

# **A Critical Evaluation of the Social Concerns in the Play “The Entertainer” Of John Osborne: With Special Reference to Marital, Neglected Children, Alienation and Isolation among Aged People, Divorcee**

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## **Abstract**

John Osborne's *The Entertainer* (1957) serves as a powerful social critique of post-war and tackles the deterioration in conventional British ideals. Through this research, the dysfunctional Rice family, Osborne explores several important societal concerns, including marriage, separation, and the impacts of divorce as well as neglected children, estrangement, and loneliness among the elderly. Archie Rice calls in this research for moral and national decline even as family members exhibit the psychological consequences of a failing socio-cultural structure. This paper elaborates via pertinent evidence and critical analysis that “*The Entertainer*” catches both a home tragedy and Britain's post-imperial identity problem. Osborne's portrayal of moral vacuity and broken relationships is a constant critique of modern society's inability to maintain emotional and ethical connections.

**Keywords:** John Osborne, The Entertainer, Social Concerns, Post-War British Drama, Family Disintegration

## **INTRODUCTION**

Renowned post-war British drama writer John Osborne became critical of the social and cultural degradation of his country. His works stood out and often mirrored the explosive social milieu of mid-20th century Britain by their emotional intensity and straightforward truth. Though his first play, *Look Back in Anger*, became legendary of the Angry Young Man movement by challenging the existing quo and communicating the worries of a disillusioned generation, his later works, such as *The Entertainer* (1957), more accurately mix personal failure with national disillusionment [1].

Filmed against the backdrop of the Suez Crisis and the falling British Empire, *The Entertainer* captures the waning grandeur of a family legacy and a nation's identity [2]. Osborne shockingly fits the social

catastrophe of post-imperial Britain with the moral depravity and cynicism of music-hall performer Archie Rice. Originally an excellent site for amusement, the music hall stands for cultural obsolescence [3].

Osborne investigates in *The Entertainer* the demise of traditional values and the disintegration of family ties, as well as the moral and emotional bankruptcy British society is now suffering from. The domestic environment of the Rice family mirrors the national identity crisis in which the responsibilities related to marriage, parenting, and elder care are either twisted or neglected.

Archipelago speaks to a generational transformation typified by apathy, flight, and disappointment through moral cynicism and emotional estrangement. Jean and Billy Rice react differently in the meantime: critical but resigned and hopeful yet nostalgic. This drama offers excellent social commentary on the emotional impact of divorce and separation permeating all the characters, the generational disconnection exposed by neglected family responsibilities, the alienation of the elderly who mourn a lost past, and the marital breakdowns reflecting emotional sterility on several different levels [4]. Osborne stresses both human strength and the effects of decay. He effectively highlights these themes. Due to the author's critical and sympathetic point of view, the well-known work *The Entertainer* finds a place in the corpus of British social dramas [5].

## **MARITAL BREAKDOWN AND EMOTIONAL ESTRANGEMENT**

Marriage is regarded in “*The Entertainer*” Osborne as an institution under stress, one defined by disappointment, adultery, and emotional immobility. Main character Archie Rice, a struggling singer from a music hall, exhibits emotional distance from his wife Phoebe and apathetic attitude toward the emotional needs of his family. Driven more by habit than love, their marriage is like a hollow shell [6]. This image reflects the prevalent unhappiness in post-war Britain about marriage when traditional institutions were less reliable source of emotional or financial stability.

### **Phoebe laments: “You don't even care what happens to any of us.”**

This line catches the emotional void in their marriage. Phoebe's regular grievances and Archie's snarky, apathetic attitude mirror the emotional collapse of a marriage gone off course. Osborne reduces family life to its most problematic aspects rather than idealizing it; so, he exposes a culture in which the institution of marriage provides neither security nor satisfaction [7].

The drama also juxtaposes the past with the present by means of the protagonists' disastrous marriages. Another indication of shifting views on conventional family structures is Jean, Archie's daughter's, engagement in a breaking-off process. This particular trait captures the younger generation's increasing concern about marriage since it exposes a social change in which dedication is no more taken into account as necessary or even desirable.

## **Neglected Children and Unfulfilled Parenthood**

The Entertainer shows parenting as a burden rather than a cause of continuity or importance. Archie's indifferent approach to his children reveals the issue of parental neglect, especially in relation to their moral and emotional growth [8]. Archer's father, Billy Rice, exhibits a sentimental link to the past, while Archie is a parent who embodies failure—not only as an entertainment but also as a moral guide [9]. His children drift between the heritage of a glorious past and the aimlessness of a failing present without direction.

**Jean, Archie's daughter, says: "You're dead inside, Dad. You can't feel anything anymore."**

This comment implies not only Archie's emotional numbing but also how his children suffered from that emotional blank. Jean's developing autonomy and troubled relationship with her father mirror a generational struggle in which conventional parental authority has lost moral credibility. Osborne catches the greater age difference in post-war Britain using this family dynamic. Left to fend emotionally for themselves, the children reflect a society in which conventional parent obligations are vanishing [10].

As the military-serving son of Archie, Mick stands in for the patriotic young people suffering under the shortcomings of their leaders. His death during the Suez Crisis draws attention to generational loss and the pointlessness of sacrifice for an almost assured empire. Osborne claims there hasn't been consistency or moral direction from the paternal generation. Once a source of national solidarity, the war today appears ridiculous and demoralizing as young men die for a cause nobody can really explain [11].

### **Alienation and Isolation Among the Aged**

The Entertainer's patriarch, Billy Rice, stands for the marginalizing and separating of the older generation. Retired actor Billy stands for a brief period of imperial pride and cultural peace gone by [2]. Beset by the failing son and the disintegration of family togetherness, he is more and more alien in the disintegrating 1950s Britain. Though they provide some consolation, his background also shows how useless his beliefs are in the contemporary culture [12].

**Billy reflects: "There's no pride left. We were proud once."**

This nostalgic claim emphasizes the great loss older people in a society gone beyond their values experience. Billy lives among a family that no longer supports the values he used to defend; hence, his presence is sad and ironic. Furthermore, he cannot interact with them completely either. His isolation has emotional as much as physical aspects [13]. Osborne presents Billy as a representative of how society, fixated on reinventions, overlooks the lessons of its past that of how the old is seen as useless [1]. Billy's quiet dignity stands in many areas quite different from Archie's moral bankruptcy and cynicism [14]. He stands for a fading moral order replaced by a surface-level culture and cheap entertainment.

### **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF DIVORCE AND SEPARATION**

The Entertainer does not show a legal divorce, but emotional separation infuses every moment in the play. If not in law, Archie and Phoebe's marriage is practically broken in spirit. Their frustrated contacts

draw attention to the psychological effects of emotional distance; their lectures lack intimacy. Among all the family members, lack of affection and mutual understanding drives sentiments of desertion, uncertainty, and pessimism.

**Phoebe bitterly accuses Archie: “You’ve never loved anyone but yourself.”**

Their amazing backdrop reflects their great emotional distance apart. Jean battles the breakdown of her family as well, which drives her doubts about her loving obligations. Osborne constructs a cosmos in which occasionally disappointment or self-interest skews emotional connection or where it is fleeting [15].

Lack of love and the collapse of close emotional relationships speak to a society incapable of preserving conventional romantic or family ties. The psychological consequence presents itself as less moral orientation, loneliness, and cynicism. These broken ties reflect Britain's own social cohesiveness breaking down, in which case institutions are hollowed out and people are left to negotiate a society free from moral and emotional support [16].

## CONCLUSION

John Osborne’s “*The Entertainer*” delivers a poignant and unflinching portrayal of a society in decline and presents in a terrible way a society losing a family and the moral bankruptcy of its leader. Through his investigation of important societal concerns such as emotional estrangement, geriatric loneliness, abandoned children, and marriage failure, John Osborne offers a somewhat dismal picture of post-war Britain. In a post-imperial era, emotional estrangement, alienation of the elderly, and the loss of real intergenerational links are all manifestations of a greater national disenchantment. Osborne, in his work titled “*The Entertainer*,” not only examines the shortcomings of individuals but also exposes the psychological and emotional expenses that are incurred by a society that is unable to reconcile its history with its uncertain future. Particularly in view of Britain's loss of imperial position, these problems are seen as a component of a more general national decline than as personal ones. Osborne is a rare and important writer as he can combine national perspectives with personal experience. *The Entertainer* makes a strong point on generational conflict, emotional emptiness, and lack of common wisdom, notwithstanding its age. Osborne's works are monuments to the search for purpose, disillusionment, and loss in a divided moment; the personal flaws of the Rice family reflect the wider failure of British society to significantly adapt with the times.

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