CHAPTER - V

THE STRUCTURE

Though the theme of researcher's is related to the contents of the plays, the researcher finds that the contents of the plays themselves take the forms of the structure of the plays. Pinter's structure is different from Aristotelian's concept of the structure described in the Poetics. Aristotle said that there should be beginning, middle and the end and they should be inter-related. For him the coherence is the basis of the building of the structure. Moreover, for Aristotle it is a closed structure. Contrary to Aristotle's structure, Pinter follows open structure. Recurrence of the events is the whole mark of the structure in Pinter plays. As the plays of Harold Pinter are presented before us, one can see that these plays have no seemingly combination of classical unities. Although some of them do have time, place and action. As these plays sometimes are memories plays; sometimes about an issue.
The basis of all these is a sense of reality as the events or menace depicted in these dramas exhibit the irregular life of the characters. They are sometimes dragged into controversial positions. The suspense prevails throughout the plays. They face mysterious atmosphere. There is a meaningful strategy for reconciliation which is essential for the adjustment and for survival of a character. The precarious present situation of the characters leads him to the precarious future.

The loyalties, weakness and other vogue terms are manifested through dialogues or actions. The same characters with different names and situations reappear from play to play but in various forms. The dramas of Harold Pinter seem to utilize the same theme and ideas but with altering emphases. Developmental patterns are like shifting sands.

The Rooms which contains the germs of all his other plays is the basis for maintaining three unities successfully in his dramas. The Room evolves out of the basic situation that Pinter varies for each of his dramas: two people are in a room and a visitor enters or threatens to enter. The Room
also introduces most of the characters to whom all others are related in some degree. It introduces the oral, anal, and oedipal fantasies or anxieties that appear in one form or another in all of his dramas. It also introduces most of the themes to recur in varying patterns of emphasis. It also introduces the dream like quality of incoherence that characterizes most of Pinter's plays. While The Room provides the basis for explaining the mechanisms of the dream like situation, the mechanisms in turn illuminate the obscurities and ambiguities of The Room and its pivotal relationship to the succeeding plays.

The dream like mechanisms are the modus operandi for whatever the structure of the plays are depicted through. The bizarre, incoherent quality and mechanisms help the readers to unlock Pinter's obscurities.

The room, first of all, represents the stage setting itself:

A room in a large house.

Second the room represents the character Rose. In the sense of Freudian theory the rooms represent women. In the same vein it could be construed for a womb in which Bert hides
from the world. Here the image of mother replaces the image of wife. As a womb, the room can also be Rose’s nurturing mother from whom she fears separation. Ultimately, the room becomes more literally a tomb for Riley who is beaten to death by Bert. The final image condensed under the title of The Room requires that Rose’s house be perceived as her psyche. The Room then becomes Rose’s conscious mind as opposed to the basement the subconscious strata. The repressed wishes are disguised and distorted. Within the play Bert suffers from oedipal guilts. He defends himself against them by eliminating all sexual feeling from his relationship with his wife. Therefore, he displaces these feelings from Rose onto his Van, which has the same symbolic association to women that a room has. Bert speaks of his van as though it were his woman:

She was good. She went with me, she don’t mix it with me. I use my hand. Like that. I get hold of her...

(P.120)

Displacement on a broader scale refers to the degree to which the whole dream is disguised (or displaced) into a realistic situation. The Room is only slightly displaced; it remains
close to pure dream. Rose's fear of the outside is a projection of her oedipal fears. The little girls wish to be rid of her mother still lives in Rose and frightens her so much that she projects it outside of herself.

Therefore, every knock on the door becomes a potential threat that the danger outside has arrived at her threshold. Displacement then is a protective transformation that can take place outside affecting the character's inner psyche.

Four mechanisms which are operated to show the above. The first is symbolization, here the room itself is a symbol. The second is concretization which is closely akin to symbolization. It transforms an abstract idea or verbalization into a concrete picture. The third is dramatization, which is the perception of Rose's house as her psyche, her room as her conscious mind, and the basement as her subconscious mind. It Riley is perceived as a repressed wish rising from Rose's subconscious to her conscious mind, the concretization is dramatized. The final mechanism that springs out of condensation and displacement is splitting. Splitting refers to the division of one person into two or more, each representing different characters facets. It may be a
split personality. An example of splitting in The Room occurs when Mr. Kidd is viewed as a manifestation of Rose's father. He is, symbolically speaking, the land lord of her house. The other half from which Mr. Kidd is split, is Riley. Riley is that fellow in the basement who disturbs and harasses Mr. Kidd by simply lying there wishing to see Rose. He also rises up to beg her to return to her father. Riley, then, is the fearsome side of Rose's father; Mr. Kidd is the harmless side. While the room is a symbol with many meanings. In other words it is over determined or ambiguous. So, it is with the ambiguity of Pinter's plays.

In this context the researcher wants to discuss Pinter's second play The Birthday Party, which has a close knit and tight structure.

It is a play which mystifies the readers with its mysteriousness and the unexplained motivations of the leading characters, but structurally the play seems to be flawless unlike other plays. Indeed it possesses the classical structure, with recognizable beginning, a middle, and an end. Pinter has tried to maintain all three unities in The Birthday Party. This is the only play which has not suffered on
The opening dialogue of the play serves to establish the identities of the husband and the wife, and to show that the relationship between them is emotionally empty. Meg, as a wife seems to be more concerned about Petey the husband, but no more than this. Stanley, who is emotionally a wreck person behaves rudely with Meg, but Meg has an obsession, an obsession of a motherly instincts which she inadvertently showers on Stanley. It is an Oedipus complex, a situation described by Freud where mother has her dotting affection on her son. The son uses ‘succulent’ word for her. She thinks
that he is using this word because she still looks like a sexy woman. When he announces that he might go away as he was offered a decent job somewhere, it was a desponding news to her. She urges him not to leave but to stick to this place:

Meg: You stay here. You'll be better off. You stay with your old Meg.

(Act I, P.33)

The news about some more guests to this boarding house is disgusting news to Stanley. His prediction about the arrival of the people in a Van, although turns out to be true. Pinter hints at the hidden menace in the play.

The confrontation with the two goons and the birthday party celebration is the culmination of mental state of Stanley. It is his regression to a state of childhood. The arrival of the two strangers has disturbed the serenity of this place. The Act first contains an indication of the theme of the play and give the readers the preliminary information which one needs it. Therefore; this Act is an exposition. The second Act reflects on action of the conflict. It also constitutes the middle part of the drama. This Act reveals that Goldberg and McCann are
the goons from an organization and are somewhat familiar with the past identity of Stanley the hero. The cross examination by these two constitutes the central episode in the play. It also consists of the accusations which impeach the hero Stanley to surrender. It reveals that he has betrayed some organization and as a result he is being prosecuted. The cross examination is full of guilt and menace.

The third Act opens with another inconsequential and light dialogues between Meg and Petey. Meg has had her hang over of the previous night’s party. Petey’s inquiry from Goldberg as to how Stanley is getting on and the latter’s reply that he has suffered a nervous breakdown is ominous. The information comes as a shock to both Meg and Petey. The play becomes very serious and somber. This act is completely free from anything irrelevant or superfluous. The patterns which the play follows, are the same as were followed by the ancient Greek dramatists of tragedies. According to some critics Pinter has employed A. B. A pattern in the play in order to give a good end to it.

The overall design of Pinter’s plays is designed to be episodic, each scene is isolated in the main from those before and
after, containing different characters, set in different and often well-contrasted backgrounds achieving a wide sweep. Coherence is obtained mainly through the language of the plays. Other devices of a more stylistic nature help to establish some degree of continuity, notably the recurring symbols and imageries. The three unities, time, place and action are clearly grouped within the conventional methods of structure.

Eschewing conventional plot, story and character, absurdist playwrights created a dramaturgy that reflected illusory dreams through apparently meaningless, illogical, unrelated, and insequential dialogue and action. The universal despair in these plays is presented in archetypal symbols and enigmatic scenes a-kin to anxiety dreams which produce a cathartic effect. The theatre of absurd is also characterised by the term anti-theatre because it rejects thematic meanings and logical structures. It induces mystical hallucination, spiritual transcendence and hence may be said to be cathartic in its effect.

Pinter has been combining in his plays the Avant Garde and the traditional. He uses external situations with bizarre
fantasy events. Critic Gale, citing Martin Gottfried comments that Pinter uses this strategy for:

For the purpose of mood, audience manipulation and theatre magic to deal with subjective contents, menace, truth, love, memory.¹

Pinter grew up in a society riddled with racial conflicts in which the fascists of England threatened the Jews. Pinter recalls his childhood when he discusses the struggle for dominance and the violence which occur in his plays. Pinter is primarily interested in the revelation of the unconscious sources of human action and contemporary man's spiritual condition. Pinter's world is full of uncertainty and menace. His characters obscurely anguished, suffering malaises crippled in their interactions with each other by what one writer has referred to as a lack of the redeeming sense of self. The search for identity in his plays is a perennial theme. He knows that anyone without "self" is loathsome, neurotic, psychosis and unethical. These things depend on one's social, psychological, ethnic, economical or social circumstances. When a certain character in his plays encounters the real external or internal threat, he or she...
endeavours hard to preserve self identity, it is an instinctive effort.

A new existential school of psychology has arisen in the last three decades. The existential fact that our aloneness has remained an important aspect of the psychological state in Pinter's plays. These existential psychologists have been influenced by philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Camus, and Sartre. Existential philosophy has its origins primarily in Germany; but it was popularised especially in France after the Second World War. Its central concern is with human freedom. Sorenkierkegaard aimed to release his readers from the illusions of objectivity and thus from the fake authority of science and of the systematic philosophy, such as that of Hegel. He told that the truth was essentially a personal realization, unique to each individual, and could not be ossified into dogma. He told that the task of philosophy was to reinstate subjectivity, especially in ethics and religion. The central text in existential philosophy is perhaps Being and Nothingness by J. P. Sartre (1905-1980). In the book Being and Nothingness, he points out that existence is of two kinds, being-in-itself, the being of unconscious objects and
conscious existence. Consciousness is characterized as not only self consciousness (being for itself) but also as capable of conceiving negatives, what is not the case, as well as what it is. The human being is forever envisaging futures which are possibilities and not actualities, and thus projecting himself forward into action which will change the present situation.

R. D. Laing, great critic on Modern dramas points out:

If the individual cannot take the realness, aliveness, autonomy, and identity of himself and others for granted, then he has to become absorbed in contriving ways of trying to be real... of preserving his identity in efforts... Prevent himself losing his self.

Pinter presents a subtle and powerful study of effects of neurotic characters of the psychological sufferings in individuals and groups. His characters are intricate puppet personages with malignity and arbitrary motives. The atmosphere in his plays is ladden with neurotic atmosphere. Psychotic fits and mental break down occur in The Birthday Party and The Caretaker. The atmosphere in the plays is charged with an atmosphere of incipient paranoia. Pinter portrays a world of ravaged persons of neurotic attacks. His
dramas are concerned with the waxing and waning of the self under the pressure of neurotic atmosphere. In his early plays a sense of menace grows as the play progresses. But the source of menace in these plays is often not explicit, the effect is a strong sense of floating neurotic state of mind and identity. Set in an enclosed area, usually one room, the plays imply that the world outside that room is threatening; the circumstances seem ordinary, but there is a generalized, unspecified horror seething beneath the action. Mystery and terror are frequently created in the form of unanswerable accusations; nothing is verifiable; and there is a chilling sense of isolation of people.

In his later plays, Pinter transfers the menace from the outer, unseen world to the mind. Much of the menace as well as the humour of his plays derives from non-communication. Characters in the early plays, although they might communicate on the low level, do not choose to do so. Characters in the later plays have the sense of uneasiness often associated with the painful ambiguity of memory. Martin Esslin points out that there is a frequent protest against:
One of Pinter’s major concerns as a dramatist is that of the difficulty of verification of their identity. In fact in the early plays Pinter investigates the source of the protagonist’s neurotic state of personality. The secondary characters have a tendency to suggest aspects of the protagonist’s mind. They end in existential death, the death of a self, which is portrayed in symbolic terms. The researcher intends to point out as to how the symbolic terms are met with in his dramas. The Room, which was published in 1957, is a study of the origins and manifestation of neurotic state of mind in search of identity to get rid of the past identity in a single character. As the title suggests, the action takes place in a single lighted room in the middle of huge darkness. The people who live in this room are an elderly couple. On the one hand, the room represents safety, a refuge from the threatening world outside. On the other hand it is the prison of her spirit, the very image of shutupness, to recall Kierkegaard’s term. The Room opens with Rose’s long, one sided conversation with
Bert as she prepares food for him. Her conversation amounts to distracted monologue. Bert hardly says any word. Stephen H. Gale remarks:

The disintegration of Rose's character under the threat of unknown menace is the structure of the play.\footnote{4}

Rose makes repeated trips to the window to peer at the world outside which she pretends to fear. She is offering maternal care to Bert, she attempts to lessen her sense of dread by denial which gives her words the pathos of a child singing herself a lullaby. Rose's illusion that she and Bert have a secured relationship reveals her complicated mental strategy to lessen the burden of her mental stress. As critic on Harold Pinter, Mr. Austin Quigley observes:

...Ignoring Bert's silence, she casts herself as one vitally concerned in providing Bert with food, information, advice, encouragement, nursing and admiration. She constantly projects his needs in order to define for herself a variety of functions in their relationship.\footnote{5}

Mr. Kidd appears after sometime and admits that his purpose for visiting Rose's room the first time was to tell her of the
presence of mysterious visitor in the basements. The mysterious visitor has been there for days, waiting for Rose's husband to leave, just lying there in the basement. The way Kidd speaks of the visitor demonstrates symptoms of his nervousness:

Mr. Kidd: What? What's that got to do with it? I don't know what you're talking about. I've got to tell you, I've had a terrible weekend. You'll have to see him. I can't take it anymore. You've got to see him.

I'm not a young man, Mrs. Hudd, that's apparent. It's apparent. You've got to see him.

(P.119-120)

Riley, the Negro visitor is a much more valid manifestation of Rose's past identity. He is old, blind and black and his thematic and symbolic frame of reference is complex. He is an aspect of the Rose herself. He is from below, the basement and he bears a message for Rose. His age suggests him to be a fatherly figure, and yet all his being is a personification of menace, At first, Rose feigns complete ignorance of Riley's identity. Her reaction to Riley is hostile. Her hostility suggests
her instinctive reaction for her insecurity. Her denial of her knowledge of Riley's identity may come from deeper source and expresses her own extreme concern. His entrance has clearly somehow returned Rose to the realm of her childhood. Her denials and vehement protestations allude to her suppressed feeling for her father. Her tender touch of Riley's temples and eyes remind us that as her father he is also her first object of love. As she is on the verge of recognizing her entrapment, Bert enters suddenly. Bert's speech about driving his van conveys his need to dominate Rose entirely. So he attacks Riley, Rose goes blind witnessing the violence. It provides a metaphor of isolated and crisis bound modern individual in search of identity. In the play there is a gradual revelation of the origins of the past and present identity of the characters.

Pinter unfolds the mystery of identities of his characters gradually and by and by. He observes the structure of the plays as an instrument. The Caretaker is another example for such progress. This play emerges as a coherent and apparently simple. But the play is endowed with psychological veracity and power. The room in which The
Caretaker is set is an image of Chaos. It is jumbled with multiple objects, beds, containers of nuts and screws, paints, buckets, vases, a step-ladder and a statue of Buddha, a disconnected gas stove, a kitchen sink, pile of newspapers, a shopping trolley etc. Aston spends his time collecting miscellaneous objects which appeal to him or which he thinks may prove useful one day. Hinchcliffe has identified this activity of Aston’s as a metaphorical statement about the need to make connection which is felt throughout the play. Both Aston and Davies lack purpose and goals. Aston’s long speech in Act second in which he recounts his experience in the mental hospital, is full of images of our vulnerability and aloneness. Davies the old-tramp is penniless and vulnerable character. His oddly assorted, ill-fitting clothes are evidently other people’s castoffs. He is afraid of being destitute, isolated, adrift. Hinchcliffe describes him:

An opinionated narrow-minded, prejudiced, irascible old lay-about.6

There are elements of the Christian myth of Adam and the fall from the paradise in The Caretaker. As Martin Esslin suggests of Davies’ ouster:  

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Davies is clearly the old Adam, who must be cast out of a situation which, for him, would be paradise.  

Davies is a tramp and wanderer. His physical rootlessness is the outward and visible manifestation of his spiritual rootlessness. His true identity remains in question throughout the play. He is a true lost soul. He tells us that he has been living under an assumed name for years. He has no viable standing in society because of the lack of identity. He is not sure who he is and where he was born. His refusal to take the job of the Caretaker is symbolic of his refusal to take the responsibility for himself or for other people.

Mick uses language as a weapon to disarm both Davies and his brother Aston. His knowledge of London's inner suburb and bus routes and his pretensions to middle-class culture gives Mick's speeches an air of worldly wisdom and authority.

The Caretaker is a play about existential isolation. It is Davies who most exemplifies the terror of isolation. In the end Davies is still seeking refuge. He is alienated from his society, from his fellow men, and from himself. The play
reminds us of the inexorable aloneness of the human condition. Aston’s long speech at the end of Act second revealing his mental troubles and experiences at the mental hospital, is memorable and confessional as a helpless man in the world who reposes his trust in someone else.

HYPOTHESIS

The overall designs of the plays of Pinter is episodic, each scene is isolated in the main from that of the earlier one. The well-contrasted background and characters achieve the coherence in the play. It is mainly achieved through language. it also provides the continuity notably because of the symbols and imageries. The three unities, time, place and action are respected in his almost all plays. Pinter has prepared plays with various contours and sizes. There are long plays like The Birthday Party and there are other short pieces like Silence, Night and The Basement, which are presented complete in a single act, sometimes with no change in setting. With reference to their structure one sometimes experiences the Aristotalian temptation of marking a
beginning, a middle and an end. In plays like The Homecoming and The Lover there is a sequential order linking the events and actions in a tentative casual chain. In most of his plays, however, the stages of action cannot be conveniently demarcated; the actions are repetitious and the speeches are like echoes reinforcing the significance of central pathos which can be called the heart of the play. The characters speak and move round a static situation involving an impasse. The plays do not develop a tragic structure, though they are fundamentally connected with tragic experience. His characters are already humbled long before we meet them.
REFERENCES:


