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ISSN:2278-9529

# GALAXY

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Vol. 3, Issue - V September 2014



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## Dynamics of Anger in *A Street Car Named Desire* and *Look Back in Anger*

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Anger is a strong feeling of human emotion caused due to the disliking and discontentment towards an action. The genesis of anger has its ancestry. It is probably originated with the very creation of the world. All living human being bear such feeling. It is a medium to vent out one's suppressed feelings. This strong feeling gets reflected by different people differently in different dimensions. While discussing about the dynamics of anger it would be worthwhile to discuss its cause and effect. Indeed this paper purports to show anger and its dynamics through the discussion of two representative plays of the 1950s, i.e. *A Street Car named Desire* and *Look Back in Anger*.

It is commonly believed that Osborne's *Look back in Anger*(1956) introduced 'Angry Young men movement' in the theatrical landscape of the world. But the staging of William's *A Street Car Named Desire* (1947) forces us to rethink and reconsider our preoccupation about the movement. A close scrutiny reveals the fact that *A Street Car Named Desire* is an angrier play and it preceded *Look Back in Anger*. There are enough evidences to summarise that *A street Car Named Desire* influenced *Look Back in Anger*. Osborne is of the opinion that "to ignore these plays is to ignore the world we live in. Every British dramatist is indebted to them."(Donahue, Francis, 210)

1950s had been the most inglorious decade in the history of England. English suffered a lot of humiliation both on and off the territory. The territorial shrinkage of England consequent upon the grant of independent status to India, Cyclone, Burma and Hungary. The hopeless misadventure in Suez, the bungled economy at home in the name of reconstruction and welfarism- all poised the English youth in the brink of a precipice. Discontentment and disapproval of the chaotic order gave birth to anger and indignation. Osborne who was highly sensitive towards the socio-politico-economic situation fires the first salvo in his hate letter to his fellow countrymen:

This is a letter of hate. It is for you my countrymen. I mean those men of my country who have defiled it, The men with manic fingers leading the sightless, feeble, betrayed body of my country to its death. You are its murderers and there is little left in my own brain but the thought or murder for you....

(Osborne, *Case Book*, 61)

This reflected the embittered life of the intellectuals in the fifties. During this time Tennessee William's play *A Street Car Named Desire* was staged in United States. Stanley Kowalski, the protagonist of the play was perhaps the appropriate character chosen from the common rungs of life that fits into the passage of the then time. John Osborne might have been influenced by William's *A Street Car Named Desire* and its hero Stanley perhaps tempted him to produce Jimmy Porter, who is generally acclaimed as the first angry Youngman.

Anger as a fiery human emotion had its ancestry not only in English and American Literature but also in the world literature. D H Lawrence had already used it as a potential subversive force in his quarrels with the dehumanising mechanisms of bourgeois civilization.

While in *Hairy Ape* anger is reflected as premeditated outburst William's anger infuses a new dimension when gets closer to the sight and sound of the character of opposite taste. In William's plays anger is not imposed from without, it seems to grow without. It serves as a safety-value and allows ample scope to open up suppressed feelings. Osborne recognises the value of such emotion and uses it in an intense dramatic mode in *Look Back in Anger* which thrilled the spectators and audience, through Jimmy Porter's angry vitriolic and bantering sarcasm which held violently the contemporary mirror up to them.

Both *Look Back in Anger* and *A Street Car Named Desire* are the products of 'angry tradition'. Many aspects of these two plays are found common and the similarity they have between them in terms of form and content, which does not, however, preclude us from seeing the divergences in minor details. In spite of some differences they appear quite similar, thought-provoking and striking. Even in the stage setting it is evidenced from the murky, dull suburbs of New Orleans and midland towns. The furniture and other belongings of the rooms shown on stage are mostly equal. Most importantly the protagonists Stanley and Jimmy belong to one class, the working-class of the society who make a religion out of it. As they suffer from insecurity and crisis of identity they step out to be aggressive and violent. Further the morbid awareness of their class gives them a peculiar aggressiveness and they feel justified in protesting against anybody and anything disagreeable, distasteful and different from them. Both the protagonists take a sadistic pleasure in inducing pains and penalties on others. The plot construction of both the plays has got enough resemblance. The greatest common factors in them are the people who inhabit them. Both the plays center round Williams and Jimmy. Other than the two-Stella, Blench, Alison, Helena also carry some amount of importance. But rest of the peripheral characters bear little significant. They appear to be milled and obsolete. Indeed, while Stanley and Jimmy represent working class, Stella and Alison represent the upper class society. Both Stanley and Jimmy possess animal vitality and alimental charm which pull their counterparts Stella and Alison who are socially and economically superior to them.

It is fascinating to see the resemblance of physical appearance between Stanley and Jimmy. Both are young, energetic, vibrant and handsome. They belong to the Ku Klux Klan platoon and have the same physical filth about them. Both of them are poorly clad, Stanley, a motor mechanic is seen wearing a very dirty and grease-stained fabric and Jimmy with a worn tweed jacket and flannels whose surrounding are filled with smoke emanating from the pipe he smokes. Their dresses clearly make us conscious about their unclean habits and economic condition. On the other hand the major female characters are seen with complete clothing, sophisticated manner, and delicacy of approach which symbolize the cultured background they are from. Stella comes of a cultured family of South America who was once rich but later became impoverished due to the loss of her estate. Alison too hails from an upper middle class society. In her conduct one finds the form, manners and modesty typical of her class. Both Stella and Alison are well mannered, calm and composed, patient and parcibearent, polite and loving. But their ineffectual goodness cannot counter the reprehensible temper of their husbands. Further the passivity of their nature does not help them protesting the crude reaction of their husbands. It has also been witnessed that the romantic escape of Stella and Alison against their parental will does not bear any emancipation. A deep study of the content of the plays reveals the fact that the principal cause of all disturbances in Stanley and Jimmy's families are due to class distinction the distinction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisies. The class war was the focal theme of the then western literature. Thus *A Street Car Named Desire* and *Look Back in Anger* are no exceptions. In anger, ill temper, filthy language and free booting cruelty, both Stanley and Jimmy

excel each other. They are seen treating their wives as useless commodities. They unhesitatingly inflict their wives with highest degree of cruelty and infinite hardness. This act of cruelty is evident when Jimmy fires his wife Alison with harsh words (when she wishes to go to church with her friend Helena) and Stanley fires his wife Stella and manhandles on the poker night.

In both the plays we find an insidious, intruder as the disturbing factor. In *A Street Car Named Desire* the conjugal life of Stanly and Stella gets ruined after the intrusion and intervention of Blench in their life. Similarly in *Look Back in Anger* Helena's approach acts like a west wind which brings great devastation to the life's castle built by Jimmy and Alison with care and concern. Blench and Helen stand for upper class society where as Stanley and Jimmy voice for the working class. Due to this class conflict both the heroes are seen suffering from inferiority complex and identity crisis. The presence of upper class representatives, Blench and Helena creates the whole atmosphere tensed. The unwanted intrusion and intervention of Blench and Helena really makes Stanley and Jimmy angry. Stanley opposes Blench's stay with them from the beginning. He even buys a one way bus ticket for Blench to go back to Bell Reve. Stanley says:

Stanley: She is not staying here after Tuesday. You know that don't you?

Just to make sure I brought her ticket myself. A bus ticket.

(*Street Car*, Scene vii, 191)

In *Look Back in Anger* too Jimmy when informed about Helena's arrival bursts out in an incredible fit of anger so much so that what he speaks is not only uncharitable but borders on misogyny:

Alison: She is at station. She is coming over.

Jimmy: I see, she said "can I come over? And you said my husband, Jimmy-if you your face!" (He stands up, unable sustain his anger, poised on the table.)

Alison: So I said she could come here until she fixes something else.

Jimmy: Why not have her here? Did you tell her to bring her armour?

Because she is going to need it!

(*Look Back in Anger*, Act-1, 37)

Indeed both the plays witness extra-marital sex in different forms. Stanley rapes Blench (when Stella was in Hospital) and Helena willingly enters into the bosoms of Jimmy. In both the plays sex becomes an area for challenge and revenge in the deliberate class war between Stanley and Blench in one and Jimmy and Helena on the other.

However in both the plays we find a perfect demonstration of nostalgia. "They look back with longing to a time that has been sweetened in the remembering". (Roger Boxill, 27) In *Look Back in Anger* Jimmy regrets the passing away of the glorious Edwardian age. Jimmy tells Cliff: Jimmy: ... The old Edwardian brigades do make their brief little world pretty tempting.

All homemade cakes and croquet, bright ideas, bright uniforms... the long days in the sun, slim volumes of verse, crisp linen, the smell of starch. What a romantic picture... If you have no world of your own it is rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's.

(*Look Back in Anger*, Act-1, 17)

Though not overt yet we could feel Stanley's reminiscence of the past and reaction on present in some occasions. Indeed the points of convergence of these two plays are so many that it is impossible to think that they are coincidental. Yet one cannot ignore the vital differences in

them. Stanley and Jimmy though belong to the working class, Jimmy is an intellectual, and Stanley is a menial. Jimmy's anger is due to variety of reasons but Stanley's rage is for certain specific reason. While Jimmy's attack is focused on socio-economic condition, religion, politics, class distinction and more particularly on two women Helena and Alison, Stanley's attack is more concentrated on Blench. In spite of these differences, do not, however, cancel out the dominant parallels in them; rather they give the plays their originality and distinctive flair. Indeed, both Williams and Osborne use anger and its varied dimensions, to drive home the malaise and phobia of the contemporary life.

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