

the combined personal and social forces it can mobilize and direct"18. Esslin has also given the dialogue used by Pinter an aspect which distinguishes him from others by saying that " [his] ability to express the inexpressible, to transcend the scope of language itself"19. And Styan has also described "his ability to convey objectively what he sees through character and dialogue has made him the best comic dramatist writing in English since Shaw"20. Whether or not exactly so, Pinter remains a major dramatist in the modern theatre.

NOTES

1. J.R. Brown ed, *Modern British Dramatists*. (N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1968), p. 2.
2. A.K. Abdulla, "Pinter's Language of Silence", in *Al- Mustansirya Literary Review*, vol: 3, 1986, p. 77.
3. M. Esslin *Pinter: a study of his plays*. (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), p. 65.
4. J. R. Brown, *Modern British Dramatists*, p. 10.
5. A. K. Abdulla, p. 77.
6. Harold Pinter, *The Room and Dumb Waiter*. (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1960 rpt: 1973), p. 30. All subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically.
7. J. R. Brown, "Dialogue in Pinter and Others". in *Modern British Dramatists*, p. 132.
8. A.L. Quigley, *The Pinter Problem*. (N.L: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), p. 87.
9. *Ibid*, p. 87.
10. Harold Pinter, "Between the Lines". *The Sunday Times* (London: March4, 1962), p. 25.
11. A.L. Quigley, p. 83.
12. Ruby Cohn, *Currents in Contemporary Drama* (bloomington: Idiana Univ. Press, 1969), p. 78.
13. A.L. Quigley, p. 89.
14. M. Esslin, "Godot and His Children: The Theatre of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter", in *Modern British Dramatists*, p. 66.
15. M. Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 268.
16. R. Hayman, *Contemporary Playwrights: Harold Pinter*, 3rd ed. (London: Heinemann, 1975), pp. 14-15.
17. M. Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p. 266.
18. J.R. Firth, "The Tongue of Man, in *The Tongues of Men and speech*, (London, 1966), p. 113.
19. M. Esslin, *The Peopled Wound: The Work of Harold Pinter* (New York, 1970), p. 252.
20. J.L. Styan, *Modern drama in Theory and Practice 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, p. 136.

ever". (p. 16). If Mr. Kidd does not say the truth about such two matters, can we believe any other word? The audience is not sure if Mr. Kidd is the real owner of the house or some other person. The dialogue then does not give truths and the is always suspicious.

Everything in *The Room* is confusing. This confusion gives it a dramatic effect particularly when we do not have information about so many things in the play. 15 For example, who is the black negro? What is his message? Who is Sal? And the black and *blind* negro says, "I want to *see* you". (p. 29). Is he really blind or not? Why is he beaten by a jaelous husband? And Rose's own blinding. R. Hayman almost gives an answer to some of these questions when he says:

In each case the question is unanswerable on the evidence Pinter gives us but in each case the fact that it's unanswerable contributes to the dramatic effect. This is a technique that Pinter went on using but his ways of using it were soon to become much subtler. 16

One more thing is left which is the illusion of darkness. Darkness is associated with Rose's suppressed life, with the world outside. It has entered the room in the shape of the Negro. Rose is afraid of the world beyond her room. She considers everything out as a "murder", "It's very cold out, I can tell you. It is murder", (p.7) which means indirectly that her room is a symbol of psychological and mental struggle which goes on in the mind of Rose. The black negro, the black basement and the the blindness of Rose. The black negro, the black basement and the blindness of Rose are symbols of the mental state, of Rose's mind. Accordingly she wants to stay in her room because her room becomes "an image of the small area of light and warmth"¹⁷, and the world outside will show clearly the deep secret of Rose and her reality. Thus the interrelationship of darkness and dialogue gives the play more meaning and reflects both the inner and external worlds of the characters. Pinter is thus one of the most controversial of the contemporary playwrights. The symbols which he tries to show are mostly related to the dialogue he uses to express the themes and concerns of his plays.

However, what is finally central to our concerns is that Pinter's play is not a symbol or a message but a process: the process of characters trying to deal with the problems of the self in its relation to others. It would be difficult to get any moral, political or philosophical messages from the play except when all of these terms can be used to cover all activity of the play. To put it more precisely, the process upon which the play focuses is much more local in its origin and much more universal in its application. The example of Rose trying to adjust the self to its environment is a continuous need which is never satisfied. All her attempts to convince herself that she can find it with Bert or with Riley is always self-deception. Thus, the continuous stress between the individual and his companions is the process dramatized by the play that discovers and begins to develop the dramatic possibilities of the dialogue used primarily for interrelational concerns. "The meaning of a great deal of speech behaviour is just

Riley: So now you're here.

Rose: Not Sal.

Riley: I touch you

(p. 30)

No one seems able to escape the problem of explaining what such a dialogue implies or what a "message" it conveys or what purpose it has. The other side of Rose's character has now emerged. The part of Rose that needs to look outward, afraid, needs the room and needs Bert has now become clear. The side of her character which insulted Riley and refused to accept him disappears, and this comes with the change of her name to "Sal". The room is now contrasted to "home". It loses its haven characteristics and becomes only "here".

The audience mainly depends on dialogue to understand what is happening on the stage. Through dialogue the ideas, actions and situations are expressed. The playwright presents his characters truly through dialogue. The audience can distinguish clearly the reality of every character. In *The Room*, the audience cannot comprehend clearly the significance of the uttered words. There is a

contradiction in what the characters say and what they mean. The dialogue is ambiguous in many places. For example, Mrs. Sands says when she enters the room that she and her husband have "just come up the stairs" (p. 17). After a while she mentions that while she and her husband "were just coming down when you opened your door". (p. 23). From such information, the audience is not sure whether the couple is "going up" or "coming down". Such contradiction evokes an atmosphere of suspicion of what this couple says. If somebody says that they are mistaken in their "going up" or "coming down", what would the audience say when they realize that there is a basement in the house? Not only the audience but the characters themselves are subject to such contradiction. Thus the focus of contradiction in the words of the Sands is an issue that Rose finds disturbing. The Sands' confirmation that Mr. Kidd is not the landlord threatens the security of Rose's world. Thus such a situation evokes suspicion and complicates matters for character and audience alike. From the conversation which goes on between Rose and Mr. Kidd, we realize that he ignores the number of floors in the house. This makes matters more complicated and provides an element of suspense:

Rose: Anyone live up there?

Mr. Kidd: Up there? There was. Gone now.

Rose: How many floors you got in this house?

Mr. Kidd: Floors (he laughs) Ah, we had a good
Few of them in the old days.

Rose: How many have you got now?

Mr. Kidd: Well, to tell you the truth, I don't count them, now.

Rose: Oh.

(p. 14)

What makes matters more complicated for example is when Rose tells her husband that Mr. Kidd does not have any sister: "I don't believe he had a sister,

deaf too? You're not deaf too, are you" You're all deaf and dumb and blind, the lot of you. A bunch of cripples.

(pp. 28-29)

Calling him a "cripple", she struggles to define the relationship on terms that give her control. Riley is not so easily provoked by Rose and he refuses to answer her demands. This refusal undermines Rose's attempt to control the situation, and as she tries harder to impose her authority on him she is forced to give in to him "I can keep up with you I'm one ahead of people like you. Tell me what you want and get out". Looking at such conversation, we do not see or follow any regular focus. She does not listen to him and he does not listen to her. Her only purpose is to show her anger and insults. These insults, however, have no visible impact on Riley. Such dialogue is not to give any information, but to embody fear, menace and evasion¹³. Even the message which the blind negro brings to Rose is a mysterious one.

Riley: I have a message for you.

Rose: You've got what? .. What message? Who have you got message from?
Who?

Riley: Your father wants you to come home.

(p. 30)

When Rose reverts to the demand that he tells her what he wants, Riley's response brings her ambivalent character to another state of crisis. When he says "I have a message for you" he arouses again the conflict between fear and hostility which makes Rose's life unstable and impossible.

Although Pinter uses everyday speech and conversation in his dialogue, yet it has been called "confusing and meaningless"¹⁴. Again such confusion and meaningless conversation is clearly expressed in the dialogue which goes on between Rose and Riley, when Riley wants her to go home and calls her "Sal". Pinter uses everyday language, simple words structure, but, at the same time, it is confusing and it does not follow a context.

Rose: Home?

Riley: Yes

Rose: Home? Go now. Come on. It's late. It's late.

Riley: To come home.

Rose: Stop it. I can't take it. What do you want?

What do you want?

Riley: Come home, Sal

(Pause)

Rose: What did you call me.

Riley: Come home, Sal.

Rose: Don't call me that.

Riley: Come, now.

Rose: Don't call me that.

(P. 14)

Again, the above conversation runs at cross-purposes as Mr. Kidd thinks that the topic is dampness in rooms while for Rose the important topic is the basement itself. In fact Rose invests the basement with an ugliness and strangeness that goes beyond her need for a comparison with her room.

Dialogue is used to give an idea or expression and from that expression to show the psychological and emotional situation. In *The Room*, the dialogue does not convey the ideas of characters only, but it conveys their inner feelings and menace. In the beginning of the play, the husband does not talk or say anything to Rose, who motherly took care of him. She feeds him and treats him kindly. She is afraid he might catch cold and she dreads his driving in the dark. Thus, Rose's dialogue does not show the reality of what she says, but is an expression of her inner feeling. Throughout the first scene Rose is uncertain about her commitment to the life she leads, and this uncertainty is repeatedly indicated in the details of her speech:

Rose: Here you are. this'll Keep the cold out (she places bacon and eggs on a plate, turns off the gas and takes the plate to the table).

It is very cold out, I can tell you. It is murder. That's right. You eat that. You will need it. You can feel it in here. Still the room keeps warm. It's better than the basement anyway. (She butters the bread).

(p. 8)

She emphasizes the benefit of the cosy warmth in the room but dwells on the windy, cold world outside the house. But the most frequently "recurring manifestation of her ambivalence is her fascination with the basement of the house" If someone examines Rose's words, one might find that she tries to dismiss her fear and hostility by clothing and feeding her husband. In other words, she does not tell him about her fear, but she cloaks in her conversation fear and hostility¹². In some other scene fear and hostility are expressed in Rose's conversation when the black negro (Riley) enters the room. The dialogue is a hysterical one. His arrival brings to a crisis the conflict between the two sides of Rose's ambivalent character and his presence becomes the focal point of both her fear and her curiosity. She immediately assumes a crude aggressiveness and authority as if she has categorized him in advance. She curses him severely but to him her curses are meaningless. Neither she nor the negro listens to each other or cares to what each one says:

Riley: Thank you.

Rose: Don't thank me for anything. I don't want you up here. I don't know who are. And the sooner you get out the better. What do you think you 've got here; a little girl? I can keep up with you. I'm one a head of people like you. Tell me what you want and get out.

Riley: My name is Riley.

Rose: I don't care if it's - What? That's not your name. That's not your name. You 've got a grown up woman in this room, do you hear? Or are you

Mr. Kidd: Look here, Mrs. Hudd, I've got to speak to you. I came up specially.

Rose: There were two people in here just now. They said this room was going vacant. What were they talking about?

Mr. Kidd: As soon as I heard the van go I got ready to come and see you. I'm knocked out.

Rose: What was it all about. Did you see those people? How can' this room be going? It's occupied. Did they get hold of you, Mr. Kidd?

Mr. Kidd: Get hold of me? who?

Rose: Well then, who were they?

Mr. Kidd: That's why I came up. But he hadn't gone yet. I've been waiting for him to go the whole week-end.

Rose: Mr. Kidd, what did they mean about this room? (p.25).

This short conversation runs at cross-purposes as Mr. Kidd operates on the assumption that the topic is to tell Rose about the blind negro, while for Rose the essential topic is telling Mr. Kidd about the Sands. Such dialogue also expresses the sense of lone liness which results from difficult and sometimes impossible communication. People are burdened with their problems and their troubles that they are not able to listen to others. Thus, the sense of human attachment is lost in *The Room*. This loss has been clearly emphasized through the dialogue used. The language used is not to convey objective information. It is an instrument open to a variety of uses. Mr. Kidd's oblique response to Rose's words "is not a sign of insanity; it is a mode of refusal, a method of evasion"⁸, because Mr. Kidd is unable to tell Rose all she wants to know. It seems from the conversation that he "is not willing to allow her to relate to him as one who is entitled to know the details of his life"⁹. Pinter himself comments on the "Failure of communication" in his play by saying, "what takes place is continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves"¹⁰. Another example which confirms Pinter's statement about the failure of communication is when Rose speaks with Mr. Kidd referring to the basement as so excessively uninhabitable, Mr. Kidd fails to substantiate her belief.

Rose: It must get a bit damp downstairs.

Mr. Kidd: Not as bad as upstairs.

Rose: What about downstairs?

Mr. Kidd: Eh?

Rose: What about downstairs?

Mr. Kidd: what about it?

Rose: Must get a bit damp.

Mr. Kidd: A bit. Not as bad as upstairs though.

Rose: Why's that?

Mr. Kidd: The rain comes in.

summarizes the writers' basic concerns and themes. Pinter's *The Room* shows an obliquity of dialogue because it reflects the author's basic concerns.

The plot of the play focuses on an old woman called Rose and an old man called Bert Hudd. Bert is the husband and about to leave driving his van. Rose does not know how many storeys the house has and where her room is situated. The woman is talkative and treats the man in a motherly way. As soon as Bert leaves the room to run on errand, a Mr. Kidd comes to see Rose and she treats him like the landlord. Mr. Kidd also does not know anything about the house, the number of rooms and the storeys it contains. He comes to tell her that a blind negro is waiting in the basement and insists to see her. After Rose's husband and Mr. Kidd leave, Mrs. and Mr. Sands enter looking for a room; they have heard there is a good room to let in that very house. Wandering through the empty house, they heard a voice in the dark basement confirming that there was a room to let which turns to be room No: 7- Rose's room. After exchanging a mysterious message, they leave. Then the blind negro enters the room as Mr. Kidd has insisted that Rose must see the negro. The negro immediately addresses

Rose as "Sal" and asks her to go home. We know that the woman is called Rose. Though she does not deny being called Sal, yet she does not want to be called like that, "Dont call me that"⁶. Bert, Rose's husband returns and speaks now. He speaks about the dark evening and his drive. As he notices the negro, Bert beats him savagely until he dies and suddenly Rose goes blind.

Pinter in *The Room* is able to convey the idea of obliquity among the characters through the dialogue. Although the play has a small group of characters, the situation is a complex one. The blind negro with the message from Rose's father calling his daughter home, the killing of the negro by the husband and Rose's blinding are all mysterious events which can be considered as crude symbols. What makes them symbols is the use of the dialogue which helps to cloak the situation with fear and menace.

To start with the influence of the dialogue in the play J. R. Brown gives a revealing statement:

Pinter not only writes dialogue that presents both conscious and unconscious thought behind the words but he is also adept at keeping several flows of consciousness alive in a single conversation and making them apparent to the audience⁷.

Pinter does not convey information to the audience, but his dialogue is used for the purpose of confusion and suspect. The audience starts doubting the conversation. The main characteristic of the play is that all the characters talk to each other in an out-of context situation. When a character asks a question he / she does not have a response to his / her question. Actually this does not complicate the matter, but what really complicates the matter is that the question is answered in a different context. Everybody answers according to the situation of what is going on in his or her mind, not according to the question asked, as revealed by what is going between Mr. Kidd and Rose. Mr. Kidd wants to tell her about the blind negro whereas Rose insists on telling him about the Sands:

DIALOGUE IN PINTER'S *The Room*

Sulaiman Yousif Abid *

The general significance of Pinter's *The Room* is ambiguous and highly controversial. This controversy is centred on the dialogue of the play. Thus almost all critics focus on the dilemma of explaining what the dialogue implies and conveys. In *The Room* what is said and what is implicated together form a meaning of the utterance which is not following ready made cliches. The problem of dialogue is to be solved because critics review it in two different ways. The first one is that it is naturalistic based on everyday speech and it is confusing on the other hand. This has given Pinter an aspect which distinguishes him from others by expressing the unexpressible.

Dialogue in Pinter's *The Room*

Harold Pinter is probably the most consistent of the British dramatists. His topics are taken from simple life and the world he lives in. His plots do not follow usual development but in his plots the "inner tensions and appetites are well clarified"¹. The dialogue used in his plays reveals the most problematic element of his drama². It is problematic because it is a characteristic feature in the Absurdist Drama which shows the gap between what is uttered and what is conveyed. In *The Room* (1957) of Pinter what is said and what is implicated together form a meaning of the utterance which is not following ready made cliches. In this play the gap between what is literally expressed and what is intended is so great that a reader unable to understand easily what is implicated will not appreciate the complex nature of the exchanges among the characters of the play such as Rose, Bert Hudd, Mr. Kidd, The Sands and Riley.

Critics differ in their attitudes so much about what the play actually says, what it really implies. Their attitudes about the structure, the situation and the dialogue are cleverly modulated, which means that "tremendous impact"³ has been exerted by both critics and audience. This impact comes from the use of dialogue. Thus the problem of dialogue is to be solved because critics review it in two different ways. The first one is that on the hand, it is naturalistic based on everyday speech and it is confusing on the other hand. Accordingly, the importance of dialogue seems to have a difficulty that has to be tackled. The best thing to say about Pinter and others is that "they keep critics on the run"⁴.

The general significance of Pinter's *The Room* is ambiguous and highly controversial. This controversy is centred on the "dilemma of explaining what the dialogue implies and conveys"⁵. In plays, the dialogue is not the same used in everyday use but it is condensed and it is well brushed up. It makes the listener confused and puzzled because it is not following traditional ready cliches, but it

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