LOOK BACK IN ANGER BY JOHN OSBORN (NON AFRICAN DRAMA) LITERATURE SS2

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY:

Jimmy Porter -Central character ,husband to Alison

Cliff Lewis- friend and neighbor of the Porter’s family

Alison porter-wife of Jimmy Porter

Helena Charles-bossom friend Alison

Colonel Redfern-father of Alison and Nigel.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

Look Back In Anger, captures a married life of Jimmy porter and his middle class wife, Alison .The play shows a marital struggle between two characters of different social classes who are deemed to be intelligent and educated ,yet they are incompatible because of their social background.

As the name of the play implies , Osborn through the personality of his central character Jimmy Porter, reflects a high sense of anger over those he truly loves ,but his love is not reciprocated,he laments on his personal life and marriage failures. Again ,his anger is also directed to the society which does not provide chances of survival and opportunity. Instead, those who assumed their places in the social and power structure continue to succeed to the detriment of the poor masses.

SETTING

Look Back in Anger is set in England after the second world war.The period of 1940s that was engulfed by class system.The setting of the play in a symbolic level illustrates the contrast between the idealistic Jimmy and the shadow surrounding him. Nepotism favouritism and classism have become a general trend as can be seen in the background.

PLOT PRESENTATION

The play is opened with Jimmy Porter at home ,in his small bedroom flat ,reading newspapers and chatting with his friend Cliff,while Alison,Jimmy’s wife is ironing clothes.She is from an upper class family ,while Jimmy only owns a stall where he sells sweets(lower class).As a result he hates Alison and her family,he always bath them with insults just he referred to Alison as a Coward.

Jimmy gets offended at the quality of the papers he and cliff are reading,while snatching the paper from cliff, he suddenly turns his angry words against his wife,Alison.Cliff defends Alison as he tries to recollect the paper from Jimmy.

Jimmy and cliff play fight and knock over the ironing table and this made Alison’s arm to get burnt by the iron.Jimmy goes out while cliff stays to comfort Alison, though it is not an intentional act.Jimmy apologized later and they played a game of “bears and squirrels”.

Alison becomes pregnant and decides not to tell Jimmy, she only discussed it with cliff. The bell rings and Helena Charles, a friend of Alison to stay with the Porter’s for sometime .Jimmy is not happy ,he says all sorts of abusive words against Alison and Helena.

Jimmy gets information that his friend’s mother is dying and he asks Alison to go with him to London to visit her but Alison disagrees and jimmy left.

When Jimmy comes back,his wife, his wife was away, Helena seduced Jimmy and the two of them had a row(sexual intercourse).Helena Charles hands to Jimmy a note from Alison about her movement and pregnancy. After several months, on a Sunday ,Helena is now doing ironing, Alison comes in while Jimmy is out of the room. She reveals that she had a miscarriage.

Helena breaks up with Jimmy, while Jimmy and Alison reconciled. The play comes to an end with them playing another round of ” bears and squirrels”.

CHARACTERER AND CHARACTERIZATION

A.JIMMY PORTER

He is the central character and the protagonist of the play LOOK BACK IN ANGER. He is a young man of about twenty six years, who manages a sweet stall. He expresses his frustration for lack of feelings in his domestic life. He shows his unfiltered expression of emotion and frustration through his wife,Alison. Through Helena ,he can also be considered a villain for the way in which his anger proves to be destructive to those in his life.

B.ALISON PORTER

She is Jimmy’s wife,they married for three years. In terms of social background , Alison comes from a the upper middle class establishment .She is the daughter of colonel Redfern.Alison is a woman of patience and tolerance who endures all the assaults of Jimmy against her and her family and still keeps the marriage up to three years.she became pregnant for Jimmy, who with destructive anger causes her great pains and she eventually leaves Jimmy after being persuaded by her friend ,Helena. She returns to her father’s house and never for a day protest against Helena who takes over her marriage with Jimmy. she later had a miscarriage. she later comes back to Jimmy,to show her high sense of forgiveness no matter what. She made peace with her husband and they re-unite, though she later wanted to give up with the marriage.

C.CLIFF LEWIS

Cliff is directly opposite of what Jimmy is. He is the best and only friend of Jimmy and Alison.Cliff lives with them in their attic apartment. He features as a hard working class welsh man,Jimmy always pint out that he is common and less educated.Cliff believes that this the reason Jimmy keeps him as a friend.His quiet fond of Alison and has a strange phiscally affectionate relationship throughout the play. This makes him feel bad whenever Jimmy is on Alison with abusive words.

D.HELENA CHARLES

Helena Charles is Alison’s best friend. She lives with Jimmy and Alison in their apartment while visiting for work. Helena is from upper class family.she is responsible for Alison’s leaving Jimmy and she began an affair with Jimmy.Alison is a total betrayal of trust and arrant show of hypocrisy and sexual indulgence.Her final regret and repentance for her action makes her quit. This however, defines her as the moral compass of the play. She apologizes and reconciles with Alison after living with her husband for several months.

E.COLONEL REDFERN

He is the father of ALISON ,He represents Britain’s great Edwardianpast.He was a military in Indian for many years before returning with his family to England. Colonel Redfern does not approve Jimmy but has certain things to admire in him. He accepts that he is to blame for many of his meddling in Jimmy and Alison’s affairs.He took Alison to talk to her at home , but she later came back after several months.

THEMES IN THE PLAY:LOOK BACK IN ANGER

1Theme of anger and its consequences

2Theme of betrayal of trust

3Theme of class conflict

4Theme of neglet and abuse

5Theme of lust and deceit

6Theme of marriage

7Theme of repentance and forgiveness

DRAMATIC DEVICES

LANGUAGE/DICTION :The choice of words is artistically and carefully selected to enhance the comicality of the situation in the then England.Through the character’s speech in the play ,thick class and education is reflected.

IMAGERY:There is prevalence of sound images from offstage eg the church bell and Jimmy’s trumpet .the churchbell serves as a reminder of the power of the power of the established church.The trumpet souud allows Jimmy’s presence to dominate the stage even when he is not there.secondly;it also serves as Jimmy’s way of showing how frustrated and angry he is,though he eases off with it sometimes.

HUMOUR:This device helps to enhance comic relief,this has the tendency of amusing the audience through the humorous actions of characters. for example the game of bears and squirrel,and theplayful wrestling with cliff.

SURPRISE: The actions of Helena against Alison to some extent create a sense of surprise as she indirectly pushes Alison out of her matrimonial home with and at the same time occupy her matrimonial bed with its attendant sexual immorality with Jimmy. Again the sudden appearance of Alison after leaving Jimmy for several months at his door post while living with Helena and her miscarriage,spell surprise in the play.This device is used to promote comic intensity to ,spice up the play with realism.

SYMBOLISM

Alison in the play is used to symbolize the class systems and the struggle for survival and dominion among the characters.Jimmy is a victim of indiscriminate and social imbalance in his society.Jimmy attacks the church because to him , the church only provides easy escape from facing the pains of living without any clear redemption.