

Contemporary Literature

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Mod-01 Lec-02 Harold Pinter

So, today we will be talking about Harold Pinter, who is a British playwright, a Jewish British born in Hackney part of London and he was born on 10th October 1930. He died quite recently, we will be talking about that. He is of Jewish origin and the salient features of his plays are the use of understatement, small talk, Pinter's small talk is a very famous attribute of all his plays, reticence and silence. There are lots of silences in Pinter. So, these devices are employed to convey the substance of a character's thoughts. How he does that, we will see.

This is Harold Pinter. Pinter's father was a tailor. As a child, Pinter loved his mother, but he did not get on well with his father because his father was a strict disciplinarian. On the outbreak of the Second World War, Pinter was evacuated from the city of Conwell to be ranches from his parents was a traumatic event for Pinter because those were the days of the times of bombing and Jewish persecution.

So, he, all Jewish children had to be evacuated. Pinter lived with 26 other boys in a castle on the coast and at the age of 14, he returned to London. He remembers, the condition of being bombed has never left me and this feature of the terror of the unknown is a persistent feature in all his plays. At school, one of Pinter's main intellectual interest was English literature, particularly poetry, but at the same time, he also read works of Franz Kafka and Ernest Hemingway and he started poetry, writing poetry for little magazines in his teens. The seeds of rebellion in Pinter could be spotted early on when he refused to do the national service.

All young people were expected to be a part of the army of the armed forces during the Second World War, but he refused to participate. As a young man, he studied acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, the famous Rada and the Central School of Speech and Drama, but he soon left that place to undertake an acting career and he acted in a number of plays under the stage name David Barron. He travelled around Ireland in a Shakespearean company and spent years working in a provincial repertory before

deciding to turn his attention to playwriting. So, Pinter began his career then as an actor. Now, let us talk more about Pinter's life.

Pinter was married from 1956 onwards to the actress Vivian Merchant. For a time, they lived in a Notting Hill gate in a slum. They could not afford a better accommodation. So, therefore, eventually Pinter managed to borrow some money and they moved away from the slum to a better place. Although Pinter said in an interview in 1966 that he never has written any play for any actor, his wife, the actress Vivian Merchant frequently appeared in his plays.

His marriage to the actress dissolved in 1980 and then Pinter married the biographer Lady Antonia Fraser whose former husband was the conservative MP Hugh Fraser. So, the divorce with Vivian Merchant separated Pinter from his son Daniel who later went on to become a writer and a musician. Vivian Merchant died in 1982. Antonia Fraser's account of a married life with Pinter, its title, *Must You Go*, it came out in 2010. Pinter's works, some of his early plays were *The Room* in 1957 and *The Dumb Waiter* in 1957, both are one act plays.

His first full length play was *The Birthday Party* in 1958. He also wrote a number of radio plays. One of such prominent plays is *A Slight Echo* in 1959 which was subsequently adapted for the stage and his reputation was secured by his second full length play *The Caretaker* which can be categorized as a realistic play. At this point, I would also like to make a mention of *Encore's* journal. It was the foremost radical theatre journal of the time.

The contributors to *Encore* studied Pinter's plays with interest as soon as they arrived on the scene and made powerful senses and comments of them. *Encore* believed that theatre is a social art. So, remember *Encore* was a radical theatre journal and it was one of the foremost journals which paid attention to Pinter during his initial days. So, most of Pinter's works were seriously interpreted and critiqued in *Encore*. The first edition of *The Birthday Party* was also published by the *Encore* publishing company.

The magazine encouraged discussion on a variety of works and included every point of view. So, it was not as if they subscribed only to the popular points of view. It could be radically different point of view from the ones that would exist popularly. For instance, the Irish writer Sean O'Casey attacked *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett. This is what Sean O'Casey says about *Waiting for Godot*.

Samuel Beckett is a clever writer and that he has written a rotting and remarkable play, but his philosophy is not my philosophy. For within him, there is no hazard of hope, no

desire for it, nothing in it, but a lust for despair and a crying of woe. Although Samuel Beckett by many is recognized as one of the greatest playwrights of that 20th century, however, Sean O'Casey begged to differ, but the Encore magazine people they were not afraid of publishing such a radical point of view. So, that was their characteristic. Now, Pinter and the 20th century drama.

So, when we are talking about radical journals like the Encore magazine, this was the time backdrop of the or the times when Pinter was writing. At the same time in the US during the early 1950s, the plays of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams they were being staged and these plays also registered a departure from the constructive self-censorship of the British plays. The British plays during that time they were extremely conservative, extremely conformist. However, when the British playwrights observed, discovered the American theatre especially the theatre of, we have been talking about these playwrights Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams who were radical in terms of themes as well as techniques. So, Pinter was inspired by this particular group of American playwrights.

So, British plays were at that time dominated by virtual terror of the so called vulgar and working class. So, you would never find any reference to the working class people in the British plays of that time. There was an utter absence of the working class people, the so called people who were not elitist. However, along with the changing post-war social conditions, the seeming freedom signaled by the Americans provided an impetus for the rise of the angry young men. So, predominantly John Osborn and John Wesker.

So, we have been talking about the angry young men group of playwrights and we remember these names John Osborn and John Wesker. The period that these people belong to was the mid 1950s. A word about the angry young men. So, the angry young men were a group of young British writers whose works expressed the bitterness of the lower classes towards the established socio-political system and towards the mediocrity and hypocrisy of the middle and upper classes. The trend was evident in John Waze novel *Hurry on Down* 1953 and in *Lucky Jim* 1954 by Kingsley Amis and this trend which was evident in the novels of these writers, this was crystallized in 1956 where the most representative work was written by John Osborn and the title of the play was *Look Back in Anger*.

The label angry young men was extended to all his contemporaries who expressed a rage at the persistence of a class distinctions, a pride in their lower class mannerisms and dislike for anything high bro or phony. Arnold Wesker and Alan Sillito are also other dominant figures of this movement. Another highlight of that particular era was the translation of the French absurdist literature most famously Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for*

Godot and Eugene Ionesco's with his success by the early 1960s. Pinter was frequently associated with the social realism of the angry young men and with the absurdism of Beckett and Ionesco. Ionesco's *Chairs* is often compared with Pinter's *The Caretaker*.

Likewise Pinter's *The Birthday Party* bears resemblance to *Rhinoceros* by Ionesco in terms of themes and ideas. Just a small introduction to it that this is a small, this is a life in a small provincial town where all but one turn into rhinoceros. The allegory, this is an allegory, this is nothing but an allegory of conformist fascism and this can be highlighted in the famous lines such as good men make good rhinoceros unfortunately, is because they are so good that they get taken in. Pinter's works have also been categorized under the term the theatre of the absurd. So, the theatre of the absurd is a term coined by Martin Esselin in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd*.

Waiting for Godot published in 1957 in many ways heralded the age of the absurd theatre. The term applies to a number of works in drama and prose fiction which have in common the idea that human condition is essentially absurd and that this condition can be represented by those works which are absurd. So, why absurd? Because you, why absurd is literature? Because human condition itself is absurd and there cannot be any other way to represent it that was the idea. Expressionism has its roots in the movements of expressionism and surrealism. In fiction, Franz Kafka's works during the 1920s, they are also more or less and they can be categorized as absurdist literature.

For example, the trial and metamorphosis. So, back to the 1940s, you must remember that there was a tendency specially prominent in the existent, existential philosophy of Sartre and Camus to view human beings as an isolated existent who is cast in an alien universe. This universe according to the existentialist writers has no inherent truth, value or meaning. Ionesco adds to the entire definition or to the body of the theater of the absurd that cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost. All his actions become senseless, absurd and useless.

Likewise Samuel Beckett's plays, they also project the irrationalism, helplessness and absurdity of human life. His dramatic forms reject realistic settings, logical reasonings or a coherently evolving plot. *Waiting for Godot* is a supreme example of this. Like most works in this mode, the play is absurd in the double sense that it is grotesquely comic and also irrational and non-consequential. So, these are the terms perhaps that you should pay attention to grotesquely comic, irrational and non-consequential because all these attributes would be, would recur even in the works of Harold Pinter.

Much of the works in the written in the theater of the absurd kind of tradition is a parody of the traditional assumptions of western culture. And at the same time, it is also a

parody of the conventions and a generic distinctions in traditional drama. For example, if you read a play, you can perhaps you would like to remember a play like *The Crucible*, even *Oedipus*. Consider the dramatic structure, consider the themes that you find in those plays and then take a look at the works by Samuel Beckett and Pinter, Ionesco and then you will feel that it is indeed a kind of parody of the conventional assumptions of western literature. So, the absurdity of characters and dialogues are used to project alienation, estrangement and tragic anguish of the characters.

The famous lines from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* encapsulates perhaps the entire philosophy of the absurdist theater, nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it is awful. So, some of the major names associated with the theater of the absurd are Jean, sorry Jean Genet, Edward Elby, Edward Elby who wrote *The American Dream* and *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, then Tom Stoppard, Pinter of course and writers of absurd fiction, for example, Joseph Heller, *Catch-22*, Thomas Pynchon who wrote *V*, Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, John Barth and *Gontrogross*. So, these names are associated forever with the absurdist literature, both plays, both dramas as well as fiction. So, just to recap the characteristics of absurdist writings, you have one finds for example, naive and inept characters, inarticulate characters, characters, dramatist, personae who are unable to express themselves, fantastic or nightmarish world, the setting itself is absolutely irrational, psychological and often we find characters playing out tragic far, I am sure you understand what is a far. So, but in absurdist literature you find tragic far being played out, events are simultaneously comic, horrifying and absurd.

You consider the mix of genres, so many genres collapsing together, horrifying, comical as well as absurdist. The influence of Samuel Beckett on Pinter's works is, can be easily identified. In 1970, Pinter declared Beckett to be the greatest writer of our time. You just saw what Sean O'Kessie had to say about waiting for Godot and look at the contradiction for Pinter, Samuel Beckett was the best, was the greatest. In a letter, Pinter writes, I do not want philosophies, tracts, dogmas, creeps, way outs, truths, answers, nothing from the bargain basement.

Beckett is the most courageous, remorseless writer going. Can anyone tell me, what is so courageous about Beckett? Are you aware, are you familiar with waiting for Godot? That is a good response. One was the experimenting with the structure, but what was more important was the use of a peculiar kind of language, which so far was just not used. So, Beckett revolutionized the theater in more ways than one. It was not just the structure, which was radical, but it was also the language.

If you read waiting for Godot again, perhaps you go back, revisit the play and you will understand what is so special about it, especially during those days when it was first

written. Pinter's theater can also be called the comedy of menace. We were just talking that Pinter's theater plays are comic, horrifying, absurdist, all at the same time. So, the term comedy of menace is associated with Pinter. So, Pinter's plays focus on triangulated relationships.

Triangulated relationships means, most of the time you find three people or two people having some kind of a conversation. So, basically all the plays of Pinter are conversational plays, but what kind of dialogue, what kind of speech, what kind of conversation, that is what sets them apart from the plays by other writers. I am quoting the critic Christopher Ince, who is a noted theater critic. He says Pinter's typical cast is three. He usually develops his plays around the cast of three people, three dramatists, the smallest unstable relationship in which changing alliances can be formed and individuals isolated.

If I ask you to interpret this particular comment, what would your response be? Triangulated relationships, look at the choice of language, triangulated relationships, unstable relationship, changing alliances, isolation. Does it say something? I will give you a moment, just think about it, we will come back to it later. Ince further notes that Pinter's plays are variations on the subjects of dominance, control, exploitation, subjugation and victimization. So, what generally happens in a typical Pinter play is that it begins with three characters as we have seen triangulated relationships and then gradually alliances start changing. For example, two people start pledging their friendship to somebody else and what happens then? The third person is invariably left isolated and this is the feature that you find in most of his plays, isolation, estrangement, alienation.

So, in his plays, Pinter adds an element of comedy provided mostly through the brilliant small talk behind which characters hide their growing anxiety and you will find plenty of small talk where characters do not do anything, but they just talk. Just make a small talk, talking for the sake of initiating a conversation, but nothing much happens. You know what communication is all about, so they talk, but they do not communicate. Many of Pinter's plays involve processes of physical and mental torture which can be seen in a play like the down waiter and this is the play which we are going to read in detail, do in detail. Pinter suggests that his earlier plays can be read as political metaphors implicitly interrogative of the abuse of authority.

Now, this is quite interesting because none of his plays are overtly political, but they can be read as political metaphors. Therefore, when we were talking about triangulations, changing alliances which invariably would lead to isolation of one character, so that was not just a common domestic situation that Pinter was trying to

portray, but however, it was a commentary on the politics of that time. They are all very universal. They are not just restricted to the western world. Pinter's plays are quite universal as we read along during the course of the dumb waiter.

We are going to understand that the kind of power struggle that he portrays can be found in any society. So, in his plays, the terror only culminates, the menace is only confirmed when observation is put to an end. We will understand this more when we read the dumb waiter. So, Pinter's plays generate new kinds of ambiguity in relations between dramatic situations and the abstract framing of the political facts. So, you have to understand that politics is always implicit.

It is always covert and always used metaphorically rather than explicitly in Pinter's plays. I will give you an example from the opening of the dumb waiter. The dumb waiter has only two characters and the third character is mentioned. We know that the third character is lurking somewhere in the background, but he makes his presence felt, but we never see him.

We never see that character. Most of the time or all the time rather, we see only two characters Ben and Gus. So, this is how and this is a typical and very good representation of Pinter's language. So, I will read Ben caw. He picks up the paper.

What about this? Listen to this. He refers to the paper. A man of 87 wanted to cross the road, but there was a lot of traffic. See he could not see how he was going to squeeze through. So, he crawled under a lorry. Gus he what? Ben he crawled under a lorry, a stationary lorry.

Gus no. Ben the lorry started and ran over him. Gus go on. Ben that is what it says here. Gus get away. Ben it is enough to make you want to puke, is not it? Gus who advised him to do a thing like that.

Ben a man of 87 crawling under a lorry. Gus it is unbelievable. Ben it is down here in black and white. Gus incredible silence. Remember silence is in Pinter.

Gus shakes his head and exits. Ben lies back and reads. The levatory chain is pulled once off left, but the levatory does not flush. Ben whistles at an item in the paper. Gus reenters. I want to ask you something.

Ben what are you doing out there? Gus well I was just. Ben what about the tea? Gus I am just going to make it. Ben well go on make it. Gus yes I will. So, can you see the power relations these two people are sharing? Who is the more dominant of the two?

The man who is reading the newspaper.

So, Ben is the more powerful. So, the dialogue establishes that and also the reading of a very banal kind of a newspaper item. An 87 year old man he just crawled under a lorry. He wanted to cross the road. The traffic was very thick and the lorry started and he got run over by the lorry.

So, that is the way conversation develops in a typical Pinter play. I will also read you the famous interrogation scene from the birthday party which is another play by Pinter. It has three characters again. So, Stanley sorry I will begin with Goldberg. Take off his glasses. McCann snatches his glasses and as Stanley rises reaching for them takes his chair down stage center below the table.

Stanley stumbling as he follows. He clutches the chair and stays bent over it. Weber you are a fake. They stand on each side of the chair. When did you last wash up a cup? Stanley the Christmas before last.

Goldberg where? Stanley lines corner house. Goldberg which one? Stanley marble arch. Goldberg where was your wife? Stanley in Goldberg answer. Stanley what wife? Goldberg what have you done with your wife? McCann he is killed his wife. Goldberg why did you kill your wife? Stanley what wife? McCann how did he kill her? Goldberg how did you kill her? McCann you throttled her.

Goldberg with arsenic. McCann there is your man. Goldberg where is your old mom? Stanley in the sanatorium. McCann yes. Goldberg why did you never get married? McCann she was waiting at the porch.

Goldberg you scaddled from the wedding. McCann he left her in the lurch. Goldberg you left her in the pudding club. McCann she was waiting at the church. Goldberg Weber why did you change your name? Stanley I forgot the other one. Goldberg what is your name now? Stanley Joe soap.

Goldberg you stink of sin. McCann I can smell it. Goldberg do you recognize an external force? Stanley what? Goldberg do you recognize an external force? McCann that is the question. Goldberg do you recognize an external force responsible for you, suffering for you? Stanley it is late.

Goldberg late. Great enough. When did you last pray? McCann he is sweating. Goldberg when did you last pray? McCann he is sweating. Goldberg is the number 846 possible or necessary? Stanley neither. Goldberg wrong. Is the number 846 possible or

necessary? Stanley both.

Is Goldberg wrong? It is necessary but not possible. Stanley both. Goldberg wrong. Why do you think the number 846 is necessarily possible? Stanley must be Goldberg wrong. It is only necessarily necessary. So, this is a Pinter's language and you find plenty of repetition, plenty of banal conversation, plenty of repartee and all his conversations are full of farce and also he also makes use of plenty of aggressive joke telling which you will find a lot in *The Dumb Waiter*. His very recent play, not very recent but quite a recent play is *Mountain Language* in which he focuses on a prison for political dissidents in an unnamed country in an unspecified time.

So, a very contemporary kind of play commenting on the contemporary current political situations in many countries which are run by the so called dictators. So, the play was advertised as a parable about the torture and fate of the Kurdish people. You know the situation of the Kurdish people. Where are the Kurds? Yeah. So, this is a depiction of a hostile landscape where communication is absolutely impossible and the only language that is allowed is the language of the oppressor, the aggressor.

Otherwise, there is a systematic killing, you know, language death. So, the systematic killing of the language of the minorities, here the Kurdish people. By the end, the mountain people are so terrified that they have almost forgotten their language. So, when the oppressors, when the dictators tell them to start using, they are allowed to use or they are permitted to use their language, they do not know what to say because the fear has been so much. They are so much, you know, terrorized. They are so much persecuted that by the end, they do not remember what their actual language was.

So, they are unable to use their language and this is stripping away of one's language. That is what Pinter says could be the, you know, the worst kind of torture to a human being because you have deprived a human being of their voice. The freedom of speech is just taken away. Coming back to his earlier plays, the 50s in particular when Pinter was getting established. So, the 50s was a period of sexual modes when sexuality would be hinted at rather than expressed blatantly. The decade also witnessed an obsessive interest in the subject and the surveillance of sexual behavior became amour.

Focaalt, the French critic in the history of sexuality states that western culture has long been fixated on sexuality. We call it a repression. Rather, the social convention, not to mention sexuality, has created a discourse around it. Therefore, making sexuality ubiquitous.

This would not have been the case had it been thought of as something quite natural.

This is a Foucault's position and this particular position is reflected in most of Pinter's plays. So, there was also an element of social control in this. According to Foucault, a power relationship was created between the preacher and the confesant, between the psychoanalyst and his patient. So, power relations are to focus central to any analysis of society and this is especially true for sexuality.

Power relations are formed in all relations where differences exist. So, in the same way, sex for Pinter is a power struggle and a mind game in which there is no certain victor, but an endless struggle for dominance. So, both the birthday party and the homecoming, that is another play by Pinter, they can be read as dramatization of violent and authoritarian forces, especially in a sexual kind of a relationship. Pinter was also a well-known theatre critic and he has written, this is taken from a speech called writing for the theatre and at the beginning of this class, I told you that in Pinter, silence is a very important entity. So, he talks about silence. Pinter says in writing for the theatre, there are two silences, one when no word is spoken, silence, you just remain silent and no word is spoken, that is a silence.

The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed, when true silence falls we are left with echo, but a nearer nakedness. One way of looking at speech is to say that it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness. I believe we communicate well in our silence. Would you like to comment on this particular observation? Well, you know there is silence.

On the other hand, you can also have torrent of words. What is the torrent? You can bombard a person with words and speech and have plenty of conversation. According to Pinter, silence makes us understand people better as compared to speech. As compared to speech because language is just not sufficient. Now, whatever we have learnt in our theories of communication, this is a complete antithesis of those particular theories of communication where language is used to connect people with one another, but according to Pinter, language is not just enough.

In other words, silence communicates better. In this respect, Pinter has often been compared with the Russian writer Anton Shklov. In Shklov, characters often talk across each other as if encapsulated in private worlds. In contrast, avoidance of communication characterizes Pinter's dialogues. However, in the works of both playwrights, the most profound expression of feeling is through silence.

To make his point clearer, Pinter in 1970 wrote a play called Silence. Critics have found Silence, the play, as one of his most lyrical, most Beckettian and also the most mysterious and difficult plays. So, in Silence, the characters are also, except in flashback dialogues,

physically separated. The stage direction is extremely laconic and this is what the stage direction is. Three areas, a chair in each area.

So also do the three characters seem to live apart, each in his room. So, there are three rooms, three areas, a chair in each area and then Silence. The characters find it very pleasant to be alone. In fact, some of them show their dismay and anger at living next door to young people who make noisy music and noisy love. Silence is an attempt to tell a story by a technique which breaks the chronological sequence more decisively than is usually done in intricately woven patterns of flashback.

Now, Pinter is also understood as a political activist. So, most people who read Pinter's plays, they have realized that a political reading is always implicit as I was just telling you in his plays. So, Pinter as a political activist in 1985, this is what he says, in 1985 Arthur Miller and I, that is Pinter, visited Turkey on behalf of international PEN. You know what is PEN? The organization PEN, what does it stand for? Essays Novelists, Poets Playwrights Essays Novelists, PEN. We met writers, artists, academics.

Many of these people had spent some time in military prisons and had been tortured. They had been imprisoned for their ideas. They had committed no concrete act against their state. We met people whose lives had been ruined, both those who had been tortured and their families. Arthur Miller and I were invited to the American Embassy to meet the ambassador.

We discussed American support for the military regime in Turkey and conditions in military prisons. The ambassador said to me, Mr. Pinter, I do not think you understand the realities of the situation here. You have to take into account the strategic reality, the military reality, the political reality. The reality to which I am referring, I replied is that of the electric current attached to your genitals.

Sir, he said, you are a guest in my house and turned on his heel. He had found mention of that reality offensive. That is my point. We take refuge in finding offense in a strong language when it is the reality which is obnoxious, brutal and disgusting. You understand this point? The diplomatic language, that is what Pinter says, the diplomatic language the ambassador was employing has been used to justify the guilets in Russia and the torture chambers in El Salvador, Chile, Guatemala, etcetera, which last regimes are supported by the United States. I remind you of that simply because the USA is the head of the democratic world and considers itself to be the defender of Christian civilization.

In June 1989, a Harold Pinter and Antonia Fraser, his wife, they visited Wycliffe Heville

in his farmhouse in Bohemia, overlooked by a 24 hour police guard. Wycliffe Heville later went on to become, do you know anything about Wycliffe Heville? He was a playwright. He later went on to become the president of the ZEC republic.

So, that is what Pinter feels. The US is really beyond reason now. There is only one comparison, Nazi Germany. Nazi Germany wanted total domination of Europe and they nearly did it. The US wants total domination of the world and is about to consolidate that. That is what Harold Pinter said in June 2003, a little before his death. So, Pinterisk is the language. So, peculiar, so unique is Pinter's language that it has come to form an adjective of its own because it is a very distinctive kind of an idiom.

So, the term has come to suggest the irrationality of everyday conversations, its bad syntax, repetitions, non-sequiturs and self-contradictions. Pinter's language suggests that real life conversations do not proceed smoothly and logically from point to point. Is not this an antithesis of whatever we have learnt about language? Language is meant to connect, but in Pinter language does something opposite.

It creates a wedge, it drives a wedge between people. So, language cannot necessarily be a force of connection. Pinter is decidedly an innovator where language is concerned. In his works, we find a fusion of the minimal language in naturalism as in the works of Anton Shikov and the aesthetic expressiveness of the symbolists. Most importantly, Pinter's plays can only be experienced through listening to the way everyday language gets deflected by and the way it alienates the speakers from one another. So, the language as an alienating force.

The use of Pinter is evocative and disturbing and accurate reflection of colloquial. In Pinter, characters' internal fears and longings, their guilt and difficult sexual drives are set against the neat lives they have constructed in order to survive. I will read you a particular, I mean, I just wanted to expand this particular point that people generally it is believed that they create neat and very well ordered lives for themselves, but such is the human predicament and that is the way Pinter sees it that is you know that the way they will use the language, it exposes the force of their existence. This is a scene, this is a slight excerpt from a play called A Slight Ache.

This is a conversation between a husband and a wife. Wife is Flora, husband is Edward. Flora is the height of summer today.

Edward cover the marmalade. Flora what? Edward cover the pot. There is a wasp. He puts the paper down on the table. Do not move, keep still. What are you doing? Flora covering the pot.

Edward do not move, leave it, keep still. Give me the telegraph. Flora do not hit it. It will bite. Edward bite.

What do you mean bite? Keep still. It is landing. Flora it is going in the pot. Edward give me the lid. Flora it is in. Edward give me the lid.

Flora I will do it. Edward give it to me. Now slowly Flora. What are you doing? Edward be quiet slowly, carefully on the pot. Very good. He sits on a chair to the right of the table.

Flora now he is in the marmalade. Edward precisely. She sits on a chair to the left of the table and reads the telegraph. Flora can you hear him? Edward hear him.

Flora buzzing. Edward nonsense. How can you hear him? It is in an earthenware lid. Flora he is becoming frantic. Edward rubbish. Take it away from the table. Flora what shall I do with it? Edward put it in the sink and drown it.

Flora it will fly out and bite me. Edward it will not bite you. Wasps do not bite. Anyway it would not fly out. It is stuck. It will drown where it is in the marmalade. Flora what a horrible death. Edward on the contrary. What do you understand by this exchange? We were talking about Pinter often constructs a neat well ordered, very structured kind of an arrangement. It could be between brothers, it could be between husband and wife, it could be between friends but the language says a lot of things about the characters without giving away too much.

Any comments on this particular exchange? Yes Rehan. Well I thought it was a very normal something that happens on a day to day basis. At the same time the last line takes it turns the whole thing on its head and he says on the contrary. Yes, you know you find such the wasp and allowing a wasp to enter jar of marmalade covering the lid and then watching it die and being very you know a plus it about it. Then nothing is special that is how wasp should die. So, although it would not bite. If you remember we were also talking about the political metaphors perhaps you may like to connect the metaphor here like to do some kind of a reading, political reading into this.

Pinter is also an acclaimed motion picture screen writer. Not many know about this but he has been credited with writing screen plays for many well known films. The first one of this was The Servant in 1963, Accident 1967, The Go-Between in 1971, The Last Tycoon. This is based on a novel by F.

Scott Fitzgerald in 1974, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles. The novel is by John Fowles 1981 and *Betrayal*. His later plays include *Mountain Language* in 1988, *Party Time* 1991 and *Moonlight* in 1993. Pinter has a lot to say about a writer's responsibility. He says the theatre is a large energetic public activity but writing is a private activity. The professional theatre is a world of false climaxes, calculated tensions, some hysteria and a good deal of inefficiency.

What I write has no obligation to anything other than itself. Well, this goes against the grain of playwriting according to many critics that what I write has no obligation to anything other than itself. However, what he says is that my responsibility is not to audiences, critics, producers, directors, actors or to my fellow men but to the play in hand. So, absolutely denying the writer's responsibility. A writer has no responsibility towards anyone except towards the play, very interesting thesis.

Pinter on characters and plot, he says that a context should be concrete and not abstract. I never start a play from any kind of abstract idea or theory. I do not make any allegorical representation, so he says. I never envisage my characters as messengers of death, doom, heaven or the milky way.

So, I do not, my characters are not representatives of all these. Characters should be defined. A symbolic character on the other hand puts up a smoke screen against recognition, against an active and willing participation. On real and unreal, Pinter says there can be no hard distinction between what is real and what is unreal. A thing can be both real and false, both true and false.

A character on stage may or may not give a comprehensive analysis of his motives. The more acute the experience, the less articulate its expression. So, now you understand what we have been talking about the inadequacy of the language, insufficiency of language. The more acute the experience, the less articulate the expression because language can never be enough to articulate, to represent emotions. On verifying the past, Pinter says a moment is distorted often even at the time of its birth. What is happening now? We would not know until tomorrow or in six months time.

It will be forgotten or our imagination will have attributed quite false characteristics today. We all interpret a common experience quite differently. There is no fixed reality, shared reality, but a quick sense. Pinter is against a playwright indulging in moral issues. So, in his plays, you will never find an overt, a very explicit discussion of moral issues. He also wants against words, the bulk of which according to Pinter is nothing but dead terminology.

And his most important theory on language, language is highly ambiguous business. For all words spoken, there are things known and unspoken. A language is where under what is said, another thing is being said. Most of us are inexpressive, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling. It is out of these attributes that a language arises.

So, language is a mix of all these things. It is inexpressive, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive. So, language is everything that what believe it to be. We believe that language can be relied on according to Pinter. We cannot rely on language. Now, all these ideas of very radical ideas of theatre, very radical ideas about language and Pinter has lots of admirers, but at the same time, detractors as well.

So, Allardyce Nicoll, one of the most prominent theatre critics who wrote a definitive book called British drama. He criticizes Pinter's assertion that he does not write with my audience in mind. That is what if you remember, Pinter says that he does not feel obliged or responsible towards any audience, towards producers or directors or actors. Allardyce Nicoll on the other hand, he criticizes this assertion. He says that this kind of attitude bears destructively down on the very essence of drama because the drama is something which by its basic nature must be designed to appeal to an audience.

You look at all those classic plays that you know the plays written by the masters of the 20th century and even the earlier playwrights. So, they talk to an audience. The playwrights do betray some kind of a responsibility towards the audience, but when Pinter completely denies, completely he wants to shrug all kinds, all responsibility towards the audience, then there is something wrong with his plays according to Nicol. So, we are looking at the other side of Pinter's plays. And the critics have also felt that in Pinter, we have the lowest common denominator of human speech.

Now, all this criticism notwithstanding, Pinter was awarded the Nobel in 2005 for literature. It is the highest award, of course, you know highest kind of honor available to any writer in the world. So, in announcing the award, the chairman of the Swedish committee, he said that Pinter was an artist who in his plays uncovers the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppressions closed rooms. In his Nobel lecture which focused more on politics than literature, Pinter launched a ferocious tirade against Bush and Blair saying they were responsible for tens of thousands of deaths in the Iraq war. So, again the same political activists.

Pinter accused the United States of supporting every right wing military dictatorship in the world after the Second World War from Chile to the Philippines. The crimes of the United States have been very systematic, constant, vicious, remorseless, but very few people have actually talked about them. That is what Pinter says. It has exercised a quite

clinical manipulation of power worldwide while masquerading as a force for universal good. It is a brilliant, even, witty, highly successful act of hypnosis.

The US also has its own bleating little lamb tagging behind it on a lid, the pathetic and supine Great Britain. Any questions at this point? Because Beckett has influenced Pinter in many ways, looking at two plays which is *The Homecoming* by Harold Pinter and *Endgame* by Beckett. Both these plays utilize silence to a great degree. But then the difference between Beckett and Pinter is that Pinter is more in that play looking at comparing these two plays rather than the playwrights. *Endgame* has a lot of dialogues which are more absurdist than the dialogues in *Homecoming*.

It is a total negation of the dearly held bourgeois values of the British middle class. Yes, of course. Yes, there are lots of and this is the constant in all Pinter plays where he strikes a blow against all kinds of establishment, particularly the domestic situation. He language as well as themes, they are a way of interrogating the established ideas, the conventional ideas about family life in a middle class situation because what Pinter tells us is that very often things are not what they appear to be. Harmony is superficial, it is just on the surface whether it is a political harmony or whether it is friendship between two friends or even situation between husband and wife, brothers and brothers, but everything is suspect.

So, he cautions us against taking things at their face value. There is a play called *The Lover*, a very short play. Are you familiar with that? No, perhaps when we discuss the down waiter, I will bring that along and we will discuss it in detail. All right, so thank you so much. Thank you.