

## Causes of Jimmy Porter's Anger

John Osborne's brilliant play "Look Back in Anger" highlights the class conflict that existed in English society and elsewhere after World War II. In essence, it is the story of an angry and frustrated young man. This angry young man, Jimmy Porter, is educated beyond his social origin in the working classes. He has been given a liberal education. As a result, he has come to expect certain things and a set of values which he finds lacking in the society of which he is a member. The consequent frustrations turn his home in to a battlefield because his wife belongs to the upper middle-class. From the picture of Jimmy Porter's personal life one can generalize as to the conditions existing in post-war English society.

Jimmy Porter, the central figure of the play, is a tall young man of twenty-five years of age. He has received education at one of the many new universities set up by the government as a part of its drive to create a welfare state in Britain. However, his education does not enable him to find some form of employment suited to his educational qualifications. He tries his hand at a variety of jobs - among them being the selling of vacuum cleaners, journalism and advertising. Finding all of them equally unsuitable, he turns to running a sweet stall.

Jimmy falls in love with and marries Alison, the daughter of Colonel Redfern, an officer retired from the British Army in India. The set of social values to which the Colonel, his family and his social circle subscribe are different from the social values of Jimmy.

Porter's class. Alison is attracted to him mainly because all the male members of her set are inclined to treat Jimmy with contempt.

Her mother is shocked when the marriage is proposed. She makes every conceivable effort to thwart the plans of the young couple. She even employs private detectives to go into Jimmy's past and discover something discreditable or unsavoury so that Alison may be turned against him. Both Alison and Jimmy become all the more determined to fight such opposition. They finally succeed in marrying in spite of the disapproval of Alison's parents and social equals.

Jimmy, the central figure, in Osborne's play 'Look Back in Anger' is a frustrated young man, angry and bitter, who keeps up a volley of vituperations through out the play. In one of his comments, he himself tells about the cause of his frustration — "there are no good causes left in the world." He wanted an outlet for his burning virility of mind and spirit, but found himself in a world where there was no such outlets, no good brave causes left to fight for. His anger is more destructive than constructive, a mere dissipation of youthful energy which is not canalised in to constructive channels.

While all are agreed that Jimmy is an angry young man, there is no agreement among critics as to the real cause of his anger. Different reasons have been advanced by different critics. John Russell Taylor finds the roots of his anger in his class consciousness. He can not forget the upper-middle class origin of his wife, and so is constantly railing at her, friends and relatives.

As another critic points out, Jim has developed "a persecution complex" as a result of hostility of his in laws to his marriage. His mother-in-law has gone to the extent of hiring detectives to keep watch on him.

Simon Trussler traces his anger to mother-guilt and nostalgia. His mother was an intellectual, a superior and refined lady, with a taste for minorities. When his father lay sick and dying, his mother looked after him, but she did not really care for him. She did not give him that love and affection which she ought to have given to him in his last moments as a devoted wife. The result was that Jimmy developed a "mother-guilt" complex which made him hostile to womanhood in general. He is hostile to Helena, to Alison, and to Alison's mother.

Thus, psychologically considered Jimmy is not the epitome of the angry young man of his generation. He is rather a very exceptional individual, a tortured soul, at war with itself and with the world, an impotent soul which, like Hamlet, finds the time out of joint, but has not the capacity to set it right. It is only a deeper psychological study which makes us realise that his angry tirades and outbursts are not chaotic, but are psychologically motivated and coherent.

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