Drama

Fourth year- the second semester

**The last lecture**

The 11th lecture: د.ليلى باطوق

The most important thing in act two is the departure of Alison. You remember the dialogue between her and Cliff. She said to Cliff that she is intending to leave but with the coming of her friend in act two, she was more strengthen with her coming and even Jimmy thinks that it is because of Helena that she has left him . He was really afraid of the strong power of Helena over Alison. So, the most important thing that takes place in act two is the departure of Alison. It was the first time that she takes a decision against Jimmy. When was the first time that she has taken a strong decision before? When she decided to go to church with Helena, it was against the convention and against the ideas of her husband. She did not use to do it throughout her marriage life and she knows that it is against her husband but she insisted and she did it. Another strong decision is when she invited Helena/ when she allowed her to come although she knew that Jimmy did not like that but she did it. The strongest decision that she has taken in the first place was before the play starts when she decided to marry Jimmy against the will of her parents. Her family is from the upper-middle-class and they rejected this marriage, especially her mother who has strong character over the members of her family. But Alison did a powerful decision to go against the will of her family. But during her marriage life she did not take any important decision or any real decision. She was only following whatever Jimmy was telling her. Although he was imposing that on her but at the same time he was criticizing her weak character all through. In act two she gains her earlier character and she does the second decision that will change her life which is going back to her family.

Who called her father? Did she take that step? She did not take that step. She only thought of it but it is Helena who really forwarded the step into action by calling the parents and sending them a telegram, telling them about the miserable condition of their daughter and that they should come and rescue her from that hell as it is always described in the play.

It seems that it has been two weeks now that Helena is living with them in the same house. Act two opens with a dialogue between Helena and Alison. This dialogue is important because it is an exposition of the past of Alison about her life with husband Jimmy. It exposes some features about his character and about their kind of life. It appears that Helena is a curious character; she asks about things. One of the things she asked about was Cliff. She was surprised that he is living with them in the same apartment and she realized the way he talks to Alison, so she was curious to know about this kind of relationship. Through their dialogue she is very significant that it tells us about more characters in the play. We know about how Jimmy’s friend and the mother of that friend before in act one. But here we know more and more about them.

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We know that Hugh’s mother helped Jimmy in his work which is selling sweets. Helena was surprised that how would an educated man like him become satisfied in such a job. Through their dialogue, we know about the background of his education and that he had studied university and we know the system of higher education in Britain at that time. What is so peculiar about this issue about the universities and the different kinds of universities there?

In the middle of page 41:

(Well, after Jimmy and I were married, we'd no money — about eight pounds ten in actual fact — and no home. He didn't even have a job. He'd only left the university about a year. (Smiles.) No — left. I don't think one "comes down" from Jimmy's university. According to him, it's not even red brick, but white tile.)

They are talking about the different kinds of university in Britain at that time. The red brick universities are the new kinds of universities. The most famous traditional universities in Britain are Oxford and Cambridge. These are the first government official universities and then new universities established. They were called the red brick universities (Yale University, Manchester University). His university is even newer than that. Graduates of such universities were enthusiastic to have good opportunities of jobs at that time. When they graduated, they were faced with the miserable conditions of the country and they did not have jobs. An educated man would not have an opportunity to work. So, Jimmy was not even satisfied with his university education because at the end it will not provide him a job as the situation is with all young men at his time. This is one of causes of his anger to the political situation or to the social condition and the economical conditions of Britain at that time. This is one of the causes of his anger that there are no good opportunities of work for even university graduates.

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Through their dialogue, we understand how Jimmy used to treat Alison and what is his conception of her background/ of her family in particular.

Helena told her when your life was not going on well, why did not you come to me?! She told her that you were not available. Because she is an actress and she travels from one place to another. So, she told her that you are not there at that time.

(Alison: Those next few months at the flat in popular were a nightmare.)

So, she was describing her first year of marriage when she had to live in a different place.

(Those next few months at the flat in Poplar were a nightmare. i suppose i must be sofl: and squeamish, and snobbish, but i felt as though I'd been dropped in a jungle. I couldn't believe that two people, two

educated people could be so savage, and so so uncompromısing.)

This is the important part of the quotation. >>>> Muınmy has always said that Jimmy is utterly ruthless, but she hasn't met Hugh.

She is talking here about her husband Jimmy and his other friend Hugh who has been around them at the beginning but then he traveled to another country. She was describing Jimmy and Hugh that they were very ruthless, very violent and very impolite, especially with ladies. She said that her mother recognized their features from the beginning.

(Muınmy has always said that Jimmy is utterly ruthless, but she hasn't met Hugh. He takes the first prize for

ruthlessness - from all comers.)

They are very rude although they are university educated but still their manners are very rude.

(Together, they were frightening.) >>>>When they are together, life with them is like hell. They were frightening.

(They both came to regard me as a sort of hostage from those sections of society they had declared war on.)

She is saying that her husband and his friend Hugh all the time are against the upper-middle-class. They are against this section of class in the society. They are opposing that section but at the same time they are taking me as if they are taking me as a hostage. Hostage= means that you take somebody as if by force in order to gain things from the class that this person belongs to. So, how did they use her? She will explain later on how. >>> because she is an upper-middle-class lady, she is allowed to enter the parties of that class. You know Aristocratic and upper-middle-class used to have imitations of people and parties in their houses. They invite different kinds of people (artists, politicians, critics). So, they took her as an opportunity to be allowed to go with her to these parties. What did they do in such parties? Drink and eat. They made use of the opportunity to find food because they are jobless and they do not have enough money. So, they have made use of all that. What was their real intention? Beside spending leisured time and having food and drink, they did have another intention. He wants to make fun of her family as well as herself as if he has married her only to revenge from her and her family. He wanted to shame her and especially her mother.

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Here through the conversation we feel that Alison has felt that her husband has changed and that their life is not as excited as it was. You know how they spend their life in the house? They do something; they do a kind of a game that they play together in order to change the mood of their life. They have **Bears-and-Squirrels Game**. One represents the husband and one represents the wife. They used to play with it a lot in order just to change their life to have fun in their house but she says that even this game we have not played for sometimes. She asked her is it because I came to your how? But she says to her:

Page 26: (Alison explains it at first in terms of sheer escapism: Alison: it started during those first months we had alone together — after Hugh went abroad. It was the one way of escaping from everything — a sort of unholy priest-hole of being animals to one another.)

She is justifying why they play such a game. She says that this game is the one way of escaping from everything. When they want to escape from the boredom of life/ from the ruthlessness of their life, they escape to this game to change their life. They have started it long age.

(We could become little furry creatures with little furry brains. Full of dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other. Playful, careless creatures in their own cosy zoo for two.")

You remember in act one she called their life in the house is like a zoo because the flat is full of shouting, scream, quarrel between Cliff and Jimmy; everyone is pushing the other like animals and not like educated people. So, in order to change this mood of life, both of them they escape to this kind of game to refresh their life with joy.

(A silly symphony for people who couldn't bear the pain of being human beings any longer. And now, even they are dead, poor little silly animals.”" )

She felt the pain of not living like a human being. In order to escape that feeling, she uses to play that game. This game is very significant. They two toys that they have in the house are symbols. In act two when she decides to leave the house, how do we know that she has taken the decision to leave the house?

When her father came and she was taking her things, the father maybe at a moment was not sure that she will not come with him because she might needs certain things. And for herself although she left certain things but when she left her toy in particular, we as audience feel that she does not want to go back to that kind of life anymore. She has decided to complete her life completely.

When Jimmy comes to them and they start to have another conversation, the dialogue between Jimmy and Helena is also considered an exposition because it tells us more about their early life and his relationship to Alison from his point of view.

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Jimmy’s long speech>>>

("Anyone who's never watched somebody die is suffering from a pretty bad case of virginity. [His good humour of a moment ago deserts him, as he begins to remember] For twelve months, I watched my father dying — when I was ten years old.)

In this long monologue as it is called by certain critics, he gives the background of his age. He talks about his father. How do you feel this relationship to his father? It was a close relationship. He really loves his father. He has a strong relationship towards his father. And he is describing the agony and the pain that he suffered with the loss of his father and how his father even was suffering during his last years of life after the defeat and the Spanish civil war. But at the same time we feel that he dislikes his mother. He is against his mother. Some scholars comment >>that is why throughout the play we feel that he is against women in general. He criticizes women a lot. He rejects women a lot.

After that long monologue when he knows that his wife is going to go out with Helena, he gets furious and he gets angry. We wonder again and again about his opinion about his friend who is Helena. He always considers that when she does something that he does not like as if she is betraying him. Even when she decides to go out with Helena, he considers it as an act of betrayal. And he started talking very violently and very ruthlessly about him.

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Now there is a phone call for Jimmy. He stops attacking his wife and goes to answer the phone call. Cliff in his conversation with Helena describes his role in the life of Jimmy and Alison.

(Cliff: I am not the desperate commissioner. Listen Helena, I do not feel like Jimmy does about you but I am not exactly on your side either.)

So, even Cliff expresses his resentment towards Helena. He does not like her. He says I am not like Jimmy but I also do not like certain things about you.

(Since you have been here everything is certainly being worse than it has ever been.)

Since you have come, things are becoming worse and worse. Although they were bad before, with your coming situation is worse.

(If I hadn't been here, everything would have been over between them long ago.)

It is him who reconciles the situation between husband and wife; otherwise they would have been departed long ago.

(I’ve been a no-man’s-land between them.)

So, he is describing the flat and their life as a battlefield (a land of one party and the land of the other and the land in between which is the no-man’s-land).

(Sometimes, it's been still and peaceful, no incidents, and we've all been reasonably happy.)

Sometimes we have a very happy life.

(But most of the time, it’s simply a very narrow strip of plain hell. But where I come from, we’re used to brawling and excitement.)

Quarreling is an exciting thing.

(Perhaps I even enjoy being in the thick of it. I love these two people very much. And I pity all of us.)

Sometimes he enjoys the quarrel between him and Jimmy. He does not say I pity them. He says I pity all of us. He knows that his situation is not a good one but he feels that he has to live among them in order to keep them going.

In act three, he is going to emphasize his role again. He will repeat the same idea and emphasize it later on.

Here Helena tells him that that she has already sent a telegram to Alison’s parents telling them about her miserable situation. Now Alison who is now very exhausted does not reject to it.

Jimmy was going to answer the phone call. When he came, Alison and Helena were leaving the flat going to the church. But Jimmy tells them about the phone call that it was about Hugh’s mother. She was very sick and she was almost dying and that he needs to go there. He was expecting that Alison would come to him and he as very disappointed that she left him. she rejected to go with him and choose to go with Helena.

Scene one of act two ends again with despair on the part of Jimmy. He is left alone. He is very sad. The feeling of sadness here is more than the feeling of anger although they are always together. Anger and sadness are always together with Jimmy’s character.

In scene two, we meet Alison’s father. The dialogue between Alison and her father again is an exposition the exposes more information about the life of Jimmy and Alison and more about Jimmy’s conception of Alison‘s father plus mother. Here in this scene, we see how he looked at her mother. In one of the quotation, Alison expresses her anger by telling the father that he called her mother a bitch. It is to this extent that he was calling her with bad names.

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Alison is describing Hugh’s mother to the father telling his who is this lady and why she is important to Jimmy that she helped him.

(“Oh--how can you describe her? Rather ordinary. What Jimmy insists on calling working-class.” )

Hugh’s mother represents the working class for Jimmy.

(“A charwoman who married an actor, worked hard all her life, and spent most of it struggling to support her husband and his. Jimmy and she were very fond of each other”.)

So, she is describing the working class and the suffering of the working class, giving an example of a woman from the working class who suffered to take care of her husband and son.

Sweet doll it does seen Extra ordinary thing for an educated young man occupying himself with it.

(COLONEL: Sweet-stall. It does seem an extraordinary thing for an educated young man to be occupying himself with.)

He is surprised that how Jimmy is satisfied with a sweet-stall/ a sweet shop although he is an educated man.

(Why should he want to do that, of all things. I've always thought he must be quite clever in his way.)

Alison says to him that was the only opportunity that he had. She is talking here also about his education and they talk about the kind of universities again.

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The father asked the daughter why you used to write letters for us but you never mentioned your miserable life.

(Colonel: Oh, I know what you mean. You were afraid of being disloyal to your husband.)

If you tell us about your life, it means he might consider it as disloyal. And she starts laughing.

(Alison: Disloyal ? He thought it was high treason of me to write to you at all !)

It is not only disloyalty is his opinion; it is high treason. As if she were doing something very sinful.

(I used to have to dodge downstairs for the post, so that he wouldn't see I was getting letters from home. Even then I had to hide them.)

She says I was writing letters and receiving letters in secret. He did not know that I was writing to you.

(Colonel: He really does hate us, doesn't he ?

Alison: Oh yes - don't have any doubts about that. He hates all of us.)

As if she is confinced that he also hates her. And the father was surprised.>> since he hates you why did he marry you?

(COLONEL: It's a little late to admit it, I know, but your mother and I weren't entirely free from blame.)

The father in this qoutation is ready to take the blame. He says yes, we did not recieve him well and your mother showed her resentment towards him. Maybe this has increased his hatred to us.

(I suppose she was trying to protect me—in a rather heavy-handed way.)

She believes that her mother was only trying to protect her.

Through the dialogue we understand that her father is kinder than her mother. The mother was very strong character. He says to his daughter >>>>> I think you may take after me a little, my dear. You like to sit on the fence because it's comfortable and more peaceful.

I think that there is a similarity between you and me. You are similar to me more than you are to your mother.

(You like to sit on the fence because it's comfortable and more peaceful. )>>> you are more humble. You do not reject alot. Whenever he insults you and treats you badly, you are silent and you are passive; you do not act against him. This is exactly how her father treats the mother. The mother used to raged at him but he used to be silent, not to increase the situation. So, he says to his daughter you are like me sitting on the fence. You like to sit on the fence, it is more comfortable and more peaceful towatch others but not to act against anything.

Page 70: A very important comment is said by Alison. The father again in a long qoutation was expressin his past; how it was when he left India and how he still dreams of the great days of victory of Britiain during that time. So, it is the nostalgia theme here. Alison says to her father you are hurt because everything is changed. In the long qutation before, he was expressing his sadness for the loss of everything that Britian used to have. So, she says you are hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. You remember in the eginning of the play, he is angry and he is raged because everything is the same. He was criticizing the Monotony of life; that life is the same, especially Sundays.

(ALISON: You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it. Something's gone wrong somewhere, hasn't it ?)

Neither of you can face the reality and accept the new situation. This satatment is very significant. It really represents the age. It represents Britain at that time/ the post-second World War where people have lost their past glory and they are sorry for that (There is the nostologia theme) and also where young men were angry because they did not have good oppurtunities.

(She picks up the squirrel from the chest of drawers, is about to put it in her suitcase, hesitates, and then puts it back.)

She decides not to take it. Maybe she thinks that she does not need it in her father’s house because nobody is going to make her life miserable there. Her decision here not to take it is a very symbolic.

(The Colonel turns and looks at her. She moves down towards him, her head turned away. For a few moments, she seems to be standing on the edge of choice.)

>>> As if she was hesitant, to go or not to. So, she was standing on the edge of choice.

(The choice made, her body wheels round suddenly, and she is leaning against him, weeping softly.)

Her decision to leave was depicted in action more than orally/ more than verbally. She does not say to her father lets go now. It was not given through language. It was done in action.

The father was taking the suitcase to the car and he was saying to Helena I take can your case also with me and put it in the car but Helena decided to stay in the house. Her excuse was that she had an appointment and so she will remain in the town for one more day.

Before the leave, Cliff was coming and he knew that she was leaving. Alison gave him a letter to be given to Jimmy. When she leaves he gives that letter to Helena and he said to her that you give it to him. She leaves it on the table. What is significant here is that Cliff has realized Helena’s intention. He felt it before that she had an eye on Jimmy but his suspensions increased when she decided to remain in the flat. He decides to leave the flat before Jimmy comes. He decided not to face him.

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Jimmy enters the house and to his surprise he saw only Helena in his bedroom and she was holding the bear that he used to play with his wife.

He was coming with anger.

(That old bastard nearly ran me down in his car! Now, if he'd killed me, that really would have been ironical. And how right and fitting that my wife should have been a passenger. A passenger!)

Who told him about his wife’s departure? He saw Alison with her father car. Helena did not need to tell him. When he was coming to his house, he saw Alison in her father’s car. The car was going so fast that they almost hit him. So, he says imagine if I were to be killed by that old man in his car. It is very ironical that my wife is a passenger in that car.

(What's the matter with everybody? (Crossing up to her) Cliff practically walked into me, coming out of the house. He belted up the other way, and pretended not to see me. Are you the only one who's not afraid to stay?)

When he was coming Cliff was getting out of the house. So, he saw Cliff and he was sure that Cliff saw him but he says that even Cliff was pretending that he was not seeing me. So, it seems that Jimmy is very angry here because for the first time Alison leaves him as well as his friend Cliff who was always around him, now he was pretending that he did not see him. He wonders at Helena why you are here, are not you afraid like them? They talk and he starts insulting her also and she slaps him on the face as if she was shaking him to wake up from his anger and from his usual way of shouting.

The act ends here with surprise and shocking for the audience that Helena is going to take the place of Alison in that house.

In act three, it is very important to read the description at the beginning. It is exactly the description of the setting of act one. The two men are reading newspapers and a woman was ironing. This woman is Helena. Helena here is taking the role of Alison. Through their dialogue we understand that she has been doing the housework for them.

Although Helena has been talking about herself as a conventional lady before and we know that she used to go to church every week, through the dialogue we understand that she abandoned that and even Jimmy in one of the quotations was making fun of that.

Looking at the dialogue in act three and in act one, what is the most obvious difference? In act one, we used to have long speeches (long monologues), especially by Jimmy, in which he was talking and nobody is responding to him. He continues talking and nobody even says a word. But here (in act three) we find it is a kind of dialogue. It seems that Helena is different from Alison; she was responding to him although we also notice that she was not responding happily because he did not change his way. He was insulting her plus insulting Cliff. But at least there is a kind of dialogue. Dialogue is short conversation between all the characters unlike the situation in act one.

We have here also the same situation even the kind of quarrel. The quarrel in the first act resulted in the injury of Alison. Here in act three it resulted in spoiling the shirt of Cliff. So, Helena suggested that she would clean it and it will dry because they decided to go to have drink.

Page 88: Cliff tells Jimmy that he decides to leave him.

cliff: (sits on the arm of his chair, and rubs his feet). Jimmy — I don't think I shall stay here much longer. Jimmy: (rather casually).

Why does he want to go? Throughout the play we have realized his character that he is a person who cannot make relationships. That is why he sticks to live with Jimmy and Alison. Even through the dialogue with the description of other characters, we understand that his character is very conventional and it is very difficult for him to make new relations.

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(Jimmy: Try washing your socks. (Slowly.) It's a funny thing. (Listen to me.) You've been loyal, generous and a good friend. But I'm quite prepared to see you wander off, find a new home, and make out on your own. And all because of something I want from that girl downstairs, something I know in my heart she's incapable of giving. You're worth a half a dozen Helenas to me or to anyone. And, if you were in my place, you'd do the same thing.)

He said to him that the reason is that he notices that Helena cannot take care of two men in that house. She can only take care of one man. It is very difficult for her. So, he decides that I will leave for that. Jimmy here says that if I have to compare between you, you are better than Helena. You're worth a half a dozen Helenas. But he says it is very ironic/ very strange. Although I know that you are better than her but I am ready to make you leave the house. It is exactly as he did with Alison, although he loves her but he was ready to let her go. He says although that I know the thing that I want from that lady Helena, she won’t be able to give me (the love that he lost with Alison will not get it from Helena). So, he leaves.

At the end of this scene, Jimmy and Helena are talking together and in the dialogue now they are planning how they are planning to spend the rest of their life. They are planning how to live happily together for the rest of their life. But to their astonishment they decided to live somewhere else in order to begin a new life. Whenever they want to come back they will come for a short time.

To their shock, the door opens and Alison enters the attic. The scene here ends with the coming of Alison. She looked very tired, exhausted and weak. That coming was a shock plus like a shaking means for Helena. Jimmy leaves the room for them. He tells Helena that your friend has arrived, I will leave you together. As if he does not want to meet Alison. So, scene two starts with a dialogue between Helena and Alison. The dialogue or the conversation as usual is an exposition of what has happened to Alison. We know that she has lost her baby and Helena here tells her that she decides to leave Jimmy although just moments ago, she was planning with Jimmy to live happily for the rest of their life.

We have a feeling that Alison is not planning to come back. We do not know why she came back. Helena insists to tell Jimmy herself that she was leaving.

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Helena was trying to make Jimmy listen to Alison but he was insulting her and talking to her rudely. When Helena said to him that >> do not blame her, she has lost her baby, and he said "I don't exactly relish the idea of anyone being ill, or in pain. I am not the kind of person who feels happy in talking to people who are ill. I know how painful she feels.

It was my child too, you know.

So, the loss also was for me.

But (he shrugs) it isn't my first loss.

This is not the first time that I lose something which is a part of me. Maybe he was talking about the loss of his father when he was a child and the loss of Alison when she left him.

But (he shrugs) it isn't my first loss.' Alison's reply is, (on her breath) 'It was mine’.

Alison says for me it was the first loss. That is why I cannot accept it. I am taking it very seriously.

How does the play end?

Helena leaves him. It is very ironic that Alison is going to stay with him. What are the last moments of the scene? They are back to their game which was considered as an escape for them. So in the very last part of the scene, we see Jimmy and Alison talking about their game again.

Alison at the end with the same comic emphasis:

(Poor bears ! She laughs a little. Then looks at him very tenderly, and adds very, very softly) Oh, poor, poor bears!)

She was talking about women that how poor Squirrels they are and talks about men how poor bears they are. So, it seems that they will continue their life again/ the same circle.

What is important here? Through all these quotations or dialogues, we understand about the character of Jimmy and why his character is so complicated and so complex. He was representing certain kind of people of his time (the angry young men). He was representing the young generation of his age.

Last time I asked you to figure an answer when we talked about the literary references in the play. The play is full of literary references. You hear about Shelley, Shaw, Shakespeare, Bronte, critics and all kinds of names related to literature. What is the purpose of John Osborne to depict all these literary references?

One thing is maybe the representation of the English culture through ages. Why is it always Jimmy who refers to these references (Not only him but mostly him)? Even in the dialogue between Helena and Alison, they talked about other references. Always Jimmy refers to literary figures. If you look at the meaning behinds the literary references that he was talking about, you will always find a common thing which is that he insults woman and rejects woman in such references. So, the first implication is to reveal his rejection to woman. When he compares Alison to a certain character in a Greek mythology, he was commenting on Alison’s passive way. He compares her to mythological figures who have strong characters. Always in his reference he uses it to reject women in general. It is Osborne in a mouth of Jimmy. He always represents his playwright. Another thing is that most of the references are to figures of literature who were mainly homosexual. He refers to these people as creative people. So, some critics say that his purpose is to show that those people because they are not burdened with the family life, they are not burdened with the requirements of a wife or children. That is why they are creative. Their time is all for their creativity. As if he is rejecting the social domestic life of a family. When Jimmy emphasizes the creativity of homosexual writers, he looks at these people that they are very creative because their time is only for them. They are not burden with quarreling with their life or with raising their children.

(at the end of the lecture the doctor answered the quiz questions she has given to them and talked about the final exam and gave them some advice regarding the exam).