"ARE YOU SPEAKING?": A SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS OF
PINTER'S A KIND OF ALASKA AND NO MAN'S LAND

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Reading List

Beckett, Samuel. Endgame.

Brecht, Bertolt. The Messingkauf Dialogues.

Ionesco, Eugene. The Bald Soprano.

_____. The Lesson.

Osborne, John. Look Back in Anger.

Shakespeare, William. Coriolanus.

_____. Henry V.

A Kind of Alaska and No Man's Land, two of Harold Pinter's recent plays, demonstrate the range between naturalistic and stylized elements in his work.[1] In A Kind of Alaska, the situation and characters cohere in a believable if unusual representation of reality. No Man's Land, however, resists this treatment as a naturalistic set of circumstances. Although the dialogue of both plays is composed of ordinary, spoken language, its effects resist the label of realism; one critic has called Pinter a "hyperrealist" and "a virtuoso of phonomimesis."[2] (By "ordinary language" I mean language that people use in conversational discourse as opposed to specialized types of language.) Through an analysis of these two plays, this essay will attempt to uncover some of the ways in which Pinter's drama employs ordinary speech to yield extraordinary effects.

Like most other Pinter critics, Austin Quigley identifies this puzzling effect of Pinter's language as a central issue in his work.[3] Quigley identifies a general trend in Pinter criticism of treating this quality as something mysterious and almost magical: "These [terms describing Pinter's language] are variously described as language that transcends the expressible, language that abandons the expressible, language that conveys things in spite of what it expresses."[4] Such views suggest that Pinter's language has the unique property of communicating one thing while meaning another.

The problem with this idea, Quigley suggests, is that it wrongly assumes that there is a normal, core counterpart to the supposedly extraordinary way in which Pinter uses language.[5] "Normal" here refers to a supposed type of ordinary language that occupies a place of logical priority over other types of ordinary language. Quigley, basing his argument on Wittgenstein's later work, denies the notion that language has core uses and peripheral uses.[6] His account of what makes Pinter's language interesting is that it is not

"primarily referential"; rather, "The language of a Pinter play functions primarily as a means of dictating and reinforcing relationships."[7] In short, there is nothing mysterious or transcendent about Pinter's use of ordinary language.

Closely linked to this quality of Pinter's language is the issue of exposition. For most dramatists, exposition is a simple matter of conveying undisputed facts about the characters and situation, usually at an early point in the play. In Pinter's plays, on the other hand, exposition is never taken for granted; primary importance is often given to veiling, unveiling, and disputing facts about the characters. The search for identity through one's past motivates the action in both A Kind of Alaska and No Man's Land. Consequently, the main type of action in both plays is speaking. Against charges that this type of dramatic strategy becomes a gimmick, Quigley writes,

> In depicting the characters' efforts to complete or
> renegotiate the consensus in these areas, the plays
> chart the progressive development of the character
> relationships, not simply the progressive revelation
> of them.[8]

Again, the use of language as a tool of negotiation as well as an index of relationships helps to yield this effect. But just how this function of language leads to extraordinary or dislocating effects is not clear from Quigley's analysis. In contrast to his work, then, this essay will use the view that speech is a form of contextual action (speech acts) as a tool for analyzing Pinter's language. This approach will offer a more rigorous and satisfying account of just what traditional critics find mystifying about Pinter's language.

My purpose, however, lies not only in a desire to contribute insight to

the critical canon on Pinter. I also wish to offer some insight into the literary application of speech act theory. Among the writers I will discuss are Austin, Searle, Altieri, Pratt, Derrida, and Fish. This application leads to my belief that drama is the literary genre to which speech act theory is most appropriate and applicable (in much the same way as the poem serves as the New Critical model). I will begin with a brief introduction to speech act theory, move on to my analysis of the plays, make general inferences about the plays and the theory, and then reach for conclusions.

Speech act theory originated with J.L. Austin's How To Do Things With Words.[9] He begins by classifying "performatives," statements for which "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action."[10] He opposes performatives to "constatives," which merely assert. For example, he writes, "To name the ship is to say (in the appropriate circumstances) the words 'I name, &c'."[11] Contained within each performative, he claims, are three distinct actions: the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts:

> We perform a locutionary act, which is roughly equivalent
> to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and
> reference...Second, we said that we also perform
> illocutionary acts such as informing, ordering, warning,
> undertaking, &c., i.e. utterances which have a certain
> (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform
> perlocutionary acts: what we bring about or achieve
> by saying something...[12]

According to Austin, performative utterances are neither true nor false; rather, they are successful or infelicitous.[13] Either they work as completed actions or they don't. Central to the analysis of speech acts is the idea of context:

> Once we realize that what we have to study is not the
> sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech
> situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility
> of not seeing that stating is performing an act.[14]

The implication of this point, in addition to emphasis on context, is that Austin is extending his category of performative (i.e., actions like naming a boat) to include all utterances. Austin himself later denies this, still clinging to an admittedly tenuous distinction between performatives and constatives (mere statements of fact).[15]

John Searle, Austin's closest student and follower, makes some important contributions to this view of language in his Speech Acts.[16] First, he denies the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary actions (SA, p. 23 n.). Second, he denies Austin's belief that certain types of speech acts are logically connected to certain words. He calls this the speech act fallacy, and it takes this form: "'The word W is used to perform speech act A'" (SA, p. 137). He finds an example of this fallacy in Austin's analysis: "'The word 'know' is used to give guarantees.'"[17] The point is not that "know" doesn't give guarantees, but that it doesn't always serve that purpose and that guarantees can be made without it (SA, p. 137-138).

Searle incorporates Austin's insights into a more systematic and rigorous philosophy of language. According to him, a given utterance can contain an utterance act, a propositional act, an illocutionary act, and a perlocutionary act (SA, p 24-25). He further subdivides the category of illocutionary act into the following categories: requesting, asserting, questioning, thanking, advising, warning, greeting, and congratulating (SA, p 66-67)."[18] In my analysis of the plays, I will use primarily Searle's version of speech act theory. Later I will modify and expand Searle's analysis in order to provide a more complete picture of literary speech acts in drama.

Illocutionary speech acts, primarily of asserting and questioning, are

the central events in <u>A Kind of Alaska</u>, the longest play from the collection <u>Other Places</u>. The action begins when Deborah wakes up from almost thirty years of a waking coma caused by sleeping sickness. For Deborah, her sister Pauline, and Hornby (her doctor, recently married to Pauline), speech is critical to these first few moments of consciousness. When Deborah first speaks, Hornby asks, "Can you hear me?" and she answers, "Are you speaking?" (<u>AKA</u>, p 5-6). The illocutionary force of these questions is clear (probing, information-seeking), but they are meant to test for a response rather than to find a yes or no answer. Deborah's reply then, is both an affirmative answer to Hornby's question and a request for a similar response (<u>SA</u>, 38). She refers to Hornby ("you") apparently in order to determine whether he is really there. Her difficulty results from her uncertainty about how to make a fully appropriate response to Hornby's question, and whether what she perceives is actually happening.

The main interest of the play lies in careful speaking and listening; Deborah's goal is to discern and integrate the facts of her situation, and Pauline and Hornby try to assist her in this process. There is a great deal at stake, then, in everything the characters say. Deborah often ignores or refuses to believe what Hornby and Pauline tell her; they, on the other hand, avoid saying anything that they think may shock her.

For much of the play the characters talk past each other. Despite his denials, Deborah suspects Hornby of raping her: "Have you had your way with me?" (<u>AKA</u>, p. 12). She pretends to disbelieve Hornby's denial and goes on to assert that he has done so. The uncetainty of her next comment, though, suggests that the force of her statement was information-seeking, as if it were a question: "I sound childish. Out of...tune" (<u>AKA</u>, p. 12).[19] This is a case in which exposition becomes central to the drama: the audience's

uncertainty about whether she has been raped parallels Deborah's; it only

becomes clear that he has not raped her after weighing her apparent

unreliability in comparison with Hornby in the context of the whole play.

She also denies that Pauline is her sister and that she herself is a

grown woman. Her voice varies between that of a child, an adolescent, and a

confused adult. Sometimes she catalogues what she remembers: "I've not seen

Daddy today. He's funny. He makes me laugh. He runs with me. We play with

balloons" (AKA, p. 8). At the end she tries to report what she's been told

with dismay:

> You say I have been asleep. You say I am now awake. You
> say I have not awoken from the dead. You say I was not
> dreaming then and am not dreaming now. You say I have
> always been alive and am alive now. You say I am a woman.
> (AKA, p. 40)

This speech is an assertion about the content of Hornby's assertions; taken

literally, it appears to be a successful assimilation of what Deborah has been

told. But her emphatic repetition of "you say" suggests an element of

disbelief. The speech that follows reveals a failure to integrate all of what

she has been told; the voice of the woman contains the voice of the girl:

> She doesn't go to her ballet classes any more. Mummy and
> Daddy and Estelle are on a world cruise. They've stopped
> off in Bangkok. It'll be my birthday soon. I think I have
> the matter in proportion. (AKA, p. 40)

In A Kind of Alaska, dramatic tension lies in the success or failure of the

characters in communicating with each other. Along with this runs the

question of whether what the characters say is true. Pauline tells Deborah

that her family is on a cruise, but later Hornby tells her that her father is

blind and her mother is dead.

In Speech Acts, Searle outlines the following conditions for an

illocutionary speech act to be meaningful, or successful:

> S utters sentence T and means it (i.e., means literally
>   what he says)=
> S utters T and
> (a) S intends (i-I) the utterance U of T to produce
>   in H the knowledge (recognition, awareness) that the
>   states of affairs specified by (certain of) the rules
>   of T obtain. (Call this effect the illocutionary
>   effect, IE)
> (b) S intends U to produce IE by means of the recognition of
>   i-I.
> (c) S intends that i-I will be recognized in virtue of (by
>   means of) H's knowledge of (certain of) the rules
>   governing (the elements of) T. (SA, pp. 49-50)

This analysis shows that the mere utterance of a single sentence requires the successful satisfaction of complicated conditions. In this play, conditions (a) (c) are most often called into question.

Hornby and Pauline find it difficult to achieve the illocutionary effect in Deborah, because she either can't or doesn't want to accept the rules required by conditions (a) and (c). They may utter sentences successfully, but the fact that Deborah is older than she feels may prevent her from understanding. For a woman whose most recent waking memories are thirty years old, simple acts of communicating are no trivial matter. Because of this bizarre condition, the "rules" of each statement T in the above analysis are called into question. For example, they can't decide whether to lie or tell her the truth:

> Pauline: Shall I tell her lies or the truth?
> Hornby: Both. (AKA, p. 27)

This problem, along with Deborah's inability to understand and manipulate the rules of meaning, makes A Kind of Alaska a play in which exposition occupies a central place in characterizing and dramatizing the relationships of the characters.

Deborah's problem of communication, on the other hand, stems from forgetting the rules of speech, her failure to understand her current

condition, confusing children's and adults' speech patterns, and a dim

understanding of her unconscious experience. Her speech is muddled because

she has a poor grasp of the rules that govern speaking as well the experiences

about which she speaks. Consequently, she uses poetic or non-literal imagery

to describe her experience variously as the sea, the desert, prison, a "vast

series of halls" in which "glass reflects glass" and dancing "in narrow

spaces" (AKA, pp. 13, 14, 17, 25, 39).

Interestingly, the two main physical actions performed by Deborah are

accompanied by long, poetic speeches that refer to her unconscious state.

First, she illustrates her sensation of dancing "in narrow spaces" by getting

up and demonstrating the dance. Second, toward the end of the play, she

experiences what threatens to be a relapse into her former condition:

> She begins to flick her cheek [....] They're closing
> the walls in. Yes [....] During the course of this
> speech her body becomes hunchbacked.
> Let me out. Stop it [....] They're closing my face.
> Chains and padlocks. (AKA, p. 38)

The combination of metaphorical ("the walls") and colloquial (the ambiguous

"They're") elements in her language yield the mixed effect of naturalistic and

literary language that is characteristic of Pinter.

For Deborah, the outlook for successful communication seems paradoxically

more optimistic than for the other two. Her dialogue has the effect of being

intuitively lucid and communicative. To accommodate this to the speech act

model, the rules governing her utterances could be changed to allow for

metaphorical language. That is, we could rewrite the rules for a successful

speech act on non-literal or metaphorical terms; this would be problematic,

since non-literal language relies on complex and inherently ambiguous rule-

governed conventions such as metaphor.

In his essay on metaphor, Searle expresses this point, namely, that in
order for metaphorical utterances to be uttered and understood, there must be
"shared strategies" and "shared principles" between the speaker and listener:

> The question, 'How do metaphors work?' is a bit like
> the question, 'How does one thing remind us of another
> thing?' There is no single answer to this question,
> though similarity plays a major role in answering both[20]

Searle offers a set of principles that account for how metaphors work; they
are summarized in his seventh principle:

> The hearer's task is not to go from 'S is P' to S is R'
> but to go from 'S P-relation S'' to 'S R-relation S''
> and the latter task is formally rather different from
> the former because, for example, our similarity principles
> in the former case will enable him to find a property that
> S and P things have in common, namely, R.[21]

Conventions like metaphor, then, are governed by their own sets of rules.
The appeal they hold for literary works like A Kind of Alaska relates to two
things: first, the metaphors provide Deborah with an avenue for expressing
her unprecedented experiences--they allow her to describe what has never been
described; second, the relational process of interpreting these metaphors is
different from and more complicated than interpreting ordinary referring
expressions. Differences as well as similarities between the terms enrich
this interpretive experience. At the risk of painting in very broad strokes,
I would say that this type of process yields much of what is aesthetically
satisfying in this play as well as in all other literature.

A Kind of Alaska is primarily about the difficulty in meeting the
requirements for a successful speech act of assertion or questioning.
Although the end of the play is optimistic about Deborah's recovery, it is
clear from her words that Pauline's and Hornby's speech acts have often failed
in creating uptake, or the illocutionary effect, in Deborah. The most
compelling moments in the play involve such lapses of communication. For

instance, after Deborah denies Pauline's claim that she is a widow by saying
she is mad, Hornby steps in and again tries to tell her what has happened,
slipping into metaphorical language:

> Your mind has not been damaged. It was merely suspended, it
> took up a temporary habitation...in a kind of Alaska [....]
> Your ventured into quite remote...utterly foreign...
> territories. You kept on the move. And I charted your
> itinerary. (AKA, p. 35)

This passage comes from the longest speech whose purpose it is to inform
Pauline of what has happened. Her response neither confirms nor denies the
uptake of these speech acts of assertion: "I want to go home [....] Is it my
birthday soon?" (AKA, p. 35).

As I mentioned before, this play lies quite securely in the category of
naturalism; the characters and events are credible imitations of ordinary
reality. Yet the play has profoundly non-naturalistic, stylized effects.
Among the most obvious of these is the sense that the non-literal or poetic
language communicates more successfully than the literal language. The
reasons for this are understandable. First, there is no precedent for
Deborah's condition, so there is no vocabulary with which to describe it; thus
Hornby's quite apt phrase that Deborah's mind has been "in a kind of Alaska."
Second, Hornby and Pauline want to avoid shocking Deborah, so they often
resort to euphemisms and lies (e.g., Pauline's claim that the family is on a
"world cruise" [AKA, p. 28]). Pinter's paradoxical success in this play is
that he chooses a naturalistic medium to discuss problems of communication and
the communicative triumph of literary over literal language.

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Although No Man's Land is vastly more stylized and self-consciously
literary than A Kind of Alaska, the two plays share the same basic concerns.

First, both plays are primarily about speech acts; in the latter, speech serves to navigate an extremely delicate situation, while in No Man's Land language becomes a sophisticasted tool of power in the hands of literati (Spooner and Hirst) and a crude weapon for lower-class thugs (Foster and Briggs).

Second, sexual and linguistic elements are linked as metaphors for power in both plays. In A Kind of Alaska, Deborah shifts from an awareness that Hornby is speaking to a suspicion that he has "had your way with me" (AKA, p. 12). Control of speech suggests a position of advantage, and that, in turn, suggests a sexual advantage. Conversely, this accusation puts Hornby in a defensive position and gives her temporary control of the situation. As my analysis shows, the effectiveness of this metaphor (which is made by Pinter rather than the character) derives from the process of interpretation. The audience must infer either that the character has been raped or that her experience of Hornby bears some relation to the experience of rape. Further, the fact that Pauline and Hornby are married suggests the element of the love triangle that is so prominent in Betrayal, Old Times, The Basement, and Tea Party.[22] In No Man's Land, sexual and linguistic finesse become interchangeable in the power struggle between Spooner and the other three.

Third, figures of speech, colloquial sayings, and literary allusions receive special attention in both plays. As speech acts, colloquialisms suggest familiarity and informality; for Deborah they often signify a coy, girlish stance: "Was I bold as brass?", "ginger boy," and "flibbertigibbet." At other times she uses elaborate language that expresses precocity and superiority, over Pauline, for example:

> And she's only...thirteen. I keep telling her I'm not
> prepared to tolerate her risible, her tendentious, her
> eclectic, her ornate, her rococo insinuations and

garbled inventions. (<u>AKA</u>, p. 21)

Spooner makes his mastery of and admiration for ornate language explicit: "A metaphor. Things are looking up" (<u>NML</u>, p. 94). For him and Hirst these uses of language become rhetorical weapons in an oblique struggle for control over each other.

Finally, both plays contain soliloquies in which unconscious states (dreams, sleeping sickness) suggesting a state of permanence are described. In both cases, these states seem indeterminate and evade precise description; it is as if language is inadequate to communicate this type of experience directly. Metaphorical descriptions approximate the experience by relating it to something more familiar. Interestingly, in both plays this experience relates to a state of coldness as well as permanence.[23] Both plays are in a sense <u>about</u> performing speech acts, partly because these permanent states are difficult to describe. This emphasis on permanence also contributes to what distinguishes Pinter's dialogue from the ordinary speech after which it is modelled. This topic, insofar as it is characteristically literary, is indicated by what Charles Altieri calls "illocutionary operators which invoke methods of projection"; that is, it is one of the signals that this discourse is literary.[24] This projection in turn helps signal the <u>literariness</u> of the text on Altieri's institutional and procedural definition of literature.[25]

<u>No</u> <u>Man's</u> <u>Land</u> presents a complicated picture of friendship, cruelty, role reversal, memory, and permanence. Like Davies in <u>The</u> <u>Caretaker</u>, Spooner is the outsider who tries to win the favor of his host and contemporary, Hirst.[26] His only weapon in this struggle is the power of speech, and he successfully dominates the conversation with Hirst in the first half of Act I. When Foster and Briggs enter, however, Spooner immediately loses this advantage. The two

younger men shower verbal abuse on him in a way that recalls the menace of

Pinter's earlier plays (especially Goldberg and McCann in The Birthday

Party).[27] In the second act, Hirst and Spooner exchange a stunning shower of

verbal blows based on their respective versions of past love affairs. Hirst

effects a kind of role reversal with Spooner in Act II (reminiscent of The

Basement and Tea Party) by gaining the verbal upper hand and eventually

reducing him to a poor man pleading for employment. The play concludes after

Hirst and his lackeys clearly shut out Spooner by ignoring his offers of help,

which are actually pathetic pleas.

The play's opening indicates its two dominant forms of action: talking

and drinking. After preparing drinks, finishing them, and going for seconds,

Spooner resumes a conversation they began on the way back from the pub where

they met:

> There are some people who appear to be strong, whose idea of
> what strength consists of is persuasive, but who inhabit
> the idea and not the fact. What they possess is not
> strength but expertise [....] It takes a man of intelligence
> and perception to stick a needle through that posture and
> discern the essential flabbiness of the stance. I am
> such a man. (NML, p. 78)

For Spooner, strength lies in control of language. The distinction Spooner

makes here may be described as one between actions and words, but the fact

that his main actions in the play are speech acts (primarily assertions)

undercuts this distinction. Indeed, the speech from which this is taken is

composed of assertive illocutionary speech acts that are rhetorical in nature

(i.e., they are intended to produce the perlocutionary effect of trust and

good will toward him).

Language becomes a subject of conversation with a witticism made about

Spooner: "A wit once entitled me a betwixt twig peeper. A most clumsy

construction, I thought" (NML, p. 80). This assertion, which is followed by a

second assertion about the manner of the first, has a double effect: it draws

attention to the subject of language style while avoiding the implications of

his "peeping." In response to Hirst's terse "What a wit," he goes on to

maintain, "All we have left is the English language. Can it be salvaged?"

(NML, p. 80). Hirst's reply is that its salvation rests in Spooner, to which

Spooner condescendingly responds, "It's uncommonly kind of you to say so. In

you too, perhaps, although I haven't sufficient evidence to go on, as yet"

(NML, p. 81).

By performing such evaluative, assertive speech acts about Hirst (who is

a poet) and language, Spooner begins to gain an advantage over him. The above

reply also illustrates his frequent use of sarcasm (the multiple references to

"kindness," which Steven Gale suggests allude to A Streetcar Named Desire[28])

that has the effect of being patronizing and belittling. These overstated

uses of "kindness" become a blatantly unkind gesture. As Spooner gains an

advantage, though, he gradually makes his motivations clear (as in the

"boatman" speech) and consequently makes himself vulnerable to the rejection

and cruelty he faces later.

Spooner and Hirst make numerous literary allusions to Eliot, Tennessee

Williams, and Shakespeare which Gale refers to as "substitutes for content."[29]

In other words, he interprets them as sketchy, unfinished ideas on the part of

Pinter, implying that a better play would suppress these allusions and offer

original formulations of "no man's land." This view, however, overlooks the

fact that the characters using the allusions are literati; the allusions are

flat and pedantic only because the characters who use them are as well.

The important sexual motif of the play surfaces as Spooner denies that

his peeping is voyeurism: "I don't peep on sex. That's gone forever" (NML,

p. 81). Sex, for Spooner, is characterized by transience as well as power, and he claims to shun it in favor of the more permanent realm of linguistic art. Explaining that "Experience is a paltry thing," he maintains, "I myself can do any graph of experience you wish [....] I am a poet. I am interested in where I am eternally present and active" (NML, p. 82). This disregard for historical fact provides a clue in the search to understand Spooner's confusing remarks. Many of his speech acts appear to be assertions, but they are often deceitful, rhetorical devices.[30]

In keeping with this quest for permanence, Spooner (despite his denials in the first act) seeks to join Hirst's "No man's land" which "does not move...or change...or grow old" (NML, p. 96). After Spooner tells Hirst how he met a Hungarian who impressed him because "he possessed a measure of serenity the like of which I had never encountered," he continues, "And I met you at the same pub tonight" (NML, p. 87). Everything Spooner says to Hirst is intended to persuade him of his merit and potential value as a personal secretary. He realizes that there is something unchanging about Hirst and embarks on a campaign to control him through parasitism. It is a war waged on a verbal battleground for a metaphysical prize: "I could advance, reserve my defences [...] call up the cavalry" (NML, p. 82). Whether this permanence is worthwhile is questionable, and this uncertainty makes the struggle a balanced one. While Spooner seeks the comfort of Hirst's unchanging environment, Hirst envies Spooner's freedom: "It's a long time since we had a free man in this house" (NML, p. 83).

For Spooner and the other characters, there is little differentiation between past and present, fantasy and fact. His belated self-introduction in the middle of Act I, although told in the present tense, clearly represents a

combination of nostagia and lyrical romance:

> Young poets come to me. They read me their verses [....]
> But with the windows open to the garden, my wife pouring
> long glasses of squash, with ice, on a summer evening,
> young voices occasionally lifted in unaccompanied ballad
> [...] what can ail? I mean who can gainsay us? What
> quarrel can be found with what is, au fond, a gesture
> towards the sustenance and preservation of art, through art
> to virtue? (NML, p. 90)

By recalling the "bucolic life" of the aristocratic literati and making
numerous sexual slanders, Spooner gains influence over Hirst (NML, p. 91).
Spooner's intuitive sensitivity to Hirst's weaknesses, rather than adherence
to historical truth, is the mechanism whereby he exercises this power.

When Spooner's recollection of the gilded past strikes a chord in Hirst,
he immediately seizes this advantage by making a barrage of obscene
insinuations in cricket jargon about his wife ("did she google?" (NML, p.
92)).[31] When Hirst fails to answer, Spooner says,

> I begin to wonder whether truly accurate and therefore
> essentially poetic definition means anything to you
> at all. I begin to wonder whether you truly did love
> her [...] I have seriously questioned these propositions
> and find them threadbare. (NML, p. 93)

The equation of "accurate" and "essentially poetic" speech explains Spooner's
indifference to the historical past and his complete dedication to literary
language. Finally, Hirst throws his glass and expresses his despair:
"Tonight...my friend...you find me in the last lap of a race...I had long
forgotten to run" (NML, p. 94). Spooner continues his cruel manipulation,
again with explicit reference to speech: "A metaphor. Things are looking
up," and later, "you lack the essential quality of manliness, which is to put
your money where your mouth is" (NML, pp. 94-95). Then he makes his sales
pitch: "Let me perhaps be your boatman [....] In other words, never disdain a
helping hand, especially one of such rare quality" (NML, p. 95).[32] Hirst

replies by making the titular speech and crawling out of the room (NML, p. 96).

When Hirst reappears, he pretends not to know Spooner and gains conrol of the conversation with his speeches about the dream of the drowning person and the past, which is symbolized by his photo album (NML, pp. 106-109). His dream narrative resembles Deborah's account of her experiences:

> It was blinding. I remember it. I've forgotten. By all
> that's sacred and holy. The sounds stopped. It was
> freezing. There's a gap in me. I can't fill it [....]
> They're blotting me out. Who is doing it? I'm suffocating
> [....] Someone is doing me to death. (NML, p. 108)

Like Deborah's "chains and padlocks" speech, this speech combines the colloquial, ambiguous "they" with poetic elements, suggesting an ambiguous, anonymous, danger. The shift from past to present (which is typical of this play) indicate Hirst's timeless condition of despair and drinking. His permanent restriction to verbal action contributes to his bad memory and failure to notice his surroundings: "I am sitting here forever [....] I wish you'd damnwell tell me what night it is [....] There's too much solitary shittery" (NML, p. 108).

Hirst's disposition is completely different the next day. As if he had searched through his photo album to remember Spooner's name, he greets him as Charles, an old friend (NML, p. 126). He adopts an aggressive and mock-friendly manner as he recalls the war: "You did say you had a good war, didn't you?" (NML, pp. 127-129). After the two men accuse each other of various sexual aberrations, Spooner angers Hirst by referring to one of his own poems: "It is written in terza rima, a form which, if you will forgive my saying so, you have never been able to master" (NML, p. 135). Hirst's response is to order a drink and express angry disbelief:

> You are clearly a lout. The Charles Wetherby I knew was

a gentleman. I see a figure reduced [....] I do not
understand...and I see it all about me...continually...
how the most sensitive and cultivated of men can so easily
change, almost overnight, into the bully, the cutpurse, the
brigand. In my day nobody changed. (NML, p. 136,
emphasis mine)

But if Spooner is protean, so is Hirst, at least with respect to his

moods and memories. The permanence he refers to here is unlike his own, which

is the bleak "no man's land"; in fact, all indications are that he is one of

these fallen cultivated men; he has left a successful past and become a

failure and a drunk. He tells Spooner to "tender the dead" partly because he

is almost dead himself, like the forgotten tennis balls he describes later:

"They are lost there, given up for dead, centuries old" (NML, p. 139).

Spooner poses a threat to the job security of Foster and Briggs, Hirst's

two henchmen. In contrast to the educated speech of Spooner and Hirst, their

dialect suggests that they are lower-class, and in the Peter Hall production

they were played with Cockney accents.[33] When they first enter, Foster tries

to alienate Spooner by pretending his name is Friend and by repeatedly asking

him what he's drinking (NML, pp. 97-100). Briggs, who is older than Foster,

is less forceful but cruder: "Whereas he's a pintpot attendant in The Bull's

Head. And a pisspot attendant too....I've seen Irishmen chop his balls off"

(NML, pp. 110-111). Despite Hirst's financial and intellectual superiority

over Briggs and Foster, they wield considerable control over him:

> Foster: Listen chummybum. We protect this gentleman against
>   corruption, against men of craft, against men of evil,
>   we could destroy you without a glance, we take care of
>   this gentleman, we do it out of love. (NML, p. 111)

It is possible that Spooner fails to control Hirst because he doesn't use the

cruel, crude speech tactics of Foster and Briggs; ultimately, verbal

sophistication loses to the language of violent action and domination; Foster,

who says, "I don't usually talk. I don't have to," says of Spooner, "Why

don't I kick his head off and have done with it?" (pp. 111-112).

Briggs' feelings toward Foster are strong and mixed. In Act I he says of

him: "Neurotic poof. He prefers idleness. Unspeakable ponce [....] He's

nothing but a vagabond cock" (NML, p. 114). But the Bolsover Street speech

expresses affection and insecurity toward Foster:

> We're old friends, Jack and myself. We met at a street
> corner. I should tell you he'll deny this account [....]
> A car drew up. It was him. He asked me the way to Bolsover
> street. I told him Bolvover street was in the middle of an
> intricate one-way system [....] All he's got to do is to
> reverse into the underground car park, change gear, go
> straight on, and he'll find himself in Bolsover street with
> no trouble at all [....] I told him I knew one or two people
> who'd been wandering up and down Bolsover street for years.
> They'd wasted their bloody youth there [....] I remember
> saying to him: This trip you've got in mind, drop it, it
> could prove fatal [....] I took all this trouble with him
> because he had a nice open face. (NML, p. 120)

This speech epitomizes Pinter's refusal to treat exposition as a mere vehicle

for undisputed background facts. The breathtaking leaps of content, tense,

and personal opinion here illustrate the way in which Pinter combines

naturalistic and stylized elements to yield a speech that implicitly

characterizes the speaker.

The speech takes three turns: first, from an account of how he met

Foster to a lengthy set of directions to a London street (accompanied by a

shift to present tense); second, from the directions to social commentary; and

third, from this general comment to his motivations for helping Foster. Thus,

the naturalistic detail of the street directions veils a self-defining

justification for his fondness for Foster. The speech acts here are

assertions, but Briggs' warning that Foster will deny them suspends the

illocutionary effect in the audience and creates a feeling of doubt that calls

for careful and critical listening. Briggs' defensiveness suggests that he

could be lying, which in turn suggests that he is insecure and ambivalent
about his with Foster.

All the main elements of the play--drinking, Spooner's pleas, Hirst's
reveries, and the henchmen's complaints--intensify and recur as the play draws
to a close.   Like Spooner's repeated use of the statement "I have known this
before" (a possible echo of Eliot's Prufrock), this repetition adds to the
feeling that the action is a self-repeating, self-sustaining cycle (NML, p.
96).[34]   To Spooner's final plea, which is his longest and spoken in the
language of chivalry, Hirst replies:

> Let us change the subject.
> Pause
> For the last time.
> Pause
> What have I said?

> Foster: You said you're changing the subject for the last
> time.

> Hirst: But what does that mean? [....]

> Foster: So that nothing else will happen forever [....] We'll be
> with you. Briggs and me. (NML, pp. 149-152)

Hirst concludes that he didn't see anyone drowning in the water, Spooner
echoes his earlier speech by telling him he's in "no man's land," and Hirst
answers with the closing line, "I'll drink to that" (NML, p. 153).

In a sense, nothing has happened here besides drinking, rejection, breakdown
of communication, and articulate expression of despair.   Gale takes this point
quite far: "...some of the dialogue seems merely to be witty conversation,"
and "These are men who no longer act--they talk."[35]   But if speech is a form
of action, a great deal more has taken place.   Spooner has gained and lost the
confidence of Hirst; Hirst has "come to a conclusion" about "certain matters"
(namely, to adhere to his current condition forever); Foster and Briggs have
included themselves in Hirst's hell while excluding Spooner.   Still, the fact

that the characters often talk past each other makes this action seem idle; as
John Bush Jones says, there are few predictable causal relationships among
these actions.[36] The reliance on trite oracular and literary skills as forms
of action perpetuates Hirst's eternal despair and reveals Spooner's
vulnerability.

———————

Before making general inferences about drama and speech act theory, I
will consider three main types of objection to Searle's theory in light of my
analysis. I will refer to them and discuss them in order as follows: the
Derridean objection, the philosophy of language objection, and the literary
criticism objection. I will consider these objections in order and follow
with a discussion of whether Searle's theory can accommodate them.

In "Signature Event Context"[37] and the hilariously long-winded "Limited
Inc abc...",[38] Jaques Derrida levels several criticisms against speech act
theory. The former essay addresses Austin's account, and the latter is a
reply to Searle's objections to this essay in "A Reply to Derrida."[39] Because
of the radically different approaches of Derrida and Searle, this debate is
extremely polemical, and they often write at cross-purposes. (Derrida admits
this at the end of "Signature": "Deconstruction cannot limit itself...to a
neutralization: it must...practice an _overturning_ of the classical opposition
and a general _displacement_ of the system."[40])

The primary objection is that Austin ignores what Derrida is always at
pains to point out, namely, the "arbitrariness of the sign":

> Austin has not taken into account that which is in the
> structure of _locution_ (and therefore before any illocutory
> or perlocutory determination) already bears within itself
> the system of predicates that I call _graphematic in
> general._[41]

Derrida asks,

> Could a performative statement succeed if its formulation
> did not repeat a 'coded' or iterable statement, in other
> words if the expressions I use to open a meeting, launch
> a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as <u>conforming</u>
> to an iterable model, and therefore if they were not
> identifiable in a way as 'citation'?[42]

He proposes a "new typology" in the study of utterances in which "different

types of marks or chains of iterable marks" would replace intention as the

center of attention.[43] That is, Derrida believes that the study of languge as

a sign system takes logical priority over the study of language as speech

acts. His emphasis on the uncertain meaning and interdependence of linguistic

elements leads him to conclude that Austin's failure to acknowledge this flaws

his case.

Derrida's point is worth noting, but the assertion that the indeterminacy

of signs logically precedes intended speech acts is like arguing that the

chicken came before the egg; the relationship between speakers and language

is dynamic, and neither intention nor signs should occupy center stage. As

Searle says in "Reply" (which, as Derrida is at pains to indicate in "Limited

Inc," <u>is</u> quite hotheaded),

> Iterability...is not as Derrida seems to think something
> in conflict with the intentionality of linguistic acts...
> it is the necessary presupposition of the forms which
> that intentionality takes.[44]

Derrida's objection, then, is not so much a threat to speech act theory as a

plea for a competing interest in the study of language. Still, Pinter's

dialogue often conveys the feeling that there is something inherently

restrictive and inadequate about language, such that it sometimes leads a

speaker into almost involuntary patterns of speech. For example, a

deconstructionist might say that the conformity of Spooner's chivalric

language "to an iterable model" and its status as a "citation" against its

historical background combines with the fact what he says is false and

affected and so reveals his pathetic state (despite his persuasive intention):

> I am I. I offer myself not abjectly but with ancient pride.
> I come to you as a warrior. I shall be happy to serve
> you as my master. I bend my knee to your excellence.
> I am furnished with the qualities of piety, prudence,
> liberality and goodness. Decline them at your peril.
> (NML, p. 147)

On Searle's account, this effect could be handled with an account of the

illocutionary force and intended perlocutionary force of this language in this

context. The first six sentences assert Spooner's qualities and presuppose

Hirst's superiority, yielding the effect of obsequiousness, given the action

and characterization that precede this speech. The last sentence is in the

imperative and has the force of a (presumably idle) threat. The analysis of

this speech as either a speech act or a Derridean linguistic citation, then,

yields similar results. As Derrida suggests, the objection that Austin

ignores some linguistic elements in his analysis doesn't refute speech act

theory but rather points out an omission in the analysis.

I now turn to the philosophy of language objection to Searle's theory. I

will consider two versions of this type of objection, first from Dennis

Stampe's "Meaning and Truth in the Theory of Speech Acts"[45] and second from

David Holdcroft's Words and Deeds.[46] My purpose in considering this objection

is primarily to test Searle's study of speech acts on its own terms, not to

demonstrate its applicability to literary criticism.

Dennis Stampe's quarrel with Searle centers on two of Searle's concepts,

the ifid (illocutionary-force-indicating device, phrases like "I hereby

promise") and the PE (Principle of Expressibility, i.e., "whatever can be

meant can be said") (SA, p. 19). Stampe first claims that Searle elevates the

ifid

to the status of a theoretical entity, so that those factors
thought to determine illocutionary force where the
performative prefix occurs may be held to operate to
determine force even where no prefix or other ifid
occurs--i.e., where the ifid is not 'overt.'[47]

Stampe's objection locates a central ambivalence in Searle's analysis. On the

one hand, Searle wants to use the ifid as an implicit model of what is "MEANT

by what one says in uttering a sentence that is inexplicit as to force."[48] On

the other hand, Searle deliberately avoids this identification of meaning and

force in his "speech act fallacy," an error that takes the form, "The word $\underline{W}$

is used to perform speech act $\underline{A}$" ($\underline{SA}$, pp. 136-141).

Moreover, Searle indicates at one point that a statement without a

certain ifid $\underline{may}$ (in a given context) have the same illocutionary force as a

statement without it.[49] On this context-centered interpretation of Searle,

the ifid can be viewed as a model that makes the point that utterances often

contain linguistic clues about their illocutionary force. Stampe's claim that

Searle equates force and meaning points, therefore, to a fundamental tension

in Searle, but one which I think can be resolved without threatening his

central concepts of convention and rules (see $\underline{SA}$, pp. 20, 21, 61).[50]

Stampe and Holdcroft share two general views in common: that Searle's PE

is untenable, and that Searle is wrong in abolishing Austin's locutionary/

illocutionary distinction.[51] Since Holdcroft articulates these objections

more completely than Stampe, I will state his case. Holdcroft initiates his

argument by objecting to Searle's abolition of the locutionary/illocutionary

distinction: "because, in his view, every sentence contains some indicator of

illocutionary force, every such description is a description of an

illocutionary act."[52] This is not quite true, because on Searle's account,

context can serve the rule-govened function of determining illocutionary force

(SA, p. 36). Spooner illustrates the importance of context when he recalls the impression the Hungarian made on him:

> What he said...all those years ago...is neither here nor there.
> It was not what he said but possible the way he sat which has
> remained with me all my life and has, I am quite sure, made me
> what I am. (NML, p. 87)

Before presenting Holdcroft's argument against Searle's Principle of Expressibility, let me begin by stating it: "for any meaning X and any speaker S whenever S means...X then it is possible that there is some expression E such that E is an exact expression of or formulation of X" (SA, p. 20). As Searle says, though, the "expressibility" in PE does not refer to such things as complicated effects in listeners or obscure, private languages (SA, p. 20). Searle infers that PE "enables us to equate rules for performing speech acts with rules for uttering certain linguistic elements" (SA, p. 20). I agree with Holdcroft that this is false.[53] For, to hold this would be to commit the speech act fallacy that Searle claims to avoid (SA, p. 137). Further, it ignores the critical element of context that Searle himself articulates in the following rule: "X counts as Y in context C" (SA, p. 36). It does not follow from this, however, that PE is false or untenable.

There is a deep ambivalence, then, in Searle's attitude toward the connection between certain expressions and the speech acts they might be used to perform. Although he stresses context and wants to avoid the speech act fallacy, he is attracted to the notion of connecting certain words to certain actions. I think, however, that Searle's basic analysis is sound and that this ambivalence can be resolved by emphasizing context and deleting what appear to be commissions of the speech act fallacy from his theory.

This brings me to the third type of objection, namely, the literary criticism objection. I will discuss three forms of literary objection to

Searle's speech act theory. In "The Problem of Inferred Modality in Narrative," Horst Ruthrof objects to Searle on three related grounds: first, and wrongly, that Searle assumes there is "perfect meaning exchange," in indirect speech acts, and second, that he "leaves out such important issues as the spatial position of the speaker and is vague about inferrable values and ideological commitment," and third, that "his starting point and method (propositional content modified by illocutionary features) deny him the full exploration of what goes on when we make meaning."[54] I think this third objection is also false; Searle's "starting point and method" isn't "propositional content modified by illocutionary force," nor is it clear that his program logically prevents a fuller study of context. The first and second points constitute only an incompleteness objection, calling for a more complete account of what Searle calls context.

Altieri echoes this objection by claiming that Searle's theory is inherently unable to handle "social practices" and "actual conversations."[55] Searle, according to Altieri, "tries to domesticate Austin within the confines of analytic philosophy."[56] This philosophy, he says, exhibits an "insensitivity to the expressive features of the speech acts he purports to analyze."[57] Like Ruthrof, however, Altieri fails to show that such a sensitivity to speech acts would be inconsistent with Searle's view. Still, Searle's theory (as it stands) seems to have little to say about Spooner's bizarre jeer at Hirst:

> Remember this. You've lost your wife of hazel hue, you've
> lost her and what can you do, she will no more come back to
> you, with a tillifola tillifola tillifoladi-foladi-foloo.
> (NML, p. 96)

Claiming (wrongly) that Searle ignores context and style (and conventions like irony), Altieri rejects Searle's account as being useless for literary

criticism and takes up Paul Grice's account instead.[58] As I said, I think

this ambivalence about context is resolvable <u>within</u> Searle's account, and I

will show that Grice's analysis is not fundamentally incompatible with

Searle's.

In "How to Do Things With Austin and Searle," Stanley Fish writes a

speech act analysis of Shakespeare's <u>Coriolanus</u> and concludes that speech act

theory

> cannot possibly serve as an all purpose interpretive
> key....it can't tell us anything about what happens after an
> illocutionary act has been performed (it is not a rhetoric);
> it can't tell us anything about the inner life of the
> performer[59]...it can't serve as the basis of a stylistics;
> it can't be elaborated into a poetics of narrative; it can't
> help us to tell the difference between literature and non-
> literature; it can't distinguish between serious discourse
> and a work of fiction, and it cannot, without cheating,
> separate fiction from fact.[60]

This passage summarizes the literary objections I have outlined so far. Fish

also objects to giving fiction the ontological status of parasitism, claiming

that the distinction between fiction and serious discourse is not one of

logical dependence but merely "one between two systems of discourse

conventions."[61] That is, "words are responsible not to what is real but to

what has been laid down as real...by a set of constitutive rules."[62] I think

this objection is serious, and I suggest a solution to it below.

With the exception of this parasitism objection, Fish's is also an

incompleteness objection. His point seems to be that, since Austin and Searle

don't settle these questions, these issues lie outside their theoretical

jurisdiction. But in fact, several writers have successfully applied this

contextual element of speech act theory to literary works. Mary Louise Pratt,

for example, shows how speech act theory provides a way of talking about

utterances

> not only in terms of their surface grammatical properties
> but also in terms of the context in which they are made,
> the intentions, attitudes, and expectations of the
> participants.[63]

And, contrary to Fish, Pratt also believes that speech act theory "does away

with the distortive and misleading concepts of 'poetic' and 'ordinary'

language."[64] This type of move makes the theory's applicability to

literature, especially Pinter plays, clear. I will summarize and respond to

the three objections and then place my discussion of Pinter in the perspective

of this analysis.

The Derridean objection deals with the apparent inability of speech act

theory to address the inherent indeterminacy of language. As I said, Derrida

doesn't claim to fully discredit speech act theory; rather, he merely points

to Austin's failure to take certain linguistic factors into account. Beyond

this, it is important to recognize that Derrida's philosophical program

differs in kind from Searle's in its emphasis on scepticism and that on _its_

terms speech act theory (along with all other theoretical positions) is

problematic. As Pinter's dialogue shows, moreover, it doesn't follow from

failures of language to communicate that speaking is not an intentional, rule-

governed activity.

The philosophy of language objection demonstrates the ambivalence in

Searle between avoiding context and blending meaning and illocutionary force;

it also points out some of the shortcomings of the latter view. My view

(although I won't prove it here) is that Searle's theory can survive a descent

from this fence-sitting position firmly on the side of context. The literary

criticism objection, as I said, picks up on this ambivalence and often wrongly

interprets it as a logical shortcoming. Finally, the literary perspective

rightly objects to Searle's view that literature is logically parasitic on

ordinary language.

This view of literature as being parasitic paralells that of the critics who view Pinter's language as a variation on a supposedly normal type of language. This problematic notion can be overcome by adopting Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of "language-game" "to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life."[65] Wittgenstein views language as consisting of related uses of language whose "multiplicity is not something fixed, given once and for all."[66] Further, these varied uses are interconnected in "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" he calls "family resemblances."[67] Such a view (as Quigley points out) can bypass the logical necessity of counter-intuitive notions like the parasitic status of literature.

This non-hierarchical type of view, which is compatible with speech act theory, views literary forms as simply different (not logically dependent) types of language use. As Pinter's successful blend of naturalistic and stylized language shows, this model seems more accurate than one that privileges an unspecified, normal language use over others. Almansi and Henderson, following this Wittgensteinian approach, write, "Pinter's games of mimicry and agon are both, primarily, games involving language."[68]

Applying this concept to fictional literature in general, we can replace the idea of logical parasitism with Pratt's understanding of "literariness or poeticality" as "a particular disposition of speaker and audience with regard to the message, one that is characteristic of the literary speech situation."[69]

In "Logic and Conversation," Paul Grice incorporates context into speech act theory by building its analysis up from the foundation of conversation;[70]

this is accomplished by the "Cooperative Principle": "Make your

conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it

occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk-exchange in which you

are engaged."[71] This approach differs from Searle's in that it avoids

identifying linguistic rules with speech act rules, an equation that I think

is mistaken (SA, p. 20). Still, with the exception of this view, Grice's

approach does not run counter to his own (as Searle himself shows in "Indirect

Speech Acts"[72]). Thus, though less systematic, Grice's view is more

accommodating to non-literal language uses and points the way to a revision

and expansion of Searle's theory. As I see it, these two views are actually

complementary, though different in focus.

Since, as I hope I have shown, Searle's view is not essentially

incompatible with those of Wittgenstein and Grice, it can therefore meet and

overcome the force of the three objections I have raised. Searle's main

hypothesis, that language use is governed by rules, is plausible, theoretically

elegant, and also serves to shed light on literary works such as plays (SA, p.

12). With the amendments I have proposed, I think Searle's theory offers a

sound foundation for a theory of language. I leave this project of revision

in sketch form and return to the plays and the question of the value of this

analysis.

The main challenge to a speech act approach to literature is simply how

to apply the theory to specific texts. Making the connection between

conversation and narrative (with the help of Grice), Pratt says,

> Natural Narratives formally acknowledge that in voluntarily
> committing ourselves to play the role of audience, we are
> accepting an exceptional or unusual imposition. This claim,
> I believe, holds for voluntary audience roles in general and
> is crucial to our understanding of the appropriateness
> conditions bearing on many kinds of speech situations,
> including literary ones.[73]

The Bolsover street speech comes to mind. In that case, Spooner is the primary audience, and the theater audience is secondary. I think Pratt's choice of the word "audience" is no accident here, nor do I think it is an accident that Fish, Joseph Porter, and Shoshona Felman have all done speech act readings of plays.[74] Fish interestingly says that Coriolanus is "about speech acts," an observation that he uses to deny the general applicability of the theory to literature.[75] Porter's assertion is more general:

> A drama is a sequence of acts, verbal and nonverbal, done
> by a group of characters to or on each other....The
> 'speeches,' the bulk of the text, consist of the words
> in which the verbal action is done."[76]

Felman's book compares the significance of promising in the Don Juan story (primarily in Moliere) to its significance in Austin's theory.[77]

Altieri's view of a "dramatistic approach to speech acts" bears more than a metaphorical resemblance to Pratt's view and stresses the element of context. He says, "when we learn a language in a culture we develop powers to understand semantic properties in relation to several kinds of dramatistic contexts."[78]

The study of Pinter is especially relevant to these types of contextual elements in language use. In Dialogue and Discourse, Dierdre Burton asks (about a typically elusive Pinter dialogue): "how do we know so much about the interactants in the dialogue?"[79] Her purpose in doing a sociolinguistic analysis of Pinter's sketch "Last to Go"[80] is "to specify how a given dialogue is like a naturally occurring conversation."[81] She is not so much concerned with the literary qualities of the work as the fact that, as Eric Salmon puts it, "almost all of Pinter's early characters speak the most accurate Cockney that has ever been written for the English stage."[82]

All of this leads me to the following point: if speech act literary

criticism can offer a coherent approach to literary works, then drama is the most appropriate genre to which it can be applied. Just as New Criticism has poetry as its standard of interpretation and structuralist (and post-structuralist) criticism typically analyzes narrative fiction, so I think drama is most suited to speech act interpretation.[83]

Because conversational dialogue is the primary form of utterance in drama, speech act theory offers a particularly valuable perspective to its interpretation. I think valuable dramatic criticism could be done with the slightly revised and expanded version of speech act theory that I sketched here. And unlike some forms of traditional criticism, this speech act theory would have the advantage of a basis in a rigorous philosophy of language.

Searle (who sees works of fiction as pretended speech acts) says this about drama:

> the playwright's performance in writing the text of the play
> is rather like writing a recipe for pretense than engaging
> in a form of pretense itself....the illocutionary force of
> the text of a play is like the illocutionary force of a
> recipe.[84]

Although Searle probably commits the mimetic fallacy here (the idea that art should and does imitate reality), this passage is quite interesting. For, if the playwright's role resembles that of the recipe writer, then one of his challenges must be to anticipate a variety of performances (cooks and kitchens) and to avoid parochialism (little-known measuring units or unavailable ingredients).

Pinter's concentration on the rich ambiguity and open-endedness of ordinary conversation satisfies these conditions to a point where the audience often engages in an act of creative interpretation that resembles the playwright's. But, as he has said, the rule "anything goes" never applies to

a Pinter play:

> I don't think that they [the plays] bear a very great amount
> of shifting and changing and different interpretations....
> I think what has to be done is just to play the damn
> lines and stop, start, move and do it all very clearly
> and economically.[865]

A _Kind_ _of_ _Alaska_ and _No_ _Man's_ _Land_ are, in different ways, about speech

acts. The first centers on the difficulty of satisfying the conditions of an

illocutionary speech act, and the second spotlights language as a deceitful

tool of power and an unsatisfactory substitute for friendship. When Hirst

responds to Spooner's offer of friendship with "No man's land...does not

move...or change...or grow old...remains...forever...icy...silent,"

he chooses language (perhaps quoting from one of his own poems) over

friendship (_NML_, p. 96). Because of Pinter's keen interest in communicative

subtlety, it is easy to imagine speech act analyses of any of his plays.

Rather than demonstrating a logical hierarchy of different language uses,

Pinter's dialogue shows the opposite, namely, the interdependence ("family

resemblances") between different types of language use. The blend of

ordinary, British conversation with literary language, the lack of predictable

causation from speech act to speech act, the persistent attention to the

fragile complexity of speech acts, and the choice of extraordinary dramatic

situations (both naturalistic and stylized) all figure in the "hyperrealistic"

effects of Pinter's drama.

Endnotes

[1] Harold Pinter, <u>Other Places</u> (New York: Grove Press, 1983), and <u>Complete Works: 4</u> (New York: Grove Press, 1981), respectively. Subsequent references will occur in the text. I will refer to <u>A Kind of Alaska</u> as <u>AKA</u> and to <u>No Man's Land</u> as <u>NML</u>.

[2] Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson, <u>Harold Pinter</u> (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 36.

[3] Austin E. Quigley, <u>The Pinter Problem</u> (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 32-75.

[4] Quigley, p. 36.

[5] Quigley, p. 36.

[6] Quigley, pp. 37-39.

[7] Quigley, pp. 50-52.

[8] Quigley, p. 72.

[9] J.L. Austin, <u>How to Do Things With Words</u> (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975).

[10] Austin, p. 6.

[11] Austin, p. 6.

[12] Austin, p. 109.

[13] Austin, p. 12.

[14] Austin, p. 139.

[15] Austin, pp. 146-147.

[16] John R. Searle, <u>Speech Acts</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984). Subsequent references will be in the text; I will refer to this as <u>SA</u>.

[17] J.L. Austin, "Other Minds," <u>Logic and Language</u> (New York, n.p., 1953), cited in Searle, <u>SA</u>, p. 137.

[18]These are more rigorously reclassified as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations in Searle's "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts," in Expression and Meaning (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 12-20.

[19]Because Pinter uses the ellipsis so often, I will indicate my omission of material with the bracketed ellipsis.

[20]John R. Searle, "Metaphor," in Expression and Meaning, pp. 104, 112.

[21]Searle, "Metaphor," p. 110.

[22]Harold Pinter, Complete Works: 3 (New York: Grove Press, 1978) for The Basement and Tea Party and Complete Works: 4 (New York: Grove Press, 1981) for Betrayal.

[23]As both of the plays' titular speeches show: in NML see pp. 96, 153; in AKA see p. 34.

[24]Charles Altieri, Act and Quality (Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 1981), p. 192.

[25]Altieri, pp. 191-195.

[26]Harold Pinter, Complete Works: 2 (New York: Grove Press, 1977).

[27]Harold Pinter, Complete Works: 1 (Grove Press, 1976).

[28]Steven H. Gale, Butter's Going Up (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1977), p. 202.

[29]Gale, p. 200.

[30]For an example of deceit, see SA, pp. 44-45.

[31]Gale, pp. 203-206.

[32]This "boatman" could refer to Charon, thus suggesting a death journey. See Katherine Burkman, "Hirst as Godot: Pinter in Beckett's Land," Arizona Quarterly 39 (1983), p. 10.

[33]Peter Hall, dir., <u>No</u> <u>Man's</u> <u>Land</u>, with Sir John Gielgud and Sir Ralph Richardson (Caedmon cassette tape, New York, 1982).

[34]John Bush Jones, "Stasis and Structure in Pinter's <u>No</u> <u>Man's</u> <u>Land</u>," <u>Modern</u> <u>Drama</u> 19 (1976), 295.

[35]Gale, pp. 200, 202.

[36]Jones, p. 296.

[37]Jaques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in <u>Margins</u> <u>of</u> <u>Philosophy</u>, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982).

[38]Jaques Derrida, "Limited Inc abc...," <u>Glyph</u> 2 (1977).

[39]John R. Searle, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida," <u>Glyph</u>, 1 (1977).

[40]Derrida, "Signature," p. 329.

[41]Derrida, "Signature," pp. 322-323.

[42]Derrida, "Signature," p. 326.

[43]Derrida, "Signature," p. 326.

[44]Searle, "Reiterating," p. 208. He does, however, make a more relevant attack on Austin and Searle, namely, their view of literary uses of language as logically parasitic on ordinary language, a point on which Altieri agrees (See "Signature,p. 325, "Limited," p. 231, and Altieri, p. 31). I think Derrida makes too much of this point, but it is one which I will bring up again, as part of the literary objection.

[45]Dennis Stampe, "Meaning and Truth in the Theory of Speech Acts," in <u>Syntax</u> <u>and</u> <u>Semantics:</u> <u>Speech</u> <u>Acts</u>, Cole and Morgan, eds. (New York: Academic Press, 1975).

[46]David Holdcroft, <u>Words</u> <u>and</u> <u>Deeds</u> (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978).

[47]Stampe, p. 3.

[48]Stampe, p. 48.

[49]In the passage that Stampe uses, Searle implies the element of context with the qualifier "might": "I <u>might</u> say, 'I'll come,' and...mean it as I would mean 'I hereby promise I will come'" (emphasis mine). Searle, "Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts," <u>Philosophical</u> <u>Review</u> 7 (1968), 415.

[50]Stampe, p. 12.

[51]Stampe, pp. 5, 17n., and Holdcroft, pp. 33-37.

[52]Holdcroft, p. 34.

[53]Holdcroft, p. 37.

[54]Horst Ruthrof, "The Problem of Inferred Modality in Narrative," <u>Journal of Literary Semantics</u>, 13 (1984), 101-102.

[55]Altieri, p. 78.

[56]Altieri, p. 293.

[57]Altieri, p. 96.

[58]Altieri, pp. 78, 88-89.

[59]Fish's claim that speech act theory ignores psychological elements is arguably defeated by Searle's notion that a speech act <u>expresses</u> a psychological state:

> There is a double level of Intentionality in the performance
> of the speech act, a level of the psychological state expressed
> in the performance of the act and a level of the intention with
> which the act is performed.

See John R. Searle, <u>Intentionality</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), p. 164.

[60]Stanley Fish, "How to Do Things With Austin and Searle," in <u>Is There a Text in This Class?</u> (Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1980), p. 244.

[61]Fish, p. 241.

[62]Fish, p. 241.

[63]Mary Louise Pratt, Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse (Bloomington, Indiana Univ. Press, 1977), p. 86.

[64]Pratt, p. 88.

[65]Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 11^e.

[66]Wittgenstein, p. 11^e.

[67]Wittgenstein, p. 32^e.

[68]Altieri, p. 26.

[69]Pratt, p. 87.

[70]Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts, Cole and Morgan, eds. (New York: Academic Press, 1975).

[71]Grice, p. 45.

[72] John R. Searle, "Indirect Speech Acts," in Expression and Meaning, p. 50.

[73]Pratt, p. 73.

[74]Joseph A. Porter, The Drama of Speech Acts (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1979) and Shoshona Felman, The Literary Speech Act, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983).

[75]Fish, pp. 244-245.

[76]Porter, p. 165.

[77]Felman, passim.

[78]Altieri, p. 78.

[79]Dierdre Burton, Dialogue and Discourse: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Modern Drama (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

[80]Harold Pinter, Complete Works: 2 (New York: Grove Press, 1977), pp. 245-248.

[81]Burton, p. 12.

[82]Eric Salmon, "Harold Pinter's Ear," Modern Drama, 17 (1974), 363.

[83]Peripherally, this view of speeches as actions may qualify Pinter's theater for inclusion in Artaud's "theater of cruelty," which prefers action to speech. This distinction between actions (theater of cruelty) and words (the actual, modern theater) dissolves with speech act theory. See Derrida, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 239-243. See also Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), especially pp. 122-126.

[84]Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," in Expression and Meaning, p. 70.

[85]Harold Pinter, interview with M. Dean, "Harold Pinter Talks to Michael Dean," The Listener (6 March 1969), 312.

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