

## Notes for John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956)



*Look Back in Anger* Lobby card for *Look Back in Anger* (1959), starring Richard Burton. Woodfall Film Productions

### ANGRY YOUNG MEN

**Angry Young Men** were a group of mostly working and middle-class British playwrights and novelists who became prominent in the 1950s. They expressed scorn and dissatisfaction with the socio-political order (dominated by the upper and middle classes) in Britain.

“the first of the angry young men and arguably the biggest shock to the system of British theatre since the advent of Shaw” pf 37

### NEO-NATURALISM

The play is a combination of realistic theatre and naturalistic theatre. It shows us both a slice of life from post-war England and also includes cooked up devices

Second phase of English Realism. (first phase starts with Bernard Shaw, the second phase focuses on the working class). While Shaw's plays take place in rich houses, these plays take place in flats.

**Setting** : attic flat (from which the inhabitants want to escape)

**Characters** : one small group

Alison

Alison's mother-represents the sophistication and the upper middle class

Colonel (Father)

Helena

+

Jimmy (neither middle class or lower class)

Cliff (lower class)

Hugh-Hugh's mother (lower-class warmth and sympathy)

Jimmy experiences confusion between classes, has received an education and is intellectual but cannot find a decent job and is stuck in poverty.

**End** : usual reconciliation

**BUT** The play brings a new sense of reality, a world changing politically, intellectually and socially. This especially realized through the character Jimmy Porter, who expresses his disillusionment and ideas through highly rhetorical, violent and blazing speech.

There is stress on the weakness and unsureness of Jimmy, a strong hint that the verbal force and energy is the product of nervous tension within the character, and is in contradiction to his physical appearance [tall, thin, smokes a pipe]. A man of education living in poverty

In order to present awareness Jimmy is first seen reading Sunday Papers, talks about T.S.Eliot, Vaughan Williams, America, Ulysses, Emily Bronte, Andre Gide, Dante.