

A Cultural materialistic approach to Harold Pinter's *Mountain Language*

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts a Raymond William analysis of cultural materialism and symbol of power in Pinter's Mountain Language (1988). In Pinter's play Mountain Language, the symbol of power forms the main theme and language plays a vital role in bringing out the theme throughout the play. The mountain people are suppressed by the military decree. This suppression is effectively modeled with the use of language by the suppressor and the suppressed. Many critics have commented that Mountain Language is about a mountaineer who has no freedom of speech in the military decree. This article throws light on the ins and outs of the play from a cultural materialistic point of view and discusses the use of language as the symbol of power.

Keywords: cultural materialism; language; military decree; symbol of power; suppressor; suppression.

INTRODUCTION:

Raymond Henry Williams coined the term Cultural materialism. He was welsh academic, novelist and critic. He was an influential figure within the new left and in wider culture. His writings on publics, culture, the mass media and literature are a significant contribution to the Marxist critique of cultural and arts. (Williams, 1977) “‘empirical’ work quite systematically transgressed the boundaries between elite and popular cultures. He was an interested in television and the press as a canonical literature and drama. Hence, his insistence that concepts both ‘literature’ and ‘criticism’ were forms of a class specialization and control of a general social practice, and of a class limitation of the question” (Williams, 1977). (Harris, 1927) pointed out that the cultural materialism is the strategy has found to be most effective in his effort to understand the causes of differences and similarities among societies and cultures. It is based on the simple premise that human social life is a response to the practical problems of earthly existence. Alan Sinfield, Cathering Belsey and Jonathan Dollimore are showing in their works the theory of Cultural Materialism. Their approach has been distinguished from the somewhat similar school of New Historicism in that they hold a less pessimistic view of the prospects of cultural dissidence and resistance to established powers. In view of the fact that literature performs an energetic role among the thought yet consolidation about power, a literary textual content does not in basic terms reveal the culture in which it is produced, however additionally actively contributes in conformity with the constitution of that culture. Cultural materialism tries according to convey in conformity with light how ideology then as a result existing social order tries in conformity with preserve itself through literature without losing its grip. The Cultural materialist has some kind of idealistic motives, like as pure, unselfish devotion to humankind, rightly or wrongly, a large segment of world opinion. The Anthropological thinkers Marx has given right responsible for all the people. Likewise, Pinter has demonstrated in *Mountain Language* (Pinter, 1988), materialist as an elite people. They were ruling like a cruel and dominated to other. Pinter overtly stated that political theatre define the task of government in similar terms. The logic is clear and, in its own way, admirably

efficient: Mountain Language, Pinter expresses how attractive such a concept of governmental power is to well-established military decree, and he suggests that he compare this vision of the state against the ones we live in. Pinter's visualized the concept of cultural materialism in his perspective how the mountain people are affected by Military decree. The decree is suppressed by mountaineer, because of lack of communication and does not know about the British language. In William's perspectives the Cultural materialist is against this kind of expression. The materialist is well known about human behavior and their activities but sometimes lack of understand with the people. The scientific account of human behavior for example, humanist claims that there is no determinism in human affairs and it opposes the currently popular attribution of the depression of industrial society to too much rather than too little science. Pinter has introduced the Theatre of Absurd and the "angry young men" plays of working-class social realism to bring English theatre into a new era. Once is the enfant terrible of the British Stage. Pinter is great man on the world stage of Absurd Theatre. His major themes of his play interpersonal power struggles, failed attempts at communication, psychological cruelty, antagonistic relationships and the nature of memory. His great work of *The Birthday Party* (Pinter, 1957) is called a great masterpiece as well as a great masterpiece of meaningless significance. In his some of the plays called as political plays such as *One for the Road* (Pinter, 1984), *The New World Order* (Pinter, 1991), *Party Time* (Pinter, 1991) and *Ashes to Ashes* (Pinter, 1996) are concerned with government abuse and for the most part torture.

Pinter's later political plays are *Mountain Language* and *Ashes to Ashes* comes close to his earlier work in terms of artistic depth and cultural issues. Pinter's Mountain Language who has brought two group of culture. One is deeply suppressed from the mountaineer and other is Suppressor. It is most overtly political play was inspired by his pity for Turkey's Kurdish population. The story concerns Kurdish women, visiting their husband in prison, who are forbidden to speak their native mountain language during these visits. Obviously, Pinter's play is not an abstract lesson in political philosophy: the play dramatizes overthrow in practice, not in theory. The ultimate important of mountain language derives from the action it depicts, an action culminating in the final, frozen silence of the Elderly woman as she watches her trembling son. Faced with this manipulate system, with a government that regards rules as inconsequential, the Elderly woman's ultimate non-responsive does not necessarily indicate surrender. Her final silence is ambiguous. The Elderly woman may be choosing not to speak since to speak in her own language would be to obey and surrender to the government imprisoning her.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

(Williams, 1977), perception of the dominant culture is never the only player in the cultural field, although it is the most powerful, there are always residual and emergent strains within a culture that offer alternatives to hegemony. In other words, the dominant culture is always under pressure from alternative views and beliefs. Is this true in the global world? Yes, likewise whom are the people dominating to other; they were losing all these ruling system one day. The people are not given response to them. It was happened in the global world. Now-a-days everyone has followed the government rules. Sometimes, it is changed occasionally. The materialist exploited some strategy and given right responsibility for all. Every part or group of people is called as a materialist. In Pinter used two group of materialist, one is from mountaineer and other is military decree. (Howard, 1992) has observed that Jonathan Dollimore's view of Elizabethan drama has offering 'a recognition of the discontinuous nature of human identity and its social construction' suggests an affinity between 'this picture of the Renaissance and certain contemporary understandings of our own historical moment as the post-humanist epoch in which essentialist notions of selfhood are no longer viable'. (Howard, 1992) argues, finds in the early modern period 'a self-consciousness about the tenuous solidity of human identity' which encourages 'playfulness with signifying systems' that cannot be entirely fixed, marshaled or contained.

The dominant cultural materialist is always under pressure, striving to substantiate their claim to superior explanatory power in situations where diverse features are resistant. William's (1977) argument that culture has always to be produced: 'social orders and cultural orders must be seen as being actively made: actively and continuously, or they may quite quickly break down' (William 1997:201). (Howard, 1992) argues that the image of culture is the past resonates powerfully with 'some of the dominant elements of postmodern culture'. From this point of view, cultural materialism re-enacts new historicism's tendency to 'see an image of the seeing self' in its objects and representations. (Young, 1988) suggests that this structure of reflection is crucial to cultural materialism since it enables its proponents to argue the contemporary relevance of their historical findings. Here, Pinter stated that all the concepts in his absurd dramatic works. The Mountain Language explores the historical and materialistic consequences of being powerless to use one's own language. Pinter demonstrates the various emotional responses to aggressive and unexplained environment. His unique use of language or lack of it reinforces the plays themselves. In Mountain Language most of the dialogue among the guards and the

woman and the prisoners appear to make little sense, reflecting the plays focusing on communication breakdown. Communication is forbidden, and language has become the tool of the oppressor, as (Gussow, 1994) has proved that Pinter's play is about suppression of language and the loss of freedom of expression feel, therefore, it is as relevant in England as it is in Turkey, it also reflects what's happening in England today, the suppression of ideas, speech and thought.

CULTURAL ISSUES IN THE PLAY:

Mountain Language is a play about linguistic suppression. Though Pinter wrote this play keeping in mind the specific suppression of Kurdish language in Turkey, it is a more universal play than that. There are two things focused on the play. One is that they really do believe that the Kurdish people are a wonderful people. Their dignity and their courage and their will and their refusal to submit to terror are remarkable. They were a body of people who have their own extremely distinguished culture and traditions and the people believe they will prevail. They have to, but they must be given our total support. Located in an unspecified prison of a capital, where speaking the *mountain language* is forbidden, this twenty minute play shows two kinds of resistance to a barbaric politicization of language through the two female central characters. The Elderly woman who comes to visit her convicted son and keeps getting abused for using *mountain language* inside decree not to speak her own language when at a later date the guard says that there is a change in the rules whereby she is now allowed to speak her own language. Here, the silence of the Elderly woman becomes an ethic of struggle to the ironic notion of linguistic freedom, which can only come from within the political power structure. On the other hand, we have a Young woman, Sara Johnson, coming to visit her imprisoned husband and being greeted with the four-letter word

“Who’s that fucking woman? What’s that fucking woman doing here?

Who let that fucking woman through that fucking door?” (Pinter 1988).

In return, Sara decides to literalize this abusive political signifier as she asks if she can ‘fuck’ a man called Joseph Dokes, who, according to the Sergeant, will be able to give her necessary information about the place and help him find her husband. Therefore, while the mother opts out of the register of language, Sara Johnson subverts its abusive power by de-idiomatizing the signifier ‘fuck’. Here, Pinter brings two cultureless one is from mountaineer and other is from the urban society. Both are well-wisher in their mother tongue. But in the military decree allow to speak British language. In this case the Young woman has helped the Elderly woman. The Elderly woman does not know about the British Culture and the rules and who has not communicated with other people. Pinter has shown the symbol of language and power through the elite people. It is to be analyzed in some criteria.

LANGUAGE AS A SYMBOL OF POWER:

Pinter's language differs by various other dramatists. So as to realize what can be fresh inside his by using language one has to know the principle characteristics associated with it is. He exploited the particular language associated with non-communication vulnerable of the penalties of the hostile and spiritual world. Moreover, he draws on language as a method associated with token associated with electrical power so that as some sort of spoken application associated with violence. As well, he makes use of language in a fashion that the particular personas episode each other inside words and phrases or else bodily. Still, the power of the expressive episode can be more than the particular depth of the term physical attack. (Esslin, 1963) portrays that the Pinter's language is doing something that in some way new: A true understanding of Pinter's language must, I believe, be based on deeper, more fundamental considerations: it must start from an examination of the function of language in stage dialogue generally, and indeed from considerations of the use of language in ordinary human intercourse itself. How power of language is used in Pinter's plays, he has frightened somebody and how are overpowering another: It is an act of wicked and cruel suppression consistent with the practice of a totalitarian regime. (Prentice, 2000) described that “nobody will dissent from central purpose, which is to show what an unspeakable horror it is when one human being has unrestrained power over another” (Prentice, 2000, p. 286). The symbol of power has represented by the society of suppresser. The suppresser is dominated by the suppressive. They were not allowed to speak mountain language inside the military decree. The forceful activities in this play are a result of going against nature and oppressive society represented by the statesmen. The Elderly woman entered the prison to see her son on behalf of she has to entered main gate instead of that she has entered other gate through the guidance of guards. When the dogs bitten the Elderly woman for this reason who has to open her mouth to communicate with her mother tongue. But inside the military decree is not

allowed to speak any other language. The Guard took more advantage to use their power of language against the mountaineer. But later on the guard's aware of that used to communicate other language inside the decree. Looks upon that the decree always shows their authority to make their symbol of power. The Young woman for example, she might be answer the questions, because of the Elderly woman does not know the language that's why the Young woman makes attempts to resist the authority of the officials through her questions and her silences. The Young woman is helped after the dog's bite, using her hand and cleaned the blood. The Elderly woman has naturally affected by decree. She could not identify the words. She is watching, how the sergeant delivered the language from his mouth. She insists on something that should be done to help the Elderly woman after the guard's dog bites her hand. She insists on that because it is her right to see her husband. Yet, at the end of the play her spirit has effectively been broken by the totalitarian system.

MOUNTAIN LANGUAGE: FORM A CULTURAL MATERIALISTIC PERSPECTIVES:

The cultural materialist approach is read the literary text in such a way as to enable us to 'recover' its histories; that is, the context of exploitation from which it emerged. Mountain Language according to the conflicts and contradictions in the Second World War political and ideological discourse and explores and argument with the military decree. Pinter's plays are connected to, and indeed participate in, argument of freedom of mountaineer. The cultural materialist identifies his works of specific, political and cultural frameworks, and to argue that the ideological struggle of power and identify their problem. In accordance with (Wortham, 1999) approach in Cultural materialism has been situated within a British tradition of criticism characterized by an outlying greater compass reading toward the present and toward political concerns; changing the strident undertaking of Leavisite criticism for overt political commitment. Yet, within the context of this commitment, does cultural materialism make its interventions in a thoroughly self-aware analytical manner, fully exposing the shifts and repetitions that occur between criticism and its objects? Every dramatist is used some kind of strategy followed in his work. Pinter's also portrayed in his play the materialistic point of view, the requirement of materialistic people are from mountain but military decree has not given right response to them, because of mountaineer does not know about the language.

Pinter has revealed the materialist perspectives in his play the Mountain Language is set in a prison on the day, when Elderly woman from mountains have been granted permission to visit their imprisoned relations, who have obviously resisted the state authority. They have been potential objectives of authority's gaze as part of the system, a way of looking that could operate as a general principle of supervision. As a part of the disciplinary system an officer announces that they are not allowed to speak in their language to their men, because there is a military decree that their language is illicit and forbidden, and their verbal communication no longer exists. The verbal communication of the capital is forced on mountain people to persuade homogenization or resemblance to help the state to consolidate its authority. The materialistic repressive methods of imprisonment and torture are joined with the ideological coercive methods of one state language formula and elimination of other languages to maintain the other under subjugation.

The mountaineer has taken more authority to action by military decree. The realistic power projection capability complements their overseas presence in acting as a limit to possible adversaries. In this materialistic world the human has been captured with other person things. It was happened in the human beings life. But in the 20th century no one allow to speak their language in particular place. It is not restricted to the human beings. Pinter takes some different kind of settings used in this play. The military has taken more responsibility to secure the country and who has not given freedom for the people. They were shown the effective power projection abilities also provide greater flexibility in employing military. The officer said that here is not allow speaking your language. He does not know about recent rules and regulations. The guard has checked and clearly point out here, the decree has changed the activities. They were allowed to speak any other language inside of the decree. As we find, though military is their strategy of control, ironically they often way out to the approach of variation, difference from the powerless to maintain their hierarchical superiority, but this difference is to be acceptable within homogeneous cultural political order-that of one central authority and one cultural system. When the Young woman, in the beginning, draws the attention of the Sergeant to the Elderly woman being bitten by a dog officer wants to know the name of the dog:

"Every dog has a name!

Before they bite, they state their name. It's a formal procedure" (Pinter 1988:17).

This emphasizes the absurdity of officiousness that tries to apply official, technical procedure to examine a dog's behavior and brings out the contradictions in their power structure. Pinter is connected man with dog it also ridicules the ordinary man, the underdog, reduces him to a state beast or sub-human to maintain his

superiority and difference, and project his 'humanistic materialism'. Young woman's intellectual stance of asserting her right is savagely degraded by sergeant's calling her "a fucking intellectual" (Pinter 1988:25).

The Sergeant is called the young woman "Who's that fucking woman" (Pinter, 2006) the sergeant says that the Young woman is a fuck. As a result of this sexual objectification, the sergeant successfully removes her identity and therefore, does not need to treat her in any way. The sergeant is raised many question to the Elderly woman but young woman is answered all the questions. The prisoner sits next to his mother, trembling with blood on his face; she has bitten by dog. Pinter demonstrated the last scene is regarded as a scene of broken communication; it is unbreakable, when the Elderly woman does not respond to her son, either due to her fear of being beaten or to her son's shocking physical condition. The staff of the prison and those who have the authority trying to justify their aggressive treatment by saying they have their own responsibilities and they are forced to use the aggressive action against the prisoners. Such an action has no logic or rational cause.

In the third scene there is a daydream scene performed by the voices of a hooded man and woman, who are at a distance from each other, depicting their love making, which tears apart the imposed discipline and security. When the prisoner acts as mediator on behalf of his mother, "She is old. She doesn't understand" (1988:31) the prison guard feels secure by posting him as the other. But when the prisoner asserts and repeats "I've got a wife and three kids" (31) the guard responds with violent reprisal to this shared identity, for he feels his differentness that can establish his identity and superiority is at stake. When the man in power sees a reflected version of himself in the eyes of the other, he feels insecure. By returning his gaze the victim threatens the victimizer's position of authority. This sense of insecurity also haunts the victimizer in *One for the Road* (1984), who, at one point, desperately begs of the victim for the recognition of his authority, for the latter by defying him threatens to erase the difference between them. The victimizer finds himself as the other to Power, whose mouthpiece he is. In *Mountain* a power beyond is articulated by the state authority represented by officer, sergeant and guard, who are also positioned in a hierarchical order of authority and subordination to each other.

That the woman has managed to get in hooded man the security cordon, attributed to the failure of the computer system and connects herself to her man shows the weakness of the structure of the authority, and also reveals that the military of vitality cannot be contained by a system. But at the end the hooded man collapses, when the woman is being questioned again bringing them within surveillance system, the panoptic gaze. Pinter bring into play repetition to show how a character slowly learns to accept a fact, which at first he had complexity in taking it. Pinter affords work for the device of repetition to fulfill a definite function in the action. Therefore, the repetition of the statement is more important than the statement itself; (Dukore, 1988) represented Pinter's materialistic language conveys something other than the meaning of its words that Pinter shows that language can be used to convey what it cannot be said that it is not the words that, but the sub-text, that Pinter has transcended the boundaries of language.

Pinter has been fascinated by the elusive nature of reality. The verbal communication of course, reflects the mountaineer most effectively. He is different from the people who fail to employ language successfully and make use of this blessing given to human beings powerfully on stage challenging the reader and the spectator too. *Mountain Language* is perhaps the most concise, powerful and violent example of what materialist language is, and can do how used the language differentiates people, and can make them mutually unintelligible. It has a very direct effect in its dramatization of the dilemma of people whose mother tongue is being suppressed. The real sight of the conflict is not body only, but the voice. Pinter's dramatic dialogue is denied the everyday life activity which has been brought into high level. The language of the four scenes in *Mountain Language* operates principally on a sub-textual level; meaning lies not in the words themselves, which are often non-sensual. In the opening conversation of the first scene, Pinter creates verbal plays i.e. absurd situation as when he depicts the horror of any to totalitarian state, a point Pinter illustrates by refusing to name the country, the prison or any of the officials. Pinter adds elements of absurdity to heighten, for his audience, the nightmare of totalitarian barbarism. The situation in which the women find themselves while visiting their relatives in the prison is an absurd situation. An example of this is what happens from the opening sentence in the play:

Sergeant: Name!

Young Woman: We've given our names.

Sergeant: Name!

Young Woman: We've given our names.

Sergeant: Name? (Pinter 1988:251).

Mountain concludes with the guard informing the prisoner that in accordance with the new law he will now be allowed to converse with his mother in their language. Rather than as a sign of defeat this concession only

confirms the absolute authority of the state, which establishes itself as the source of sanctioning as well as proscribing authority. But the mother's silence at the end is shrouded in ambiguity. She is perhaps terrified to a point when speech becomes impossibility. On the other hand her silence can be an act of resistance, refusal to speak a language that now granted official recognition, no longer belongs to the mountain people. This ambiguity becomes more ambiguous as the prisoner's collapse at the end is seen together with the sergeant's comment:

Look at this.

You go out of your way to give them a helping hand and they fuck it up (Pinter 1988:47).

It suggests the futility of resistance when directed against the field of power that articulates itself through the ideological coercion of language and more direct naked coercion. A stage comes when linguistic and extra-linguistic powers overlap and become indistinguishable from each other. Officer's declaration of outlawing the mountain language is an example of the language of violence. Mountain Language, thus, becomes a site for the contest and conflict between hegemony and resistance both using homogenization and difference as strategies against each other.

CONCLUSION:

Mountain Language is a later play of Pinter that deals with cultural materialistic approach among mountain people. Many critics have discussed the theme, absurdity, technique, characterization, and language of the play, it lends itself to a Raymond Williams analysis of cultural materialism and symbol of power. The symbol of power meant that superior Military degree, torture the unknown language interpreter of Elderly women. In spite of the fact that Pinter has indicated at the savagery against the Jewish race by the oppressor, the nonsensical and absurd demonstration of the oppressor is really unfavorable to the whole mankind. Hence, Pinter calls for a careful scrutiny of all forms of suppressed culture and symbol of power in Mountain Language.

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