

The Female Psyche in the plays of Harold Pinter

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Abstract : In this study we are discuss the female psyche in the plays of Harold pinter. Much is discussed about Harold Pinter's male-female struggle for domination, realism, surrealism, menace, comedy of manners and absurdity, but little about female psyche in his plays. Present study is a humble attempt to explore and widen this less ventured area of his plays in view of psychoanalytical theory as central canon. Using the analytical material on absurd elements in Pinter's plays, his predilections for feminine dominance, and his preoccupation with the deepest feelings and attitudes of women, an attempt is made to extract the female psyche which pre-supposes the overthrow of patriarchy. Harold Pinter is re discovering the re assertion of matriarchy. Social structure is slowly succumbing to the white goddess, i.e., the woman. This briefly is the hypothesis of the paper.

Index Terms - Female Psyche, patriarchy, matriarchy, psychoanalytical approach

I. INTRODUCTION

Pinter's plays are very close to the happenings of real life. So one has to understand Pinter's plays as one understands the life. In real life every one tries to carve dominance on others. There is a battling of dominance for survival which continues from cradle to grave. Pinter's characters are no option to it. Let it be Ruth of The Homecoming or Kate of Old Times, all are battling for dominance. Apart from thematic interpretations on the plays of Pinter, present study aims at analysing this thematic superstructure in his plays on the basis of psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud and other theories.

The focus of the present study will be mainly on these plays-The Birthday Party(1957), The Caretaker(1959), The Homecoming(1964), Old Times(1970) No Man's Land(1974), Betrayal(1978).

It is frequently asked- what did Pinter mean in this extract? Work of Pinter has been remained difficult to understand and there is possibility of misinterpretation. Authors of the discursive plays want viewers to understand their thematic purposes. They employ a spokesman to make the meaning clear. They inject a remedy or thematic summary in the final act. By contrast, Pinter doesn't consider it part of his job to help audiences to understand his plays. He feels that understanding 'can only come through the work itself' and is 'entirely their own responsibility'. (Gussow, A Conversation (Pause), 134).

Pinter has always tried to avoid comment on the meanings of his plays. He rejects any allegorical meaning to his plays. When Terence Rattigan saw The Caretaker, he gave an allegorical meaning to it: "It's the Old Testament God and the New Testament God, with the caretaker as humanity- that's what it's about, isn't it?" Pinter disagreed: "It's about two brothers and a caretaker." (Watts 26).

When Pinter's characters try to explain themselves they fail to clarify. Problem is not whether they are real or not but one fails to understand them-a failure that is the dramatic point. Pinter objects to 'the because of the drama' and asks, "What reason have we to suppose that life is so neat and tidy?" (Taylor 184). One understands the situations of his life without any help. Some time he succeeds and sometime he fails.

Harold Pinter is the world renowned playwright, director, actor, poet and political activist. He is the winner of 2005 Nobel Prize for literature. He was born on October 10, 1930 at Hackney in London to a working class. Both his parents, Jack and Frances Pinter, were Jewish. As he was the only son of his parents, he was the focus of their attention.

Inspired by Joe Brearley, his English teacher, he frequently wrote and published poetry as a teenager. He played Romeo and Macbeth in 1947 and 1948, while still a student at Hackney Downs Grammar School in productions directed by Joseph Brearley. Alan Dent praised Pinter of his role in Macbeth. He wrote, "Harold Pinter made a more eloquent, more obviously nerve-racked Macbeth than one or two professionals grown-ups I have seen in the part of late years."(Bellington 14).

In 1949, at the age of nineteen, he read Samuel Beckett's novel Murphy and Watt, and was greatly influenced by the works. He began admiring Beckett. Later Pinter met Beckett and great bond of friendship developed between them. He called Beckett "the best prose writer living". (Bensky 19-20).

He first met actress Vivien Merchant in 1953 and married her on 14 September, 1956. There was a gap between Pinter and Vivien Merchant; when they met she was the famous repertory star and he was a struggling repertory star known as David Baron. They shared the relationship of both love and conflict. Their son, Daniel, was born in 1958. Through the early 70s, Vivien Merchant appeared in many of Pinter's works.

Their marriage began disintegrating in the mid-1960s. Vivien took divorce from Pinter in 1980, and in the same year Pinter got married with Lady Antonia. This break-up incident affected Pinter's personality and his work. It was difficult for Pinter to write at this moment. Two years he spent in directing and acting. Unable to overcome her bitterness and grief at the loss of her husband, Vivien Merchant died of acute alcoholism in October 1982.

Late in 2001, Pinter was diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus, for which, in 2002, he underwent a successful operation and chemotherapy. On 28 February 2005, Pinter announced publicly that he would retire from writing plays to dedicate himself to his political activism and writing poetry. While fighting for noble causes even in his old age, he died on 24 Dec, 2008.

He wrote twenty-nine plays including *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, and *The Homecoming*. He also wrote twenty-one screen plays including *The Servant*, *The Go-Between* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. He directed twenty-seven theatre productions including James Joyce's *Exiles*.

His first play was *The Room*. *The Birthday Party* (1957), Pinter's second play and among his best-known, was initially a disaster. In 1958 Pinter wrote *A Slight Ache* and this was broadcast on BBC. In 1959, Pinter wrote *The Caretaker* which was shown at the Arts Theatre, London. It was regarded as his first major critical and popular success on the stage. It received the 1960 evening Standard Drama Award. After the success of *The Caretaker* in 1960, it established Pinter's theatrical reputation.

After *The Caretaker*, Pinter's major success on stage was *The Homecoming*, written in 1964. Now Pinter became a celebrity playwright. He became Britain's foremost living dramatist. In 1966 Pinter wrote *The Basement* and in 1967 *Landscape*. It is one of Pinter's best written and most deeply felt plays. We can view it as the result of the circumstances of his own life.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is voluminous work on portraying of female characters in the plays of Harold Pinter. Writers like Elizabeth Sakellaridou, Dukore, Bellington, have been focused on specific feminine problems. Attempts have been made to discover woman's growth to self discovery and self realization but much is still not known about the female psyche which prompts her to exhibit a dominating nature. Portraying a woman character as subservient, emergent and dominant, is Pinter's true mastery over female psyche. Present study is an attempt to explore it widely.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

To make the plays of Harold Pinter popular in India.

To explain the super structural behavioral pattern of female characters.

To study the whole aspects of a female's psyche.

The focal point of the present research is to analyse the mental turmoil, the agony and deepest feelings of a female mind which finds its expression in her dominant and surrealistic behavioral pattern.

Pinter says about his play *Old Times*, "I'll tell you one thing about *Old Times*. It happens. It all happens". (Gussow 135). This statement will remain as the chief tool for present research. There will be no room for symbolism. Pinter has portrayed the life as it is. No space will be left for mental concoction or imagination. Research will be based on 'plays as they are' and 'life as it is'. His plays may not have resemblance with the real incidents and his characters may not have taken up directly from the real life, but undoubtedly, plays portray the real life and characters are much closer to it.

IV. CURRENT WORK AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Today's woman has performed a long journey by demanding bodily integrity, autonomy and to have equal rights. Pinter's characters like Ruth in *The Homecoming* and Kate in *Old Times*, don't demand, but force the manhood to bow to their feet. They are unwilling to succumb to male dominance and make their way out from subservience to dominance even at the cost of exploiting their sexuality. Current work is a psychoanalytical study to have the every aspect of female psyche.

V. NEED OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH WORK

It is apt to conclude that present research will add new dimensions of multiple appeals, concrete grounds and a kind of authority to widen the horizon of new current of thought among the scholars.

VI. PINTER, POLITICS AND POSTMODERNISM

In such a context, the 'I' in the repeated phrase 'I am not alone' is not the 'I' of bourgeois individualism, nor the 'I' that functions merely as the spokesperson for an unreflecting 'we', nor the 'I' that is the involuntary voice of a cultural or linguistic code. This is an 'I' that justifies itself in a variety of ways, but – most important – is its evident need to do so. Like the old woman who is unwilling or unable to speak in *Mountain Language* Nicolas exists outside the codes he uses to construct, exhibit, and justify himself. Like so many Pinter characters he can be illuminated by, but not exhaustively summarized by, any description of inherited cultural codes or ideological commitments. Here at the edge of the civilised world, inhuman acts are justified by individuals who invoke general social bonds as a justification for abandoning them in the case of dissenting individuals. Indeed, part of the torture to which the victims are subjected consists of turning the psychological and emotional bonds of a family group into weapons to be used against each of them. The rape of the wife and the murder of the son invoke, even as they break, some of the strongest bonds that hold civilised human beings together. The personal and the political are, indeed, intertwined, but we will make little sense of these plays if we simply equate the one with the other. Though the context in which we encounter them prevents the characters in *One for the Road* and *Mountain Language* from being developed in great detail, Pinter conveys enough of the personal in social and political contexts to make these scenes continuous with scenes in his other plays in which we feel we are encountering individual characters with, among other things, familiar social histories, rather than abstract characters representing narrow social and political agendas, or, to put it another way, individual characters whose representativeness follows upon and includes their individuality, rather than preceding and supplanting it. These points are made at some length for two reasons. First, neither in Pinter's so-called political plays nor elsewhere do we encounter characters with an explicit ideological position to exemplify and defend. Second, after a time when literary theories of various kinds became obsessed with the death of the subject, Pinter is continuing to create characters whose irreducible idiosyncrasy makes a significant contribution to our conviction that the plays themselves retain an irreducible singularity, no matter which modes of explanation we adopt to convert intrigue into enlightenment. And it is in this context of irreducible singularity and strategic avoidance of ideological debate that we should make the link between Pinter, politics and postmodernism. It seems to me quite true, as Chin has argued, that

'postmodern' has become 'one of those terms, like "existential" for an earlier generation, which everyone tosses around like a beanbag, while aiming at different targets'.¹² I find myself much persuaded by Lyotard's argument that we would benefit by thinking of postmodernism as one of the recurring phases of modernism rather than as something posterior to and opposed to modernism.¹³ Indeed, if we are to make sense of the modernism/postmodernism relationship we would do well not only to acknowledge that modernism has always been many things anyway, but also to put that recognition to work in our attempts to distinguish its various kinds. I would thus be inclined to follow and extend Hassan's argument on this issue by conceiving not just of three major kinds, but of three major voices, of modernism: avant-garde modernism, high modernism and postmodernism.¹⁴ All three voices are liable to occur in the work of any one writer or any single decade, but proportional representation of those voices has changed gradually (though not uniformly) over the decades from the prominence of avant-garde modernism, through the prominence of high modernism, to the prominence of postmodernism. In terms of the characteristics critical commentary usually associates with these concepts,¹⁵ the avant-garde modernist voice would be the one rejecting the status quo and demanding that it be totally replaced. This is the voice insisting on a sense of crisis, of generational conflict, of the complicity of art with the existing order and of the need for radical artistic and social reform. The high modern voice would be the one more concerned with providing the new than with rejecting the old. This is the modernism associated with establishing the aesthetic domain as the alternative to the religious and political domains, whether or not it can claim equivalent scope.¹⁶ It is the modernism of art as aesthetic object, as cultural artifact, as difficult, abstract, reflexive, ironic, distanced, autonomous, an art for the elite and for the initiated, and strongly opposed to the popular, the easily accommodated or the easily reproduced.

VII. UNDERSTANDING PINTER'S FEMALE CHARACTERS

Life is a battle for survival in Pinter's reality. The mission of the characters is then for survival; what we have toward the finish of a play is a realignment of powers to guarantee this probability of survival. It is here that Pinter's ladies move from a subservient to a prevailing job; regularly they uncover a conclusiveness and a heartlessness which aren't there in the early depictions. They appear to assume their jobs with impressive assurance – of mother, spouse, and prostitute. Regularly these jobs are consolidated into one puzzling persona. As the characters acquire intricacy the mission isn't just for survival, yet for an acknowledgment of their selves, which for Pinter appears to mean the acknowledgment of their lewd selves. A nearby investigation of Pinter's plays uncover three kinds of ladies subservient, rising, and overwhelming. These terms don't have any political suggestions. They are to be comprehended in terms of Pinter's microcosm, the world as he delineates it, a world wherein inward substances overshadow outside subtleties. The expression "developing" is utilized here in the feeling of the capricious appearance of totally new properties or characteristics at certain basic stages or levels over the span of activity in a play. Accordingly Rose in *The Room*, and Meg in *The Birthday Party* are subservient; Flora in *A Slight Ache*, Stella in *The Collection* and Sarah in *The Lover* are emanant; and Ruth in *The Homecoming*, Anna and Kate in *Old Times* and Emma in *Betrayal* are prevailing. This paper inspects these ladies characters under these heads in the accompanying sections.

- Subservient Women
- The Emergent Women
- The Dominant Women

Their marriage began disintegrating in the mid-1960s. Vivien took divorce from Pinter in 1980, and in the same year Pinter got married with Lady Antonia. This break-up incident affected Pinter's personality and his work. It was difficult for Pinter to write at this moment. Two years he spent in directing and acting. Unable to overcome her bitterness and grief at the loss of her husband, Vivien Merchant died of acute alcoholism in October 1982.

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The Collection is one more of Pinter's plays managing working class individuals. There is another dimension of this play which is the cognizant side of imagination life. Life appears to have gone stale for every one of these characters. The offense among Stella and James is clear in their first scene together. She reluctantly asks on the off chance that he will be home that night. He gives no answer. Rather he comes to for an ashtray and respects it. Harry and Bill appear to be no happier. Harry has been to a gathering, yet Bill has been left at home. Harry has come to regard Bill as a grimy toy – a "ghetto slug". So these individuals assuage their fatigue with sex dreams. Stella starts it with her tale about Bill; Bill proceeds with it with his anecdote about Stella. James participate by envisioning Bill as an engaging and rich gatherer of fine items. "What Pinter appears to show through the James-Stella marriage is that any adoration relationship will make an individual defenseless to the torment of enthusiastic double-crossing, a torment that can't be kept away from or got away from. The character who can acknowledge this, and who can live with a specific measure of torment furthermore, disillusionment in a relationship that is generally genuinely fulfilling, is the most grounded, the best prepared to frame an effective marriage or love relationship. A character who can't live with such disillusionment should either withdraw behind deceptions or get himself unfit to effectively keep up a marriage" (Morgan, 169). For this situation Stella is effective regardless of what truly. She has a better possibility of picking up the advantage in her marriage by keeping her significant other uncertain he will never again underestimate her and therefore will give the

consideration that she requires. Toward the finish of the play her position has been fortified in correlation with what it was the point at which the show opened. We are first presented to Stella in the job of a spouse uncertain of a husband over who she has no control. He does not respond to her inquiries. Not by any means beyond any doubt that he will be there in that night, the inadequate Stella can just pummel out of the house in dissatisfaction. The circumstance is switched when the last blind falls, for the time being it is James who is uncertain of her accomplice, posing her inquiries to which he gets no answer.

VIII. THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN HAROLD PINTER'S

When Teddy and Ruth touch base in the house, plainly she will end up being the fundamental focal point of the male characters, and their quest for power, which was at that point in play, winds up better than an a lot more noteworthy degree. Presently the strategic maneuver is centered around the sole female as the men endeavor to pronounce their position over her in different ways. Incredibly, Ruth enters this interest with her very own character and individual qualities in question. Singular showdowns with every one of the male characters pursue and the fight for power is battled through activity and exchange. The scene bringing Teddy and Ruth into the story passes on a wedded couple's conventional power battle as they request each other around, each guaranteeing they recognize what is best for the other. Ruth wins the fight as she goes out for a "breath of air" (31) leaving the more shaky Teddy behind. Emblematically, she takes the way to the house with her.

Ruth's dad-in-law Max demonstrates the broadest scope of feeling in his response towards her. Upon first gathering Ruth, he demonstrates outrageous savagery, utilizing derogative words that make one out of the most stunning discoursed of this especially stunning play. In the 1966 meeting with Bensky, "Pinter makes reference to the significance of utilizing revolting words sparingly and to abstain from putting them on for show as to not reduce their capacity and miracle just to exhibit the right to speak freely" (63-4). This announcement adds weight to the significance of Max's apparently superfluous antagonistic vibe as he continues to consider Ruth a "stinking pox-ridden skank" and "messy scrubber" and cases he has "never had a prostitute under this rooftop previously" (49-50). In the following demonstration, Max hails Ruth as "a beguiling lady" (57), and "astute and thoughtful" (59), his frame of mind toward her totally improved in merely minutes. These boundaries in articulation and brisk turns in frame of mind are very tuned in to Max's character. He more than once exclaims unacceptable proclamations towards the remainder of the family, including his expired spouse whom he the two hails as a brilliant mother and portrays as having had a "spoiled stinking face" (17). Max speaks to the lost man, whose stature and job inside the home have been vexed. He battles to hold his power as eader of the family unit yet in the meantime helps the group of onlookers to remember a period of various qualities. His most youthful child Joey is the polar opposite. He is effectively managed by his sister-in-law who takes part in sexual movement with him which results in his disrespect, stripping him of his masculinity and atesting his job as the offspring of the family. He communicates aching for her in the most blameless way, finishing with him stooping at her feet in the last scene, totally surrendered to her sexuality and power.

Harold Pinter's very own issues of the 60s, the quest for the new lady picture and the contentions of sexual orientation inside the home and family radiates through the play. The subsequent articulation is that ladies have singular quality and the capacity to accomplish balance in her decent variety, while confronting affliction. Well beyond social or sexual legislative issues, Harold Pinter was a craftsman and his plays are gems, expedited by a need to make, not intercede meaning. That part is left to the peruser. In the meantime we can securely expect that as a craftsman he was affected by his contemporary talk on issues that wound up in his plays and amid the 60s, Pinter thought about the power battle of sexual orientation in home life through his generous way to deal with the prostitute.

IX. CONCLUSION

Sex plays an overwhelming job in their battle for survival. It is to be noted that every one of these characters is degenerate in one manner or the other. Maybe the term "freak" is a misnomer. "Abnormality" infers a critical takeoff from the standards of a social gathering. Pinter's characters are free from the encumbers of any standards; they are past the pale of the regular society, and profound quality. They are all things considered flippant. Sex, hence, is irreverent. Thus, sex doesn't produce any feeling of blame in anybody. It is a weapon ladies characters utilize most skillfully with no going with feeling of blame. While these characters have their sexual inclinations, they do uncover an adaptability in their ways to deal with sexual relationship remembering the bigger job of sex in the stratagems of survival and self-delight. So on the off chance that they might they be able to take on their male partners openly. In assuming a subservient job, Rose, however she may in any case keep on living inside the four dividers of the room, has lost her vision and her personality. Meg too in *The Birthday Party* is tormented by a feeling of sexual inadequacy. An investigation of the pictures of ladies in Pinter's plays are confined by two factors: the trouble in interpreting the inspirations of the characters, and the stratagems they embrace which don't really draw out their fundamental characteristics and preferences. Nonetheless, it is conceivable to touch base at some conditional ends with respect to depictions on the off chance that we comprehend the idea of the sensational clash in Pinter's plays. In a meeting with Kenneth Tynan, Pinter sees that in his plays he manages characters who remained at fundamental defining moments in their lives. "I'm managing these characters at the extraordinary edge of their living... " (Tynan, Meeting) The characters accordingly are in the grasp of an extraordinary tension the nature of which they neglect to appreciate. The horrid inquiry they face each snapshot of their life is the manner by which to adapt to their profound feeling of depression, insufficiency furthermore, discontinuity, and how to get by in a world that appears to compromise their very presence.

The homecoming of the play belongs to Teddy, who returns home from America for a visit to his all male family with his wife Ruth. The men's relationship with one another is established through their interaction at the beginning of the play and new characters are introduced steadily with the dialogue giving to audience the information of their relation to one another and the nature of their usual communication with each other. The lack of the mother is declared through comments on her passing away and a split history of the family's story is told through the character's conversations. Something seems wrong from the very start

and their use of words and tone suggest a menacing dialogue with exaggerated messages of ill content. In an interview with Miriam Gross in 1980, Pinter claimed that despite evidence to the contrary, love could be found in his plays and taking *The Homecoming* as an example stated “I think there’s a great deal of love in that play but they simply don’t know what to do with it, referring to the violence exerted by the all-male family” (74).

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