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John Osborne

‘Look Book In Anger’ As an Angry Young Man Play

John Osborne’s emergence as a playwright is important in the history of British theatre because a new generation of playwrights became eager to write about thoughts and feelings of the people and to expose, in most rebellious fashion, the contemporary state of England. This new generation of playwrights produced the character called “Angry Young Man” who generally has a working class background and is generally disturbed, anguished, angry, and desperate and at times funny, pairing out invectives against society, its codes and institutions. Post war generation of England got disillusioned due to the fact that both labour and conservative government which seemed to them more promising than they really were, failed to solve economic as well as socio-political problems England facing that time. The whole generation was then threatened by the nuclear weapons and was frustrated with political and social discontentment. This scenario is brilliantly reflected in the plays and fiction of John Osborne, Kingsley Amis, John Wai, Nigel Dennis, Angus Wilson and Wilis Hall.

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Osborne's plays always present the problems and issues of contemporary England through his characters. *Look Back in Anger* is such a play which reflects the contemporary society of England after second world war. Here, the playwright focuses first time the despair and frustration of new generation. Jimmy Porter, the main protagonist of the play, is the mouth piece of Osborne. He is dissatisfied and annoyed with his internal and external life, due to which his anger comes out on everything. In the very beginning of the play we find that Jimmy is speaking in a discontented, restless manner. He is unsatisfied with the newspaper, with his wife Alison, as she belongs to the upper section of society and he is dissatisfied with his friend, Cliff. His hatred for upper class is seen at a time when he calls Mrs. Red Fern as "an over freed, over privileged, old bitch". Further, this hatred is seen when he says about his wife, Alison, and his family that "they represent predatory, selfish, ignorant and insensitive society". Jimmy hates the upper class in spite of it that his mother and his wife's relatives belong to this class. He blames class and status system of society to make him a man of no existence and identity. He likes Cliff because he calls him a common man. Osborne has portrayed Jimmy as such a character who longs for the company of anyone whom he can express his ideas and feelings regarding society, religion causing frustration, disillusionment and nihilism in him. He is the face of unemployed youths who are fully disturbed and confused with the static failures. He tries to escape from the boredom of his life by playing loudly on a trumpet. He has no faith in religious activities and is opposed of formal religion and its rituals. He annoys when he saw that his wife, Alison, is going to the church with her friend, Helena. Jimmy is an educated person with university degree but he fails in his married life. He had tried his hand in many jobs like journalism, advertising, even vacuum cleaning but could not settle in life. He himself does not know what he will do. He

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always lives in uncertainty, aimlessness. Through such characteristic of Jimmy , Osborne tries to present the youth of post war England who lives in confusion, and uncertainty.

Thus, Osborne has presented the play “Look Back in Anger” as a play of angry young man. Jimmy Porter is the representative of post war youth of England. .

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