

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Social Binary Oppositions in Osborne's "*Look Back In Anger*"

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Abstract: Focusing on the binary opposition in the play ' *Look Back in Anger* 'which is written by renowned dramatist John Osborne. It is the motif of this research paper. Binary opposition is concerned to Structuralism . Structuralism helps us to understand the deep underlying meaning which the play produced . This is possible through the study of binary opposition. Social binary opposition is introduced by famous dramatist John Osborne in his play ' *Look Back in Anger* .' The play has binary oppositions which help us to understand the play easily . The focus of the paper is on ruling and working class binary , love and hatred binary , real and imaginary world binary and pre and post - marital life .

Keywords: Structuralism, Ferdinand de Saussure, Surface structure , Deep structure , Binary opposition

INTRODUCTION

A : STRUCTURALISM :

John Osborne is known as angry young man as well as for his renowned play "*Look Back In Anger*" which is written in 1955 and published in 1956. His play based on the structuralism and there are binary oppositions can be seen , which helps us to understand the deep structure of the play. After paying close attention , we can understand how it is used in the play. Close analysis is needed to understand the deep structure. John Osborne used binary opposition skilfully in his play.

Structuralism is considered a movement, an approach , an intellectual school , as

well as a method which helps us to understand the structure of any literary work. Two structures are introduced by structuralism first is physical , observable and visible as well as can be seen easily in number of human activities. It is known as surface structure. On the other hand second structure which is considers underlying , invisible and can not be seen easily. It is known as deep structure. It is a set of principles and can be found under the surface structure. Thus for understanding the deep structure of anything we must know what is the binary opposition. Deep structure can be understood with help of binary opposition.(1)

For understanding the deep structure of any literary piece the structuralism can be used in the field of linguistic, anthropology, sociology, mathematics, cultural studies, psychology, literature, architecture, economics and literary criticism. Following theorists are the members of the structuralism movement Claude Levi Strauss ,Ferdinand de Saussure, A.J. Greimas, Jonathan Culler, Roland Barthes, Roman Jakobson, Vladimir Propp. Their contribution in the field of structuralism is remarkable. (2)

There are two function of the structuralist . First is analysis of a art work second is to discover and define the invisible structure of literary work. In structuralism structuralist are desirous about the system and their view of looking at literary piece is quite different and because_of this view they can look behind the literary composition so that literary composition can be perceived. The structuralist

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dissect a literary piece to find the structure of the particular work this is their mode of operation. (2)

B : BINARY OPPOSITION :

The concept of binary opposition is central to structuralism and structuralist practice. In structuralism binary opposition is an important and remarkable term which is used by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the field of linguistic as well as by French anthropologist Claude levi Strauss in the field of anthropology. Jewish Russian linguist Roman Jakobson also used the ' binary features ' which are properties either present or absent in Phoneme.(3)

As a structuralist concept it derives especially from Claude Levi - Strauss studies of mythology. The concept ' binary opposition ' was used by French structural anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss in his work. Ferdinand de Saussure opines that the binary opposition is the means by which the units of language have value or meaning, each unit is defined against what is not. (4)In the terms of words, concepts, conversations or codes of a text the binary opposition used by linguists and structuralist . Deconstruction as well as post structuralism not satisfied for the notion of binary opposition. They think that the concept depicts the nostalgia for ' self - presence ' or centering. (3)

Meaning of binary is pair of opposites. There is opposition of two words. We have been seen binary opposition from childhood. Such as black and white, front and back , heaven and hell , cheap and expensive.(5) In world we can find lot of opposites it is full of opposites and this helps us as a base for constructing sophisticated concepts. For example good and bad right and left. In text there are plentiful sets of binary oppositions. Text is composed by using binary oppositions. The structuralist critics explain text with the help of binary oppositions and classify the meaning the text produce. (6)

Ruling class and Working class binary is the binary which is used by the author in his play to exhibit the exploitation of the working class by the upper class people . Treatment to Alison given by Jimmy clearly shows that working class is in oppose to upper class . Working class has a wish of classless society but there is no equality in educational and economical opportunities .Jimmy Porter is the example of the unequal society . He is a university graduate , an intellectual one but runs a sweet stall . Nigel who is Alison's brother wants to become a politician and Jimmy thinks he will become successful because of his class . Jimmy's treatment for Alison is an example of class hatred between ruling and working class. (7)

Alison's mother Mrs.Redfern is against the marriage of Alison and Jimmy because Alison is from upper class on the contrary Jimmy is from working class or lower class. Jimmy says in the play "everything they could think of to stop "(LBA 45) for upper class such type of marriage is like assault on the superiority of the class . (8)

Bishop Bromley is another character which shows the unawareness about the bad condition of lower working class.He announced that there is no class difference in the society.He was in favour of upper class and denied the fact of class difference. When he reads the article of Bishop Bromley in the newspaper he expresses his view about the class difference and he says to Cliff that Bishop is in oppose to the working class and Bishop declares that working class itself propogates the idea of class difference and Jimmy thinks that Bishop is strong supporter of upper middle class and against the working class. Social disparity could be seen in the social, political area. Jimmy thinks the exploitation of the working class through the ruling class must stop. (9)

For Jimmy theclergy , the evangelist ,the imperialist, politicians , academics , homosexuals women, the older generation and everything i.e.phoney.Jimmys long speeches the function of

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revealing certain state of mind.(7) Here we can observe one thing that Osborne is aware about the class difference which is in the society . He presents it very artistically through the play. John Osborne has written the play and works like a social reformer.

Among the binary from the play Love and hatred binary is a dominant binary. Love and hatred is another binary which can be seen in the play. It is a binary used by th Osborne in the play . The play is the mixture of the love and hatred . Jimmy hates the church bells, Sunday routine , Mrs. Redfern , exchanging of letters between Alison and her mother .

Jimmy 's hatred for Sunday routine. He "God , how I hate sunday! It always so depressing, always the same. Reading the papers , drinking tea , ironing. " . (LBA - 4) He does not like sunday . Because the every sunday the routine is same as usual. So he wants some changes.

Hatred for religion and its belief and practices can be seen in Jimmy's behaviour. When Alison goes to church with her friend Helena he asks her ,"where are you going?"she says she is going to church and he says to her ,"You are doing what"? Have you gone out of your mind or something?When he hears church bells ring he becomes angry and screams saying: O hell now the bloody bells have started. . . Stop ringing those bells! Theres somebody going crazy in here! I dont want to here them! (Osborne 25: Act 1).(7)

Another thing Jimmy hates is women. He considers them as assassins . He thinks they bleed men to death. According to him men deliberately let themselves be butchered by women. He express his hatred and says , "Why, why, why, why we let these women bleed us to death?"Alison , Mrs. Redfern , Helena Charles , Miss Drury , Jimmy's mother becomes the target of his hatred. He uses abusive and filthy words for women such as"old bitch " . "butcher " . For Alison's friend Helena

Charles Jimmy uses bitter words.He considers as a "natural enemy, the bitch " . (8)

In the play there is love theme too . Jimmy loves Alison and through the game of bear and squirrel they express it . Sincere love between Jimmy and Alison can be seen when they play their favourite game of "bear and squirrel". They care about each other, expresse deep love for each other. Jimmy shows love for Alison when he says , You're very beautiful. A beautiful, great-eyed squirrel. They expect mutual support from each other. He calls her poor squirrel and she calls him poor bears ! (LBA96). (8) When Alison decides to leave Jimmy their friend Cliff does not like it . Cliff feels sorry and says ,I cannot go on watching you two tearing the insides out of each other. It looks pretty ugly sometimes (LBA28).He does not like the decision of Alison to leave Jimmy. He does not like Helena because he thinks that arrival of her somewhat destructive for the couple.

There is a two worlds binary one is Imaginary and another is Real world binary. This is another binary in the play . In the life of Jimmy and Alison there are two worlds one is imaginary and another is real world. Jimmy and Alison love the game of "bear and squirrel "Jimmy loves his wife in his own way. Both loves game of bear and squirrel. They loves the game because it is their favourite game. In this game both kisses each other passionately. They call to each other "bear "and "squirrel". They love the game because they get love , affection , and comfort in this fantasy game and in daily life there is conflict , class divergence , social barrier , hate , tirade and tension which they don't like and this game helps them to keep away them from the martial life and from real world. In real world there is only conflict , quarrel and hatred for them. On the contrary love , affection and care is there. Jimmy calls her poor squirrel and she calls him poor bears!(LBA96). (8)

In the play dramatist Osborne depicts Pre - marital and Post - marital life binary.

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Basically the play revolves around the life of Jimmy and Alison . Being a husband and wife they should understand each other but they can't. Because there is misunderstanding between them. When Alison encounters Jimmy in a party she fascinated or we can say she attracted towards Jimmy. And she decides to marry to Jimmy. (8)

Before marriage there is happiness. But later there is unhappiness, misunderstanding develops between them. Alison does not know fight , conflict , rude attitude , hate when she was at her parents before marriage but as soon as she got married to Jimmy she feels irritated. Before marriage Jimmy has no source of livelihood but after marriage he starts a sweet stall for earning livelihood. Being a member of upper class Alison does not do any domestic work at home but after marrying with working class Jimmy she performs the domestic chores honestly.

Jimmy and Alison get marry in a hurry so they cannot understand each other. Between them misunderstanding develop day by day. Both loves each other but marriage becomes burden for them . Alison is from upper class family and she does not know how to fight, she does not do any work at her home , she does not know what is poverty. But after marriage she comes to know poverty , fight . Jimmy fights her each day by using abusive words. But she does not give any response to him and she keeps mum. Before the marriage she lives among the upper class members but after marriage she is among the working class people. We can clearly see the pre and post marital life of Jimmy and Alison through the play. (8)

Conclusion: Eventually we can easily understand the deep structure and theme of the play if we remove the surface structure of the play . After understanding the binary opposition , it goes extremely easily to get the deep , underlying meaning or theme of the play . Through the binary

opposition we can understand the play and its underlying theme .

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