

GOLDEN RESEARCH THOUGHTS

JIMMY PORTER- IS THE VOICE OF OSBORNE'S DISSATISFACTION WITH HIS CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY?



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Abstract :

“Look Back in Anger” received an overwhelming response from the audience when it was first produced. It appealed to the audience because of the realistic subject matter. A substantial body of critical and popular opinion has subscribed to the view that Jimmy is a self-portrait of Osborne himself. Jimmy shares the same kind of anger as Osborne has his roots in a similar social-economic background, and has watched his father die at tender age. Jimmy also reflects Osborne’s disillusionment with contemporary British society and serves as his mouthpiece in denouncing the church, the Royalty, the Government, the Upper Class, and traditional morality. Jimmy also embodies Osborne’s detriment of the English notion of the stiff-upper lip, of detachment and apathy, of lack of enthusiasm.

Keywords: Jimmy Porter, dissatisfaction, his contemporary society

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INTRODUCTION

Chiding Alison and Cliff for lack of enthusiasm he says sarcastically “why don't we have a little game? Let's pretend that we're human beings, and that we're actually alive.” (Act I, Page-59) Jimmy and Alison have been married for four years and in spite of the passage of time, Jimmy has not been able to reconcile himself to the middle class origin of his wife. Jimmy complains, “Nobody thinks, nobody cares. No belief no convictions and no enthusiasm.”

This research paper reflects that in Jimmy's denunciation of the middle class Osborne's own feeling comes to the force. This paper shows some similarities in the origin of Jimmy and Osborne. Jimmy faced opposition from Alison's mother which are similar to those faced by Osborne himself while courting his wife Pamela. Like Jimmy, Osborne too married Pamela much against his parent's, wishes. Jimmy holds the upper class responsible for being unfair to him. So Jimmy attacks the upper class by making sarcastic remarks on Alison's family. He condemns Alison's mother calling her an “old bitch” and using the harshest possible language in denouncing her. He mocks at Alison's father for his inability to get over his part life and ridicules brother-in-law Nigel and calls him “the straight-balked, chinless wonder from sand Hurst.” Jimmy considers Alison's mother an epitome of the entire middle class and condemns her. He even does not spare Helena, Alison's actress friend who stays as a guest at their flat for some time. All the criticism of middle class people, to a large extent shows Osborne's own dislike of the class.

This research paper also shows Jimmy's denunciation of Helena. He sarcastically calls her an expert in the new economic “the economics of the supernatural.” In his opinion she is one of those rumours about a transfer of power. Irritated with his bitter sarcasm Helena threatens to slap him. Then he says to her “I hope you won't make the mistake of thinking me for the one moment that I am a gentleman.” Speaking vehemently he warns her “I've no public school scruples about hitting girls. If you slap my face-by god, I'll lay you out.” He find fault with everything his wife does. He calls her a “monument to non-attachment,” and addresses her as “lady pusillanimous.” Alison seems right when she tells Helena that he treats her like a “hostage” from the upper class against whom he is in war. Alison also tells her father that Jimmy most probably has married her only to take revenge on the upper class that he detests. Jimmy even disregards the moral values and ethos that is typical of the middle class. The middle class people were rather strict with morality, and, respectability demands the virtue of virginity in unmarried women. Jimmy believes that the middle class people lack ‘solidarity,’ which he considers to be working class virtue. One reason for his getting along fine with cliff is due to his low working class origin.

It seems clear enough from the bitter criticism of the middle class that Jimmy's character was tempered with Osborne's sympathies. In most of his speeches, the author's contempt for the upper class can be traced. In the opening of the play he is described as a disturbing mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and cruelty; restless and full of pride, a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike. From the description of Jimmy the accusation that he wholly sympathised with Jimmy, seems untrue.

This research paper explain that the story of “Look Back in Anger” has great deal in common with “Hamlet.” The temperament of the heroes in both the plays, their attitude to other people, towards the society and suffering has lot in common comparing both the play. Mary Maccarthy says that Cliff is Jimmy's Horatio and Jimmy's treatment of Alison has the traces of brutality that Hamlet showed to Ophelia; Brother Nigel is Laertes and Alison's mother is cast in the role of Polonius. Both heroes declared war on rot on society and have been unfitted by higher education to accept their normal place in the world. Like Hamlet, Jimmy criticises to the extent of brutality. Jimmy becomes cruel and takes pleasure in hurting the feelings of others by his insulting remarks. Both Hamlet and Jimmy suffers from inner conflict, and suffers more because of their inability to act. They want to change the whole social fabric and unable to do so they give vent to their anger by hurting abuses on others. Critics are of the opinion that Jimmy ought to have found a job at a provincial University instead of torturing himself and his wife by running sweet stall. Likewise Hamlet too might have settled down in the court of Denmark, married Ophelia and waited for the succession. Critic Katherine believes that Jimmy anger is not without reason; “Jimmy's anger has deep roots.” He was disturbed by the indifferent attitude of other people and wondered how they could turn away from the realities of life. He is so obsessed with suffering and inner conflict that Alison cannot help but speak ironically: “Don't take his suffering away from him. He'd be lost without it.” It befits Jimmy “They all want to escape from the pain of being alive,” he laments. He says that he want Alison to have a child that dies so that she can understand the pong of suffering. He curses her – “let it grow, let a recognisable human face emerge from that little mass of India rubber and wrinkles.” At the end of the play Alison gets reconciled to her husband only after she has gone through the pain of suffering.

In this way we can say that Osborne's sympathy with Jimmy goes on to this extent and Jimmy can be called a self-portrait of Osborne to this extent otherwise he is a fully individualising character with certain amount of negative as well as positive attribute.

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