The Painful Picture of a Man in John Osborne's Play "Look Back in Anger"

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ABSTRACT

The study is aiming to show the situation of the European man after the world war II. It also shows how man was hopeless and feels fear of futures. The playwright, John Osborne, identified himself with the protagonist, Jimmy Porter, who was looking for a job that comes fit to his field of study, but he cannot find that position. The papers consist of an Introduction that explain the life of the writer, the major themes of the play, the characters of the play, the language of the play that reflects the type of the characters, their social levels and thinking. Finally the conclusion that includes the findings.
INTRODUCTION

John James Osborne was born on 12th of December in 1929 in London, England. He was a British writer and film producer. His play Look Back in Anger represented a new movement in British drama. It was performed in 1956. A company of Juvenile actors introduced him to the theatre. Later he became an actor, manager for various companies. His first play "The Devil Inside Him", was written in 1950 with his first passion Stella Linden. His first appearance as a London actor in 1956, the same year that his play "Look Back in Anger" was produced by the English stage company. The play was about the hero "Jimmy Porter" the son of the worker. He reached an uncomfortably marginal position of the middle class. Porter continues to work in a street-market and still condemn his wife's family. Osborne tries to make the audience feel them acutely. John Osborne's three-act play established him as an "Angry Young Man" of the mid 1950s. Alienation from the people represents a major theme. He thinks that Alison doesn't feel deeply as he can. He refers to her as "Lady Pusillanimous"

Jimmy Porter is very angry because he is so helpless, since 10 years old when he saw his father died from fighting towards democracy in the Spanish civil war.

The title of the play refers to the character's attitudes towards their lives in general while Jimmy's in particular there is a feeling that life is passing them by, they are growing without things changing into a better. Jimmy runs a little shop with Cliff Lewis who was his partner in that shop, he was dissatisfied with the current job because he thought that he deserve more.

It can be noted that Jimmy becomes a kind of representative of post war generation puzzled by Hungarian revolution, unhappy about Britain's so-called imperialist approach to Suez, and dedicated to protest the Bomb and the nuclear weapons. Jimmy Porter often regarded as an example of angry man. He is angry at the political and social structure. He believe that social and political structures hinders him from achieving his dreams. He directs his anger towards his friends, most notably, his wife, Alison. His anger causes his wife to leave him.

The generation at that time suffers a lot because of realism. According to many critics, the genre of realism had become tired and unimaginative that's why many critics accused Osborne of glorifying the domination of males on the expanse of females.

KEY WORDS

Anglican: is the large denomination in Britain.

Angry Young Man: group of mid-twentieth century British writers.
Chivalry: It is often related to virtue such as bravery and self-sacrifice.

Liberal: opposition to the most conservative Tory party.

Pusillanimous: cowardly person.

Kitchen sink Drama: a revelation for British theatre.

1-0 About the play

Osborne's play "Look Back in Anger" on May 1956 is regarded as starting of a new era in the British Drama. John Russel Tylor considers the play "as the beginning of a revolution in the British theatre". Arthur Miller calls the play "The only modern English play" (qtd. in Tylor 193)

Another critic, George E. well-warth claims that "the new movement in the British Drama actually begins officially the night of May, 1956 (Tylor 157)" Arnold Wesker describes the play as 'having opened the door of theatres for all succeeding generations of writers" (qtd. in Tylor 195)

A large number of critics agreed that Look Back in Anger appears more strongly to the young people under the age of 30. Another critic, Katherin J. Worth, explain the reason for Look Back in Anger and its impact on the audience

Osborne astonished and fascinated by his feeling for the Contemporary scene and the mores of post-war youth by his Command of contemporary idiom. And his tart comment on Subjects ranging from the posh Sunday newspaper and white tile Universities to the Bishops and Bomb (Tylor 101)

Look back in Anger is a play in which Osborne depicts the sense of anger and frustration at the depressing conditions of post war Britain. Porter expects to leave behind his lower class origin by using higher education. He is educated behind his social roots, but he cannot get what he expects from education. Despite his education, he worked in different jobs that were not related to his education level. He worked in journalism, salesman, cleaner and a sweet stall. These jobs were not proper to his graduation. According to Berkowitz "inability to fulfill the anticipation is a frustration" (Root 16).

The play takes place in the Porters' one-room flat, a fairly large attic room. The furniture is simple and rather old: a double bed, dressing table, book
1.1- **Characters of the play**

It is clear that characters of Osborne are angry and aggressive because of many reasons. Jimmy porter rails at Alison, especially her family who belongs to middle-class manners so he behaves aggressively. The whole characters are somehow angry and they express their frustration in various ways.

1- Jimmy Porter: is the protagonist and main character in the play who feels that he is not in his proper place in life. He is the angry young man. He also can be consider as a villain, because he is destructive to those who near him.

2- Alison Porter: is Jimmy’s wife. She belong to British upper class family and married of working class person, Jimmy. She becomes pregnant and her suffering continues. Later she comes back to live with Jimmy.

3- Cliff Lewis: Is a working class and Welsh. He shares them the apartment. He has a relationship with Alison, Jimmy’s wife, but Jimmy keep this relation between them.

4- Helena Charles: She is Alison’s friend. She belong to upper class. She comes to visit her friend and lives with them. She satisfies Alison to leave Jimmy. She can be considered the play moral compass.

5- Colonel Redfern: He was Alison’s father. He was a military leader in India. He represented British power. He was not satisfied with Alison's and Jimmy's relationship. He still eager to the past and live it.

1-2 major themes

1- **The Angry Young Man**

Look Back in Anger was the earliest play to discover the theme of "Angry Young Man". This was a full description of post-world war generation and working class men who were ascribed to political and social views. that means they refused their acknowledgement to their social and class alienation. Jimmy Porter is an example of angry man who believes that his social and political structures kept him away from fulfilling his dreams, consequently he directs his anger towards his wife, Alison, and his friends.

2- **The Kitchen Sink drama**

This term refers to plays that depends on realism. This kind of plays were introduced by the British writer George Bernard Shaw. This genre capture the lives of the British upper class which reflected the ordinary drama of ruling class British society.

3- **Loss of Childhood.**

The theme of loss has its impact on the characters of Jimmy and Alison. The death of Jimmy’s father when he was ten. He was suffering from his early childhood and forced to deal with men. Alison loss her childhood. She was
forced to grow up fast by marrying Jimmy. Her youth wasted in the anger of her husband.

4- Sloth in British culture
Jimmy was angry and compared his life to the slothfulness of the world around him. Jimmy does not see the world around him as dead. His anger is an attempt to awaken those around him from their sleep.

5- The Rise and Fall of the British Empire
This represented by the two characters Colonel Redfern, Alison's Father, who were yearning to British empire. The Colonel served for many years in India, a symbol of British imperial, The Edwardian age, the British highest power.

6- Masculinity in Art
Osborne's views in his plays were misogynistic. That made critics accused the writer of glorifying young men anger and cruelty towards women and homosexuality. He wishes Alison's mother's death. He thought that the society turned into feminization.

2-0 Types of Anger
There are different kinds of anger expression. Buss believes that aggressive behavior could be classified into two ways: "The first one is on the basis of organ system involved (Physical versus verbal aggression). The second one is on the basis of the interpersonal relationship: active versus passive aggression." 4

Physical aggression aims at assaulting an organism by using body parts (e.g., slapping, pushing, biting) or weapon like (gun, knife or any instrument of hurt). Verbal aggression consists of bad criticism, threatening, and abuse.

(Buss 6) observes that most aggressive behaviors are active while passive aggressive behavior consists of escaping from confrontation. It can also be referred to as silent aggression. Buss asserts that:

*Passive aggression is a subordinate best weapon against his Superior. Active attack invites relation, however when he attack Is passive it is usually difficult for a victim to establish blame or to determine whether aggression has occurred (9)*

Freud claims that people express anger or aggression so that they could be able to avoid self-destruction. Consequently, the play Look Back in Anger analyzed from psychoanalytic theory and the frustration – aggression
hypothesis. Osborn plays like Inadmissible Evidence (1946) and Watch it Down (1975) were analyzed according to psychoanalytic theory and frustration aggression for the same reason considering anger as an emotional state aroused by frustration and anger as a defense mechanism to prevent self-destruction. According to psychologists who agree that anger is an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to rage and fury that may lead to aggressive behavior. Thus, aggression can be considered as a way of expressing anger. Hence Aggression may be defined as "the behavior intended to harm (Physical or nonphysical) another individual" (Abeles, Fischer and Schere 4).

Jimmy trapped between the past which he can not escape and the present which he can not accept (John Osborne, p 145)

3-0 language of the play
The language of the play is realistic one. Jimmy shouts and swears most of the time. He opens his mouth when he speaks. Cliff Welsh who is well recognized by his Irish accent. His speech is understandable. Every character can say what he feels or thinks. It seems that Osborne uses everyday's language. The writer wants to shock the audience with its bluntness.

It can be noted the Look Back in Anger is considered as a reaction to the affected drawing-room comedies of such writers as Terence Rattigan Noel Coward and others, because these writers wrote about affluent bourgeoisie or sections in upper-middle class comfortable in suburbs.

"Part of the immediate shock of Look Back in Anger lay in the impact of its setting"
A one-room flat in a large Midland Town a fairly large attic Room most of the furniture is simple, and rather old up R. is a double bed… a shelf of books. Down R. Below the bed is a heavy Chest of drawers, covered with books, neckties and odds and ends A small wardrobe … two deep shabby leather armchairs (Look Back in Anger 9)

The writer uses dramatic monologue so that his characters are able to express their feelings and thinking. He uses the language that comes fit to the situation in the play. The language is realistic one. The audience understand each situation, they find no difficulty when they hear or see the characters on the stage. The characters reveal everything in Britain at that time. The language that uses by Osborne reflects their social, education levels. Helena is very proper and conventional and so is her speech. Cliff is humble, Colonel Redfern is calm and reflective, Alison is socially high class.
CONCLUSION
These papers aimed at analyzing John Osborne's themes of anger namely in his play "Look Back in Anger" 1956. It shows the fact that there are two kinds of anger which are the emotional and the expression of that emotions. The expression of anger has been analyzed in terms of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The people express their anger or behavior for the purpose of self-preservation.

Jimmy Porter, the protagonist of the play, is frustrated and angry because of the insensitivity of the people.

The play was a reaction of Jimmy towards the generation of the world war II. Osborne identified himself with Jimmy, because Osborne was angry with the same thing that Jimmy angry for. The writer loses hope of future. Jimmy feels the same thing also. The idea of optimism was clear in the play because the playwright and the character expect that things are going into worse. The war destroys everything and makes things going into bad situations.

The play reflects the discrimination between the British society and the control of capitalism. Jimmy Porter has no mutual relation with his wife Alison who left him after her pregnancy. She cannot live peacefully with her husband who belong to different class. Each character in the play was yearning to the past, since they see that past is better than the present. They fear of unknown future. They lose their power like great Britain who loses its power. In fact the character are not looking back in anger to the past, but they are looking back in fear to the future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


