

Contemporary Literature

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Good morning. So, we were on page 186, when the play gets rudely interrupted by the inspector and while the play Macbeth is in progress and inspector happens to know that most of these are banned playwrights and play actors and they are not supposed to stage a play. And while all this is going on, he is you know throwing his flashlight or search light on the audience and he wants to know who are the people who are attending and the people who are supporting this kind of what is the term you remember? Good LRT the living room theatre in Prague flats. So, he recognizes the famous actor Pavel Landovsky and he says Macbeth is being played by Pavel Landovsky who is a real life character who was indeed an actor who was prevented from acting during the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. So, Landovsky inspector the actor Macbeth the floor cleaner in a boiler factory, what do you understand by this? He is a well known actor Pavel Landovsky and his inspector says your name is Landovsky rings a bell you are an actor right and he says the floor cleaner from boiler company factory, what does it mean? Not exactly, see when they were prevented from doing their from pursuing their profession, what other choice did they have? Do you remember the unbearable lightness of being Milan Kundera? Does it mean anything to you? Are you familiar with the back drop? It is again about the communist regime in Czechoslovakia and the revolution and the attempt to over throw the communist regime and what happened to professionals and intellectuals during that particular regime and the protagonist the hero of the novel Thomas, he is a doctor he is a practicing surgeon, but because of his so called liberal inclinations he is suspended, he is no longer permitted or allowed to pursue his profession. So, what other choice does he have? So, he becomes a window cleaner and we are told that there are many such highly qualified people who are pursuing such jobs because there is no other way for them.

So, this could be one of you know this could be an explanation for this. So, he is not really lying, but because he is an actor that is his profession, but he is denied to pursue it. So, now, he is a boiler he is a floor cleaner in a boiler factory that is what he is doing. That is him I am a great admirer of yours you know I followed your career for years I have not worked for years.

What are you talking about? I saw you last season my wife was with me the newspaper kiosk at the tram terminus and you were wonderful you were also selling newspapers at one point of time at one point I said to my wife that is Landovsky the actor is not he great what a character wonderful voice no strain every syllable given its value. So, now, you are sweeping floors. So, in between I hear you were also I saw you selling newspapers now you are flooring cleaning floors good I remember you when you were a night watch man in the builders yard and before that when you were the trolley porter at the mortuary and before that you were the button molder in Peer Gynt. Peer Gynt is a play by Ibsen. So, you know before doing all these jobs you know before cleaning floors before being a trolley pusher and selling newspapers you are playing doing Peer Gynt I remember that.

So, it has been quite a while since Landovsky has been out of job and he is forced to take up these you know very ordinary kind of work just to survive and that was the real condition in Czechoslovakia which is a fact. So, this is just a commentary on that actually Pavel you have had a funny sort of career it is not my business of course, but do you know what you want is my opinion that the public is utterly confused about your intentions is this where you saw it all leading to where when you started off. So, bravely all those years ago I remember you in your first job you were a messenger post office was it now he is again being sarcastic say this is a character from Antony and Cleopatra. So, you were working at the post office I remember actually he was playing a character of a messenger in Antony and Cleopatra, but the inspector being what he is he says that was your first job you were working as a postman that was no I was actually acting then in Antony and Cleopatra right. You see I am utterly confused by myself what are you exactly.

So, are you you know you are so many things tell me Pavel how why did you give it all up you were a star I saw your hamlet of course, your Stanley Kowalski you know this character Stanley Kowalski yes Stanley Kowalski your hamlet Stanley Kowalski is a character is a memorable character good A Streetcar Named Desire. Marlon Brando popularized it on broad way and of course, is a Tennessee Williams play if you remember the animal cries Stella Stella right. I saw your Romeo with what is her name wonderful girl whatever happened to her could I have your autograph it is not for me it is for your daughter now he is addressing the female actor here. Lady Macbeth I would rather not the last time I signed something I did not work for two years. So, you never know what these people make you sign and then get you arrested for trumped up charges.

Now, look do not blame us if the parts just stop coming may be you got over exposed see this is what actors are usually told you know you were doing all sort of bit jobs and

you know not really worthwhile work. So, therefore, you did not get the right kind of play it is not actually what was happening that people were coerced producers were forced not to give any work to these people therefore, they went out of work how else. So, it was just a you know very well state controlled machinery, but however, here they are they do not even take responsibility for doing that they said perhaps you know you were you just did not work well enough and you got over exposed. So, therefore, the parts stop coming. I was working in a restaurant at the time there you are you see the public is very funny about that sort of things they do not want to get dressed up and arrange a babysitter only to find that they have paid good money to see Hedda Gabler done by a waitress who wrote Hedda Gabler Ibsen again.

So, lots of references to Ibsen here can you tell me why so much of inter textuality happening here Peer Gynt Hedda Gabler who made that famous presentation on Ibsen yes all fingers pointing at you and what was Ibsen the dramatist of. The authority that was prevailing at that time breaking all social taboos and taboos questioning the society. Social accesses moral codes establish moral codes as you have seen in a dolls house right Peer Gynt is again an extremely Peer Gynt along with ghosts you know extremely controversial plays and the Ibsen had to face a lot of trouble. So, perhaps what Ibsen went through during his times in Norway that could perhaps be a commentary that is how that could be the inter textual reference here because Ibsen too was not very well received during his times because of his unconventional ideas. They may not look all that unconventional today, but during those times they were because you see he came at the turn of the 19th century.

So, those times things were different and now inspector as these people are own to he is squarely laying the blame on her that you know after all you have been working as a waitress in a restaurant who would pay and come to see you playing lady Macbeth. So, all the reality something different I am beginning to understand why your audience is confined to your circle of acquaintances to audience do not move it gives one pause does not it. Tonight Macbeth will be played by Mr. Landowski who last season scored a personal success in the newspaper kiosk at the tram terminus and has recently been seen washing the floors in number three boiler factory. The role of lady Macbeth is in the capable hands of Vera from the dirty spoon it sounds like a rough night.

So, now this is a very sarcastic and a very cruel observation on their situation see after all you are you know this is what you are you are floors sweeper and you are a newspaper seller and then why bother who would bother to come and see you, but they are not actually that is not their identity they are actors who are denied their rightful profession. We will move on to now page 190 please. So, this is the first page of the book. So, this is page 190 here you know they are coming to the end here Macduff. So,

Macduff he is already named and gone to scorn to be invested fanfare they leave the stage Macbeth his cloak crowns himself standing above screen the inspector applauds and steps forward into the play inspector very good.

So, what scene are they enacting from hamlet Macbeth in cloak crowns himself standing above screen that is king Duncan has already been murdered and now Macbeth has been crown the rightful the you know the he is not actually the rightful heir, but now he has been crowned by the minister as the king of Scotland and inspector is quite happy with the situation he says very good very good. So, nice to have a play with a happy ending for a change he thinks this is how the play ends, but this is just the beginning other actors come on stage in general light to lady Macbeth darling you were marvelous it is just like you know very theatrical pleasantries all those darlings and social etiquette and all and you are marvelous this is just a convention in the theatrical society. Lady Macbeth she is quite indignant and she is already put off by this man I am not your darling I know and you weren't marvelous, but when in Rome parlez-vous as the new natives do. So, now, since we are in parlez-vous you talk the way a Roman said that this is a proverb right. So, see how Stoppard uses language he is satirizing the theatrical etiquettes as well and then he is you know because then perhaps this is commentary on the actual state of affairs in theater where people are always complementing each other however bad they may be because they are you know supposed to do.

So, may you are not really all that great an actress we know that we have to say when in Rome do as the Romans do and parlez-vous this is also interesting you are saying Rome and you are using a French term. To the general audience the inspector says please do not leave the building you may use the lavatory, but leave the door open. So, this kind of surveillance you are not supposed to leave you are being watched all the time stunning incredible absolutely fair to middling Macbeth you were rubbish. So, now, you know that just there is a face off between them inspector look just because I did not laugh out loud it does not mean I was not enjoying it. To hostess which were you which one were you hostess I am not in it you are in it up to here you are a part of this entire set up it is pretty clear to me that this flat is being used for entertaining men there is a law about that you know.

So, now, he is accusing her. So, that you know he can shut the place down he is accusing her indirectly of running a brothel, but see you are doing this which is something absolutely illegal say they are trying to survive they are trying to protect their theatrical heritage anyhow they are struggling. So, perhaps this is exactly what they went through when during those times and stop it. So, there was at this stage let me tell you there is a site you can go to this particular site and look for this topic charter 77 this was when the communist government was at its peak and when there were when there were lot of

violation of human rights some liberal minded people they developed a document they took that initiative to come up with a charter it was called charter 77 and Pavel Kahoot was one of the architects of this particular charter and there the idea was to spread the message of that charter it was all about civic rights human rights etcetera to spread the contents of the charter to as many people as possible that is what they were trying to do and the government was doing its best to suppress this charter. Now it was believed that through their theatrical expressions because see many people who were that architects of this charter they belong to the artistic world drama, theater, films etcetera.

So, Vaclav Havel as we have been talking about he himself was a dramatist. So, it was believed that they were using theater as a means to propagate their ideas especially the contents of the charter 77. So, that was so it was not like Macbeth is being staged. So, it should be prevented I mean what is so harmful or what is so dangerous about acting out Macbeth, but the government it was so paranoid they actually believed that perhaps there are there are certain encoded messages which are being spread about and about charter 77. So, therefore, this urge to control whatever was being played and you know this excessive surveillance bugging the houses all that.

Any questions at this time at this point? No, all right we will skip to page 190. So, sorry 192. This there is a lengthy this dialogue by the inspector Abhay can you read it out please page 192 the inspector's part. You see some went down, but some went up. Fair do's. Well, I'll tell you what. I don't want to spend all day taking statements. It's frankly not worth the candle for three years' maximum and I know you've been having a run of bad luck all round- jobs lost, children failing exams, letters undelivered, driving licenses withdrawn, passports indefinitely postponed- and nothing on paper. It's as if the system had a mind of its own; so why don't you give it a chance and I'll give you one, I am really glad I caught you before you closed if I can just make just one tiny criticism Shakespeare or the old bill as we call him the force is not a popular choice with my chief going to his popularity with the public or as we call it in the force the fifth.

The fact is when you get the universal and timeless writer like Shakespeare there is a strong feeling that he could be spitting in the eyes of the beholder when he should be keeping his mind on Verona hanging around the 'gents'. You know what I mean? Unwittingly of course. He didn't know he was doing it. At least you couldn't prove he did. Which is what makes the chief so prejudiced against him.

The chief says he rather you stood up and said there is no freedom in this country then there is nothing underhand and we all know where we stand. You get your lads together and we get our lads together and when it is all over one of us is in power and you are in jail. That is freedom of action but what we don't like is a lot of people being cheeky and

saying that they are only Julius Caesar or Coriolanus or Macbeth. Otherwise we are going to start treating them the same as the ones who say they are Napoleon. Got it? Can you comment on this particular passage? Now, why this prejudice against Shakespeare? I think we touched upon this briefly yesterday. Do you remember Krishna? Go through the lines.

Look at the lines again. The fact is when you get a universal and timeless writer like Shakespeare there is a strong feeling that he could be spitting in the eyes of the beholder when he should be keeping his mind on Verona hanging around the gents. It is a play. This is a clever pun on which play of Shakespeare? And who is Verona in Merchant of Venice? Pray tell me. Good.

Two gentlemen of Verona. There is a play called Two gentlemen of Verona. So, he should keep his mind on Verona who is hanging around the gents. Do you see? But you know being a universal playwright he talks about so many universal predicaments and therefore, we do not like him. Under the guise of saying something Shakespeare always says something else and he is quite ambiguous. So, very difficult to understand the moral complexity, the meaning implicit the subtext in Shakespeare.

So, you can use Shakespeare to say whatever you want. So, when you say Julius Caesar because Julius Caesar happens to be a political play partially. You know you can praise it for its aesthetic value, but also it says it is also politically relevant play. Then you also have a play like Macbeth like Rehan was saying yesterday when I asked you guys that what is Macbeth all about the first thing she said is a political play. There is lot of and Macbeth can also be contextualized in several different ways.

We have seen in our own country what how Macbeth has been used Maqbool and recently there is a Hollywood flick called Macbeth with that and it is all about a gang war in New York. So, you have the same story almost like Macbeth. So, it has what is his name Sam Worthington playing Macbeth. So, you know Shakespeare can be universalized and he can he can be made very contemporary in and he is timeless. So, he to use a cliché he redefines the boundaries and pushes the boundaries of time and space.

So, therefore, we do not like Shakespeare do anything else I mean we come out and say it in the open that the government is oppressive and we are denied freedom of speech. So, here you have lot of you know dialectics going on now. So, it is no longer a comedy of course, it is a satire, but then again like most plays it turns into some kind of a you know a play of dialectics where there is lot of exchange intellectual exchange about what is what is moral after all and what is freedom how do you define it and therefore. So, you see if you say that you are a Julius Caesar or Macbeth or Coriolanus then we will we will

say that you know we are Napoleon and what did Napoleon do to all his opponents and that is what we are going to do to you that is the idea. We obey the law and we ask no more of you the law I have got the penal code tattooed on my whistle you know I keep the law in my pocket I understand law.

Landowski and there is a lot about you in it section 98 subversion anyone acting out of hostility to the state section 100 incitement anyone acting out of hostility to the state I could nick you just for acting and the sentence is double for an organized group which I can make stick on Robinson Crusoe and his man any day of the week. So, do not tell me about the laws we are protected by the constitution dear god and we call you intellectuals personally I cannot read that stuff constitution what is it you know there is no such thing nobody talks like that. So, it is not reasonable to expect them to live like it the way I see it life is lived off the record it is all together too human for the written word it happens in pictures metaphors a few years ago you suddenly had it on toast, but when they gave you an inch you over played your hand and rock the boat. So, they pull the rug from now look at all the proverbs and idioms he is using you give an inch and they pull the rug and rock the boat and they do also. So, this is again Tom Stoppard and his punnings I mean that is pure fact metaphorically speaking it describes what happen to you in a way that anybody can understand now Banquo henceforth Kahoot.

So, that this is Kahoot's Macbeth howls like a dog barks fall silent on his hands and knees sit here boy what is his name Kahoot the social parasite and slanderer of the state the writer that is him you are a great favorite down at nick you know we are thinking of making you writer in residence for a couple of years like we are going to make tie you around like a dog this is what you are. So, writers that is the that was the situation of the condition of the writers that you should be on all force for if you are a member of a recognize school which I can make stick on a chimpanzee with a box of alphabet bricks would you care to make a statement thou hast it now king Cawdor Glamis all the weird sisters promised kindly leave my wife's family out of this. Now, he is a Banquo the character of Banquo as played by Kahoot Kahoot who was actually an actor one of the architects of charter seventy seven. So, he starts reciting the lines and ugly sisters and the which is from here and inspectors is fine I think you are referring to my wife's family all right. We will skip a bit and go to page one ninety seven where we have another character who we are already familiar with.

So, as the play is in progress yes Macbeth it is concluded Banquo the soul slight if it finds the witch in heaven you must find it tonight the murders take a position to ambush Banquo easy appears and window at window and sees Buxton's almost Leamington Spa. Now, this is a spillover from Dogg's Hamlet and how does he come here and why does he come because from England now he is in Prague driving his lorry with all the stage

material how come. Can you give me some explanation now easy is used as a you know as a kind of a device to suggest some kind of a link between the two plays, but what link is it these plays do you find any thematic link between the two plays. So, why is easy introduced at this juncture yes Aditi cannot guess easy appears at that window and says the murderers are surprised to see him murderers the actors and they have just killed Banquo at the behest of Macbeth. Macbeth has instructed these people to kill Banquo and then soon you will have that scene where Banquo's ghost is sighted at the you know state dinner and where you know.

So, all kind I mean then that is starts the downward spiral of Macbeth emotionally and mentally and all, but here at this point easy makes an entry and he this is what he says at the beginning of when he is introduced in Dogg's Hamlet as well he represents this company Buxton, Leamington Spa that is his lorry and all. Cake hops first murder, but who did bid the join with us are you one of the actors and who asked you to join us Buxton's second murder with misgiving he need not are mistrust since he delivers he is delivering something. So, let us not mistrust him our offices and what we have to do to the direction just then stay with us the west yet glimmers with some streaks of the all these are original authentic line from Macbeth and they are going on with their performance. We will go to again page 198 easy's lines page 198 easy's lines. So, let us see what is going on here? So, here is the page 188 top easy remains looking bewildered the hostess appears from the audience again Buxton's cake hops almost Leamington Spa the hostess leaves him off stage light and music for Macbeth's feast Macbeth enters with lady Macbeth and guests in attendance where he pretends to expect Banquo who he knows has already been murdered you know your own degrees sit down at first and last a hearty welcome ask ourselves will mingle with society and play the humble host the guests have brought their own stools and goblets lady Macbeth enters likewise first murderer enters with easy remaining at the edge of the stage.

Then Macbeth sees first murderer and goes to him there is blood upon their face it is Banquo's then is he dispatched my lord his throat is cut that I did for him thanks for that get the gone tomorrow we will hear ourselves again exit murderers followed by easy during the scene easy is hovering at the fringes hoping to catch someone's eyes his entrance and exits coincide with those for Banquo's ghost who is invisible and he only appears in Macbeth's eye line Macbeth does his best to ignore him my royal lord you do not give the cheer sweet remembrance now good digestion wait on appetite and health on both here had we now our country's honor root were the grace person of our Banquo present his absence sir lays a blame upon his promise please say your highness to grace us with your royal company here is a place reserved easy enters at door stage right where here my good lord what is it that moves your highness which of you have done this what my good lord now cannot say I did never shake thy gory locks at me sit worthy friends

my lord is often thus the fit is momentary upon a thought he will again be well she
crosses to Macbeth are you a man I and a bold one that dare look on that which might
appall the devil easy appears at window pretty see there behold look low