiences constant suffering. She may have made an effort to be sympathetic towards his class. However, with each of these factors, she is not able to accept his beliefs and put her family aside. She wed Jimmy by being aware of his working-class upbringing. Nevertheless, she thought it was pathetic that he deliberately insulted her class as a result of his grudge towards her. The reason why she struggles to warm up to his lifestyle or class is that Jimmy and Hugh leave her with an unfavorable view of how the working class behaves (Haque, 2014: 65-70). For these reasons, she listened to his ideas but refrained from being passionate about them.

According to Foucault, power relations were grounded on a hierarchal structure and this structure is divided into two as those who have the “right to know” and those who are “forced to remain ignorant” (1990: 99). He mentioned “an order of sexuality” and within this order; men, adults, parents and doctors have “right to know” while women, adolescents, children and patients are “forced to remain ignorant” (95). Likewise, women were made to believe in this manner that they are naturally inferior to men through the patriarchal system. Foucauldian rendition of how power relations operate can be appropriated into *Look Back in Anger* since Jimmy, as being part of the supposedly superior sex, assumes the power to oppress his wife. From the first act onwards, the conversation between him and Alison is dominated by him, which depicts the male domination in the house.

Throughout the play, Jimmy's misogynistic attitude is very evident. In an unpleasant manner, he refers to Alison as "The Lady Pusillanimous" to imply that she lacks courage and tenacity. However, he ignores the fact that Alison is a strong person with her own individuality, as well. By choosing to wed Jimmy, she defies the expectations of her family and her status. In her own right, she is rebellious since she refuses the accepted norms of her class. He either mocks Alison or comes out with an insulting remark such as “clumsy” or “python” (Osborne, 1960: 24, 37). It is the way

he defines his wife as if swallowing him whole like a python. In cultural materialism, there is also a great deal of emphasis put on the significance of language and communication in shaping meanings. The manner in which marriage is discussed, portrayed and conveyed within a society can unveil power dynamics and cultural beliefs concerning gender roles and relationships. Examining the language used to describe marriage can offer insights into the values and norms upheld by that society. He torments his wife with his assaults in order to boost his self-esteem. Through various stage directions between his monologues, this trait of him is illustrated the best. His rage eventually comes to a rest with the following stage directions:

There is no sound, only the plod of Alison's iron. Her eyes are fixed on what she is doing.... Jimmy is rather shakily triumphant. He cannot allow himself to look at either of them to catch their response to his rhetoric.... He's been cheated out of his response, but he's got to draw blood somehow (Osborne, 1960: 21).

Jimmy's intention to "draw blood somehow" implies that he is attempting to exert power through his words. In an effort to recover control or elicit a response from Alison, he is trying to manipulate the situation. This is indicative of a power dynamic in which people try to exert control over others through discourse. As a result, the passage exemplifies a power dynamic within the scene characterized by quiet and unspoken tensions. Furthermore, Foucault's (1979) perspective on power relations demonstrates how silence and control play roles in discourse as individuals strive to establish their authority. In the context of the play, this passage perfectly captures the complexity of power and communication. Alison neither committed any wrongdoing throughout their marriage nor does Jimmy's frequent outbursts towards her have a convincing reason. This shows his "neurotic determination to establish and keep his supremacy" (Taylor, 1962: 44) inside the family. He constantly humiliates Alison in order to maintain his sovereignty. In *Look Back in Anger*, abusive language is prevalent in the couple's dialogues. In that way, Alison, as a woman, is victimized through the institution of marriage, which is a social institution of the prevailing ideology. Ideology is enforced by the culture that is prevailing to sustain its authority. Jimmy's dominating his wife can be interpreted as an attempt to maintain his status as the head of the family. Through Jimmy and Alison, the play reflects the power struggles between the two genders within the post-war society. Through Jimmy's disdain for Alison and his treatment of her, the play depicts a picture of the patriarchal

mindset that views women as the other. He even accepts that he did all these on purpose to get a reaction from her by saying: “Nothing I could do would provoke her” (Osborne, 1960: 19). She never gives a voice to her emotions. Instead; she prefers to stay back, keep quiet and find consolation in ironing and quietness. These are her defense mechanisms. Her silence serves as an example of patience and perseverance, which functions as a form of defense mechanism against Jimmy's fury. She draws a passive attitude to protect herself from Jimmy's vindictive remarks.

Besides Jimmy's verbal aggression, he truly became physically violent, whether it was accidental or not. Hence, Alison becomes the equivalent of Jimmy's predicament. His attacks almost became physical at one point. Alison could be subjected to physical abuse as it is clearly understood from the stage directions, during a quarrel between Jimmy and Cliff. When he throws Cliff onto the ironing board and then onto Alison at the beginning of the play, Alison's arm gets burned as a result (Osborne, 1960: 26). Hence, the fight between Jimmy and Cliff ends up causing Alison physical pain. The difference in their attitudes and Alison's reaction to them: “Look out, for heaven's sake! Oh, it's more like a zoo every day!” (Osborne, 1960: 26) underline their differences including class between the two sides. Jimmy and Cliff share the same background whereas Alison comes from a different social class. She is the outsider in this triangle. Also, this physical pain of Alison can be considered as the symbol of the psychological and emotional pain from which she suffers because of Jimmy. Even after he burns her arm unintentionally, he flees to a different room in an effort to avoid her criticism instead of staying with and soothing her. This attitude deepens her suffering and she is baffled (Haque, 2014: 67). She is estranged from him as a result of his authoritarian behavior. She even hides her pregnancy from him. Jimmy is as uncomfortable with a woman's potential to become pregnant as he is with her sexuality. It sounds as though he is accusing Alison of preventing him from giving birth to himself when he discusses Alison's sexuality (Öztürk, 1993: 38). She ends up being a representation of the “venomous woman image” a concept described by Margaret Hallissy. Hallissy asserts that “an image of female power and male fear of that power” and “m[i]sogynistic notions related to [this] image are manifestations of male fear of domination by a woman” (1987: 14). *Look Back in Anger* presents this male fear of female power through Jimmy and Alison. Hence, gender conflict has turned out to be a battlefield for sexual identity apart from being a place for class

conflict. As he fears losing control of the household, Jimmy needs to show and prove his masculinity through Alison in the lines as follows:

The way she jumps on the bed as if she were stamping on someone's face, and draws the curtains back with a great clatter in that casually destructive way of hers. It's like someone launching a battleship. Have you ever noticed how noisy women are? Have you? The way they kick the floor about, simply walking over it? Or have you watched them sitting at their dressing tables, dropping their weapons and banging down their bits of boxes and brushes and lipsticks? (Osborne, 1960: 24)

The passage presents a view of women's behavior that aligns with stereotypes. These stereotypes are influenced by norms and expectations regarding gender roles. The language used to describe Alison's actions, such as "noisy" and "destructive" indicates a perspective that may be shaped by power dynamics within society and the reinforcement of gender roles. At this point, it must be stated that Michel Foucault's (1972) theories on power relations also emphasize how power operates through language, discourse and knowledge. The passage illustrates how language is employed to label and categorize the woman's behavior as "noisy" and "destructive." These labels can be regarded as a form of "discursive power", where language is used to shape and control perceptions of gender and behavior. To illustrate, Foucault's work, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), emphasizes how society commonly enforces norms and disciplines individuals to adhere to those norms. The passage suggests that deviating from expected behaviors, particularly for women, is often viewed as "destructive" or "noisy, indicating a societal form of discipline that upholds gender norms and expectations. This dynamic reflects power relations within society.

Muhammad (2013) points out Jimmy has the power to sexually entice women, but is not at ease around them. His sexuality is the basis of his relationships with Alison and Helena. Jimmy's masculinity is threatened by Alison, who in the play, is a symbol of female sexual power. The virginity of Alison or Helena is considered an invisible power and dominance by him, which he feels an urge to attack. This is obvious when he makes fun of his wife's virginity. In fact, he is the one who feels challenged by it (21-22). One of the several issues with Jimmy's supposed heroism is her virginity prior to their marriage. It is clearly understood through Alison's words as given below:

Jimmy's got his own private morality, as you know...It is pretty free, of course, but it's very harsh too. You know, it's funny, but we never slept together before we were married...And, afterwards, he actually taunted me with my virginity. He was quite angry about it, as if I had deceived him in some strange way. He seemed to think an untouched woman would defile him. (Osborne, 1960: 30)

Jimmy's hatred for her stems from the fact that she has kept her virginity, which reveals his underlying sexual insecurities. He is made to feel inadequate and inferior by women's capacity to procreate. In particular, Jimmy cannot stand women who come from the upper class or who are in any way superior to him. In this instance, Jimmy considers virginity as appealing, yet when it comes to his wife, he does not appreciate the concept that his wife is a virgin as it elevates her moral status above him (Öztürk, 1993). She was an advocate of middle-class morality and in line with the morality of this class, she did not have sexual intercourse with anyone before getting married. Jimmy is really outraged and he fights against the values and beliefs of the middle class. Hence, his behavior is also about the distortion of all established ways of thinking and morality of the middle class until then. Thus, it can be claimed that Öztürk's premise foregrounds the class disparity between the couple, once more. Jimmy's "attacks on the old class system and his uneasiness about his own class" and vulnerability are shifted and displayed as an assault on Alison, his wife, her sexuality and even the potential of her for being a mother (Wandor, 2014). Jimmy's remark about Alison's capacity for procreation involves a cruel aspect and irony since the audience is already aware of the fact that Alison is pregnant at that moment. Jimmy expresses his feelings as follows:

Oh, my dear wife, you've got so much to learn...If only something--something would happen to you, and wake you out of your beauty sleep! If you could have a child, and it would die. Let it grow, let a recognizable human face emerge from that little mass of indiarubber and wrinkles. (She retreats away from him.) Please—if only I could watch you face that. I wonder if you might even become a recognizable human being yourself. (I.i.37)

In an effort to influence her actions, he says that she might change if she experiences a significant shift in her life, such as having a child or going through a catastrophe. This illustrates a power dynamic in the relationship when one party tries to correct or mold the other to suit their own needs. Accordingly, Jimmy's fear of Alison's capacity

for procreation is closely connected to the misery he wants her to go through. He is scared of her potential for motherhood since the mother is a symbol of feminine power and is "[r]ecognized as the source of life and thus the embodiment of fertility." As a result, this female sexual power in the drama turns out to be the cause of female subjugation (Öztürk, 1993: 37). Considering Jimmy will feel betrayed, Alison finds herself unable to confide in her husband, the person closest to her, about her pregnancy. Instead, she confesses it to Cliff. Alison is familiar with Jimmy's mindset. The sexual disappointment of Jimmy is a result of his social frustration. His authority can only be sustained as long as Alison is vulnerable and docile (Muhammad, 2013: 22). From a Foucauldian perspective, the given passage above illustrates the need to regulate and correct the wife's behavior so that she conforms to a set of accepted ideals. The following passage describes a scene where, in the framework of marriage, power and social conventions collide. Jimmy seems to use his verbal assaults to make up for his sexual insecurities since he perceives Alison's sexual power, which "devours" him, as a danger to his masculinity. This situation is verbalized by Jimmy in the lines below:

She has the passion of a python. She just devours me whole every time, as if I were some over-large rabbit. That's me. That bulge around her navel--if you're wondering what it is--it's me. Me, buried alive down there, and going mad, smothered in that peaceful looking coil. Not a sound, not a flicker from her--she doesn't even rumble a little. You'd think that this indigestible mess would stir up some kind of tremor in those distended, overfed tripes--but not her?... She'll go on sleeping and devouring until there's nothing left of me. (I.i.37-38)

The "python" analogy further reveals his doubts regarding his masculine identity. As Hallissy (1987) puts it: "serpentine woman ... becomes a strong metaphor for the woman who is too [powerful] for the man to handle." Hence, Jimmy attempts to "subdue her--in other words, by showing his power to control her, to become a hero" The "idea of the venomous animal is linked to women, the significance is usually sexual, and the metaphor becomes a m[i]sogynistic commonplace" (14, 15, 90). The fear of women and of engaging in sexual intercourse are indications of misogyny. The way Jimmy speaks is indicative of his selfishness, disappointment, and despair as Innes (2002) claims, "Jimmy's rebellion is purely verbal. The strong expression can be a cover, compensating for the inability to take effective action. He describes that he 'learnt at an early age what it was to be angry-angry and helpless'" (88-89). Jimmy is

the embodiment of the society that he does not like as Elsom (1981) wraps it up by stating that: “Jimmy is not just a critic of his society, but also the object of criticism. He is the main example of the social malaise which he attacks” (77).

Additionally, his name; Jimmy, is the shorter version of James and is possibly associated with King James II, a historically failed king. His surname, Porter, means “gatekeeper” or someone in a servile position. As a result, the connotations of Jimmy’s name and surname suggest his attempts at asserting power and control despite his inherent weaknesses. When Jimmy is referred to as a “spiritual barbarian” (Osborne, 1960: 67) in the play, this duality is further emphasized. This word is an oxymoron, implying that Jimmy is a combination of barbaric aggression and an apparent absence of spiritual or intellectual depth. It stands in stark contrast to his name's and surname's meanings, which suggest both a position of subordination and failed authority. Jimmy strives to be the head of the household but his actions reveal his weaknesses and fears that undermine his attempts to keep power. His aggressive behavior toward others, especially women, reveals a deeper fear of losing power and facing his own inadequacies. This interpretation of Jimmy's personality, grounded in possible historical and symbolic connotations of his name, contributes to a deeper comprehension of his complex motives and actions within the context of the play's examination of gender dynamics and patriarchal authority.

Friedan asserts that “the identity of a woman is determined by her biology,” (2001: 135) and that “...there is no road to identity” (1962: 232). Cultural norms have a significant impact on how people are identified within society. In this story, gender connects biological and societal inequalities, and it links the inferior woman to the superior male. Accordingly, Alison is depicted as a woman who lacks her own unique identity and individuality as if she is a property of Jimmy within the household. She is not allowed to assert her autonomy as many other women who are governed by patriarchal mechanisms, which brings to mind established assumptions about gender and power. Wandor asserted in her essay, “Alison is ironing one of Jimmy’s shirts and wearing another. Immediately she is identified as ‘his’; servicing his clothes, wearing ‘his’ uniform and working on his behalf- ironing his clothes while he is at leisure” (2014: 42). The quote above highlights how traditional gender roles are reinforced through domestic labor, where women are expected to serve and support men. R. Williams’ approach (1976) to language and identity also examines how language and

symbols express cultural meanings. The idea that Alison was referred to as "his" through her behavior and clothing highlights how language and symbols reinforce gendered power dynamics.

She has no privacy within the household, as well. Since, whenever he gets the chance, he searches through her briefcase and handbag as it is seen at the end of Act 1. He “picks up Alison's handbag thoughtfully, and starts looking through it” (Osborne, 1960: 36). It is such an insecure attitude for a relationship. Foucault’s theories on power relations (1975) place a strong emphasis on how society controls and regulates its citizens. Without Alison's permission, Jimmy searched through her briefcase and handbag. This was an intrusion on her privacy as well as a display of authority and dominance in the home. Furthermore, Foucault's view of power links knowledge and the management of knowledge. Jimmy is looking through Alison's personal items in an effort to learn more about her and possibly obtain power by doing so. This depicts the power relations that exist in the home, where information can be utilized to establish power. As a result, the quote give an account of the power dynamics between men and women in the home and how gender roles are upheld, especially in domestic and private settings. While Foucault's power relations highlight the control and knowledge parts of the power dynamic in this context, cultural materialism offers insights into the material circumstances and language that form these interactions. The home turns into a place where power dynamics are played out and strengthened. Even Helena, an independent woman, is forced to follow the patriarchal system of the family as it is so strong.

Act three begins with the imitation of the first act. The woman character: Alison seems to be replaced by Helena: “Helena is standing down L. leaning over the ironing board, a small pile of clothes beside her....she wears an old shirt of JIMMY’S” (Osborne, 1960: 75). Helena has established herself in Alison’s place, she has taken her duty of ironing on Sunday afternoons. Hence, Jimmy is a very insecure figure who is ready to dominate his spouses in the domestic sphere by abusing them physically and mentally. In the patriarchal system, women are required to be obedient and weak in order to ensure that they do not pose a danger to male superiority. As a result, Jimmy “becomes the abuser, victimizer and observer whereas she is the one who is abused, victimized and observed” (Muhammad, 2013: 20-21).

Alison's intelligence and knowledge are evident when she has a conversation with her father. Throughout the conversation, she refers to a 19th century family, of famous writers and philosophers: William Godwin and Mary Shelley. As it is clear, she is a well-bred woman. Yet, Jimmy still tries to look down on her by proving his cultural superiority with a snobbish attitude, "I'm the only one who knows how to treat the paper ..." (Osborne, 1960: 12). Jimmy's snobbish attitude and his reference to treating the paper improperly show a sense of cultural superiority in which social class is linked to knowledge and customs of culture. When people use culture to claim their perceived superiority, it can be seen as a form of class struggle.

Alison's expecting a baby adds to her physical and mental stress. Consequently, when she is pregnant, she can no longer stand the abusive behaviors of her husband and leaves the house in an effort to end her misery after realizing Jimmy is offended by her upper-class background. Nonetheless, she suffers horrible loneliness and sorrow when she has a miscarriage and then accepts new sufferings by returning to Jimmy. Alison experiences ongoing and unbearable psychological pain throughout the play. It is indisputable that bachelor's and marriage life differ concerning finances, environment and duties. Any woman, regardless of her class, may get through these obstacles if her husband is caring, affectionate and empathetic. As for her situation, there is only criticism, censure and abuse (Haque, 2014: 67-68). Home is a man-made institution, which becomes a prison for the female. Accordingly, home never provides any comfort for Alison. She continually feels like: "I've been on trial every day and night of my life for nearly four years" (Osborne, 1960: 67) and she starts to lose her tolerance for him as it seems he tries her patience. Alison's grief and isolation following her miscarriage can therefore be understood in the light of power dynamics. It implies that the power disparities in the marriage and the social pressures placed on women are to blame for her emotional anguish. These dynamics emphasize the influence of cultural and societal elements on the characters' behavior and interpersonal relationships in the play and can be analyzed through the lenses of cultural materialism and Foucault's power relations.

In conclusion, in a symbolic way, the sterility and emotional disorientation of this family represent the ambiguities of the post-war period. However, it is for sure that life after the war is solely defined by the male identity. Jimmy's struggles are particularly those of a young man after the war. The structure of the play reinforces

the protagonist's bigotry against women. Alison has little theatrical presence in her own right compared to Jimmy. She possesses a certain amount of resilience, is able to recognize and meet his needs; yet, this strength comes with the price of losing her own gendered identity as a mother in her own right and her own mental space to articulate this issue. Jimmy governs not only her attitudes, and her class prejudice on his property but also her sexuality and what she is permitted to feel. To him alone, she can have both sexual and maternal qualities. (Wandor, 2014). Hence, the manner which patriarchal tyranny is portrayed in Alison's story draws attention to the social disparities that are embedded in marriage and societal norms. Her deference to Jimmy's despotic behavior and her conformity to gender stereotypes are outstanding instances of how societal male dominance affects the identities of women. Her agency and autonomy within the narrative are further challenged by the discrimination she encounters as an upper-class woman, which emphasizes how class and gender collide. The cultural materialism framework improves our comprehension of the text's social significance by offering a complex insight into the connections between interactions among individuals, ideological structures and material reality. The intricate ways that gendered power relations and socioeconomic structures intertwine to sustain oppression and inequality are made clear by a cultural materialist reading of *Look Back in Anger*.

B. Shirley, the Isolated, Neglected Wife in *Shirley Valentine*

Shirley Valentine is a dramatic examination that chronicles Shirley's journey of self-discovery while also eloquently depicting the mistreatment she experiences due to her gender. By portraying Shirley as a lonely housewife stuck in an unhappy marriage with her husband, Joe, the drama explores the ways in which gender influences behavior.

Shirley's long-ago maiden name, Valentine, derived from the Roman family name Valentinus, and valens, meaning healthy and strong in Latin¹, symbolizes her original strong and healthy spirit. Her later surname, Bradshaw, deriving from Old English and meaning a broad thicket or a wide forested area², could symbolize entanglement and being lost in a dense situation, which is in line with her later state of being trapped in her marriage. Shirley's journey from a place of strength and vitality to entanglement and feeling lost, and then back to self-discovery and empowerment, is highlighted by the contrast between Valentine and Bradshaw. This shows Shirley's struggle to redefine home and self-worth.

Her two children have both moved out; her son, who lives in an abandoned building because of financial difficulties, is more understanding and helpful to Shirley than his sister. In contrast, her daughter displays self-centered tendencies that are similar to those of her father. She sees Shirley as nothing more than an unpaid servant and she acts accordingly. Her reason for returning home is not because she is fond of her family; rather, it is a practical necessity for domestic help with cooking, cleaning, and ironing after living somewhere else. She even goes so far as to demand Shirley to move the television into her room. No matter their age, it has always been expected of kids to help out around the house to lessen their mother's workload and give her some leisure time. This story thread draws attention to the unequal division of family duties and the significant influence of gender norms in the home. As a result, the background of the play does not offer a warm and understanding family picture such as gathering around a dinner table in the evening and sharing what has happened during the day. Instead; there is a lack of communication. Hence, "home" in the play offers a great chance to deconstruct the idea of the "home sweet home" concept. The play subverts cultural norms that have molded the idea of "home sweet home" by using Shirley's story as an example of how gender roles and expectations can affect one's perception of home. Therefore, the play explores how the concept of home is not ideal and can be a source of restriction, making us reevaluate what a "sweet home" really entails.

Shirley's husband's moral dominance has prevented her from asserting her true self. She prioritizes the needs of her family and neglects her own needs in favor of those of her spouse and kids. Her own life has diminished to the status of a satellite of

1. <https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=valentine>

2. <https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=bradshaw>

their world. Hence, power dynamics on a personal and social level are explored in this drama. (Doyle, 1993). Shirley represents the isolated, neglected wife whose time is spent in the kitchen and who is caught up in the net of marital life with grown-up children out of home. She is the only character who speaks non-stop about marital problems in the play. This monologue is about a woman's quest for self as she has gone through a transformation from Mrs. Joe Bradshaw back to the courageous Shirley Valentine. She feels like she has been left behind by life (Dorney&Gray, 2013). In act one, she lacks self-confidence and subjectivity. She is all by herself and frustrated. She is talking not to herself but to the wall in her kitchen, which suggests the degree of her isolation, disillusionment and alienation. She starts addressing the wall while cooking and asks for affirmation from the wall as her only friend: "Don't I wall?" (Russell, 2014: 1). Up until the crucial point when she sets out on her trip to Greece, the audience has insight into all the different aspects of Shirley's life and relationships only through her conversations with the kitchen wall. This life-changing experience signals the beginning of a very different chapter in her journey. It is possible to interpret the woman's loneliness and annoyance as a sort of protest against dominant cultural norms. Until then, the kitchen functions as the heart of this play. The power dynamics in the home are implied by the kitchen's prominence as a typically domestic area. Society's expectations of gender roles and household duties may be reflected in the woman's dependence on the kitchen as the center of her existence. The kitchen plays a prominent role in kitchen-sink drama, which centers on the domestic lives of working-class individuals. Themes of social realism and the limitations imposed by social conventions are frequently explored in kitchen-sink dramas, which depict everyday settings like kitchens as symbolic battlegrounds where personal struggles and society expectations conflict. By situating much of Shirley's story within the kitchen and reflecting larger social themes inherent to kitchen-sink drama, the play emphasizes the gender dynamics and domestic pressures that shape Shirley's life.

Engaging in extensive dialogue with an inanimate object such as a wall, particularly concerning personal struggles, marital issues, and various life events, underscores a profound degree of social isolation and emotional estrangement experienced by the individual. Hence, her chosen means of expression—talking to a wall—also highlights how limited one's autonomy is within the confines of the dominant cultural norm. She fills the void created in her daily life by talking to a wall,

which compensates for the non-existence of a husband who can construct an emphatical bond between Shirley and himself. As she converses with the wall, it becomes clear that she is knowledgeable and astute since she covers a wide range of subjects and makes references to people such as Freud and Christopher Columbus (Russell, 2014: 5). Her language reveals a sophisticated intelligence that frequently takes the form of sarcastic observations about her own identity, and her family dynamics as she says: “Our Millandra was goin’ through her slightly intellectual phase at the time” (Russell, 2014: 1). In her speech to her daughter, Shirley uses metaphorical language that is similar to "throwing darts," giving her speech a hint of irony that the reader may need to consider in order to fully understand. This stylistic approach serves to underscore the apparent straightforwardness of her linguistic expression and the ostensibly mundane subject matter she addresses. Her only means of enjoyment is having a cup of wine during the preparation of her husband’s dinner, a practice steeped in domesticity. Interestingly, she started drinking wine at her daughter's recommendation, which is in line with a societal trend in which women are perceived to be stylish when they drink wine instead of beer. Negotiation with and within the context of culture is evident in the woman's skilled use of irony, her perceptive dialogue with the wall and her acceptance of fashionable activities such as wine consumption. In particular, the irony could be her way of rebelling against or managing the expectations and conventions that society has placed upon her. She experiences a challenging marital dynamic, characterized by her husband's demeanor, which lacks affability and is characterized by an insistence on meticulous adherence to his prescribed schedule minute by minute. For instance; if the food is not ready just as he steps into the flat; then, there is trouble or his tea has to be on the table on time; otherwise, he would start an argument. She is panicked: “Oh God, look at the time” (Russell, 2014: 2). Serving tea to husbands returning from work is an enduring tradition among working-class people in Northern regions. It fulfills two functions: it is a ritual of sustenance and an early dinner. Within the confines of this particular marital union, this traditional practice faces obstacles due to the husband's difficult personality, which manifests as traits that are in opposition to flexibility and amiability. Nevertheless, she adopts a sarcastic approach when expressing her opinions on the matter, as evidenced by her discourse in the following manner: “Listen, Joe, if your tea isn’t on the table at the same time every night it doesn’t mean that the pound’s

collapsed y'know, or that there's been a world disaster" (Russell, 2014: 2). Therefore, the husband is dependent on Shirley not because he adores her but he needs her to serve him and to be at his command for ironing, preparing breakfast or tea on time.

The relationship between them is similar to that of a master and servant in which the husband as the master demands labour and absolute control over the servant. It is also in line with the type of relationship dynamic, which is similar to what the capitalist order expects from modern individuals. She always cooks something for her husband and every day the menu changes since he has standards. There has to be one dish on a certain day and another dish on the following day in accordance with his preferences and standards (Russell, 2014: 5). The husband has set principles; on Thursdays, he demands meatballs. She uses irony by comparing her husband's actions to the ancient commandments, humorously misquoting Moses and imitating the Biblical language. Dramatic irony is revealed by this subtly mocking comparison between Biblical decree and Joe's household governance. She resembles how Joe rules his household to the commandments from the Testament:

“Wait till he finds he's gettin' chips an' egg for his tea tonight. Well, it's Thursday isn't it? And on Thursday it has to be mince. It's the eleventh commandment isn't it? Moses declared it. “Thou shalt give thy feller mince every Thursday and if thou doesn't thy feller will have one big gob on him all night long.” (Russell, 2014: 7).

The material circumstances of their domestic life are reflected in his attitude. The wife's sarcastic allusion to the biblical twelfth commandment illustrates how cultural norms and practices can be utilized to address and question power imbalances in the domestic realm. She is drawing attention to how capricious and even humorous her husband's demands are by drawing a comparison between them and a biblical requirement. This illustrates how power relations in the home both impact and are influenced by cultural practices, which is compatible with the cultural materialist perspective. Shirley's words can be interpreted as a protest or criticism. Her statement highlights the power dynamics present in the household, wherein the husband appears to possess the authority to establish some "principles." By exposing the ridiculousness or inflexibility of these requests and opposing this authority, the wife's sarcasm highlights the gendered power dynamics in the home. The concepts of power relations put forward by Michel Foucault (1975) can also be applied to this situation. Foucault

highlights the idea that power is a network of power interactions rather than just a top-down structure. In this instance, the husband's Thursday meatball demand might be seen as a type of micro-power in the home. Shirley uses cultural allusions to subvert and undermine the authority her husband presumes, and her sarcastic comparison and misquotation of biblical passages might be interpreted as a subtle kind of resistance to this micro-power.

She encounters a dog that belongs to a vegan family on her way home. She thinks that it is not natural for a bloodhound to be a vegetarian dog. Therefore, she gives the piece of meat to the dog just to see the expression on the face of a dog who tastes meat for the first time in its life (Russell, 2014: 6). She has such a unique way of reasoning on her own. As a result, the meat that is supposed to go to her husband goes to the dog. Though Joe is expecting a mince, she makes an evening dinner of eggs and fries while speaking with the kitchen wall. In this context, Michel Foucault's theories on power relations are relevant. Giving the dog the meat rather than her spouse alters the normal power dynamics in the home. As a result of the protagonist's actions, the power dynamics inside home change, illustrating Foucault's idea that power may be both constructive and repressive. When she gives him a different menu than he decides, he is selfish enough to throw the plate away, to the other side of the table. He looks at the dish that she puts in front of him and asks: "What is this?", meaning he did not ask for this and then he throws it towards Shirley into her lap, all the eggs and chips fall on her lap. That is not a pleasant way when all the effort she puts into providing a meal is considered. He harms her physically to demonstrate the power and dominance of the male gender. According to Williams' argument (1960), cultural works, such as this theatrical scene, are not separate from their social and economic circumstances. The husband's response to Shirley's alternate menu option in this situation can be interpreted as an assertion of financial dominance. He thinks of himself as the family's main provider, therefore he exercises power by making the food decisions. Williams (1977: 49, 209) also explored how dominant ideologies shape societal values and norms, ensuring that the values of a particular group prevail over others. In this incident, the husband's behavior exemplifies the traditional patriarchal attitude. This behavior reinforces gender stereotypes, illustrating the pervasive influence of dominant social norms on individual actions and relationships. Additionally, Foucault (1979) explores how power functions in diverse social

circumstances. The husband's behavior in this scene can be interpreted as a display of power that is based on gender roles. He affirms his position as the dominating man in the relationship by rejecting Shirley's choice and throwing the plate at her. Furthermore, this behavior reflects not only his own selfishness but also the dynamics of power in their relationship. Power is a relational construct rather than just something that can be acquired. In a cultural and societal context, the scene illustrates power dynamics and gender interactions. The husband's actions in this scene not only physically hurt Shirley but also serve to maintain gender stereotypes and the disparity in power in their marriage.

Prior to a violent incident, there are underlying reasons why an act of violence is committed, a variety of particular problems might be an issue. Couples frequently have conflicts that involve multiple issues, they do not always agree on the source of their disagreement or who is to blame. According to the "Violence Against Wives Study" (1979), women's domestic work was one of the specific concerns that men and women typically cited as sources of tension that resulted in violence along with general issues including power and authority. While males claim that women are unable to fulfill or foresee their wants and charge them with all kinds of misdeeds that trigger their aggression against women, women complain that men are not willing to listen or try to comprehend their perspectives or worries. As in the case of Shirley, Joe is less worried about the routine of her talking to her kitchen wall while sipping wine than he is about to eat his steak on Thursday and chips and eggs on Tuesday. Many domestic labor-related issues frequently lead to arguments and disputes that result in violence (Dobash, 1998: 145). In Shirley's situation, which is a great insult, by throwing the plate towards her, not only he despises the food which is put in front of him but it is also an insult to the person who has made an effort to put something by will in front of him. He is so disinterested in the reaction he might get from his wife as he does not care if she is hurt and Shirley is hurt. Her husband is dependent on Shirley since he needs her to be at his command. This is how he sees his wife. Hence, she is a woman who seems to be put in the position of an unpaid servant by her family. Nobody bothers to treat her as a proper human being, a proper wife or a real woman. This is a patriarchal system in which she has lost her identity and her use. Hence, the play explores the effects of cultural norms and systems on relationships (Gale, 1996: 914). Men are frequently assigned the role of decision-makers in traditional gender roles, while

women are assigned the duty of food preparers. Joe's concentration on his meals and routines is an example of this power dynamic based on gender roles and cultural standards, which is in line with the ideas of Foucault and cultural materialism. This unequal gender dynamic creates a realm or place where power is ostensibly exerted by men. In accordance with Foucault's aforementioned "order of sexuality", she needs to be controlled as being part of the weaker sex. She cannot have her opinions on her own nor she could have a life outside of the family. Hence, it can be deduced that the definition of women in the 1980s was not that far from the Victorian definition of women. Still, once a woman was married, she lost all her control over her own identity.

Shirley is talking about a fact: women who are not pleased in their marriages usually have to delay getting a divorce as they think about their children; what they will do, and how they will be able to survive without a mother or with a stepmother or with just a father. It is also Shirley's excuse for her inaction: "I always said I'd leave him when the kids grew up - but by the time they'd grown up there was nowhere to go" (Russell, 2014: 2). Thus, she has sacrificed her happiness for the sake of her children. Drawing from Raymond Williams' (1977) insights of how cultural norms are constructed and perpetuated through dominant and residual modes, women's decisions are influenced by societal expectations regarding motherhood, caregiving responsibilities and traditional gender roles. The quotation above implies that women are taking into account cultural and societal conventions about motherhood and family structure. Another main reason for Shirley to delay getting a divorce is her economic condition. Since she had no economic liberty, her husband had the power to subjugate and mistreat her wife as he was the financially superior one. According to Marx (2009), money serves as a power for individuals in a capitalist society, giving its owner an opportunity to dominate and rule those without it (159). According to Karl Marx's perspective (1867), economic factors play a crucial part in determining social dynamics and power structures. This exemplifies the notion of economic determinism, according to which people's decisions and deeds are greatly impacted by their financial situation. When this approach is adopted to closely study the case of Shirley, it is self-evident that she is unable to support herself and her children on her own financially. Therefore, until she begins to earn her own money by working in a tavern by using her experience of cooking eggs and chips, she has to accept her fate in a manner of speaking as a mother and a wife in a household where she is looked down on. Money

is a means of acquiring "freedom" according to capitalist ideology (Marx, 2009: 145, 160). Hence, Marx's theories of economic determinism and class conflict are ostensibly serviceable in making sense of how Shirley's financial situation and her husband's financial supremacy impact the power relations in their marriage from a cultural materialist perspective. Her decisions and her capacity to claim her independence are influenced by these dynamics. She does not have a place to call home or any money. Foucault's idea of gender as a source of power is also pertinent in this situation. Women are often put in a position of weakness because of traditional gender roles and expectations, particularly when it comes to making decisions about divorce and financial independence. This resonates with cultural materialism and the ideas of Foucault, women's worries about the future, children, and survival are influenced by cultural conventions and the power dynamics in their relationships.

Her children are noticeably absent from her life, coming to her only in times of need—for money, for household chores or lodging—or other forms of support. There does not seem to be any wider familial connection or involvement for Shirley; her function seems to be limited to cooking for her husband. She has no life outside her home under the oppressive clutches of patriarchy. Even her definition of marriage is very problematic, she compares her marriage to the condition of the Middle East that recently found itself: "Marriage is like the Middle East isn't it? / There is no solution." (Russell, 2014: 4). Hence, this woman is caught up in this very ordinary kind of marriage, considers herself as deprived of her individuality, of her joy and life. She thought these would be a part of her mature life. Therefore, this is a great disillusionment for her. Her allegory of the Middle East and her assertion that there is no way out can be interpreted as a critique of the prevalent cultural discourse and marriage, emphasizing the necessity of challenging and reshaping societal norms, cultural expectations and power dynamics surrounding gender and marriage. This supports Williams' (1960) view that culture can be both disputed and hegemonic.

Gendered expectations are a common aspect of power dynamics in marriage. Women's dissatisfaction with conventional gender roles and societal expectations within the framework of marriage is also indicative of Foucault's ideas that power is exercised through the norms, expectations, and discourses that govern people's lives. She is also able to make fun of herself: "they say once you've reached your forties life gets a bit jaded" (Russell, 2014: 2) and she says: "I must have been an early developer",

which is a tongue-in-cheek expression. She is a person who can be critical of herself. Foucault's (1972) concept of power being embedded in discourse is relevant here. This statement of hers is indicative of a societal discourse about aging and contentment with life. People's experiences and expectations are shaped by this discourse as they get older. Shirley's sarcastic and satirical remark, "I must have been an early developer," challenges the prevailing societal discourse around aging. She playfully implies that she lost interest in life earlier than she thought she would, which may be interpreted as a type of resistance to the prevailing narrative that portrays aging as a time of decline. The prevailing cultural ideology surrounding aging includes the social perception that life gets "jaded" in one's forties. People's experiences and perspectives of their own lives can be influenced by this ideology. Hence, this highlights the influence of popular culture on people's experiences and ideas. Shirley's sardonic and humorous reply demonstrates her critical awareness of the power dynamics at play in forming societal norms and expectations, as well.

She is referring to a brand of chocolate in England and a TV advertisement for chocolates on TV, called "Milk Tray Man". The man who comes on the screen offers a tray of milk chocolates. She is taking this image in the advertisement for the fact that the actors are acting out as the lady for whom this guy swims his way through torrents "before you've had the horizontal party with them" (Russell, 2014: 3), which means until the lady slept with the man. He would have taken the trouble just to bring her a box of chocolate if she was going to sleep with him. Hence, the advertisement undermines women, as well. Foucault's assertion (1972) that power functions through language is clear from the examination of the "Milk Tray Man" commercial. In keeping with some societal conventions and expectations around gender and sexuality, the advertising depicts a man's activities as a means of obtaining a woman's sexual favor. The commercial upholds conventional gender norms and expectations. It presents men as active pursuers and women as passive recipients of gifts. Consumer culture's interplay between power and gender norms is seen in the expectation that a man will go to considerable lengths only to provide chocolates if there is an implied expectation of sexual involvement. A specific romantic and courtship mentality, according to which males should make grandiose gestures to entice women and possibly establish sexual intimacy, is portrayed and reinforced by the commercial. This

highlights how consumer culture and advertising reflect prevailing societal norms and power dynamics, as analyzed through the lens of cultural materialism.

Shirley's perspective of the feminist movement is shown in her belief that feminism is inherently hostile to men. She labels her close friend Jane as a feminist, blaming Jane's response to learning of her husband's romance with the milkman for this label (Russell, 2014: 3). Shirley claims that Jane's embrace of feminism is demonstrated by the fact that she does not put any milk in her tea, which is against British custom. Shirley's story has a lighthearted tone when talking about Jane's divorce and feminist identity. This is especially true when she includes anecdotal information about Jane, like her persistent refusal to drink milk. This humorous touch adds to the situation's complex portrayal. This illustrates how people's perceptions of feminism and gender dynamics can be influenced by cultural norms and public discourse. The way it presents Jane's defiant reaction to her husband's infidelity subverts conventional gender norms and expectations. The irony in Jane's refusal to add milk to her tea is an expression of her defiance of social mores. Williams' argument (1977) that culture can be challenged and altered is supported by this subversion. It emphasizes the value of humor as a weapon for challenging and subverting social conventions, particularly those pertaining to gender and marriage.

Jane is the only friend she has other than the wall and the one whom she can communicate with outside of her home environment. She gives her an option by buying her a ticket for a two-week vacation to Greece, which is the only ray of hope to escape from this dismal family life she is surrounded with. However, Shirley's conscience and desperate wish to go conflict. One of the main reasons for her hesitation to take this chance to travel to Greece is that she is concerned that she may be subject to assumptions that her presence there is motivated by intentions of engaging in sexual activities. She uses this common misconception and prejudice against women who travel on their own as a way of responding to her daughter's observation that "it's disgustin'." " 'Yes, that's right Millandra- I'm goin' to Greece for the sex; sex for breakfast, sex for dinner, sex for tea an' sex for supper.' " (Russell, 2014: 18). In the context of this line, Raymond Williams' (1977) insights into cultural materialism are applicable. A hegemonic notion about female behavior and freedom is reflected in the cultural norm or prejudice that presumes women traveling alone are looking for sex. Irony and comedy can be used to subvert this standard and challenge dominant cultural

norms. In response to her daughter's observation, the woman subverts the prevailing cultural norm with her hilarious reaction. She highlights the ridiculousness and injustice of such expectations and judgments by exaggerating and making fun of the stereotype. This emphasizes how comedy can be a powerful instrument for challenging and inverting gender and travel-related power dynamics as well as cultural standards.

Another reason is that although she is incredibly tempted to go, she is aware that her husband will be strongly opposed. Hence, for the 42-year-old working-class British housewife, receiving this offer for travel is a significant occasion (Edelstein, 1999). She is planning what she might say to her husband in her mind. She assumed that being away from home for a couple of weeks is a long time since she worries about who is going to look after her husband for two weeks if the unpaid servant called wife goes away. She says: “imagine the face on ‘him’. Imagine the face if he had to look after himself for two weeks” (Russell, 2014: 3). The woman's belief that her spouse will strongly object to her travels is indicative of the dominant gender stereotypes that dictate women's roles in the home. The societal norm that dictates women should take care of the home and provide care is a type of hegemony that women must negotiate. The way she is mentally prepared for her talk with her husband shows how to negotiate cultural conventions and the ability to question and challenge established gender roles. Even the way her husband defines the items in the kitchen such as “the white blob” and “the brown blob” shows that he is unfamiliar with the utensils or machines in the kitchen as Shirley is probably the one who is using them all the time. Men like Joe do not like to and cannot look after themselves. This unfamiliarity of Joe depicts the misunderstanding about how domestic work was and has still been regarded as feminized labor. The presumption that Joe is not familiar with kitchen items because he is a man perpetuates gender stereotypes that assume men as unfit or incapable of domestic work. Williams explores how culture shapes societal standards in works like *Marxism and Literature* (1977). By criticizing the husband's unfamiliarity with kitchenware, she subverts these preconceptions and stereotypes. She challenges cultural norms and hegemony by highlighting this ignorance and the presumptions that surround it and emphasizes the need for equitable distribution of labor. When she refers to Joe, Shirley takes a detached narrative attitude and uses the third-person singular pronoun ‘he’ within inverted commas: “ ‘He’

doesn't drink wine. 'He' says wine is nothin' but a posh way of gettin' pissed" (Russell, 2014: 4).

The couple's married life is defined by a set routine, best illustrated by the frequent vacation spot they choose—the Isle of Man—which they maintained for fifteen years because Joe has a personal connection to the island (Russell, 2014: 4). This prolonged repetition makes Shirley feel bored and predictable, which makes her want to escape the boring routine of her existence. Additionally, the play implies a dynamic in which Joe's choices determine how they behave. For example, his dislike of flying because of jet lag influences their vacation plans and implies that Shirley's wishes are subordinate to Joe's. As a result, the story suggests that Shirley's agency is subservient to Joe's demands and preferences in their relationship. He experiences a cultural shock even when he visits the same location often that is different from where they reside, demonstrating how he is firmly rooted in his routine. Shirley is unable to get him to look around because he is accustomed to particular aspects of life. The name "Man" of the Isle of Man serves as an indication of the patriarchal rule and domination of male preferences in Shirley's marriage. The word itself serves to emphasize the gender dynamics at work, in which Shirley's needs and wishes are suppressed and subordinated to the male figure's routines and desires. Choosing Greece as the setting for Shirley's expression of independence stands in stark contrast to Isle of Man. Since Greece is often associated with feminine symbolism and is recognized historically as the starting point of Western civilization. It is a country that represents beauty, freedom, and renewal. The country's feminine connotations make it a fitting choice for Shirley's quest to empowerment and self-fulfillment. Shirley's transition from a life confined by male-dominated routines to one where she can explore her own identity and desires is highlighted by the striking contrast between the masculine-coded Isle of Man and the feminine-coded Greece. Greece and the Isle of Man therefore function as powerful opposing symbols in the drama. Greece represents Shirley's path towards freedom, self-discovery, and the reclaiming of her own identity, whereas the Isle of Man stands for the gendered limitations and patriarchal control of her previous life.

The couple's vacation choices demonstrate the dynamics of Michel Foucault's concept of micro-practices of power. Going to the same location often and insisting on carrying out Joe's wishes represent an expression of dominance in the relationship. Shirley is subject to these small-scale acts of power since Joe's preferences and

regulations become the norm. The holiday customs of the couple are consistent with the concept of dominant cultural practices as well. An instance of social conventions in their individual choices is suggested by their fifteen years of recurrent travel to the Isle of Man. Although Shirley might be looking for a break from the routine, Joe's preferences seem to be hegemonic, therefore Shirley may be negotiating or challenging the dominant conventions in their relationship.

The protagonist's storytelling style is not linear; she jumps between topics without following a clear timeline. She might be talking about her son one moment and then switch to discussing something happening in the present. She might then talk about her disappointments and recollections of her previous school experiences in between. There is a relationship between the various subjects she discusses despite these jumps, demonstrating how her memories and thoughts flow freely without following a set sequence. This scene serves as an excellent example of the stream of consciousness technique, which aims to capture the spontaneous flow of thoughts and feelings. The protagonist's fragmented narrative reflects human cognition, giving a deeper understanding of her mentality and demonstrating how past experiences influence her present state of mind. Her experiences and feelings become more real and relatable as a result of this method.

When she comes across her former classmate, Marjorie Mayors, she starts to contemplate her life, and her past and begins to shed tears (Edelstein, 1999). Shirley's father enjoys reading encyclopedias and shares his knowledge with his children, including details about a former prime minister of Ireland. Despite being ignored and belittled by her husband and daughter, Shirley demonstrates intelligence and awareness through her reading and informed discussions. Shirley's personality is consistent with Foucault's theories of knowledge (1979) as a tool of resistance. She challenges the power structures in her family with her intelligence and well-informed demeanor. Her knowledge destroys the traditional notions of her place in the home and her husband's and daughter's opinions of her. They do not seem to appreciate her as she is modest, she does not put herself first, which is her main problem. She has always been docile by trying to please others rather than looking out for herself. Williams (1960) also examined how individual behaviors are shaped by societal norms and values. Social norms around gender roles are the reason behind Shirley's submissive

demeanor and selflessness. It is possible that she adopted the notion that women ought to put the needs of others before their own.

Shirley wishes she could be like Marjorie, which makes her jealous of her. However, her thoughts quickly shift from the past to the present moment. Shirley initially assumes Marjorie is an air hostess, but is shocked to discover she is actually a hooker. Shirley used to admire Marjorie, but this revelation casts doubt on her opinion of her. Years later, Marjorie admits that she wanted to be like Shirley. Marjorie confronted her friend from her school days and made her realize that she had slowly lost her true identity as Shirley Valentine. In that way, Shirley has come to an awakening of what life turned her into by recalling: "I used to be Shirley Valentine". She goes on questioning her life: "Who turned me into this? I don't want this." (Russell, 2014: 11-12). She is going through an identity crisis and realizing that she stopped being her former self. She has estranged herself emotionally, looking back at her younger days as if she were an outsider, reminiscing about the beauty of harmony, love and friendship. In fact, she is mourning the loss of youth and happiness and the joy of life that she had shared together with her husband when they were young. She mourns for everything valuable that has slipped away over time, yet she does not know when she has started losing her identity as Shirley Valentine. When she lost the joy of life, which she shared with Joe, Shirley turned into a woman who goes through the same things every day mechanically without any sense of joy, love, or friendship as she does not get any from him. It turns into a very dry, dull relationship. That is why she is mourning her lost youth and identity.

Her feeling of losing her identity can be interpreted as a reflection of how gender norms and other power dynamics influence how people view themselves. Women might accept and follow the gendered norms that are imposed by the society. She said: "He says he still loves me y'know. But he doesn't. It is just somethin' he says." (Russell, 2014: 12). It is like when someone says "good morning" or "hello" without really meaning it, and she knows it. She recalled the moment when she served him chips instead of meat and how he threw it into her lap. It hurts her as it would hurt anyone. She has been putting up with such treatment for a long year. Thus, she has long suffered without complaining but there comes a time in any person's life when he or she could not tolerate anymore and says enough is enough. When he throws the plate away and shouts at her, this is the last drop of the glass for Shirley. It is the

moment he insults her. No woman deserves such treatment coming from her husband. She could have thrown the plate back at her husband's face yet she keeps everything to herself. She does not let out her anger; it is all suppressed. She has been suppressing all those feelings: her anger, the way she has been mistreated and just sharing it with the wall. This is the tragic part. The fact that Shirley repressed her rage and abuse can also be explained by the way that women's autonomy and emotional expression are constrained by gender norms and power systems within the framework of cultural materialism.

There is no one who would come and commiserate with her or encourage her to stand up and defy her husband. It is through self-awareness that she finds the strength to do so for herself. Even after she decided to leave for Greece, she fixed everything for her husband without him noticing anything wrong. She works like a slave, "Three weeks secretly ironin' and' packin', cooking' all his meals for this two weeks" (Russell, 2014: 15). She arranges everything for her mother to come and take the dishes, to prepare the food out of the freezer for her husband. She even prayed to God: "just do me a big favour God an' don't make me pay for it durin' this fortnight. Don't let anythin' happen to our Millandra, our Brian. An' keep Joe safe. Please." (Russell, 2014: 14-15). She is being ironic again: "With a bit of luck 'he' won't even notice I'm not here." (15). Shirley's inner monologue, which includes her sarcastic remark about her spouse not noticing her disappearance and her prayer to God for protection, illustrates her distinctive kind of perseverance. Foucault (1979) believed in the concept of self-resilience against repressive power structures. In his work, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, he explores how people react to and negotiate power structures. This includes both private and public coping mechanisms for oppression. Shirley plans her escape as a way to express her independence and escape the confines of her marriage.

Cultural materialism offers a critical perspective on patriarchal oppression through gender power relations. It highlights how societal norms and values are intricately entwined with economic and class hierarchies, emphasizing the interaction between culture and material circumstances. Shirley's position as a devout wife, limited by social expectations and household duties, illustrates the widespread impact of patriarchal ideology. In addition to defining her identity, this cultural framework restricts her autonomy and regulates how she acts. Despite being underappreciated and

unpaid, her work in the home is crucial to the survival of the capitalist system. Shirley contributes to the maintenance of economic status quo by indirectly supporting the labor force by ensuring the well-being of her husband and children. This unpaid domestic work is an example of what Marxists refer to as the capitalist framework's exploitation of women, wherein women's contributions are hidden and made subservient to the demands of the male breadwinner. Her covert escape plans constitute a kind of resistance that can be seen as a minor but important contestation of the prevailing power structures from Foucauldian perspective. Overall, Shirley's narrative serves as a striking example of the multifaceted nature of patriarchal oppression. By drawing on the insights of Foucault, Williams and Marx, we see how micro-power dynamics within the home, cultural norms and economic factors collectively perpetuate patriarchal control and gender stereotypes.

III. DIVERSE RESPONSES OF WOMEN TO PATRIARCHAL VICTIMIZATION

Women's varied reactions to patriarchal victimization are essential to comprehending the complex ways that women negotiate and subvert oppressive systems. In John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, Alison's struggle and eventual submission serve as a stark reminder of the constraints and social pressures placed on women in a patriarchal society. In Willy Russell's *Shirley Valentine*, on the other hand, the protagonist uses travel alone to set out on a journey of self-discovery and empowerment. This search for self and identity shows a proactive and freeing response to patriarchal oppression, which contrasts sharply with Alison's passive acceptance.

This chapter aims to shed light on the different ways that women may either submit to or fight patriarchal control by examining these varied responses. It also highlights the significance of individual agency and resilience in the face of systemic oppression.

A. Maintenance of Patriarchal Views on Women in *Look Back in Anger*

In the end, after Alison has a miscarriage, Jimmy no longer feels intimidated. At last, they retreat into their fictitious world as squirrel and bear. Since they are at their most affectionate when they pretend, Alison confirms this in her words:

The game we play: bears and squirrels, squirrels and bear. It was the one way of escaping from everything...Full of dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other. Playful, careless, creatures in their own cosy zoo for two. A silly symphony for people who couldn't bear the pain of being human beings any longer. (Osborne, 1960: 47)

By returning to Jimmy when the baby is lost, she also returns to his furious existence, which means that her misery will resume. As a matter of fact, they lack the mutual support and marital unity that exists between husband and wife. Alison would not have

been able to bring him back if Helena had stayed. Despite the fact that Jimmy is mostly to blame for all of these unfortunate circumstances, he is unaffected by her grief, leaving her at the mercy of his mistress. In this way, the wife triumphs over the other woman and the marriage that was in ruins is somehow saved. However, it cannot ensure them a happy marriage since she will continue to doubt him due to her awareness of his secret relationship with Helena. He might have prolonged their relationship and would have ignored Alison's existence if she had not returned. People like him do not change themselves in an instant (Haque, 2014). In Cliff's departure after her return, Jimmy will be urged to utter hurtful comments, which will once more turn her life into hell because: "... in the end she accepts her role as the dominated partner ..." (Carnal, 1968: 130). Kathrine J. Worth asserts that they are both defeated by an incompatibility that is too ingrained to be healed (1963: 5). Thus, her return will be in vain. Dumur (1968) claims that "Finally...everything returns to a status quo" (174). Those in power want to maintain the status quo as any changes would directly impact how the superstructure is formed. They determine how genders should behave in a certain way in a system and create a collective consciousness. Cultural norms and expectations that prescribe gender roles can help us understand how patriarchal attitudes are maintained within marriages. Hegemonic societal expectations of marriage and family may have an impact on "the illusionary world" that they create for themselves with Alison's homecoming and the effort to save the marriage. It's possible to interpret Alison's homecoming as an effort to stop Jimmy's activities from ruining their marriage. Nonetheless, the enduring patriarchal perception indicates the constraints of this kind of compromise when confronted with profoundly established societal conventions.

In the end, after her miscarriage, the subconscious wish of all the characters is unearthed through Alison's words, which is to go back to the mother's womb. Since it is the only place they would feel safe, secure and get a sense of belonging in a post-war world. "It's gone! It's gone! That- that helpless human being inside my body. I thought it was so safe, and secure in there" (Osborne, 1960: 95). It shows that they have lost all contact and sense of belonging, which is the disease of the modern times. Even the thought of the baby is gone in the life of them. There is no illusion of security or sense of belonging even in her womb since she could not provide that for her child. They come to an awareness of their true selves. Yet, they still cannot believe that they

would survive in an ordinary life as being themselves. The final speech is about their retreating into their illusionary world of animals. It is the only place where they can be as free with one another as possible as the bear and the squirrel. It is an escapist way. They are not strong enough to stand up and confront the harsh reality. In this world of animals, nobody from the outside would be able to hurt them. Even they themselves will not be able to hurt each other with pointed, cynical, hateful remarks. In a way, just like Jimmy's anger or Alison's silence, this illusionary world is also a bubble that they create for themselves. In addition, from Alison's perspective, she is unable to reconstruct herself a true identity. Instead, she chooses to accept and adopt Jimmy's concept of life in which being aggressive is connected to being or feeling alive. Thus, Alison maintains the patriarchal views on women which leads her to end up retreating into an illusionary world by adopting a false identity with her husband in an escapist way. Since they have nowhere to hide in reality, they must escape to the shelter of their imaginations. Pretending to be a tiny, little squirrel, she needs somebody to protect her from all the evils outside of this bubble they create. They represent creatures who are unlikely to come together in the natural order. In reality, a squirrel is only a mouthful of food for the bear. However, in their fantasy world, the bear represents the overall protective force that Alison has been longing for and could not find within herself. She hopes and needs Jimmy to provide that for her. The idea that power functions via societal institutions, as proposed by Michel Foucault (1975), is pertinent here. The post-war world's power structures can be interpreted as the reason behind the protagonists' retreat into an imaginary realm. The death of the child represents losing one's sense of safety and identity in a potentially hostile and harsh society. If Williams' exploration of dominant cultural norms is taken into consideration, the protagonists' retreat into a world of delusion is symbolic of their rejection of or flight from the dominant societal standards and expectations. An alternate reality could be created as a result of the post-war world's lack of security and belonging. She may have a patriarchal view of femininity, which is why she is unable to reconstruct a true identity for herself. This adoption of a fictitious identity illustrates how society's standards have an impact on how people construct their identities. Hence, Alison's adoption of a false identity within her escapist fantasy illustrates the influence of gender norms and societal expectations on individual identity creation, while the retreat into an illusionary world shows a rejection of the dominant cultural hegemony. Moreover, the

drama primarily serves to demonstrate the societal oppression experienced by women. In this manner, the readers are able to recognize that the acts committed by the characters stem from the patriarchal system.

B. Regaining Identity through ‘Solo-travel’ as a Quest for Self in *Shirley Valentine*

Shirley must deal with the harsh truth of having lost her identity. Change has started to take place. The brief interaction with Marjorie, a former classmate, sets the process into action. After this encounter, she agreed to go to Greece. Shirley lies spontaneously when her neighbor Gillian asks about the vacation, saying she is traveling with a lover. Instead of being shocked, Gillian visits Shirley's home and brings her a silk robe as a gift.

Gillian believed that it was perfectly possible for me to be some marvellous, brave, living woman. I got me mirror out and'looked at meself, an'tried to see the woman that Gillian had seen in me. In Gillian's eyes I was no longer Shirley the neighbour, Shirley the middle-aged mother, Shirley Bradshaw. I had become Shirley The Sensational, Shirley The Brave, Shirley Valentine. An' even if I couldn't see it in the mirror, even if none of it was true about me takin' a lover an' all that rubbish- the point is that Gillian had believed it. Believed it was possible of me. I tried the robe on. It was perfect. It was beautiful. An' in that moment...so was I. (Russell, 2014: 20)

Through Gillian and her gift, Shirley has seen a glimpse of what she aspired to become as well as what had been lost. There are two sides to every change. One aspect of this is the release of the past. Making room for fresh starts is the other side (Edelstein, 1999: 20). Shirley serves as a role model for women travelers in the future. For women travelers like Shirley, the world beyond their house has been considered both a perplexing and thrilling place. Hers is a self-determined escape from the physical and ideological areas to which she had been condemned and confined as a result of her search for coping mechanisms.

Numerous studies conducted over the past twenty years have shown the “empowering” and fulfilling role that travel can play in women’s lives. In their comparative study of American and British solo female travelers, Gibson and Jordan

(1998) demonstrated that traveling alone offered a sense of independence, empowerment, and increased emotions of confidence. Many of the women expressed an interest in meaningful travel in part because they understood that autonomous travel served as a means of improving oneself as well as a means of finding oneself and one's identity. There is a recognition that autonomous travel involves both an inner and an exterior journey. 'Travel's more than a physical thing; it's a psychological thing ... a spiritual thing ... there's that combination of going somewhere on a physical plane, but you're also going somewhere on a psychological, experiential plane' (Maryse, solo traveler). Some of the people claimed that they had to get over fear in order to leave their "comfort zone" and travel by themselves, yet it opened up new avenues for contemplation. Getting over travel anxieties led to an improvement in self-confidence and self-awareness. Traveling alone also provided the women with time for introspection and the ability to set aside time for their own requirements and desires just as in the case of Shirley. The women's perception of autonomous travel as liberating is strongly related to a quest for one's self and identity. Many women stated feeling empowered as a result of overcoming the difficulties of travel and social norms; thus, autonomous travel had many advantages. Making their own decisions and exercising self-control were important components of several of the women's definitions of empowerment (Harris&Wilson, 2006: 163-166). Hence, Shirley rejects the expectations and hegemonic roles that are placed on women through her journey to discover who she is. Her quest is in line with a reevaluation of cultural expectations and an exploration of a more true self.

I'm goin' to the land beyond the wall. I'm gonna sit an' eat olives on a Greek seafront. An' I don't even like olives. But I might like them in Greece. They eat squid y'know. An' octopus – they do. An' I'm gonna eat it too. I don't care. I'm gonna do everythin'. I'm gonna try anything. Like I used to. Unafraid. Without fear of anythin' new. I'll be Shirley The Brave. Course, I'm terrified really. But I'm not gonna let it show. I'm not gonna let it stop me from enjoyin' things. (Russell, 2014: 20)

Finding a means to overcome fear is neither easy nor common, yet Shirley did develop courage. Character traits develop as people age and experience more. As a result of the exhaustion and despair over what we did and how others treated us, we become

irrational and jeopardize our safety. She contemplates while sitting by the sea in Greece:

What I kept thinkin' about was how I'd lived such a little life. An'one way or another even that would be over pretty soon. I thought to meself, my life has been a crime really- a crime against God, because...I didn't live it fully. I'd allowed myself to live this little life when inside me there was so much. So much more that I could have lived a bigger life with- but it had all gone unused, an' now it would never be. (Russell, 2014: 6)

Shirley reflects on the life she never had, and her journey to Greece by leaving that claustrophobic atmosphere of home, which is dominated by her husband's existence. It marks the initial step in her quest to rediscover herself. She knows what her position is within the family and she is trying to get out of this. Hence, she is trying to retain her former identity as Shirley Valentine. After she has taken up her husband's surname, she feels robbed of her real, original identity. She is just a tool in this household.

In act two, Jane also leaves her even before they land on Greece, which hurts her. This betrayal of Jane echoes similar instances of betrayal by others in her life. Shirley is left all by herself again and this is the friend who seems to sympathize with her situation and the one who offered to go. She had placed herself in an unfamiliar circumstance, and in this setting, fresh thoughts and actions surfaced. Dealing with the emotions that came with her vacation required bravery on her part. It was a wise gamble. Shirley discovered new aspects of herself in Greece; grief is also a means of recalling all the lovely aspects of life and oneself. She started feeling good about herself again for the first time after years. After she meets Costas, who comes over like a philosopher, they make out and she has the time of her life. While her husband criticizes the birthmarks and the stretches on her body as a forty-two-year-old woman, she cannot look at herself and be pleased with herself. However, Costas touches her scars and seems not to be bothered about all of those (II, I, 5). This is part of you as a woman he said, describing them as a representation of beauty. That is such a great boost and a healing process for her, being liked and appreciated as a woman, which makes her confidence return. Costas makes her feel alive. Physical traits serve as essential indicators of the major achievements in our lives. The traits that are being

attacked are those that are typically seen as causes of shame by both women and the cosmetic industry.

Media and industry treat women as commodities and always present them as “imperfect”. As a result, women define themselves according to men and the expectations of the media. Perfection is something unachievable and is never demanded by males. We are all ruled by social dictates. Stretch marks on a woman's belly might be reconsidered as representations of a body that brought life to others instead of as something unpleasant and degrading. If women are able to see the stretch marks on their breasts and tummy as noble scars gained in the growth of their children, their perceptions of their bodies may be much more embracing, similar to the proudly worn wounds of men who were attacked during a war. Accepting oneself and self-esteem are strengthened when people view the traits they have struggled so hard to acquire during their life as indicators of their accomplishment rather than as unavoidable and ugly signs of aging (Daniluk, 2003: 353).

The sea and Costas heal Shirley's wounded pride and parts that her husband, her family and her friend have hurt. As she swims nude and enjoys every second of this natural environment, she finds joy and a sense of belonging. The act of swimming in the sea symbolizes themes of rebirth, salvation, and coming to life through water. Thus, in a way, she has been baptized by the waters of Greece, and she has claimed her real identity as that of Shirley Valentine who is independent, strong and sure of herself. The home, a man-made institution that has turned into a prison for her, stands in stark contrast to the sea, which symbolizes nature and a non-institutional place. For her to reclaim her identity, this contrast is crucial and highly symbolic. The sea provides a vast, liberated place where she can rediscover and redefine herself, while the home, dominated by routine and cultural expectations, restricts her. Like the womb's nurturing and life-giving environment, the sea's immensity and natural essence represent a return to a primal state. Shirley has a feeling of rejuvenation and rebirth in this natural environment. As she is swimming, she comes to the realization that she does not want to return home. In a way, she is uniting with Greece and everything that Greece represents to her, embracing her newfound freedom and sense of self. She has “fallen in love with the idea of living” (II, I, 9). She is coming to a point in her life where she has to make a decision. She goes to Greece and unknowingly she sucks the merry of life. She has no expectation of any relationship with Costas. She was lonely

and he was understanding and he does the same with every English tourist who comes to his hotel. That is why, when Shirley comes back, Costas is shocked to see her since he was going through the same method with another English woman. However, this one-night stand has made Shirley aware of herself as her Shirley Valentine identity. It is like a touch that brings vitality into her being. Costas made her feel as a female, as a woman and as herself. After being treated the way she was by her husband, she forgot that she was a woman. Costas, who was experienced in this, reached out to her. She has made up her mind not to go back. Just as they are in the airport, she turns back and rushes to the village, to Costas' taverna for offering to work with him. She uses her experience in cooking eggs and chips for the British tourists who come to the hotel and British customers are pleased. She turns everything in her favor. She would never be the Shirley she had been in the past; therefore, she desires to lead a full life as a grown-up. Shirley is a determined, sensible person who disputes her status as a subservient, devoted wife and mother. She informed her bewildered and accusing husband of her decision to leave the house and why she has chosen to leave him as she prepares to leave the restrictive domestic environment.

The only holiday romance I've had, is with meself Joe. An'...an' I think...I've come to like meself, really.' I said to him, I said, 'I think I'm all right Joe. think that if...if I saw me, I'd say, that woman's O.K. ...She's alive. She's not remarkable, she's not gonna...gonna be there in the history books. But she's she's there in the time she's livin' in. (Russell, 2014: 10)

Shirley reawakened and regained her life. She needed to travel for a reunion and reconciliation with her true self in order to be "in the time she's livin' in." as given in the quote above. Before beginning the next phase of her life, she had to confront and mourn the parts that she had not lived. Shirley serves as a reminder that some of life's greatest sufferings reside internally, such as a life that was not fully lived. We engage in a transforming, psychological activity that helps us cope with our loss as we release. What we feel cannot be trusted. Emotions catch us off guard as we pass through blurry stages. To adjust to the new, time is required. Time will prepare and help us believe. Shirley had extra time to be prepared since physiological and developmental changes provided Shirley with more forewarning. Even if we dismiss the initial indications of a shift and carry on as usual, realization ultimately comes upon us, and the emotions start. In the process of releasing the old, the conflict between holding on and letting go

is the phase that takes the longest. The feelings shift and frequently get stronger. At the conclusion of the process, neither what will be left of us nor who we will be known. If the emotions of sadness are suppressed and cannot be experienced, one would be unable to release his or her rage and stuck in fury. Shirley felt depressed over her wasted life. She compared the dreary present to the colorful past and longed to leave anything that was nasty. Everyone should determine which pieces of their old life can be retained and which must be abandoned in order to move forward and become the person we need to become. We must give in to all feelings: "shame, fear, anxiety, emptiness and more" (Edelstein, 1999: 20-23).

Shirley's battle against patriarchal authoritarianism shows that gender roles may be reversed. The dynamic between the dominant and other groups may alter as Sinfield (2001) argues because "[the] relations between economic, political, military and cultural power" are not "harmonious" or "coherent" but rather "uneven" and "changing" (9). The drama shows that the victim can triumph over the abuser. The play's last scene is significant because it depicts the shift in the power dynamics between Joe and Shirley. Since Shirley is only allowed to handle domestic issues up until she goes to Greece, thus the shift in Joe and Shirley's roles is startling. Joe, on the contrary, hardly spends time at home since he has a life outside of it. He works and makes money in the public realm. He owes a great deal of his authority to the outside world, where men like him are regarded as the owners of the capital. However, Joe and Shirley switch places and roles in the last scene; at this point, Joe is abandoned and stays in the domestic setting and is placed in a position of weakness.

According to Foucault (1990), oppositions that "are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behavior" (96) can bring about an alteration, shift, or uprising. Shirley's choice to leave her home, her husband, and her children should not be interpreted as a personal revolt that has no impact on the fall of the patriarchal social order as it offers an opportunity for altering the power dynamics between the sexes. In an initial attempt to keep Shirley from leaving him, Joe uses patriarchal language to remind her of her responsibilities as a wife and mother. He is trying to touch her vulnerable spots by making the children an excuse. However, Shirley, he knew did not exist anymore that is what she said. When she decides not to go back, the alarm bells ring in her family. The husband calls her

back, she has made him realize how much she means to him and how much he needs her in his life not as an unpaid servant or cook but as his wife and partner, teaching him a life lesson. By creating an opposing discourse, Shirley challenges Joe's defense of patriarchal discourse and asserts that she has a responsibility to herself before her spouse or children as she needs to discover her true self without taking into account gender stereotypes.

In conclusion, this is a transformation of a woman who has been misused, not abused but mistreated by all the members of her family. It is a dream of hers that comes true and there is a confrontation with self. It was a healing process for Shirley. She is coming alive through self-illumination and she claims her own identity back as Shirley Valentine. Through her words, she means that she is no one in a patriarchal world anymore:

“But I'm gonna sit here an' watch for Joe an' as he walks down the esplanade, an' keeps walkin', because he doesn't recognise me anymore, I'll call out to him. An' as he walks back, an' looks at me, all puzzled an' quizzical, I'll say to him, -'Hello. I used to be the mother. I used to be your wife. But now, I'm Shirley Valentine again. Would you like to join me for a drink?' ”

(Russell, 2014: 10).

She is not going to do the ironing, and she will not be serving her family. If they like her or want her, they are to come to her. She is very happy with what she is doing: she is working as a cook in the kitchen of Costas' hotel and she has found her place and herself in Greece. She is happy with her newfound personality. It is a turning point in her life.

IV. CONCLUSION

Contemporary theatre's examination of gender, power and identity offers a multifaceted exploration of social systems, institutions and human experiences. This study has shed light on the complex relationships that exist between gendered behaviors, power dynamics and identity development in patriarchal societies through the analysis of the chosen plays: *Look Back in Anger* and *Shirley Valentine*, as it is stated in the Introduction in Chapter One. Through a close examination of the actions, dialogues and interactions between the characters, important insights regarding the establishment and resistance of gender norms and power dynamics become apparent. Both plays stand as dramatic debates that resonate with cultural materialism, exploring the interconnectedness of social structures and the construction of gender identities. Cultural materialism, as applied here, views power dynamics through the lens of discourse and institutions, examining how language and cultural norms uphold gender standards. Foucault's examination of how power functions through discourses and institutions offers a lens to understand the power dynamics at play in the construction of gender identities within the plays. The idea that power is inherent in speech, as proposed by Foucault, provides important insights into how language establishes and upholds gender standards. The plays' depictions of women as victims illustrate the ways in which discourse shapes perceptions and power dynamics between genders and can be seen as a manifestation of discursive constructions that normalize patriarchal power relations. Marx's examination of society's material circumstances improves our comprehension of the connection between economic systems and gendered power disparities. Marx's insights illuminate the manner in which material conditions and class dynamics serve to perpetuate patriarchal ideas by highlighting the intersection of gendered power relations and economic inequality. Williams's approach emphasizes how cultural items contribute to the maintenance of gendered power differences. Williams's focus on the interaction of culture and society offers a framework for examining the ways in which gendered identities and behaviors influence and are influenced by social institutions.

Women audiences can explore their present and future possibilities on stage through theatre as it offers a suitable space in which to speak out freely on issues that have long been suppressed after they have been continuously silenced throughout the ages. The chosen plays demonstrate the different chosen options by women characters and their results within a patriarchal society. It is through the repeated application of laws, rules and standards that gender is a process whereby rules and norms come into existence and become reality.

The conventional view was still a major factor and continued to have a significant impact on the ideological debate over men's and women's positions as gendered individuals. The process of gender involves the formation and implementation of rules and regulations, which happens when these rules are frequently reinforced and repeated. The selected plays' development heavily incorporates gender. In *Look Back in Anger*, Osborne criticizes post-war British society by exposing the problematic dynamics of Jimmy Porter and Alison's relationship. Their interactions serve as microcosms of broader societal issues, reflecting the shifting gender roles and power dynamics of the post-war era. In the framework of a patriarchal culture, the play explores the complexity of gender identity and power through Jimmy's misogynistic tirades and Alison's submissive silence as it is discussed in detail in the second Chapter of this study. The underlying theme of *Look Back in Anger* suggests that while the man of the house uses his domineering demeanor to establish his dominance within the household, the woman of the home demonstrates her femininity by submitting to her spouse's authority and keeping herself busy with household duties. A closer look at how the characters deal with cultural expectations while staying within the boundaries of family dynamics is prompted by Osborne's investigation of these deeply ingrained gender roles. The male character turns his class-based resentments into sexual animosity. On the other hand, the feminine wife, who stands for the possibility of motherhood and female sexuality, emerges as a figure of unexpected power and imminent danger for the male protagonist. Jimmy has to eliminate her ability to procreate in order to come to terms with her, and that may be the only way for them to find a common ground. Through this investigation, the play explores controversial issues pertaining to the nature of sexual relationships and family dynamics, shedding light on the power conflicts that are intrinsic to gender dynamics. Yet, despite raising these provocative questions, there

remains a noticeable bias in favor of the male character, as the narrative tends to prioritize his perspective over that of the female character. The other characters are just presented as supporting characters. They have no function other than sharing information about Jimmy. Alison is also not given the same amount of stage presence. This disparity highlights broader social norms that maintain uneven power relations both inside and outside home.

It emerges that the domestic setting on the stage serves as a platform for the assertion of patriarchal control. Since the kitchen is traditionally considered a female domain, the male characters use it just as their place of residence to spend time and a place to subjugate their wives. As a result, making the label "kitchen-sink" theater is absurd when considering the role of the female characters in the selected plays. When Jimmy's crucial and dominant role in the play is taken into account, Osborne's prejudiced approach becomes even more evident. With the most powerful tool at his disposal, language, he is the one who is able to make the most important remarks on significant problems regarding British society.

Shirley Valentine also provides an exploration of gender, identity, and autonomy. However, it has presented the journey of its heroine through her narrative. The play highlights the tension between the dominant socioeconomic discourses of men and the "subordinate" discourses of women, primarily through the case of Shirley, a middle-class wife, who is subjected to patriarchal discourses on gender, morality, and economics. As it is presented in Chapter two of this research, the patriarchal society that limits the female protagonist's personal and financial liberties by keeping her confined to the home gives her the roles of a submissive and a supportive spouse and a caring mother. Given her exposure to both patriarchal and capitalist forces, Shirley is subject to two types of subjugation. Her husband, Joe, insults her, believing that his status and gender make him superior. As the family's head and in charge of handling finances, Joe seeks to exert control over Shirley. In addition, he treats his wife, who has no economic independence, like a slave by exploiting his financial dominance. Joe reaffirms his role as a patriarch of capitalism while confining Shirley to the home, where she is seen as a subordinate being and treated as an inhumane creature whose only responsibility is to take care of her husband and children. Due to her lack of financial autonomy, Shirley is unable to break free from her constrained household obligations and must submit to her husband, who provides for her. Yet, as

she realizes how flawed the established social structure is, she rejects the identities that have been assigned to her. As the third chapter presented, when she starts to work at Costas' tavern by cooking eggs and chips, Shirley earns her own income, which gives her financial autonomy and the ability to make her own decisions. Marxist perspective, which emphasizes the significance of financial autonomy in obtaining personal freedom and escaping repressive structures, makes this economic liberty crucial. Shirley's labor was unpaid and unappreciated while she cooked at home for her husband, which strengthened her subordinate status within the household. On the other hand, through her employment at the tavern, she can get involved with the economy at large, achieving financial independence and the associated authority. This change is significant because it represents a shift from unpaid domestic labor to paid labor. According to Marxist theory, those who control the means of production, such as Joe in the household, have authority over those who do not. Shirley challenges the prevailing patriarchal and capitalist structures that have trapped her by starting to reclaim her agency and power through earning her own money. Her financial freedom represents a departure from the restrictive confines of the home and a step toward self-determination and the development of a new, individual identity. This change emphasizes the vital role that economic independence plays in the quest for individual freedom and the breakdown of patriarchal authority.

Joe immediately calls her back by making their children an excuse. In that way, he actually uses the patriarchal discourse to remind her of her responsibilities as a wife and mother. She comes to see that her spouse is a spokesperson for the established ideologies. She consequently chooses to abandon her forced domestic identity to create a new unique identity for herself. In order to find her true self, Shirley leaves the constricting and oppressive household realm where she lacks freedom, control and power and ventures out into the outside world. Her opposition to patriarchal oppression upends patriarchal hegemony and signals a potential shift in the current gender power structures. Hence, Shirley's journey of self-awareness and emancipation, which challenges conventional gender stereotypes and gives women the confidence to claim their autonomy and resist social norms. She exemplifies a spirit of resistance against patriarchal frameworks, inviting viewers to reconsider their own roles within patriarchal frameworks.

Incorporating stage directions, character interactions, and setting into a play adds depth to the narrative and highlights the power dynamics in the plays. The domestic realm in the plays highlights the ways in which people negotiate and challenge societal expectations. It also acts as a symbolic battlefield for the negotiation of gendered identities and power relations. The examination of gender, power, and identity in modern theater provides an intriguing framework for comprehending the intricacies of societal dynamics and the human experience. Both plays accentuate gendered behaviors through relationships between a husband and a wife. They depict gender-specific traits such as feelings, compassion, and more. However, *Shirley Valentine* depicts in what ways certain behaviors defy accepted gender norms. When she engages in behaviors often designated for men or abstains from actions associated with women, she exposes the social construction of the gender assigned to these behaviors and challenges the gender reification of these acts. Shirley escapes the constraints of conventional expectations placed on her as a wife and mother through solitary travel and newly discovered experiences in Greece, which symbolizes a fearless rejection of patriarchal power. Marx's critique of capitalist institutions, in which people are subjugated by cultural conventions to act as simple cogs in the machinery of production, is echoed by her rejection of gender roles and embracing autonomy. Furthermore, Shirley challenges the patriarchal narrative that her husband Joe promotes by asserting female agency, upending established power dynamics within her household. This change emphasizes Foucault's view that power is contingent and flexible, open to negotiation and opposition. Shirley represents the possibility of social transformation and the overthrow of ingrained power systems by taking back her identity and creating a route to self-fulfillment. On the other hand, as chapter three argued, Alison is trapped by patriarchal norms, unable to express her actual identity. Also, the way that Alison and Jimmy flee to a fictional world as a squirrel and bear at the end of *Look Back in Anger* is a compelling escape from the grim reality of post-war Britain. In addition to representing a desire for safety and a sense of belonging, this escapist dream highlights the constraints placed on individuals by cultural norms, particularly those related to gender roles.

In conclusion, within the context of cultural materialism, the stories of Alison and Shirley provide significant insights into the complexities of resistance, identity, and power. We are compelled to face the interaction between societal forces and

human agency as well as the ongoing struggle for liberation from oppressive conventions through their journeys. Their experiences serve as reminders of the transformational potential of self-discovery and the search for an authentic life in a world formed by dominant cultural norms through the complexities of post-war society. By integrating insights from cultural materialism and drawing on various critical perspectives, this study has provided a thorough examination of the power struggles depicted in the chosen plays. This analysis of the selected plays encourages audiences to consider their own positions within patriarchal societies by examining the interplay between gender and power, gender norms that are formed, and the role that gender plays in a variety of spheres of life. The lessons from these plays are still relevant and poignant today, acting as triggers for imagining more just and equitable futures as we continue to struggle with the complexities of gender, power, and identity. By applying cultural materialist perspective and incorporating critical insights, readers gain a better understanding of the intricate interactions that shape gendered power relations between discourse, economic structures, and cultural practices. To promote critical discourse and transformational action, this study has intended to examine the manner in which women's victimization becomes a social issue in patriarchal societies. This research has aimed at contributing to ongoing discussions about gender equality and social justice by examining the ways in which gender norms are created, upheld and challenged. This, undoubtedly, opens the door for more inclusive and empowering narratives in the theater.

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