

# The demand on the audience is to stop thinking or reacting, and to pay attention

観客への要求は考えたり反応することではなく、作品へ注意を払うことにある  
—ハロルド・ピンターの初期の作品—

● ウィリアムズ, ニコラス R. / 富山大学芸術文化学部

Nicholas R. Williams / Faculty of Art and Design, University of Toyama

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## 要旨

ハロルド・ピンター（1930-2008）は非常にヨーロッパ的な作家だと説明される—それはフランツ・カフカやベルトルト・ブレヒト、サミュエル・ベケットそしてアントン・チェーホフからも影響を受けたからである。The Birthday Party、The Caretaker、及び The Homecoming —私が論じたこれらピンターの3作品は1958年から1965年のものである。作品を観たイギリスの最初の観客は往々にして戸惑い、時にその作品を観ることに立ち会わなくてはならないことに怒りを覚えたりしたものである。ピンターは観客に全く譲歩などしなかった。彼は登場人物について十分な情報を観客に与えず、観客が通常要求する作品についての詳細な説明を無視したのである。この作家と観客の間にある緊張した状態を、私は説明しようとした。

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) was an actor, director, screenplay writer, and one of the most significant dramatists in the twentieth century. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005. Pinter's own words on how he approached playwriting will be used to illustrate the very real problem faced by audiences when they were first exposed to his drama.

This essay focuses on three full length plays, *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Caretaker* (1960) and *The Homecoming* (1965), and how they were originally received.<sup>1</sup> The audiences were very often confused by what they saw and heard. They were distracted by Pinter's innovatory usages of language, comedy, and stylization. His theatre sometimes appeared to be an offbeat pastiche of a conventional play-narrative; this is particularly true of *The Homecoming*. As his biographer Michael Billington points out, Pinter had played in just about every kind of popular theatre genre in the 1950s, including Shakespeare productions as a very

young actor in Ireland. He knew rather too well what was expected of a night out at the theatre in an English provincial city—having appeared in the kind of play where the audiences would sit and watch people very like themselves.<sup>2</sup> The British theatre of the 1950s was largely middle class in culture and language register. In his earlier plays Pinter adapted the very different idiom of a post-war male working class to a very personal view of the world. These newly heard voices were in marked contrast with the polite stage language of an established playwright like Terence Rattigan.<sup>3</sup>

Pinter's first audiences expected that certain things would happen on stage. The characters would behave according to a certain decorum, and the plot unfolded in a way that allowed people to leave the auditorium with a sense of satisfaction after a night out at the theatre. This expectation was ignored by Pinter. His exasperation was with what he once described as “patronage” by his audiences, when they laughed a little too much at *The Caretaker*.<sup>4</sup> As a successful playwright himself, Noel Coward saw very quickly the degree of theatricality in *The Caretaker*.<sup>5</sup> Yet Pinter was doing what a playwright like Coward would never do: place the character center-stage without giving him a reliable past or a social context beyond the barest outlines of that world he inhabits.

In a program note to a double bill of two short plays, *The Dumb Waiter* and *The Room* in 1960, Pinter wrote in defiance of the audience's assumed reaction: “A character on the stage who can present no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behavior or his aspirations, is as legitimate and as worthy of attention as one who, alarmingly, can do all these things.” This is not just mystery for mystery's sake. Alfred Hitchcock's cinema uses the

denial of information about a character to compel a sense of mystery and suspense as intrinsic to his style of presentation. While Pinter was talking like a modern philosopher in questioning the possibility of verification, and like an artist when he ends by saying, “The more acute the experience the less articulate the expression [of it]”.<sup>6</sup>

To articulate what a character unreservedly feels is too much of an accommodation to the audience’s demand for clarification. What Pinter meant by saying that the twentieth-century theatre’s attachment to the “explicit form” was “cheating”.<sup>7</sup> In that one brief comment, he has outlawed the time-honored convention that if the character speaks to the audience directly, a kind of truthfulness can be assumed. (The ambiguity of Hamlet’s motivation is only tolerable for an audience so long as they are privileged to hear the soliloquies and asides.) In 1962, he explained to a student audience what was happening as he wrote the dialogue: “My characters tell me so much and no more, with reference to their experience, their aspirations, their motivations, [and] their history. Between my lack of biographical data about them and the ambiguity of what they say there lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration but which it is compulsory to explore. ... [I]t’s out of these attributes that a language arises. A language ... where, under what is said, another thing is being said.”<sup>8</sup> The audience to the first production of *The Birthday Party* were about to find out that their right to know the history of a character was no longer honored. Pinter had ripped up the old contract without their permission.

*The Birthday Party* first played at the Lyric Theatre in London in May, 1958.<sup>9</sup> The play’s setting is a seaside boarding house on the south coast of England. The opening sequence is marked for its dulling repetitiousness of words and trivial detail. A man called Petey is served by Meg (we assume is his wife) at the breakfast table. The focus of attention arrives a few moments later: a man in his late thirties called Stanley who is staying at the boarding house. He is depicted as lonely and dependent upon the older woman who acts like a maternal figure towards him. These unpromising characters are then faced by the arrival of two strangers who look as if they have stepped out of *film noir*. Like a sinister double-act, these two men are seen in comedic asymmetry: the manipulative, older character, Goldberg and the sullenly reticent McCann.

The play is divided into three acts taking the audience from domesticity to the menace begun to be felt at the end of Act I. The Aristotelean unity of time is preserved, while shifts in mood are swift, abrupt and designed to shock. Pinter creates a non-verbal link to the bizarre events witnessed in Act II by having Stanley frantically play the tin drum given to him as a birthday present by Meg before bringing down the curtain on the first act. The audience has been warned. Act II sees the arrival of Lulu, a young girl associated with Goldberg, which counterpoints the ritualistic games of humiliation and the eventual breaking of Stanley’s glasses that take place at his birthday party. Goldberg and McCann preside over this bizarre transformation of a very English normality. In the anti-climax that opens Act III, Goldberg tells a series of unrelated anecdotes, and then cross-talks with McCann in a *manzai*-like exchange. This burlesque of language signifies the breakdown of rational discourse. The totalitarian state is unmasked when the two men abruptly remove Stanley from the stage. Registered in a futile if brave protest by Petey: “Don’t let them tell you what to do!” *They exit*.<sup>10</sup> Petey and Meg will then continue talking as though nothing had ever happened, ending the play in an emotional blankness.

Kafka is the one clear influence on *The Birthday Party* although Stanley as reprising Josef K of *The Trial/Der Prozess* (1925) may seem banal in its context.<sup>11</sup> The nightmare of European totalitarianism has been played out in the familiarity of an English guesthouse. The play’s abrupt manner of playing, its sudden reversals, and the indeterminacy of the strangers’ biographical details appear gratuitous. The two strangers are seen to carry out their work of abducting Stanley without revealing who they are—yet they are declared by their ethnic stereotypes. Nat Goldberg—a brazen portrayal of stage Jewishness—is partnered with the hard man, the Irish McCann for a reason. Surely the historical prejudice against the Jews and the Irish is enough for the audience to understand why they stand there on Pinter’s stage at all.<sup>12</sup> As outsiders to this waxwork-like group of English characters, Goldberg and McCann carry out the dirty work of an unseen state. A common trope in Pinter’s plays is how the most verbally fluent character can become trapped by the situation. Goldberg seems to be the ring master of language, but that is all he ever can be. Once he and McCann have left the stage with Stanley, as caught in the mesh of twentieth century

European history, they must all three cease to exist.

In an interview with the BBC European Service in 1960, Pinter set *The Birthday Party* into its political context: "... two people arrive out of nowhere, and I don't consider this an unnatural happening. I don't think it is all that surrealistic and curious because surely this thing, of people arriving at the door, has been happening in Europe in the last twenty years. Not only the past twenty years, the last two to three hundred years."<sup>13</sup>

*The Birthday Party* was disliked by most critics—except for Harold Hobson writing for *The Sunday Times* of London. "[The play] breathes in the air. It cannot be seen but it enters the room every time the door is opened." Hobson is talking about the atmosphere of "terror" as emanating from a society without reason and legality.<sup>14</sup> The reviewer for *The Manchester Guardian* was frustrated by its extreme lack of coherence: "[Pinter's] characters speak in non-sequiturs, half-gibberish and lunatic ravings, they are unable to explain their actions, thoughts, or feelings."<sup>15</sup> In the example of one member of the audience who dared to demand more information, with numbered questions about the play's characters, Pinter's reply was neatly destructive of this failure to see the world as it is: not as what the audience imagine it to be. "1. Who are you?" he wrote, "2. Where do you come from? 3. Are you supposed to be normal? You will appreciate that without the answers to your questions I cannot fully answer your letter."<sup>16</sup>

Kenneth Tynan, who had been very dismissive of *The Birthday Party*, would concede one point only after seeing *The Caretaker* in London during its first run in 1960. "[T]he symbols [of *The Birthday Party*] have mostly retired to the background. What remains is a play about people."<sup>17</sup> *The Caretaker* is not seen today as an obscure play at all (it later became a study-text in many of Britain's secondary schools)—but Pinter's very stylized use of language, in the case of Mick, is sometimes overwhelming. Besides which, Davies the homeless man, Aston and his younger brother Mick spend most of the play doing very little, except talk.

*The Caretaker* can be understood as a serious study of human behavior, but may have been taken as a rather coarse satire on working class speech and culture by its first audiences (which is why they had laughed too much). But what would need to be said in a more mainstream play has gone unspoken. Davies is not expelled by any dramatic speech or threat of violence.

He will only leave the stage when he is denied any form of human communication by Aston's silence and his refusal to turn round and look at him. As Pinter later explained, "I think we communicate all too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid [...]"<sup>18</sup> Language is revealing of each character as funny, clever, ignorant, egotistical, and deluded by private fantasy but never can it explain itself. Pinter has raised silence to a higher plane than dialogue itself.

*The Caretaker* aroused very different reactions. The radical playwright John Arden wanted another kind of play after listening to Aston's poignant account of what had made him the way he was. In the play, Aston is still recovering from the violent Electric Convulsive Treatment (ECT) that he had undergone in a state institution to cure him of his "hallucinations".<sup>19</sup> Arden demanded: "Why isn't Mr Pinter writing that serious social play to denounce the cruelty prevalent in mental hospitals?"<sup>20</sup> (In fact, as Pinter's biographer points out, he had already written, but not published, a play called *The Hothouse* on that very subject.)<sup>21</sup> Penelope Gilliatt, a film writer and novelist, heard the 1964 film version of *The Caretaker* with a sharper ear for what was happening in Pinter's use of language. She argued that too much precision would sound artificial in a modern theatre which prefers the vernacular. "[T]o follow a question by an answer is actually a very stylized way to write lines." Pinter wrote lines to be spoken as they are instinctively spoken rather than how they ought to be said. Thus, her example: "To most people in the past to have followed a line like 'Where were you born?' by 'What do you mean?' would have been pure gibberish".<sup>22</sup>

Something else was taking place on Pinter's stage. Cut away Pinter's dialogue, and another layer of meaning begins to open up. The specter of human behavior at its most primitive level is laid bare—as tribal rather than social, as two brothers against the savage world outside. If *The Caretaker* is taken as a contemporary account of isolation and alienation, another "language, where under what is said, another thing is being said" would be lost.<sup>23</sup> From beneath the digressively fluent theatrical dialogue, the fundamental emotional conflicts of humanity can be heard as struggle and loss. The question is whether the audience are able, or willing, to listen to those much deeper resonances.

The three-act play is arranged as an extended study

of Davies's relations with each brother in turn. Davies is brought into the house—which apparently belongs to Mick—by Aston right at the beginning of the play. Pinter explained once that Aston had not spoken for ten years to anyone since he was given shock therapy.<sup>24</sup> But the audience is not privy to that key piece of information. What they know is only what they are privileged to see: Davies's arrival being silently observed by Mick, who exits without speaking—and then until Aston's rejection of Davies, the two brothers' estrangement from each other.

The stage language of *The Caretaker* is invariably disconnected from its underlying motivation. There are sudden changes in the play when what sounds like comedy is actually a form of violence. Mick is hyper-articulate and that is what makes his confrontation with the slow-witted Davies into a playground style of intimidation. At first this is brutally funny, but to a purpose. Ownership is the primary motivation; beneath this very male aggression lies his feelings towards his older brother. Mick's objective is to undo Davies's usurpation of the house, though his latent fear may actually be Aston's growing friendship with him.

An audience has to listen to Mick's hyperactively performing the insider vocabularies of law, property dealing and interior design. This brings a surreal tone to Pinter's style of rhetoric. In the example from Act II, Mick speaks in a parody of an estate agent's jargon to sell parts of the house to the speechless, penniless Davies—a sales talk that has the casual absurdity of a stand-up comedy routine: “[...] So what do you say? Eight hundred odd for this room or three thousand down for the whole upper storey. On the other hand, if you prefer to approach in the long-term way I know an insurance firm in West Ham'll be pleased to handle the deal for you. No strings attached, open and above board, untarnished record; twenty per cent interest deposit; down payments, back payments, family allowances, bonus schemes, remission of term for good behavior, six months lease [...]”<sup>25</sup> In Act III Mick will speak in the manner of an advertising copywriter to Davies in detailing the latest colors and furnishings of contemporary interior design—allowing for Pinter's satirizing of the fraudulent language of a modern consumer society. In reality, Mick is a fantasist who is a failed builder, unable even to repair his own house. Symbolic of this new society which has placed fantasy

above ordinary existence—he will talk incessantly.

Pinter's characters are arranged in simple contrast; they should read easily from an audience's point of view. Davies is recognizable from the start as being the tramp, the derelict in the street, the homeless wanderer—the title of the play is, ironically, about him. (He is given the responsibility of being caretaker by Mick towards the end of the play, probably to destroy him.) He plays the two brothers against each other to establish his position in the house. His tribal identity now gone, heard in the faint echo of a Welsh accent lost through constant journeying across the urban landscape. Davies' existential anxiety is signaled in Act I by his strong prejudice against “Poles, Greeks, Blacks” and by his constant refrain of getting down to “Sidcup” to pick up his “papers”.<sup>26</sup> It is this hopeless, marginal figure that Aston has brought into the house. Out of human kindness or out of a need for friendship? The play does not go in for neat explanations. To take Davies as the mythical stranger from outside would be to dignify this character beyond his stage presence, and be taking a serious liberty with Pinter's realism. Davies is simply a nasty, querulous individual of low cunning. He has to leave the house. That is the only possible ending to the play.

The near-silent Aston becomes the focus of the drama. He at least knows that he wants to build a shed in the garden, even if it will not be built that well. Mick and Davies are emotionally limited as characters by contrast with Aston who has suffered greatly. For the audience, Aston's lengthy speech to Davies at the end of Act II allows for a traditional sense of empathy with a character, which is usually denied in Pinter's theatre. Aston's speech seems incongruous until it is understood theatrically, for without its emotional relief, *The Caretaker* cannot be sustained as a play. Aston's long account of how he fought against the placing of the pincers on his head to shock his brain into passivity is humanistic to its core. The conclusion of this lengthy speech has an effect much more than simple resignation, as a calmness descends to the stage when he says: “I laid out everything in order, in my room, all the things I knew were mine, but I didn't die. The thing is, I should have been dead, I should have died. Anyway, I feel much better now. But I don't talk to people now [...]” The speech will close with the affirmation “I want to build that shed out in the garden.”<sup>27</sup> Aston will send Davies

back into the streets he came from.

The breakdown of Davies's thought processes are held in the long pauses: "Listen ... if I ... got down ... if I was to ... get my papers ... would you ... if I got down ... and got my ..." *Long silence.*<sup>28</sup> The compulsive talker is now rendered mute, and Davies will re-enter the savage world that has become his natural environment. *The Caretaker* tells of the maturing of Pinter as a dramatist; in every silence and pause, there is another meaning beyond the written text. When the first performance of *The Caretaker* at the Arts Theatre Club on 27 April 1960 came to an end, the audience rose to their feet.<sup>29</sup>

*The Homecoming* was first performed in 1965 at the Aldwych Theatre in London. Pinter's dialogue asks even more of its audiences. The dialogue works in fragmented bursts of energy, and then is upended by a sudden event that halts its flow abruptly without further explanation. The question posed most controversially in *The Homecoming* is how far the underlying reality of the situation is related to the language used by a character. Pinter explained himself in this way. "Do the structures of language and the structures of reality (by which I mean what actually *happens* [Pinter's emphasis]) move along parallel lines?"<sup>30</sup> Already we have seen in *The Birthday Party* and *The Caretaker* how a character will use language at odds with the proximate situation. Words for Pinter's characters have a vital importance, which is why they are not used directly.

Throughout *The Homecoming* a vicious, often very funny, badinage is heard on the surface in contrast with the significance of the inner dialogue that often goes unheard. The audience's effort to understand may be in vain—because the point about *The Homecoming* is that Pinter's characters will avoid saying anything that threatens their fragile hold on the given situation. Family politics have become so deeply laid as to be incommunicable to an outsider. The audience is that outsider: also Ruth, the one woman on the stage, who will become initiated into this family. Pinter defended the behavior of his characters in *The Homecoming* in this way: "The people are harsh and cruel, to be sure. Still, they aren't acting arbitrarily but for very deep-seated reasons. [...]"<sup>31</sup>

At its most literal, *The Homecoming* is a comedy about a family reunion. (One wonders whether Pinter wasn't referring to T.S.Eliot's immediately pre-war play *The Family Reunion* (1939) with some irony.)<sup>32</sup> The

play opens in the evening, and the audience is shown an all-male family: dysfunctional, as they clearly detest each other, but living together out of convenience and long habit. The loud-mouthed retired butcher, Max, the self-appointed paterfamilias-figure, adopts a posture of contempt towards his younger brother Sam, who is a taxi driver. The sharpest in this family, Max's son Lenny is a businessman of an ambiguous kind, and Joey, the youngest, is contrastingly a very slow-witted trainee boxer and the one family member to be tolerated. *The Homecoming* has the documentary background of a 1960s lower middle class family of working class antecedents. We will later see how much of an internal split has come about in the family when the eldest son, Teddy arrives with his wife Ruth from America where he works as a college professor. In the second scene of the first act, they will come into the family house, without any announcement, very early in the morning.

Very quickly Pinter will upset the continuity of *The Homecoming*. One scene will act as an ironic commentary on a previous one. Thus, Lenny is shown acting out a childish fear towards his old father Max who threatens to hit him in the first scene of Act I; but when meeting with Ruth soon after her arrival, he puts on the front of a sophisticated man-about-town—although Ruth responds, knowingly, as though playing a hand at poker. The audience's difficulty is that Pinter adopts a form of games-playing that can be misinterpreted as comedy. But the play is so underscored with very private grievances of ambition and envy that it cannot sustain the forgetfulness of comedy.

This initial scene between Lenny and Ruth has the structured nuances of Eric Berne's games-play theory.<sup>33</sup> Having gone through a series of exchanges, Lenny will end up by asking a direct question. When he asks to take back the glass of water which he has given Ruth a few minutes earlier, she will respond almost mechanically: "If you take the glass...I'll take you." Then she will take command with: "Why don't I just take you?" There is a pause given as a stage direction, followed by Lenny's response: "You're joking." Another pause, then Lenny tries to get the upper hand: "You're in love, anyway, with another man. You've had a secret liaison with another man. Your family didn't even know. Then you come here without a word of warning and start to make trouble."<sup>34</sup> Lenny has lost the game by speaking too much.

Just how saturated the dialogue is in private histories can be gauged by how many questions it generates about Ruth. For, why is she acting this way so soon after meeting Lenny? Does this reference to “another man” in fact refer to her husband, Teddy? Or does Lenny know her by her reputation? Nothing is known precisely about Ruth. Likewise, Teddy’s motivation in bringing Ruth back with him to the family house, and leaving her behind at the end of the play without more than a brief word between them, seems beyond credibility—though on later reflection, it will make sense. These two characters initially appear as opaque to the other members of the family, as they are to the audience. By comparison, Max and Sam, and certainly Joey, seem like open books.

Pinter’s creation of Ruth is so much more about self-determination than about gender itself. In the play’s closing scene, Ruth sits center-stage among the silent tableau of all the family members (except for Sam who has suddenly dropped dead, and Teddy who has exited). The tableau is classical, posed in an ambiguity of stillness like Greek statuary; there to be contemplated by the audience. For Ruth, Max playing out the role of the feeble, impotent old man at her feet is, nonetheless, a hollow victory, even if she has taken over from Lenny and possibly taken on Joey as a plaything-lover. The destructive element of the play becomes most obvious once Ruth had agreed to Lenny’s proposal of becoming a high-class prostitute. The men kneeling and standing around her in the anti-climax before the final curtain are fixed and rigid in attitude. Ruth, by contrast, has decided her own fate in a way that is shocking and, just perhaps, authentic.<sup>35</sup>

Martin Esslin comments that *The Homecoming* was “a sensational success in America and established him on Broadway”, but back in London the play was “received with some bewilderment”.<sup>36</sup> The question is: why? Pinter had cut all the corners and made drastic assumptions about how well the play could be assimilated despite the speed at which he had taken it. To digress for a moment: the modern film works, in much the same way, by using many short scenes to construct an experience of speed and movement. Not just the New Wave of European cinema, but the Hollywood product of the 1940s had already broken up the narrative line in the *noir* genre. The conjecture is that the American audiences were far more able to respond to those other rhythms of *The*

*Homecoming*. The rhythms of jazz could be implicated, too. At the juncture, in Act II, when Lenny tries to assume control over Ruth, the stage direction specifically mentions that: *LENNY goes to the radiogram and puts on a record of slow jazz*. The music usually played is a piece by Thelonius Monk that will cue first Lenny, then Joey who partner Ruth in an intimate dance routine.<sup>37</sup> Monk’s style of avant-garde pianism also fits perfectly as a jagged, dissonant mood to what is now about to take place after Ruth’s rejection of Teddy. The British audiences were still used to a slower progression of events, but Pinter’s theatre had made no compromise.

The offbeat patterning of *The Homecoming* is critical to its effect. Pinter uses a dialectical layering of one scene commenting on the next when Ruth, at her most expansively erotic and fluent, follows Lenny’s attempt to engage Teddy in a parody of a philosophical discussion. (This is in sequence just before Teddy decides to leave and the jazz is turned on.) Her speech re-directs the attention of the audience away from Lenny’s typically crude male put-down of his older brother to her very stylized female otherness. Ruth presents a manifesto of her own sexuality: “[...] My lips move. Why don’t you restrict ... your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant ... than the words which come through them? You must bear that ... possibility...in mind.”<sup>38</sup>

No action is without ambiguity. The honesty—a strange word to use here in the context of *The Homecoming*—is that Pinter represses nothing and elaborates no further. There is no final judgment on a theatre like Pinter’s. The audience has now got used to his “shock of the new”, as the art critic Robert Hughes typified the first reactions to modern art.<sup>39</sup> What first appears like a puzzle or, worse still, an enigma, will now become the familiar. Pinter was very much a catalyst for a new theatre using a stylized, even if uninhibited form of the vernacular as dialogue. Never to be forgotten, however, is his insistence on a character when *not* speaking.

There are, of course, perennial themes in Pinter’s drama. On one level *The Homecoming* can be taken as re-working a cliché of the nineteenth century theatre onwards, the family gathering: the confrontation with what we have done in the past. Wilde’s satire on Victorian upper-class values *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)<sup>40</sup> can be placed easily into this frame, along with the opening scene of Shaw’s *Major Barbara*

(1905).<sup>41</sup> *The Homecoming*, given a more conventional interpretation, could become Teddy's successful attempt to rid himself of that past, including Ruth. The abrupt way in which Pinter has him do it is what is so unacceptable.

Pinter's attitude to the audience did not change even at the end of his life. In an interview with Mark Batty, Batty asks him to explain his attitude towards the audience and his work. "You don't particularly care what the response is ..." To which Pinter replies "No. I think that is the point; I don't want people to love me." Pinter had advised his actors: "So don't go out on the stage and give them what they want, because giving them what they want is going to do serious damage to the work." Like Aston turning away from Davies in *The Caretaker*, the audience had to be ignored and allowed to go its own way. In fact, Pinter had believed long before, when he was a young actor in repertory in Ireland, that there was "a contest between the actors and the audience and someone had to win."<sup>42</sup>

For what the audience is required to do is to listen and watch as though eavesdropping on the very private world of his characters. If they are prepared to put themselves in the hands of the director, actors, and of course, the writer, they will be taken on a journey. The degree of preparation required for any of Pinter's plays has been recorded by his actors and directors alike. An actor has to work on the timing of those pauses, the rhythm of Pinter's lines, and then, because of the paucity of detail: the history of the character that has to be reconstructed.<sup>43</sup> A Pinter play is intricately planned and visualized before it is performed. What remains is for the audience to play their role.

One of the greatest writers on the theatre, Zeami did once instruct an audience on how they should "watch" a performance of Noh. "[T]hose who know watch with their minds, while those who don't know watch with their eyes. What is seen with the mind is essence; what is seen with the eyes is function."<sup>44</sup> Silence in Pinter's theatre is its transformative moment; that is why referring to the audience in the Noh theatre is not without relevance—because silence is the precursor to understanding. Only then can the "mind" see.

## ENDNOTES

1. All references to the three plays – *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, *The Homecoming* – are taken

from the Grove Press edition of Harold Pinter's *Complete Works* [Collection copyright © 1976, H. Pinter Ltd.] *The Birthday Party* (Complete Works: One: pages: 17-98); *The Caretaker* (Complete Works: Two: pages 13-88); *The Homecoming* (Complete Works: Three: pages 19-98) *Complete Works of Harold Pinter* (Four Volumes). References given as (e.g.): *The Birthday Party* Act III, Stage Direction (Complete Works: One (97)

2. Michael Billington's biography of Pinter covers his life as a young actor in Chapter Two: 'In Ireland': 37-43; and in Chapter Three: 'Baron Hardup': 45-65 (Billington, *Harold Pinter*: 1997)
3. Pinter had played in Rattigan's *Separate Tables* (1954) in repertory in 1957. Pinter admired Rattigan as a very professional theatre writer, and also for an unsuspected reason: "I never found him to be a safe playwright at all. I always found him to be very adventurous." (Wansell, *Terence Rattigan*: 1995 (405/406)
4. Pinter complained about "the gales of laughter about the unhappy plight of the old tramp" (referring to Davies). He called it "a cheerful patronage of the characters". For Pinter, *The Caretaker* "was funny up to a point. Beyond that point it ceases to be funny, and it was because of that point that I wrote it." *The Sunday Times*, London, 14 August, 1960 (Esslin, *Pinter*: 1982: 55)
5. Noel Coward wrote in *The Sunday Times*, London (15 January, 1961) that "[*The Caretaker*] has no apparent plot, much of it is repetitious and obscure [...] but is written with an original and unmistakable sense of theatre [...]" (Esslin, *Pinter*: 1982 (27)
6. The program brochure of the performance of *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter* at the Royal Court Theatre on 8 March 1960 (Esslin, 1982 (44)
7. "The explicit form which is so often taken in twentieth century drama is ... cheating". Pinter speaking in an interview with John Sherwood on BBC European Service, 3 March 1960 (Batty, *About Pinter*: 2005 (25)
8. "Introduction: Writing for the Theatre" (Complete Works: One (13/14)
9. First performance of *The Birthday Party* (Complete Works: One (18)
10. *The Birthday Party* Act III, text and stage direction (Complete Works: One (97)

11. Kafka, Franz, *The Trial* (English trans. Mike Mitchell) Oxford World Classics: 2009
12. Pinter's attitude to Goldberg and McCann is complex. Partly it had to do with Pinter's aversion to orthodox religion. As Billington comments: "In one sense, Goldberg and McCann decisively represent the two great autocratic religions" (79). But what seems of greater importance is what the two men represented as outsider-figures for the audience, and Pinter's own experiences of being Jewish in England cannot be forgotten. Pinter's comment on Goldberg, that he is "both villain and victim", seems to confirm this. (81). (Billington, 1997 (79/81))
13. Interview with Sherwood on BBC European Service, 3 March 1960 (Batty, 2005 (32))
14. Extract from Harold Hobson's review in *The Sunday Times* on 25 May, 1958 (Esslin: 1982 (23))
15. Extract from review in *Manchester Guardian* on 19 May, 1958 (Esslin: 1982 (21))
16. Pinter's response to a letter about *The Birthday Party*, *Daily Mail*, 28 November, 1967 (Esslin: 1982 (41/42))
17. Kenneth Tynan in *The Observer* 5 June, 1960 (Esslin: 1982 (26))
18. "Introduction: Writing for the Theatre" (Complete Works: One (15))
19. Aston takes issue with this typical medical word "hallucinations". He explains that he "could see things ...very clearly...everything... was so clear [...]" (Complete Works: Two (63/64))
20. John Arden in July (1960) edition of *New Theatre Magazine* (Billington: 1997 (128))
21. *The Hothouse* had been written before *The Caretaker* (Billingham: 1997 (128)) but was not to be performed until 27 March, 1982. (Esslin: 1982 (35))
22. Penelope Gilliatt writing in 1964, source not cited (Billington: 1997 (125))
23. "Introduction: Writing for the Theatre" (Complete Works: One (14))
24. Pinter to the actor Kenneth Cranham (Billington: 1997 (124))
25. *The Caretaker* Act II (Complete Works: Two (45))
26. "Blacks" are referred to continually in Act I; "Poles, Greeks, Blacks" are mentioned with disgust as "aliens" very early in the play (17). The anxiety about getting his "papers" in "Sidcup" just outside London is heard later in Act I (29). (Complete Works: Two (17/29))
27. Aston's long speech that goes to the curtain of Act II. (Complete Works: Two (63-66))
28. Final speech and stage direction of Act III before the curtain falls. (Complete Works: Two (87))
29. *The Daily Herald* recorded "when the lights went up, the whole audience rose to applaud the author who sat beaming in the circle" (Billington: 1997 (127)). The first performance was given at the Arts Theatre Club on 27 April 1960. (Esslin: 1982 (25))
30. Harold Pinter "Oh, Superman": *Various Voices, Poetry, Politics 1948-1998*: 1998 (182) qtd. Mireia Aragay, "Pinter, politics, and postmodernism (2)" (Cambridge Companion to *Harold Pinter*: 2013 (283-294: 283))
31. Interview in *Saturday Review* (8 April 1967), (Batty: 2005 (120))
32. T.S. Eliot, *The Family Reunion* (1939), Faber and Faber paperback edition: 1963
33. Berne, Eric, *Games People Play* Ballantine Books: New York 1964
34. *The Homecoming* Act I (Complete Works: Three (50))
35. In an interview with the American critic Henry Hewes in 1967, Pinter speaks of Ruth's free will in her dealings with the family: "She can do what she wants, and it is not at all certain she will go off to Greek Street [once a notorious street in Soho in London's West End]. But even if she did, she would not be a harlot in her own mind." (Billington: 1997 (169))
36. First reactions to *The Homecoming* in London and in New York (Esslin: 1982 (141))
37. *The Homecoming* Act II Stage direction (Complete Works: Three (74)). In the 1978 production of *The Homecoming* at The Garrick Theatre, London, Monk's version of "Round Midnight" with the baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan was played. (I was in one of the audiences, so I will serve as the witness, the auditor and the jazz fan.) This is not dance music by any definition, but it sets a distinct mood that surprises and awakens the audience to the next level of the play. (*Mulligan meets Monk Riverside, 1957*: re-released as a CD in 1987)
38. *The Homecoming* Act II (Complete Works: Three

(69)

39. Hughes, Robert, *The Shock of the New*, republished by Thames and Hudson: 1991
40. Wilde, Oscar, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays*, Introduction by Peter Raby, Oxford World Classics: 1998
41. Shaw, Bernard, *Major Barbara* (1905), Introduction by Margery Morgan, Penguin Classics edition: 2000
42. Interview with Mark Batty (Batty: 2005 (84))
43. Peter Hall, the director, talking about the rehearsal of a character in a Pinter play: “[...] unless the actor understands what game he is playing, what his actual underlying motivations are, the ambiguity of the text will say nothing.” (Batty: 2005 (161))
44. According to William Scott Wilson (the translator of Zeami’s *Fushikaden*) Zeami wrote the *Shikado* treatise—from which this quotation comes—for actors and audience alike, as the audience “must watch with the same understanding” as the actors. (Zeami, *The Spirit of Noh* trans. William Scott Wilson, Shambhala, Boston, Mass.: 2013 (6))

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