

**The Modern Woman and Conflict of Gender Performance: An Analysis of
Pinter's Selected Plays**

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the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
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Abstract

This dissertation is an opportunity to explore Harold Pinter's selected plays to unveil the representation of women in modern drama and the conflict of gender on stage. The goal is to demonstrate a literary study of the portrayal of Pinter's male and female characters, as well as the tension that arises between them that can be found in three plays of Harold Pinter which are *The Homecoming* (1964), *The Lover* (1962), as well as *Night School* (1960). The study incorporates the ideas of famous philosophers including the French Simon de Beauvoir and American Judith Butler who have profoundly written on gender, masculinity and femininity. I would like to analyse how Pinter creates the illusion of family while also suggesting the fragility of traditional family structures that are easily challenged and broken. In addition, I will demonstrate how sexuality is used as a weapon of control by both genders, male and female, to manipulate each other in the false family structures depicted in his plays. Lastly, the connection between Pinter's plays and philosophies of Judith Butler and Simon de Beauvoir will illustrate that these plays depict the emergence of modern women on stage, through which Pinter creates a conflict between patriarchal society and the modern woman.

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Chapter 1

Introduction:

Harold Pinter was introduced to me for the very first time in a course named "Modern British Drama" at BRAC University, Bangladesh. The narrative style used in Harold Pinter's texts has had a profound impact on me. Pinter's distinctive writing style is known for its use of silences, pauses, oxymoron, irony, repetitions, and ambiguity. Nasrullah Mambrol in his article "Analysis of Harold Pinter's Plays" states that the way Pinter makes use of language is the most unique characteristic of his work (3). Moreover, his writing has a double interpretation, which both confuses and piques the reader's attention.

Harold Pinter is a Nobel Prize laureate (2005) and is a pillar of Theatre of the Absurd. Pinter creates magnificent plays, with patriarchal society as a recurring theme in his work. Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1957), a dramatic work that examines the struggles between dominating and controlled characters, has been regarded as one of his most popular plays. As a matter of fact, the theatre is basically a public space that is typically dominated by men. It is embodied in Pinter's plays, which dealt not only with political problems and the problem of sexuality, but also with a variety of other gender-related issues. Theatre offers a significant criticism of the manner in which British culture engaged with questions of gender and sexuality. The analysis of gender roles in culture, as a topic of modern theatre, necessitates an examination of masculine and feminine attitudes, as well as their thoughts.

Pinter became one of the noteworthy figures through his aberrant skills of writing which started to influence British theatre. In my thesis, I will analyze three of Pinter's plays, namely *The Lover* (1962), *The Homecoming* (1964) and *Night School* (1960) concerning gender conflict, by using the gender theories of Judith Butler and Simon de Beauvoir and explaining the characters and scenes.

1.1 Life of the Playwright

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) was an English playwright, director, actor, screenwriter as well as Nobel Prize winner. He is regarded as one of the most influential dramatists of the modern British era. Pinter is a product of the postwar period, which saw the rise of theatre of the avant-garde in Europe and Britain. He was part of a generation who grew up with the absurdist movement pervading much of the academic world and literary works of the twentieth century. Identity of gender and its relationships have been a major source of concern in theatre throughout World War II. Social disintegration and individual feelings, insecurity, subservience and domination, the dynamics of space and also the skepticism regarding religions are indeed depicted through the form and content of Pinter's plays.

Pinter is recognized for the unique style of writing. Naomi Garner in her article titled "The Politics of Harold Pinter" mentions that Pinter's early works are classified as comedy of menace because of its dark and unpleasant depictions of human relationships and interactions (2). They are also known for absurdist and postwar features, which critics and scholars frequently examine. Some of Pinter's early plays, termed comedy of menace, depict the threat of violence. *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Hothouse*, and *The Birthday Party* can all be interpreted as metaphors for political repression of individuals.

The minimalist, anti-naturalistic, sometimes violent drama, where there is pause, silence and lack of communication occupies the attention of the dramatist just like speech. In such a bizarre world defined better by the term "Pinteresque", the characters of him progresses in avoidance. The term "Pinteresque" has become widely used to describe Pinter's distinct, influential, and highly creative. His groundbreaking theatrical style is made up of dramatic factors such as his characters, theme, and vocabulary. Language serves as a vital tool of characterization, a shield of attack or defense, or a way to provide uncertainty metaphor for the past in Pinter's plays.

1.2. Texts Chosen for analysis

The Homecoming is a well-known text by Harold Pinter. There were six characters in this play. Max, who was in his seventies and the family's head, was one of the characters. He was the father of three sons. Teddy, who lived in America was the eldest son, Joey was the one who was striving to be a boxer, and Lenny was a pimp. Ruth was the name of his wife. On their way back from a European tour, Ruth and Teddy stopped by to see Teddy's family, and the struggle for power among family members became more intense from then on. She was the family's only female member. Another female character, Jessie, was introduced to us through other characters such as Sam and Max, but she did not have much growth. However, when Ruth moved in with Teddy's family, she mocked Lenny and later provoked Joey, and by the end of the play, she possessed the ultimate power and had become the center of attraction for all of the family's male members. Pinter incorporated subtle hints that she, too, had taken Jessie's position in the family. Hence, she also became financially stable, and the play's final scene implied that she eventually overthrew male dominance and gained control of the family. Pinter depicts the remarkable improvements in women's circumstances at this point. On stage, the only female figure arises as a queen who gains power and reigns over a kingdom of feminine males. Ruth had a specific role in her husband's home in this text.

The Lover (1962) is a play about a couple who have devised a role-playing game in which the husband, Richard, goes to work in the morning and returns in the afternoon disguised as 'Max,' his wife Sarah's 'lover.' As the play progresses, they attempt to reconcile the two roles they play in their life, combining their domestic, pragmatic, and loving experiences with the spontaneous, libidinous ones they share as their sexual alter egos. This play portrays an ironic portrayal of love, which is traditionally seen as the expected goal in a conjugal relationship for achieving marital equilibrium and social stability. The play intends to blur the border between civilized

role-playing and the immediate gratifying of savage urges, not simply by opposing the classic duality of love and sex in which one is respectable and the other is illegitimate and thus unacceptable. Rather, they are both part of a broader mechanism that compels them to participate in an ongoing process of power struggle in their fragmented numerous roles.

In *Night School*, the three major characters in this play are all posing as someone they are not in order to obtain something from someone else. To impress Sally, Walter, a minor villain recently freed from a short prison sentence, appears to be a big-time 'gunman.' Sally is claiming to be a language student at night (while working as a PE teacher during the day) when she is actually a showgirl/prostitute in order to gain the trust of Walter's aunts, who have given her Walter's room. Solto is posing as a destitute old senior in order to avoid paying taxes on his money accumulated throughout his criminal career. He must, however, show himself in order to impress Sally (who does not require courting; she simply requires payment).

Pinter's play explores the difference between females as well as male characters in terms of interaction, language and even the number of characters in each play.

1.3 Gender norms and roles

A major concern of my thesis is how gender roles are portrayed through Pinter's plays. I believe that this can profoundly be found in his contemporary plays. The status of women in relation to men has been a contentious topic with no definitive solution since the emergence of Eve and Adam. The disagreement stems from an unfair situation between the sexes that has surfaced on many occasions. Later on, it became a topic of concern in a variety of works and fields, including literature, philosophy and politics. Our daily conversations, lives and conflicts are all shaped by gender. Gender is something we do as Butler's assertion because it is so deeply rooted in our institution, behavior, and beliefs. Exploring gender concepts is necessary in order to demonstrate each person's position in society and to achieve a balance between the two

genders that leads to a society which is equal. Gender identity refers to how a person perceives himself to be masculine or feminine in a social setting. Femininity and masculinity are more closely associated with the social construct of gender than with the biological concept of sex. One may be male and see himself as feminine, or vice versa, according to social meaning.

Simone De Beauvoir is a French existentialist who wrote her book entitled as *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*). Here, she expresses her philosophical viewpoints regarding the existence of women as well as her position in society. In patriarchal society, women have been regarded as "the other," a subservient to the chauvinist man, according to De Beauvoir. In order to create a modern woman who can draw her own career, *The Second Sex* appeared to break with Victorian ideals of women's marginalization and ideas that view women as more of the "Angel in the House" whose role was to provide moral guidance to her family. Her book examines the status of sexual difference, defining gender as a social construct imposed on a sexed body. Simone de Beauvoir associated society with male and man explaining the dominance of man's total power over women as a reference to gender, as well as the social cultural construction that implied the presence of only one gender. The influential Judith Butler elaborated on Beauvoir's claim regarding division of sex or gender, and she strongly believed that if gender is socially constructed, it occurs due to repeated acts that solidify into appearance. The social role of woman or, man is formed by a set of actions that we are socialized into. We do not create these roles, rather they are created for us which is evident in the plays of Pinter.

These two feminist philosophers are the voices of woman in the society of postwar where the first one gives a message of a free and independent woman in order to free her from patriarchal chains, while the second clarifies the sense of gender, arguing that masculinity and femininity are the development of social interaction by various repetitive acts, and that these genders are distinct from sex.

1.4 Purpose of the Thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to analyze three of Pinter's plays, namely *Night School*, *The Lover* and *The Homecoming* by examining them through the lenses of gender roles and also explore the theory of Judith Butler and Simone de Beauvoir regarding the identity of gender through the scenes as well as characters. The paper is organized into chapters that include a brief introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, textual study based on Pinter's three plays relating them with conflict of gender, an analysis focusing on the characters and scenes relating to the theory of two of the philosophers and, finally, a conclusion. The aim of this dissertation is the representation of gender roles in post-war Britain through the dramatic works of Harold Pinter plays *Night School*, *The Lover* and *The Homecoming*.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing Research on Pinter's plays

2.1 Pinter as an Absurdist

Harold Pinter is one of the most well-known living dramatists of the age. In the 1950s, he was one of the pioneers of the Theater of the Absurd, which emerged and flourished primarily in England, France, Germany, Scandinavia, and other English-speaking nations as a reaction to WWII and under the impact of expressionism and surrealism. The absurd, which is one of the many facets of Pinter's work, serves as a way of entering the reality that is Pinter's major focus. In an article "The Nobel Prize in Literature", Pinter writes that,

There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false'. I believe that these assertions still make sense and do still apply to the exploration of reality through art. So as a writer I stand by them but as a citizen I cannot. As a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false? (Pinter "The Nobel Prize in Literature")

Martin Esslin created the phrase and released a book with the same title in 1961, describing a style of theater writing shared by European dramatists such as Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet and Arthur Adamov. In subsequent editions, Harold Pinter was added to the quartet of playwrights. So according to Esslin, the origins of this form of theater may be traced back to 1896, when Alfred Jarry premiered *Ubu Roi*, a play about the exploits of a ruthless usurper of the Polish crown, in Paris for the first time.

Many critics consider him to be one of the most influential figures in the Theatre of the Absurd, and his works have been analyzed in light of the theories and doctrines of this avant-garde literature. The Theater of the Absurd has sparked debate among readers and critics, despite the fact that it is educational and helpful to them. Some have attempted to argue that Pinter is merely an absurdist playwright, while others have presented evidence to support the notion that he varies from practitioners of the Absurd drama in various ways. Joseph Hynes in his article "Pinter and Morality" highlights the terms critics have used to describe Pinter and his play, namely "existentialist," "absurdist," "amoral" and "anti-humanistic" (Hynes). Harold Pinter, an avid reader and practitioner of modern play, undoubtedly had a great variety of sources to study in order to develop a keen understanding of the craft of writing. Etheridge in his book states that "Pinter has used tactics inherited from Ionesco, Hemingway, and Kafka in his work" (Etheridge 427). As a result, nearly all of Pinter's dramaturgy's influences were either founders or forerunners of the avant-garde Theatre of the Absurd. Ultimately, Pinter was recognized as "among the most promising exponents of the Theatre of the Absurd... in English-speaking countries" according to Martin Esslin, who classified absurdist playwrights in his book and considers his work in the context of absurdist traditions, which are as old as literature and apply to all aspects of human life, leaving earlier imprints in mythology and the myth of human existence (Esslin 204).

2.2 Pinter's Linguistic Style

Pauses, silences, repetitions, irony, oxymorons, contradiction, vagueness, semantic ambiguity etc are all elements of Harold Pinter's style. His plays are marked by a sense of suspense, ambiguity and mystification that sets them apart from others. Pinter uses a unique method to explore the wonder of human interactions. His plays are known for their simple narratives and limited casts of characters, yet powerfully tense language. In his plays, he mostly uses pauses,

dots, and silence. They are the most important and distinctive aspects of his dramatic discourse.

Michael Billington in his book *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* states that

Below the word spoken is the thing known and unspoken. So often, below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken. My characters tell me so much and no more, with reference to their experience, their aspirations, their motives, their history.

(Billington 5)

Many researchers have investigated how Pinter is renowned for his mastery of the use of language. The famous 'pause' he incorporated into his playwriting became a part of the 'Pinteresque' theatrical genre. His conversations mirror everyday speech because of his use of unpolished grammar, colloquial language, frequent clichés, poor grammar, and nonsensical syntax. His contribution to modern theatre can be summed up in a single word: "Pinteresque," a phrase that captures his distinct developments in both content and form.

Pinter considers silence to be a form of communication. The unexpressed is an important part of the linguistic function. In an article named "Purely Pinteresque: The Elements of Pinter's Language", it is mentioned that "The script of a Pinter play is like sheet music" (Steinback).

The language of Pinter's plays discloses the suppressed emotions of the characters as a result of a cruel and malicious reality. Pinter's well-known use of pauses and silences emphasizes the characters' mystery as well as their lack of communication, causing them to misread one another's words and actions. Pinteresque atmosphere of terror elicits fear while simultaneously generating curiosity - a spectator may sense that something is wrong, even though the dialogues do not explicitly declare it. Pinter demonstrates his expertise of crafting realistic plays with ambiguous meaning by combining extended pauses, repetitive patterns, and the use of nonsensical words. As a means of communication, language has lost its meaning and purpose. Characters communicate, yet their words are frequently lacking in meaning. The action does not flow smoothly or in a chronological order, and even when some events occur, the audience is

often puzzled about what is going on. The unique use of language by Pinter demonstrates his inventiveness. However, the absurdity of human existence is depicted through language. A short conversation or a long monologue take on new meaning and serve a variety of functions. They serve as a model for human relationships, convey character intentions, and even counteract the action.

2.3 Thematic Study on Pinter

Harold Pinter is considered as a well-known dramatist. He has written roughly forty plays throughout the course of his four-decade career, including plays for radio and television. He began his career as an actor and later went on to become a playwright, director and producer. To define his plays, Pinter critics have used terms like "dramas of non-communication," "kitchen-sink drama," "neo-realist," "comedy of threat," "drama of cruelty" and "black comedy," He covers a wide range of themes and subject matter, as evidenced by the diversity of labels he wears. Pinter's plays mainly take place on a single-room stage, with only a few characters entering and interacting. From the first words they utter, there is a persistent sense of threat, emphasizing the intended impact of expressing discomfort, bewilderment, and apathy. One of the most essential issues is power relations and the identity crisis, as well as people's incapacity to communicate. Some of the themes which are discussed already by critics and researchers are described below:

Firstly, the themes of alienation and belonging are prevalent in Harold Pinter's works. He had experienced isolation and desired someone to be a part of his life. In his plays, the feeling of solitude, which is a key issue in existentialism, is a constant motif. The best instances of alienation and belongingness are *The Homecoming*, *The Caretaker*, *No Man's Mind* and *Betrayal*. He endorses the idea that, despite technological advancements and improvements in modern man's living standards, disaffection pervades human life in both personal and social dimensions. The characters in some of his plays are estranged from their friends and families.

Their alienation is either a product of their own nature or a result of the actions of others. These characters grow estranged from the society in which they live as a result of their experiences. Moreover, these figures are incapable of connecting or talking with other people, which is a common aspect of absurd drama plays. This difficult process, along with the outside world's indifference to their predicament, leads to isolation and, in some cases, death for these characters. Boulton in this context states in his article "Harold Pinter: The Caretaker and Other Plays" that:

Pinter's fascination with human isolation and insecurity, his awareness of a brutal world where mystery and tension are always liable to appear, his recognition of the mundane as well as the sinister that are part of human experience, and his control of the verbal medium all appear in his plays. (Boulton 100)

Secondly, another fundamental aspect of Pinter's literary style is the use of violence and terror. From play to play, he was able to mature and refine his thinking on this particular use. Theatrical violence can be identified on a variety of levels, from the most blatant to the most sophisticated. It could be a physical force capable of inflicting pain or death. Furthermore, violence can manifest itself in a complex way as an aggressive desire, as well as in any other conflictual situation. *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, and *The Hothouse* are the plays that can be considered as threat plays. Physical violence is a particularly egregious form of antagonism that can lead to abuse or murder. The external power that threatens the life of humans is shown in these plays. S. H. Gale in his book *Butter's Going Up: A Critical Analysis of Harold Pinter's Work* observes that "The threat to a person's security by unknown outside powers, as well as the destruction of his identity beneath the onslaught of the invading force" (Gale 132). Commenting on the theme in Pinter's play, Ray Orley also states that "The primary character attempts to escape from the metaphysical horror of the outside world by holding up in some supposedly safe burrow" (Orley 22). As a result, the battle becomes an unavoidable aspect in

the scenario, with violence playing a key role in the outcome. Sexual assault can take both verbal and gesture forms. In reality, sex is frequently exploited to incite violence. In fact, sex is used as a mean to evoke violence in plays like *The Lover* (1963), *Tea Party* (1963) etc.

Thirdly, Harold Pinter provides his female characters diverse roles and portrays a puzzling persona of women in his plays. In *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, Peter Raby claims that female characters in Pinter's plays take on three separate roles: mother, wife, and whore (Raby 12-13). The plays, such as *Homecoming*, and *Betrayal* represent women who have only a few patterns to choose from. These plays feature women who are struggling for survival and discovering their true selves. A detailed examination of Pinter's plays reveals that the majority of these women are cast as subordinate characters to men. The fact that they are shown as puppets in the hands of male characters or external forces that restrict their social and individual existence connects these figures. Men are portrayed as powerful, while women are portrayed as physically weak and preoccupied with their sexual and whimsical desires. Hence, Pinter uses gender violence as a tool to strongly condemn the mainstream attitude toward women as inferior home objects to be exploited by males as their own belongings rather than as distinct and independent human beings.

2.4 Point of Departure

As previously discussed, there have been numerous studies analysing how Pinter's plays contains various stylistic features. There are also various studies about his different themes of different plays. However, there seems to be a scarcity when it comes to the study of gender. There are articles about how Pinter presents women to be subjugated as well as oppressed but there are little to no studies about how Pinter's female characters challenge gender roles. Taking this existing gap, as well as the growing need for more studies to be conducted within such a popular genre into consideration, this thesis aims to examine the characters of Pinter, especially women, who are challenging to gender expectations.

Chapter 3:

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Gender as a Social Inquiry

Gender is present in our daily lives, conversations, and conflicts. It is essential to understand the gender concept in order to demonstrate each person's role in society as well as to achieve a balance between the two genders that leads to a more equal society. Gender has been a common phrase, especially since its meaning was altered by feminist philosopher Simone De Beauvoir during the twentieth century's second wave of feminism. In her book *The Second Sex*, she describes gender as a social construct rather than a biological concept equivalent to sex. She claims that gender roles are socially constructed and, as a result, are subject to change. In this respect, several writers portray as well as depict gender conflict and diversity through their literary product, such as Harold Pinter who dramatized this great struggle through three masterpieces *Night School*, *The Lover*, as well as *The Homecoming*.

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, the notion of gender entered popular English language as a key response to the feminist reaction against women's subjugation as well as oppression in society. Whelehan specifically in his book *Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to 'Post-Feminism* states that the expansion of gender dates from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s, which is referred to as the second wave of feminism (Whelehan 56).

From a philosophical perspective, Simon de Beauvoir released her book *The Second Sex* wherein she offers a message of independence and freedom. She builds a bridge between social constructions and biological differences that are linked to behaviors, asserting that the true mental or physical impacts of biological differences have been exaggerated in order to maintain a patriarchal power structure and raise awareness among women. In this regard, she states in the first chapter entitled "Childhood" that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir 295). This is a significant remark through which she built a western feminist understanding of

identity of gender. As she stated, one becomes a woman as a result of social expectations and pressures that create a culture in which one does not choose to be a woman. In her book, she focuses on the status of sexual diversity.

Humanity is male, and man defines woman not in herself, but in relation to him; she is not seen as a self-sufficient being... She is sex to him, pure sex at that. She is defined and distinguished in relation to man, rather than in relation to him; she is the inessential, the incidental as opposed to the essential. She is the Other, he is the Subject, he is the Absolute. (Beauvoir 26)

The above quotation implies how Beauvoir explains how to link humanity with man, as well as describes the dominance of man's entire power over woman as a reference to gender, also its sociological cultural construction that implied the existence of one gender. As a result, she emphasizes the negative aspects of being a woman as well as the development of this identity as a forced identity throughout childhood as a result of societal custom illustrating feminine characteristics. Plessix in his article "Dispatches from the Other" mentions that novelist Philip Gordon Wylie compliments that "*The Second Sex* is one of the few great books of our era" (Plessix).

Judith Butler is an American feminist who asserts in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity* in 1990, that both sex and gender are determined by personal decisions. "The ordinary way in which body gestures, movements, and all sorts of enactments create the appearance of a permanent gendered self" (Butler 519). Butler's emphasis on the distinction between sex and gender theory is an argument to clarify that there is no sex, which led to the fact that gender is a script of acts that people play out every day.

Butler proposed the performative theory of gender, in which she claims that sex and gender cannot be distinguished by examining diverse gender contexts. She skillfully persuades us to reject sex and gender divisions because sex is socially constructed in the first place. Judith Butler

has expanded profoundly on analyzing the term gender since she theorizes the performativity of gender. Gender is generated through a series of repetitive activities in which the production of a series of acts solidifies a specific impression about a woman or a girl and how their understanding of gender performativity must change the way we look at gender. In an article titled *Modules on Butler: On Gender and Sex*, Judith Butler mentions that

When we say that gender is performed, we necessarily mean that we have chosen a part, and also that our role playing is crucial to who we are and how we present ourselves to the world. So, to state that gender is performative is somewhat different, because performative implies that it generates a series of outcomes. We behave, move, speak, as well as converse in ways that reinforce the perception that we are a man or a woman. In a sense, the act that one does, the act that one performs, has been going on before one appeared on the scene. (Dino)

Moreover, Butler also linked performativity to J. L Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* speech act theory. By taking a post-structuralist approach, she states that gender is only produced and constituted by language. In this regard, language always takes precedence over gender identity, which is viewed as a significant action capable of bringing coherence to subjects that are the outcome rather than the cause of discourse. "Within the inherited discourse... gender proves to be performative, that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be" (Butler 24).

The two philosophical foundations are linked to women's changing circumstances in the twentieth century, while Beauvoir succeeded in exploring the distinction between sex, and gender, Butler expanded on this theory by asserting that gender is linked to fluidity and performativity because it reflects a series of repeated practices germane to a particular discourse.

3.2 Femininity and Masculinity

Femininity and masculinity are more closely associated with the social construct of gender than with the biological concept of sex. One can be male and consider himself as feminine, or vice versa, according to social definition.

The idea of femininity has been defined as a set of socially imposed behaviors and activities, as well as roles associated with female individuals. “To be a woman, one must participate in the strange and threatening reality that is femininity” (Beauvoir 11).

Moreover, Beauvoir equates femininity with man's patriarchal control, which constrains women's choices and freedom. On the point of masculinity, Joan Roughgarden states in her article “Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People” that masculinity defines the physical appearance of male species as well as behaviors. He also suggests that referring to a female with masculine qualities as a masculine female is acceptable. The idea of masculinity alludes to the reality that one's social attitude is a mirror of who he is, as Beauvoir argues that the man has the capacity to influence a woman's life in Western culture, where the masculine is the normative default “He is the absolute, she is the other” (Beauvoir 4).

Furthermore, she also associates the masculine with acts that go beyond the mere maintenance of life. As a result, traditionally masculinity implies being self-sufficient, forceful, and strong, acting assertively and as a leader. “Male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being” (Beauvoir 5).

According to Beauvoir's interpretation of this phrase, man plays the patriarchal role of the human being who sees him as masculine, whereas the relative woman, who sees herself as feminine, is always the other who cannot participate unless in the sphere of domestic as a passive participant.

3.3 Gender Portrayal in Twentieth Century British Literature

Through literary works, the portrayal of the relationship of man and woman has also become popular. Gender issues are the main point on which any literary work is dependent, even if the writer's subject matter was not gender; the depiction of man or woman in literature is, in fact, a representation of gender issue.

Several writers from previous decades and classical literature took up the task of presenting the male-female interaction. The play that we mostly read in Western society is *Hamlet*, written by William Shakespeare who is the father of literature. Here, women play minor roles in depicting their historical situation. Despite the fact that Gertrude is the Queen and Ophelia is the prince's sweetheart, they are never heard and their actions are affected by the men. On the other hand, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, is unquestionably Shakespeare's most powerful female protagonist in the play. The ferocity with which she pursues power defies all expectations of a 'woman' at the time. The representation of women has changed with time. Clare McManus in her article "Shakespeare and Gender: The Woman's Part" mentions that "Shakespeare has texts that bear his name, or the narrower issue of whether these texts prove Shakespeare as a feminist, a sexist, or something in between" (McManus).

Furthermore, Harold Pinter represented gender conflict as well within his plays. The struggle is primarily shown between male and female characters. *Night School*, *The Lover*, and *The Homecoming* are three key works for gender presentation on his stage, in which women compete with males for power, identity, and to reserve an independent space in patriarchal society. Pinter dramatized the male-female character as a societal construct, trying to maintain their identity as they have the power to satisfy the very requirements of human nature, in his plays. Pinter's men and women compete not merely against each other, but also against each other's sexual desire, repulsion, and jealousy. Also, the home is the battleground in these three plays, as a woman

strives for equal goals with a man, including power and security. For instance-*The Homecoming* presents a new face of woman; she appears strong and confident, controlling her life far from man's practices as well as the usual domestic sphere. As a result, Pinter's woman does not allow gender to limit their territorial rights. However, this dissertation seeks to prove that Pinter's characters, especially women, are challenging gender expectations.

Chapter: 4

Textual Analysis

4.1 *The Homecoming*

Harold Pinter delivered a masterwork in 1965 titled *The Homecoming*. The audience and critics have been captivated by Pinter's dramaturgy in this play, which explores the relationship between gender, power, and identity. *The Homecoming* is a two-act play with a conversation between Max and his son Lenny in the first act. The two males were primarily discussing the paper as Max looked for scissors to cut out a clothes voucher. Lenny, on the other hand, does not answer his father's questions. The conversation quickly drifted to horses, with Max recalling his glorious days at Epson with his friend Mac. Meanwhile, Max's brother Sam walks into the room and begins to stress that he is one of the greatest in the business, despite Max's lack of interest. Max then goes on to explain that Sam could bring a bride home to live with him and take care of him as if he were an ideal mother. Sam replies he has no bride in response to his brother's proposal; the friction between the two brothers is heightened when Max says Sam will have to move away eventually because he cannot pay the rent, and they then create another argument concerning Max's character. Joey, the little kid, walks in after a boxing training session.

In the second portion of the first act, Teddy, the immigrant son, and his wife Ruth enter the house. The couple was on a tour of Europe when they came to England, leaving their three children behind in America. Their talk reveals their tight and acrimonious relationship. Ruth refuses to go to bed with her spouse because she is willing to go on a walk to get fresh air, something Teddy does not need. Lenny arrives and greets Teddy for going to sleep. Lenny and Ruth had a long talk where Lenny tells her about his time as a pimp, including how he murdered a prostitute in a fit of rage and struck an elderly woman in the stomach. Ruth appears

undeterred by his proclivity for violence, going so far as to propose to him when he offers her some water. She dances with him and kisses him at the end of the performance. Meanwhile, Max wakes up, assuming Ruth is a brat, and Teddy appears to deafen his wife and clarify that she is his wife to everyone.

The second act discloses the family sharing a meal. Max gives a moral about his deceased wife Jessie, who would have loved to see that happy scene. Teddy's job as a philosophy professor in America is brought up by one of the family members. Teddy could not answer Lenny's philosophical inquiries about Christianity, and Ruth stopped the conversation with a compliment regarding her beautiful body. Teddy accepts his decision to return to America, but Ruth disagrees and chooses to remain in England. Ruth's sexual remarks, which are only connected with a prostitute, startle Lenny and his father.

Teddy announces hours later that he purposefully took Lenny's cheese roll, just as his family had stolen Ruth from him. Despite the fact that they had been in bed for two hours, Joey announces his pure relation to Ruth. Meanwhile, Teddy had made the decision to leave Ruth with his family and return to his life in America. Ruth was more interested in sketching her own future than exhibiting her body on Greek streets, so Max and Lenny started drafting the terms under which Ruth could stay with them as they agreed that she would bring them money through prostitution. At this point, Sam reveals an old truth regarding Max's wife's sexual relationships with his friend Mac. Max crawled to Ruth in the closing scene, arguing that he is not an old man and that she should kiss him.

4.2 Depiction of Ruth in *The Homecoming*

The Homecoming represents the norms that characterized British society in the 1960s. Thus, the female role expanded dramatically, allowing her to hold a prominent position and enjoy the freedom of practice and choice in a time when patriarchal males despaired of giving birth to

new women on stage.

Firstly, Teddy, who holds a PhD in philosophy, appeared to be a weak character throughout the play's events. Teddy's acceptance of the family's proposal to his wife Ruth, who is meant to be a whore on Greek Street, demonstrates his insanity as well as a weak mentality that devalues his masculinity. Teddy drifts more away from masculinity values. Giving Ruth the key to the house, putting out his cigar, and going to bed before Ruth results in his emasculation and loss of influence among his brothers.

Ruth's dynamic presence influenced the dramatist's portrayal of women. Ruth was asked to stay with the family when Teddy went to America without his wife. Teddy and his family persuade Ruth to stay in England with them and acquire property while working as a prostitute. Ruth, on the other hand, has her own plans. Henry Hewes in his article "Probing Pinter's Play" points out that "She achieves a certain level of freedom at the play's conclusion. She is free to do as she pleases, also it is unlikely that she will visit Greek Street. But even if she did, she would not consider herself a harlot" (Hewes 4).

Ruth. I would want at least three rooms and a bathroom.

Lenny. You wouldn't need three rooms and a bathroom.

Max. She'd need a bathroom.

Lenny. But not. Three rooms

Pause.

Ruth. Oh, I would really.

Lenny. Two would do. Ruth. No. Two wouldn't be enough...

Ruth: I'd need an awful lot. Otherwise, I wouldn't be content (Pinter 76).

Ruth, a female character, represents the norms of masculinity as she is seeking independence and freedom in her motherland. The family's single woman challenges the five men and succeeds in creating her own decision with a strong independent personality, causing a

transition from the chauvinists' controller to the subjugated male by Ruth. She abandons her dissatisfying work as a mother in favour of something that affords her more financial stability and independence as Simon Henderson and Guide Almansi in their book *Harold Pinter* remarks that: "By agreeing to meet the household's sexual needs...Also, Ruth obtains contradictory independence. By becoming a whore, she is able to break out from the intellectual straitjacket of the philosopher's humble life" (Henderson and Almansi 69).

Secondly, Ruth generates a vibrant atmosphere in the house by displaying a strong independent personality among the males. When Lenny tries to overpower her with extraordinary stories about his life as a pimp, she remains passive and uninterested in what he is saying. As she defends herself, Lenny tries to steal her glass. Lenny's climb to prominence is aided by her ease with the dominant figure.

Don't be too sure though. You've forgotten something. Look at me. I ... move my leg. That's all it is. But I wear ... underwear ... which moves with me ... it captures your attention. Perhaps you misinterpret. The action is simple. It's a leg...moving. My lips move. Why don't you restrict...your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant...than the words which come through them. You must bear that possibility ... in mind." (Pinter *The Homecoming* 61)

Furthermore, Pinter portrays Ruth as a queen who wakes up, orders, and demands. Ruth appears on the stage of the Homecoming, demanding food and drink. Joey and Lenny were attempting to assist her.

At the end of the play, Ruth decides to stay in England, a location where she can exercise her freedom and escape a life where she is bound by traditional marriage and family traditions and ideals. A powerful scenario that highlighted women's overwhelming domination over men.

Pinter smooths the patriarchy through Ruth's character, who takes charge of her own position beyond masculine comprehension. The fact that she flirted with Lenny in a sexual dance and kissed him while fooling around with Joey, culminating in a rolling scene on the sofa with him, is proof of her previous life as a prostitute. Prentice in his book *Ruth: Pinter's The Homecoming Revisited* mentions that

Pinter remarks that thousands of women around the country are rolling off couches with their brothers, cousins, or next-door neighbours at any given time. When your husband looks on, it's a little odd, but it doesn't mean you're a harlot. (Prentice 463).

Particularly in this part of the play, Ruth's behaviour as an unorthodox relationship is akin to the Oedipal fantasy, which is a mirror of her femininity in this permissive society. Ruth's femininity is essential to her autonomy and sexual liberation. The freedom to express herself sexually without being constrained by the roles of wife and mother that chauvinist society assigns to women. Pinter remarks "She is in possession of a kind of freedom," (Prentice 458)

The degradation of masculinity is clearly depicted in Pinter's *The Homecoming* as the female beats all the males around her, she takes the queen's charge in which she defies her power and identity within the social taboo as well as the traditional family. Ruth imposes a masculine figure by which she possesses the individual feminine strength and the ability to achieve great goals.

4.3 Ruth Challenging the Gender Roles

The development of Pinter's *The Homecoming* coincided with the beginning of the second wave of feminism, which focused on women's roles transitioning from marginalization, subjugation, and male discrimination to liberated women who inhabited a certain place in society according to their desires. Beyond the analysis of the play's components that reveal a specific ideology

about the status of gender within the social structure, *The Homecoming* events appear ludicrous as the circumstance at first glance. It poses a conundrum on the stage of the 1960s since it has remained a central figure in Pinter's canon. In modern drama, the play depicts an extraordinary crush between the two genders. The fight between males and the single female figure in *The Homecoming* is evident, as everyone wants to have authority over the other.

In this play, Ruth behaves in a way that allows her to gain a significant advantage over the male character as she develops her own kingdom based on her own set of rules. Ruth, in reality, played two roles in America: wife or mother, but when she went home, she decided to be a mother/whore for the old boys.

Lenny: You'd supply everything. Everything you need.

Ruth: I'd need an awful lot. Otherwise, I wouldn't be content.

Lenny: You'd have everything.

Ruth: I would naturally want to draw up an inventory of everything I would need, which would require your signatures in the presence of witnesses (Pinter *The Homecoming* 77).

So, Ruth decides to stay in England, despite her husband's insistence that she return to America.

As the conversation between Lenny and his sister-in-law grows into a power struggle, the dramaturgy's conflict becomes more thorny. Ruth defies Lenny's threats and emerges

victorious. When Ruth politely declines his offer to relieve her glass, the family mistress,

Lenny, loses this round of battle. Ruth claims that she should avoid succumbing to subservience in order to keep her dignity and also get Lenny's respect.

The fact of reacting in a specific manner in a gendered society that acknowledges women as sexual objects; thus, the sexual revolution integrated public thoughts as Beauvoir states in *The Second Sex* that: "Woman is the object through which the male subject creates himself" (De Beauvoir). However, the female is not an object in the hand of the subject as Ruth used all the males around her as sexual objects.

In Pinter's theatre, the male characters were all vying for power and supremacy over one another. The conflict in this drama appears to be between five males, with just one woman defending herself in a clever manner by defining her identity based on her beliefs and wants. Ruth originally disregarded her husband's requests that she return home for her children, instead of satisfying her desires by settling with Teddy's family, demonstrating the female's authority over the masculine figure as she gains paradoxical supremacy as well as independence.

Ruth, the strong woman, refuses to please her husband and is not at all his servant. This denial is significant because she defies Victorian ideals of the angel in the house. Ruth puts a stop to chauvinist males' dominance over women. As a result, she uses the game's role against him. In a British setting, the woman becomes much more active as a person; she has the opportunity to make judgments and exercise her liberality and freedom.

The closing scene, in which the householder begs Ruth for a kiss, epitomizes the significant role played by women in this fight over gender representation in postwar British society.

Ruth occupies a prominent position as a glorious queen, with every guy awaiting her decision and pleading for her happiness. Steven H. Gale in his book *Butter's Going up: A Critical Analysis of Harold Pinter's Work* mentions that "In order to meet her own wants, she satisfies numerous demands for the many males in her family" (Gale 155).

Thus, Harold Pinter refutes all accusations that he is a misogynist in *The Homecoming*. He portrays a modern independent woman capable of challenging all the males in her life to meet her demands and desires. In this play, the female character succeeds in setting the game's rules, allowing her to vanquish the chauvinist man who is selfish. *The Homecoming* is a mirror that reflects a variety of shifts in women's societal roles over the second half of the twentieth century. Pinter blurred typical family roles in an absurdist style, in which he tends to criticize the patriarchal structure in the postwar era.

4.4 *The Lover*

The Lover (1962) is a play about a couple who have devised a role-playing game in which the husband, Richard, goes to work in the morning and returns in the afternoon disguised as 'Max,' his wife Sarah's 'lover.' As the play progresses, they attempt to reconcile the two roles they play in their life, combining their domestic, pragmatic, and loving experiences with the spontaneous, libidinous ones they share as their sexual alter egos. This play portrays an ironic portrayal of love, which is traditionally seen as the expected goal in a conjugal relationship for achieving marital equilibrium and social stability. The play intends to blur the border between civilized role-playing and the immediate gratifying of savage urges, not simply by opposing the classic duality of love and sex in which one is respectable and the other is illegitimate and thus unacceptable. Rather, they are both parts of a broader mechanism that compels them to participate in an ongoing process of power struggle in their fragmented numerous roles.

Richard is notable for being the first of Pinter's male dramatic characters to express some awareness and respect of female agency; that is, the first character to exhibit some consciousness of the discourses defining gender roles and portrayal. This occurs as the couple moves from a detached indulgence in sexual play to a balanced negotiation of a more complex connection in which desire and quotidian subjectivity are no longer separated.

4.5 Depiction of Sarah in *The Lover*

It is one of the few plays by Harold Pinter that is regarded as cheery, uplifting, and celebratory of domesticity. Sarah is a normal housewife, with no professional employment or even a sense of motive outside of her house, although she exemplifies the dual roles of mistress as well as housewife within it. Through her marriage's role-playing games, she is able to operate completely well in her environment. The play begins with a fairly humorous conversation between Richard (the husband) as well as Sarah (the wife) where they nonchalantly talk about

the lover of Sarah's visit. As the play progresses, we observe that the lover is, in fact, Richard, also the scenes eventually reveal the essence of this play within the marriage and the roles each of them assumes for the other to some extent. The tension of positions for the characters is expressed to the reader as the play examines the couple's dual connection as dignified, suburban wife/husband as well as heartfelt lover/mistress

More importantly, in Sarah, Pinter created his first leading female character capable of expressing sexual autonomy and rejecting the basic binary between domesticity and sexuality that women in his previous plays either embrace or unsuccessfully contend with. By rejecting the separate roles of wife and whore, which Richard had assigned to her, Sarah takes up the role of mistress, which incorporates the features of both. As a result, Sakellaridou mentions in her book *Pinter's Female Portraits* that "Sarah appears to trust in the totality of her personality and she is braver in confronting archaic social forms than Richard" (9).

4.6 Sarah Challenging the Gender Roles

Firstly, Sarah symbolizes a feminist perspective to the housewife character in the context of the socio-political scene of the period. She may be a housewife and bored sometimes, but also she is not a sufferer of her circumstances. Moreover, she is perfectly able to adapt to her circumstances in order to meet her desires. She is capable of producing harmony when Richard lacks the resources to accept their predicament. Also, the play is set entirely in the house of a married suburban couple and deals exclusively with domestic and marital issues. Through the theme of marital life, Pinter explores the thinking of characters as well as their capability to work together. What distinguishes *The Lover* from his other plays is the passion with which it accepts the married couple's desire to involve in an erotic dream. The archetypal characters

demonstrate creativity and talent in spontaneity and sensual seduction, attacking the idea of married life's monotony with amazing liveliness. Their domestic eroticism is glorified, and the dread of betrayal inside this most sacred of covenants is confronted and mocked in a fresh setting and context.

Secondly, *The Lover* is about a love that has become stale, but we can see Richard and Sarah fighting tooth and nail to keep it alive. Lucina Paquet Gabbard in his book *Dream Structure of Pinter's Plays* mentions that Sarah's mature image is hidden beneath the latent picture of a small girl who compensated for her life's sexual limits by indulging in fantasies (Gabbard 161).

Sarah's inner child clings to the imagination as the appropriate outlet for sexual impulses. The play implies that she is the one who created the game. However, when Richard makes her aware of this, she initially rejects before silently assenting by staring at him with a "little smile" (Pinter *The Lover* 6). She seems to be really delighted with the setup since then. Sarah states to Richard that "things are perfectly balanced" (Pinter *The Lover* 13). Richard came to her at whatever time she had desired as well as taking on the role of Max which is her lover.

However, when he attempts to replace this, she explodes with rage, revealing that her fantasy existence is far from over. In the afternoons when Richard has not arrived, she has had private fantasies:

Do you think he's the only one who comes! Do you? Do you think he's the only one I entertain? Mmmmm? Don't be silly. I have other visitors all the time. I receive it all the time...I give them strawberries in season. With cream.

Strangers, total strangers. (Pinter *The Lover* 25)

She might simply be lying, which is being utilized by her to take vengeance on him due to the desire of him to end the game. It works as Richard starts their ritual of sex all over again.

Bernard in his book *Harold Pinter* states: "*The Lover* contrasts asexual marriage with intensely sexual non-marriage. The latter's victory is the victory of sex over tradition, and the woman's

desire over the man's" (Dukore 64).

Here, Sarah appears to be the very first female in this play to publicly express her dissatisfaction with Richard's views on women: "I must admit, I find your attitude to women pretty alarming" (Pinter *The Lover* 10). When Richard compares his wife to an old music box, she scorns his merely carnal engagement with a whore. Sarah responds "I can't pretend the picture offers me great pleasure" (Pinter *The Lover* 12). Thus, it can be said that Sarah is somewhat free to express her sexuality. She displays the intensity of her personality as well as the liveliness of visions of her by asserting her ego in the narrow area of intimate relationships in which she is confined.

4.7 *Night School*

In 1960, a play called *Night School* was produced and presented on television. In the book *Pinter: The Playwright*, it is mentioned how the play is often regarded as one of Pinter's least notable works, with critics claiming that it is very much thematic and Pinteresque (Esslin 102). It is a straightforward play in many aspects, having a clear plot. *Night School*, on the other hand, emphasizes crucial variables in character development.

The three major characters in this play are all posing as someone they are not in order to obtain something from someone else. To impress Sally, Walter, a minor villain recently freed from a short prison sentence, appears to be a big-time 'gunman.' Sally is claiming to be a language student at night (while working as a PE teacher during the day) when she is actually a showgirl/prostitute in order to gain the trust of Walter's aunts, who have given her Walter's room. Solto is posing as a destitute old senior in order to avoid paying taxes on his money accumulated throughout his criminal career. He must, however, show himself in order to impress Sally (who does not require courting; she simply requires payment). Pinter, like always, is non-judgmental. Being a criminal or a whore is just as acceptable as being respectable but

bickering aunts. The popularity of this play is due to the non-censorious acceptance of these well-drawn characters, as well as the superb usage and flow of language.

4.8 Depiction of Sally in *Night School*

Sally works as a teacher during the day and as a dancer/ prostitute at night. Also, she embodies the whore/goddess archetype that appears in subsequent plays of Pinter as well as culminates in Ruth in the play *The Homecoming*. We can observe that Sally is the ideal lodger: tidy, friendly, courteous, diligent, and intelligent. On the other hand, Walter has recently been freed from jail and is returning to his aunt's home, where he previously resided. Walter's aunts are enchanted by their new lodger and enjoy her company. In reality, her presence is a non-threat to everyone except Walter. The fact that a grown guy feels scared by a lady in his aunt's house highlights his immaturity and infantile mentality. We come to know that he has been living with his two aunts for several years and in his room, he never had a girl. The danger offered by her to him is focused on the room itself, which is a symbol of freedom as well as individualism throughout the plays of Pinter. In both his personal and professional lives, Walter is fundamentally a failure. His line of work is criminal, and we are told this is not his first time behind bars, so he cannot be very good at it.

Sally is an expert in her field. It is evident in the club, where her demand is high from clients as well as confident in her surroundings. Her mood as well as vocabulary change dramatically depending on whether she is at work or at home. Also, she seems to be polite and has good vocabulary in home interactions of her, which is consistent with her career as a school teacher. She is coarse, profane, and determined in her working environment, aware of the necessity to stand her position or even protect herself amid her much shady and dangerous circumstances, she says: "I'll kick him in the middle of his paraphernalia one of these days" (Pinter *Night School* 214).

4.9 Sally Challenging the Gender Roles

Firstly, Sally is self-assured and dignified, and she can adapt to her surroundings without jeopardizing her integrity. Sally cares for herself and her wholeness, refusing to sacrifice her personality or job in order to fit into the patriarchal world she lives in. If her night-time profession is known by anyone, she will be ostracized by this society, thus she must choose between compromising herself or removing herself from the circumstance. This she accomplishes admirably, departing the house (and story) on a friendly note, demonstrating to the audience that the completeness of Sally as a prostitute and teacher, as well as her function, is intact. Her character division as well as responsibilities are allocated to her by herself rather than through social environment of her, as well as behaviours are deliberate and entirely cohesive.

Secondly, Sally does not have fixed responsibility in the house, and her absences are praised as a positive trait in a tenant. She is unrelated to Walter as well as his family. Also, she has no role in their private lives. The quick departure of her at the ending, as well as the air of authority and power she exudes, could be a result of her assigned tasks. Sally's socially acceptable role, unlike Ruth in *The Homecoming* as well as Sarah in *The Lover*, is that of a teacher, a respectable occupation outside the family, for which her sense of stability or liberty does not seem to waver. At first glance, Sally's character looks to be a sexist picture of the constantly deceitful woman, who is sexually opportunistic at best. But upon closer inspection, Sally appears to be a declaration of women's empowerment as well as choice, perfectly in keeping with the era in which the play was completed.

Thirdly, the actions of Walter are childish, immature, ignorant when compared to Sally. When Sally tries to de-escalate the tension in their shared room, Walter fails miserably in the attempt to dazzle Sally with his criminal career. Walter appears increasingly confused and weak in his

discussion with Sally, but also continue fighting to regain control over their relationship as well as communication.

WALTER. Think about me last night?

SALLY. You?

WALTER. This offer to share your room, I might consider it.

Pause.

WALTER. I bet you're thinking about me now.

Pause.

SALLY. Why should I be?

WALTER. I'm thinking about you.

Pause. (Pinter *Night School* 211)

His room has suddenly turned into hers, and he concedes to the benefit of her in the circumstance. Also, he is attempting to discover a way for her to submit to him and his will. His amateurish attempts seem to have no effect on her, and for which, his pursuits become unpleasant. Walter eventually accepts that Sally's identity of night time or alter-ego did not exist, relying on self-denial so that he can make sense of the emotions of him as well as align it with the behaviours of her. The play's central topic is thus his moral weakness and failure, which is contrasted by the powerful and functional Sally. She maintains her entire dichotomy of character by avoiding situations that threaten to blur the lines between her two selves. In the final scene, she also turns out to be a declaration of self-respect as well as personal strength that is unique to her.

Walter is a crook who is solely chastised for not being competent enough at forging or eluding the law. In his aunt's talks with Walter, his career provides humorous relief, but it has no moral message to redemption or betterment. Sarah is totally content in her current situation and shows no symptoms of wishing to alter it. The play's moral concerns arise from the dialogue between

the two main characters, Walter and Sally, and their effort to defeat one another. As a result, the play deals with a power struggle that appears repeatedly in Pinter's plays,

Hence, the female protagonist character in the play is different, largely in her occupation, as both Ruth and Sarah are housewives. Ruth as well as Sarah is in touch with the 1960s discourse of women's roles. Sally, as a temporary lodger, has no duty to her home and is free to go and come as she desires, but Ruth/Sarah are dedicated to their homes, families, and hold a crucial role in the house. As a result, these three characters' struggles for power and independence are fundamentally different. Sally's character demonstrates a stark contrast in her duality, which is typical of politically propagandist works in which an idea is presented to the reader/audience. Certainly, the message is feminist as we observe Sally conveying her as a woman of liberty. Her portrait is boosted with strength and harmony when compared to the disordered and immature Walter. Her dual counterparts and characteristics serve to improve the idea of the woman as the foreign other, resulting in a gendered world that is fairly unequal. Her situation, on the other hand, does not address the more domestic themes that arose during the second wave of feminism, when the role of the housewife and women's autonomy were major concerns.

Conclusion

As the analysis demonstrates, each of the characters in Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1964), *The Lover* (1962), as well as *Night School* (1960) shows an examination of gender struggle. The study has highlighted the conflict between masculinity and femininity that Pinter produces on his stage. As a result, three plays depict the emergence of modern women on stage, through which Pinter creates a conflict between patriarchal society and the modern woman.

Pinter achieves this by depicting a drastic transformation in the portrayal of women over time. Sally, Sarah, and Ruth share a number of characteristics that strengthen their personas and give them a strong sense of significance. Sally suggests that they share the bedroom to settle their dispute, and yet no actual power struggle is addressed as she simply goes away. We can also observe that Sarah seems to be invested more in connection of her with Richard. She is forced to participate in the struggle of power with a greater stake than Sally. Lastly, Ruth finds herself in the middle of domestic war, accompanied by five men. Even though the men are at first the source of the hostility, she takes control of the struggle on her own terms, conquering them in order to achieve full power.

Furthermore, it demonstrates significant advancement in the status of women in society. It represents all elements of a powerful, independent woman who has a freedom of choice. All three plays use Pinter's experimental style which overlaps with the Theatre of the Absurd, and allow the readers to come to their own judgments on topics of gender, feminism, as well as family. The pursuit of an image of the modern woman and gender problems inside the house and family shine through all three plays, in keeping with the modern social landscape of the 1960s. Therefore, it can be concluded that women have autonomous power and the capacity to seek balance in their diversity while confronted with hardship.

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