

Chapter 1 : The Birthday Party Criticism

Harold Pinter is sometimes associated with the generation of British playwrights who emerged in the '50s and are known as the Angry Young Men. His first plays, with their dingy, working-class.

His first plays, with their dingy, working-class settings and surface naturalism, seemed to link Pinter with this group, but only the surface of his plays is naturalistic; most of a Pinter play takes place beneath the surface. His closest affinities are with a more centrally important movement, the Theater of the Absurd. As a young man, before he started writing plays, the works of Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett made a great impression on Pinter. Like Kafka, Pinter portrays the absurdity of human existence with a loving attention to detail that creates the deceptive naturalism of his surfaces. It is particularly with the meticulously rendered, tape-recorder-accurate language of his characters that Pinter pulls the naturalistic and absurdist strands of his drama all together. Pinter, however, is more than an accurate recorder of speech; he is also a poet. The language of his characters, for all of their inarticulateness, is finally profoundly communicative of the human condition. The play is set in a single small room, the characters warm and secure within but threatened by cold and death from without. Rose sits in the cheap flat making endless cups of tea, wrapping a muffler around her man before she lets him go out into the cold; her husband, Bert, drives a van. Under the naturalistic veneer, however, the play has a murky, almost expressionistic atmosphere. If she stays within, she is warm and safe. She opens the door, and there, waiting to come in, is the new generation, a young couple named Mr. Sands the sands of time? A man has been staying in the basement. She imagines it to be wet and cold there, a place where no one would stand much of a chance. The man wants to see her. Again the door opens, to reveal a terrifying intruder from the outside. He is a black man—the color of death—and he is blind, tapping in with his stick, blind as death is when claiming its victims from the ranks of the good or the bad. On the naturalistic level of the play, the action seems motivated by racist hatred, perhaps, but at the symbolic level, Bert seems to have recognized death and instinctively engages it in battle, as later Pinter characters kick out violently against their fate. It is, however, to no avail: Rose has been struck blind, already infected by her approaching death. Critics have objected to the heavy-handedness, the overt symbolism, of the blind black man, and characters with similar roles in later plays are more subtly drawn. The scene once more is restricted to a single room, the dining room of a seedy seaside guesthouse. Meg, the landlady, and Petey, her husband, who has a menial job outside the hotel, resemble Rose and her husband of *The Room*. Meg is especially like Rose in her suffocating motherliness. In this play, however, she is no longer the main character. That role has been taken by Stanley, the only boarder of the house, who has been there for a year. He is pinned to the house, afraid to go out, feeling that intruders from outside are menacing bringers of death. Although he is in his late thirties, he is being kept by Meg as a spoiled little boy. He sleeps late in the morning, and when he comes down to breakfast, he complains querulously about everything she fixes for him. He is unshaven and unwashed, still wearing his pajamas. What is enacted symbolically by his refusing to leave the house is his fear of going out and engaging life, his fear that an acceptance of life—meaning going outside, having a job, having normal sexual relations with a woman his age—would also mean accepting his eventual death. He is refusing to live in an absurd world that exacts so high a price for life. It is an untenable position, and his refusal to live as an adult human being has left him a wrinkled and aging child. Further, it does him no good to remain in the house: If he does not go out into the world, the world will come in to him. In fact, he hears that two men have come to town and that they are going to stay at the guesthouse. He knows at once that they have come for him and is thrown into a panic. In the meantime, Meg decides that it is his birthday and gives him a present. The symbolic action, though more complex, resembles that of *The Room*: What is new is the much finer texture of the realistic surface of the play. The relationship between Stan and his surrogate mother, Meg, beautifully handled, is both comic and sad—comic because it is ridiculous for this nearly middle-aged man to be mothered so excessively and to behave so much like a spoiled child; sad because one believes in both Meg and Stan as human beings. Both comedy and pathos, realism and symbolic undercurrents, grow out of the fully developed language of the dialogue. It is obvious that the two men who come, Goldberg and McCann, have

indeed come for Stan. There is no concealment between them and Stan. He is rude to them and tries to order them out. They make it equally clear to him that he is not to leave the premises. McCann is gloomy and taciturn; Goldberg, the senior partner, is glib and falsely jovial. Why did you never get married? Why do you pick your nose? It is too late, however, for they have already taken his glasses, and he has had his first taste of the blindness of death. Meg comes in, and they stop scuffling, the two henchmen putting on a show of joviality. They begin to have a birthday party for Stan. Lulu, a pretty but rather vulgar young woman, is invited. Lulu in the past has frequently invited Stan to go outside walking with her, but he has refused. She and Goldberg hit it off together, and she ends up in his lap kissing him as everyone at the party drinks heavily. The drunken Stan stumbles over to Meg and suddenly begins strangling her. They rush over to stop him, and suddenly the power goes out. In the darkness, Stan rushes around, avoiding them, giggling. The terrified Lulu faints, and when someone briefly turns on a flashlight, the audience sees that Stan has Lulu spread-eagled on the table and is on top of her. With his mortality approaching him anyway, Stan, buoyed up by drink, makes a desperate effort to get out of the house, out of his entrapment in sterile childhood. He struggles to strangle the mother who is suffocating him and to have a sexual relationship with an appropriate female—a taste of the life he has denied himself in order to escape paying the debt, death. It is too late. In the morning, a nearly catatonic Stan is brought downstairs by the two henchmen. He has been washed and shaved and dressed in a suit, as if for burial. A black limousine waits outside the door. One is reminded of the medieval morality play *Everyman*. The play in some ways points one back to other possible intentions in *The Room*. Perhaps Rose, like Stan, has denied life. Afraid to go out in the cold, she does not escape having the cold come in after her. What she has lost is the pleasure she might have had in actively engaging life. Her husband, for example, comes home after a cold, wintry day out driving his van and talks with almost sexual relish about the pleasure he has had in masterfully controlling his van through all the dangers of his route. Again, the setting is a single room in which the characters sit, nervously waiting for an ominous presence from the outside. The two characters are a pair of assassins, sent from place to place, job to job, to kill people. What is interesting is that the cast of *The Birthday Party* has been collapsed into only these two, for they are not only the killers who come from outside, they are also the victims who wait nervously inside. While they wait in an anonymous room for their final directions on their new job, a job in which everything begins to go wrong, they pass the time by talking. The conversation ranges from reports of what one character is reading in the paper to discussions of how to prepare their tea, but in this oblique fashion it begins circling around to much more pressing speculations on the nature of their lives, questions with which these semiliterate thugs are poorly equipped to deal. Also Beckettian is the way an entire life is described in the most minimal terms: In *Waiting for Godot*, there was at least a tree; here, there is only a squalid room, with no windows, in the basement of an old restaurant. The *Dumb Waiter* lacks even such a remnant. Further, Wilson is depicted as being increasingly arbitrary in his treatment of them, even though they have been faithful and pride themselves on their reliability. If God exists in this contemporary world, he is God as a fascist. Early in the play, mysteriously, an envelope slides under the outside door. It contains twelve matches. Is a benevolent power giving them fire, the great civilizing agent, to help them stave off chaos? They use the matches to light a fire under their kettle, but a moment later, the gas fails, and they have no tea. It is not benevolence, but the power of chance, which rules their absurd world, as soon becomes manifest. There is a dumbwaiter in the room. A tray comes down to them from upstairs. They open the dumbwaiter and take it out. There is a message, ordering an elaborate meal. They do not know what to do, and a moment later the tray goes back upstairs. They are quite worried. When it comes down again, ordering an even more elaborate meal, they desperately fill it with everything they have—biscuits, tea, potato chips. A message comes down telling them that it is not good enough. Earlier in the play, Ben had read to Gus items from the newspaper, accounts of bizarre accidents and killings, and they had been astounded that such things could go on. The popular press represented their access—from their safe room—to the absurd goings-on in the arbitrary world outside. They try to go back to remarking on the news items now, but they are no longer really interested in the news from outside, because now the absurd has invaded their safe room. They have passed all of their tests, they have been reliable and faithful on the job—yet absurdity is still with them.

Chapter 2 : SparkNotes: The Dumb Waiter: Suggestions for Further Reading

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Though the single-dwelling two-story house in the later play is in an unidentified "seaside town", and it is purportedly a bed and breakfast -type rooming house run by a childless middle-aged married couple, the building in which Rose and Bert Hudd inhabit their "room" is a multi-dwelling rooming house of more than two stories, and, while Rose accepts being addressed as "Mrs. Hudd", Bert Hudd and she may not actually be legally married to each other, which may be a factor leading to her defensiveness throughout the play. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. March Learn how and when to remove this template message The play opens with Rose having a "one-person dialog" with her husband Bert, who remains silent throughout the whole scene, while serving him a breakfast fry-up, although the scene appears to occur around evening. Rose talks mostly about the cold weather and keeps comparing the cosy, 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, yet answers them herself. With a few knocks and a permission to enter, Mr. 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 dialog between Rose and Mr. At the end of the scene Bert, who appears to be a truck driver, leaves to drive off in his "van". She invites the couple in and they tell her they are looking for a flat, and for her landlord, Mr. Kidd, who, in the first production and recent revivals, was played by its original director, Henry Woolf. A blind black man, named Riley, who has purportedly been waiting in the basement according to the Sands and Mr. Kidd, becoming a source of concern for Rose, suddenly arrives upstairs to her room, to deliver a mysterious message to Rose from her "father". Composition history[edit] Pinter wrote The Room over two or four days in , depending on the account, at the suggestion of his friend Henry Woolf for his production as part of a postgraduate program in directing at the University of Bristol , Bristol , England. In fact, the play arrived in the post very shortly. The Room, as the play was called, was eventually staged by the Bristol Drama Department in May in a converted squash-court and in a production by Woolf himself" 66â€” It was at this second performance that the play was first reviewed by the London Sunday Times by drama critic Harold Hobson , who had helped to found the Drama Festival with some of his colleagues. The original production featured the following cast:

Chapter 3 : Harold Pinter: Independent and Critical to the Last Essay – Free Papers and Essays Example

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A Descriptive Chronology, For an explanation of principles and limitations, click on Introduction above. A selective bibliography of books by and about the dramatist is appended. The Plays and Filmscripts of Harold Pinter: Periodic updates sent free of additional charge. Be sure to include your email address. He is the most courageous, remorseless writer going and the more he grinds my nose in the shit the more I am grateful to him. He brings forth a body of beauty. His work is beautiful. He will meet Beckett first in and become a close friend; from on he will send him everything he writes for critical comments. Written in November expressly for the occasion, it was faultily restaged in December at a Bristol festival sponsored by the Sunday Times. The first London production will occur in January In trials out of town notably in Cambridge it had been received with perception and enthusiasm, but morning-after London critics berate and mock it so that it survives only eight performances. Pinter had written *The Birthday Party* in the summer of , after *The Room* had convinced him of his vocation. Pinter radically modifies the norm by flagrantly refusing to disclose reasons and motives on both sides, so that the dominant reaction is mystification, often mixed with bemused hilarity, rather than suspense. A fortyish piano player in self-imposed isolation why? When two men arrive to stay overnight, he reacts to them as if they were threatening intruders who know something incriminating about him what? The next day is his birthday or is it? Between acts overnight his oppressors reduce him to a catatonic state, so that in the morning his only gestures of rebellion are grunts. They prepare him to go away with them, ostensibly to hand him over to "Monty" who? Symbolically, his birthday becomes a rebirth into hell. Early in Pinter told his baffled director, Peter Wood, that the play just happens, with no explanations: Everything to do with the play is in the play. His poem, "A View of the Party," throws an oblique light on the play. September The English drama critic Irving Wardle introduces a durable critical phrase for Pinter commentators in an *Encore* review: Simpson, Nigel Dennis, and Pinter. He will retrieve the script, revise it, and produce it in A black-humor fantasy about a psychiatric hospital in which the staff as well as the inmates are stripped of their individuality, the play is a companion piece to both *The Birthday Party* and *The Dumb Waiter*. The first had been staged in Bristol in ; a German translation of the latter had premiered in Frankfurt in He utters not a word, ignores the landlord during an enigmatic visit, and departs. After an even more baffling visit by prospective tenants, the woman hears from the landlord that a tenant from the musty basement room wants to talk to her. A blind Negro arrives. Despite a withering reception from her, he says earnestly that her father wants her to come home. Her mistrust melts away and she touches his face. Just then her husband returns, boasts of his aggressive driving, and suddenly kicks the intruder repeatedly. The woman clutches her eyes, unable to see. Pinter will tell his biographer that the messenger is "a potential saviour" who is trying to free the woman from the imprisonment of the room and her marriage: *The Dumb Waiter*, which Pinter wrote in , is a small masterpiece of semi-farcical absurdism, with strong echoes of *Waiting for Godot*. The characters are waiting for "Wilson," but "He might not come. He might just send a message. The underling along with the audience wants to know exactly what is going on, which merely irritates his tight-mouthed superior and frustrates us. An envelope slides under the door and a dumb waiter repeatedly clatters down, but neither contains a clue about the specifics of their mission. In a bizarre comic sequence, the machine sends down increasingly esoteric orders for food, which they have no way to fill. The door on the right opens; the assistant stumbles in, body stooping, stripped of his jacket and revolver. They stare at each other. The production transforms his life by bringing him fame and fortune; ultimately the play will be performed all over the world and become the one in his canon most frequently revived. In New York, starting in October , it runs for 21 weeks. A well-nigh inscrutable drama best characterized by the line "Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations" , it nevertheless contains a distinct line of action leading to a climax that Pinter insists must convey a sense of "absolute finality. In effect he is tested by the two nearly opposite brothers, found wanting

by both, and kicked out. Since the shambling, muttering remnant is unfit for life anywhere else, his ouster is pathetic. But since he brought it on himself, abusing favors from one brother and misconstruing ironically extended "privileges" from the other, his blunt rejection seems inevitable. His benefactor, a benumbed and reticent man, tells him the story of having electric convulsion therapy forced upon him in his youth because of his peculiar way of talking to his fellow workers allusions to a Christlike prophet abound. His contrastingly voluble brother bullies the tramp with non-sequitur verbal teases; he finally blows up and, defining his true nature, smashes a Buddha figurine that his brother had bought. The old man invites irritation from the start by claiming to need a safe haven for a while before taking a trip to recover proof of his identity he uses an assumed name, but then extending his stay until the gentle brother can no longer stand his stink, noise, or insults. Both brothers have offered him the job of caretaker, one seriously and the other with disdain, but he finally loses the only caretaker he ever had and is left to face the terrors of the outside world. Nothing happens except that somehow it does. A pompously defensive middle-aged husband and his more adaptable wife a trial run for Ruth in *The Homecoming* are thrown into conflict by the recurring presence outside their home of an old man who seems to be a simpleminded matchseller. The husband confronts the man conventionally, offering him drinks and trying to determine his identity. The benumbed tramp stares at him in silence. His anxiety level rising, the questioner speculates more and more wildly until his wife intervenes, sends her husband off, and talks to the man herself. She is completely at ease, assuming he is "a quiet, harmless old man, going about his business," not here "through any design. My kith and kin. Horror overcomes him when the matchseller seems to rock with laughter at him, and his last words are "Who are you? I think the one beautiful and great thing about the new wave of playwrights is that they approach their subject matter with this kind of allusiveness. To me the play was about the thing. Among the statements by Pinter that he quotes is this dig at drama critics: They can tell a dot from a dash a mile off. It is later reprinted in several sources, notably his *Complete Works*: Pinter stresses that what he writes "has no obligation to anything other than to itself. My responsibility is not to audiences, critics, producers, directors, actors or to my fellow men in general, but to the play in hand. To supply an explicit moral tag to an evolving and compulsive dramatic image seems to be facile, impertinent and dishonest. I suggest there can be no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A character on the stage who can present no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his motives is as legitimate and as worthy of attention as one who, alarmingly, can do all these things. The more acute the experience the less articulate its expression. So often, below the word spoken, is the thing known but unspoken. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen which keeps the other in its place. When true silence falls we are still left with echo but are nearer nakedness. One way of looking at speech is to say that it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness. The husband finally chooses to restore harmony by believing that his wife "just sat and talked about what you would do if you went to your room," but she neither confirms nor denies that that is the truth. Listen to the sound first and the meaning will become clear through that. A half-hour debate can be more confusing than one clearly put sentence. Pinter adapted the latter from an unfinished autobiographical novel, first for radio and then for the stage. It treats one of his recurring themes, the relativity of truth and perception, but in performance the play is perceived as obscure and undramatic. *The Lover*, first presented on television in March, treats the same theme in the mode of an au courant farcical comedy. The plot is formulaic and improbable, but ripples with amusing amoral twists. As she comments, "things are beautifully balanced. That night, supposedly himself again, he continues the argument and says he has paid off his "whore," which she counters by claiming that she has other lovers. In it is transferred to New York, where it wins awards for best play and best playwright of the year. Pinter says it is his only play "which gets remotely near to a structural entity which satisfies me" *Paris Review*, Fall The total impact of the drama derives from the bizarrely disconcerting quality of the things that happen to realistically depicted characters, nearly all of whom seem oblivious to their oddity and amorality. The play carries the audience along in an inexorable absurd flow, giving a sense of inevitability to a succession of head-shaking events. Again featuring an intruder who ignites a conflict, the plot revolves around

the reactions of a grubby household of males aging father and chauffeur-brother, pimp and boxer sons to the sudden reappearance of an incongruous son who has been in America for six years teaching philosophy. The catalyst is actually his attractive wife a former "model of the body" , whom he married secretly before leaving. Some of their reactions are as startling for the family as they are for the audience. The wife readily goes upstairs with the boxer son, but somehow keeps him content without going "the whole hog. She can do what she wants, and it is not at all certain she will go off to Greek Street" [Saturday Review, April]. A rich metaphorical dimension of the play accompanies this audacious series of events:

Chapter 4 : Pinter: a collection of critical essays - Arthur F. Ganz - Google Books

Critical Analysis of The Homecoming Essay Words 7 Pages Harold Pinter's play, The Homecoming, represents a series of urban characters involved in the family relationships whose prime interest is in winning dominance over another, and the depiction of gender roles which radically severed from traditional family in urban life.

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Chapter 5 : Bernard shaw pygmalion pinter critical essay

Harold Pinter, - A Descriptive Chronology of His Plays, Theatrical Career, and Dramatic Theories. Excerpted with additions and other modifications from Charles A. Carpenter's Modern British, Irish, and American Drama: A Descriptive Chronology,

Chapter 6 : Harold Pinter: critical approaches - Steven H. Gale - Google Books

Harold Pinter's play, The Homecoming, represents a series of urban characters involved in the family relationships whose prime interest is in winning dominance over another, and the depiction of gender roles which radically severed from traditional family in urban life. This essay will explore the.

Chapter 7 : The International Harold Pinter Society | Critical perspectives, dialogue and appreciation

A suggested list of literary criticism on Harold Pinter's The Dumb Waiter. The listed critical essays and books will be invaluable for writing essays and papers on The Dumb Waiter.

Chapter 8 : Harold Pinter bibliography - Wikipedia

Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays ed. by Arthur Ganz (review) John Russell Brown Modern Drama, Volume 16, Number 2, Summer , pp. (Review).

Chapter 9 : The Homecoming Critical Essays - calendrierdelascience.com

Master Harold and the Boys Critical Analysis Words | 7 Pages. Master Harold and the Boys Athol Fugard's Master Harold and the Boys is an instant classic that does a superior job at encompassing the complex of racial hierarchies and interracial friendships that existed in South Africa in the midth century.