

The Shining Rays of the Realism from The Room

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ABSTRACT: This is a paper on realistic elements in Harold Pinter's *The Room* (1983). According to the most eminent critics, this contemporary play belongs to the post modern era. There are some characteristics of the Realist School that make the text clear for the reader to match it to the contemporary man's life and manner and somehow make it more understandable. In this play, the middle class of the society is challenged from different aspects, but from the Realistic viewpoint the plot, the setting, the characterization and the character's dialogues are discussed. In fact, they are the ways that the Realistic factors are clarified in an objective way. Pinter in this play shows the reality of the society as clear as it is. It is a cut of the man's real life that he himself must judge it. It is a kind of play that Pinter is looking for the truth in the common man's life. The setting of the play is completely touchable for the reader. He can match the atmosphere of the play to the characters' behaviors, beliefs and their dialogues. The characters' situations and their reactions toward each other are clearly discussed from the Realistic viewpoint.

Keywords: The Room; Realism; Room; Dialogue; Pinter.

Abbreviation: TR- The Room

INTRODUCTION

The Room, the first Pinter's one-act play (1983), shows an important step toward in Pinter's style. Since the late 1950s, Pinter's plays have been claimed as fine examples of absurdism. As it came to the 1970s and 1980s, Pinter's plays have undergone feminist revision and been showed for their meta-theatricality. Bernard Dukore and Arnold Hinchliffe also published their books in study of Pinter's theatricality in 1980s. From the last decade of 20th century till today, Pinter's plays have been either praised or taunted for their clear confrontational political explanations. Many critics think highly of the realistic elements in Pinter's plays. Alfred Richkert and Ronald Knowles both deny Pinter's relation to realism, especially social realism, for Pinter's aim is not teaching. Though there are many critics who have touched upon the realistic side of Pinter's plays, as listed above and much more than that, few of them make enough analysis and provides some keys to understand it. In this paper, it will be made a close study on *The Room*, focusing on the realistic elements in it. The main body of this paper consists of three parts, as the items of the realistic elements in the play. Actually, its setting, plot, characterization and dialogue are going to be discussed. Ramji Lala says:

The first difference in the usual realistic play is related to the element of uncertainty about the motivation of the characters, their background and their real identity. The problems of identity, of motivation, and verification are Pinter's real problem. He uses and gave up some symbolic devices to and has shown a preference to remain within a firm framework of real events. (Lala, 2001)

Pinter shows his realism at the bottom of his plays. He remains on the harshness of everyday reality. "The Room has a conventional, one-act structure follows a straightforward chronology" (Galens, 1999). The dialogue and the characters are real, but the overall affect is one of mystery, of uncertainty, and of ambiguity:

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Realistic Setting

The presentation of a realist setting as well as a naturalistic dialogue has caused Pinter to be associated with social realism of the Realist Drama. In this play, the author uses just a single setting with a basement as the

character's unconscious. There are the features suggesting that the room is isolated from the outside world. It has always been a secure place from whatever she fears from it. On the other word, it is "like the prisoners peering into a prison cell" (Raby, 1999). Pinter sets up this play in a room, where frequently two characters appear to be trapped in their sense of intimidation.

The room is considered as a microcosm of the world. The people feel safe and secure in the room. It's warm and light inside, but outside is unusual and harsh. So, because of the existential anxieties, Rose feels alliance from out and herself. She says to Bert: "This room's all right for me. I mean, you know where you are."(TR, 5) This room is decorated well, but really it is surrounded by the emptiness which exists out of the room, beyond the solid walls and the universe in which the room is located, seems to be unstructured too.

Realistic Plot

This play has just one act which opens with Rose that is a one-person dialogue with her husband Bert, who remains silent throughout the whole scene, while serving him a breakfast, although the scene appears to occur around evening. It is a story of Rose who along with her husband Bert rents a room as a mean of being far away from the madding crowd. For her the room becomes a heaven of security from the world outside. She talks mostly about the cold weather and keeps comparing the comfortable and warm room to the dark damp basement and to the cold weather outside. She creates a sense of uneasiness by the way she talks and acts, always moving from one place to another in the room, even while sitting, she sits in a rocking chair and rocks. Her speech is filled with many quick subject changes and asks her husband questions and answers them herself. With a few knocks and a permission to enter, Mister Kidd, the old landlord, enters. He asks Bert many questions regarding if and when he is leaving the room. The questions are answered by Rose while Bert still remains silent. The dialogue between Rose and Mister Kidd consists of many subjects that change very frequently, at times each one of them talks about something different and it seems they are avoiding subjects and aren't listening to each other, creating an irrational dialogue:

ROSE. What about your sister, Mr. Kidd?

MR. KIDD. What about her?

ROSE. Did she have any babies?

MR. KIDD. Yes, she had a resemblance to my old mum, I think. Taller, of Course.

ROSE. When did she die then, your sister?

MR. KIDD. Yes, that's right; it was after she died that I must have stopped Counting. (Pinter, 1957)

At the end of the scene, Bert that appears to be truck driver leaves to drive off in his van. Afterward, Rose attempts to take out the garbage. Then she sees a young couple, Mister and Missis Sands. She invites the couple in and they tell her that they are looking for a flat, and for her landlord, Mister Kidd.

A blind black man, named Riley, who has been waiting in the basement according to the Sands and Mister Kidd, becoming a source of concern for Rose, suddenly arrives upstairs to her room, to deliver a mysterious message to Rose from her father. The play ends violently when Bert returns and finds Rose stroking Riley's face, delivers a long sexually-suggestive monologue about his experience and then beats Riley until he appears lifeless, possibly murdering him. At the end of the play, Rose cries and declares her blindness. "I can't see, I can't see."(Pinter, 1957) This is the painful point for Rose as the inferior which is faced to the reality and the power of the society that acts as the father and superior in a capitalist society.

Realism in the Characterization

It must be pointed out that the characterization produces a perfectly realistic effect. Rose's husband does not speak that foretells his authoritative nature in the house. Out of her curiosity of who has occupied the basement now, she keeps on talking to her husband. He remains silent throughout that makes the interaction a monologue. Bert's silence is superficially humorous, but at the same time, horrifying to Rose. In fact, his silence is the silence of one who has nothing to say while her much talking is the silence of one who is trying desperately but failing to say what she really wants to say. She really wants to say that she is afraid of the cold, of the night, and of forces that may hide in the basement. She is asking Bert to answer to her needs, to bring her warmth, and to accept her uncertain talking of love, but Bert is silent.

The consistent reference to the basement by Rose shows not only her unwillingness to live there, but also her deep will to know about the occupant. There is fear and wonder that it can be said regarding her attitude toward the basement. This is doubled when the readers fail to know, until toward the end of the play, the identity of the

occupant. Nevertheless, she keeps talking foolishly: "I don't know who lives down there now. Whoever it is, they're taking a big chance [...] There isn't room for two down there, anyway. I think there was one first, before he moved out. Maybe they've got two now." (Pinter, 1957) Her continual speech about the occupation in the basement and the menace in her meaningless talk clearly shows her anxiety. There is something sinister about the basement, one may conclude, that has reached to the speaker.

Riley appears vagueness when he looks around the room as if he can see things. The readers wonder how he could say: "This is a large room." (Pinter, 1957) What confuses the readers more is the question that Rose puts before Riley: "How did you know what our name was?" It seems that she and the blind Negro know each other. That they are well-acquainted is strengthened by what they say:

RILEY. Come home, Sal.

Pause.

ROSE. What did you call me?

RILEY. Come home, Sal.

ROSE. Don't call me that. . . Riley. So now you're here.

ROSE. Not Sal.

RILEY. Now I touch you.

ROSE. Don't touch me.

RILEY. Sal.

ROSE. I can't.

RILEY. I want you to come home.

ROSE. No. (Pinter, 1957)

Realism in the Dialogue

Some of the dialogues in every play by Pinter are consequential and not strictly essential to the action of the play. But "such dialogues are intended to produce an effect of realism because much of the conversation that is carried on the friends and relations is of this consequential kind" (Lala, 2001). The speech often tends to escape from the reality; therefore silence points to the characters' violent need for domination like their real motives. In some scenes, he employs a comic way of the expression to laugh at everything, even at the tragic parts of existence. He believes that even tragedy is funny. In his plays, he wants to get to this recognizable reality of the absurdity of what human behaves and speaks. Pinter's characters have struggle for their own lives. He uses comedy in double-edged one side of which tickles and the other side cuts painfully and deep. In this play, the funny scene is at the same time with frightening and unkind in terms of what the characters are experiencing. The speech and action of this play can fool the character who sees the tickling side of it. Rose is talking to her husband, Bert, while he never even opens his mouth once. Rose says: "Here you are. This'll keep the cold out [...] You can feel it in here. Still, the room keeps warm. It's better than the basement, anyway" (Pinter, 1957). She continues: "But I think someone else has gone in now. I wouldn't live in that basement. Did you see the walls? They were running" (Pinter, 1957).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the field of the criticism on some of Pinter's plays, *The Room* was one of them that is pointed to its certain resemblance to established works or the influence of such works, especially Becket's. This shift in perception of Pinter's plays marked by his puzzling dramatic style.

CONCLUSION

Pinter in *The Room* shows the reality of the society clearly. It is a cut of the man's real life that everyone can judge it. Pinter is looking for the truth in the common man's life. In this play, the protagonist, Rose, lacks a past through which his identity and real character can be shown. He remains on the harshness of everyday reality. Pinter constructs the lives of his characters in everyday situation. In fact, "Pinter, essentially, remains on the firm ground of everyday reality" (Esslin, 1977). At the end of the play, the characters are faced to the reality of the life that is unavoidable and of course painful for them.

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