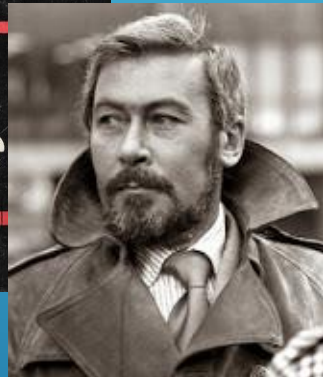
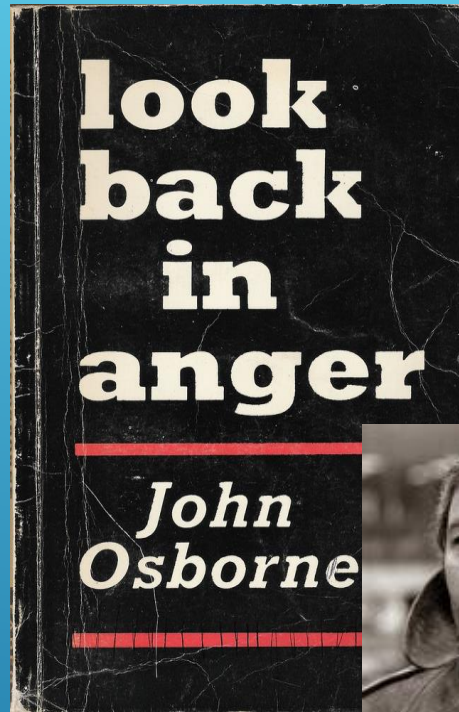


LOOK BACK IN ANGER

BY JOHN OSBORNE

Dr. Ashwini Deshmukh (Kaware)



OSBORNE' S LIFE

- He was born in 1929 in a London suburb, of a lawyer middle-class parents
- He was educated in London in a boarding school where he developed a passion for acting and for writing plays, but in 1946 he left school and worked for two magazines;
- In 1948 he became an actor and shortly after an actor-manager, continuing to write his own plays especially during his periods of unemployment;
- In 1956 he wrote LOOK BACK IN ANGER, which was produced at the Royal Court Theatre in London.
- He also acted on TV (1969) and in several films, he also worked as a scriptwriter;
- During his career he has collected a lot of important awards: for Look Back In Anger he was declared the “ Most Promising Playwright of the Year” and received the New York Drama Critics’ Award for the Best Play of 1957;
- He died in 1994.

LOOK BACK IN ANGER

- Look Back In Anger is a John Osborne's play of 1956, that deals with a love triangle involving an intelligent and educated but disaffected young man of working class origin, Jimmy Porter; his impassive wife of upper-middle-class, Alison; and her best friend, Helena Charles. Then there is Cliff, an amiable Welsh lodger who lives with Jimmy and Alison.
- It was a genuine drama, about real events and people; an authentic picture of the younger generation in post-war English society.
- The play is rigid in construction, full of stimulating ideas, and ends in an enigma: Jimmy is overwhelmed by Alison's suffering and seems at last to realize his immaturity, cruelty and excesses; Alison, having suffered so much, may now feel a closer attachment and a deeper commitment to her difficult husband.
- This theatrical performance was considered a sort of watershed between the old and the new in the British theatre.
- What it came through Look back in anger was the disordered talking and crying of the young.

Look Back in Anger | Character Analysis

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Jimmy Porter

Jimmy Porter is a self portrait of Osborne; an educated young man in post–World War II England. He is disillusioned with life in general his own life, his wife and marriage, and his country. He is always criticize social and political circumstances of everything around him, sometimes disgusting and hurtful, sometimes playful and vulgar. His wife, Alison, is his aimed to target, though his good friend Cliff is also subject to Jimmy's insensitive. But his claims of honesty can be purposely cruel and equally sincere. He is a representative of lower class society in America. An educated, jobless and frustrated Jimmy is trying to survive in society but the upper class has prevented him from making full use of his academic achievement.

Alison Porter

Alison represents contemporary society in her own way. She is an embodiment of the value of the upper class which her husband defies, and her decision to marry Jimmy creates conflict in her mind between her old and new loyalties. Bred of upper-class stock, she shunned her parents' admonitions against marrying Jimmy—especially her mother's angry and somewhat vindictive threats. Alison simply tries to survive the heated and antagonistic environment she lives in. She feels she and Jimmy have a unique connection, though she doubts this alone is enough to sustain their marriage.

Cliff Lewis

Cliff Lewis is Welsh, an old friend of Jimmy Porter. He has a similar background to Jimmy as well as his lack of expectation with modern England. But while he often agrees with Jimmy, he also sets himself apart from his friend with his laid-back, genuine character and more hopeful view of life. Cliff and Alison are remarkably affectionate toward each other, to Jimmy's amusement and annoyance. He is well-wisher for Alison, making her life tolerable for her Jimmy's one-room apartment. He is softer, tenderer and caring than Jimmy. Cliff also helps Jimmy with the sweets stall.

Helena Charles

Helena Charles is an actress and one of Alison Porter's oldest friends. She comes to stay in the same building with the Porters while passing through with a touring show. She urges Alison to leave and return to her parents. Jimmy does not like or trust Helena.

The Angry Young Man

Osborne's play *The Angry Young Man* was the first to explore the theme of the "Angry Young Man." This term describes a generation of post-World War II artists and working class men sometimes anarchist, politics and social views. These young men were not a part of any movement but were, individuals angry at a post-Victorian Britain that refused to acknowledge their social and class alienation.

Jimmy Porter is often considered to be literature's example of the angry young man. Jimmy is angry at the social and political sector that he believes has kept him from achieving his dreams and desire. He directs this anger towards his friends and, most notably, his wife Alison and her high class society. This term is directly show the picture of young, higher educated, unemployed and frustrated people in their respective field. *The Angry Young Man* concept is based on personal experiences and perspective towards life.

Look Back in Anger

Look Back in Anger was the first play in England that revealed the tossing emotionalism seething through Post-World War II England. It had gender and class manifestations structural divisions, economic restrictions, psychological questioning etc. It also had a personal psychological basis in that people were forced to witness suffering that seemed to have no rational cause, when Jimmy at ten years old watched his father's death from wounds gained in the Spanish Civil War. This personal psychological component led to a reactionary supposition, needed to justify the pain, that claimed humanity and individuality depended on the such depth of feeling. The personal psychological agony engendered a logical fallacy psychologically asserting that pain, loss of faith, angst, etc. associated to truth in the human condition and was therefore of dominant importance to each individuals. This personal psychological condition that equates, in the case of this play with the character Jimmy as a 'angry young man'.

Themes in *Look Back In Anger*

Alienation, Anger and Hatred, Class Conflict, Identity Crisis

* **Alienation**: Jimmy felt the whole play that success and money was meant for the prosperity. He constantly tortured to get Alison to lash out at him, which never happens. Calls her “Lady Pusillanimous”, because he sees her as too cowardly to commit to anything. Feels anxious that no one is willing to take from him. Balancing much of his savage cruelty towards Alison and Helena is the tender concern he feels for himself and his total commitment to the values and causes he upholds.

* **Anger, Hatred and Class Conflict** : Jimmy’s anger is for upper class society as he always face such humiliation. Denied a suitable job in spite of his university education and superior intellectual accomplishments he has come to feel that it is because of his humble background that the upper class has prevented him from making full use of his academic record. Is directed at those he loves because they refuse to have strong feelings. Society that did not fulfill promises of opportunity.

Jimmy comes from the working class and hates everybody in the upper class. Jimmy hates his family for having to grow up in the working class. The only person Jimmy loves is Hugh's working class mother. Alison's mother does not approve of Jimmy because he comes from the working class

*** Identity Crisis:** Jimmy is an aspirant to employment but the diverse situation would not allow him to get success. He is a victim of unemployment even a does not know where he belongs • His job does not reflect a job that an educated person should have. Colonel Redfern acts like he still belongs in the army. Helena needs to live by her principles to find out who she really is. Cliff is the only person who knows who he is. Every characters in the play are seeking for their self identity and existence in society. It is very difficult to conclude that who is responsible for this condition. Alison from upper class unconditional loved Jimmy even she knows his background though she was trying to adjust with the situation.

▶ **QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How does Osborne view childhood as a contribute factor in *Look Back In Anger*?
 - 2) Discuss the element of violence in *Look Back In Anger*.
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THANK YOU

