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**Multilevel  
Representations  
of Power in  
Harold Pinter's Plays**



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# Introduction

This thesis starts from the assumption that power is not a pre-given fact, but an attribute that has to be acquired and reacquired through a variety of strategies. Power is thus reflected in Harold Pinter's plays through a multitude of ritualistic games and confrontations of wills. The characters embark on such battles animated by the urgent desire to impose and maintain the authority of their fabricated universe, while negating the access of all others to their most intimate and obscure facets. Power is equivalent to depriving others of their own freedom of manifestation and, thus, to delegitimizing other structures and values of living which make Harold Pinter's characters play, with no intention of reciprocity, on the borders of the linguistic, spatial, narrative and gender configurations.

The first chapter, entitled "*A Preliminary Analysis of Harold Pinter's Dramatic Technique*" (1.1 *Breaking the Realistic Convention*; 1.2 *Surveying Power through Multi-layered Games. The Complicity of Language, Narration, Space and Gender Constructions*), investigates the distinctive features of the dramatic technique Harold Pinter employs in his plays, starting from the playwright's ingenious strategy of crossing over the commonly accepted conventions of Post-World War II English drama, while simultaneously choosing to operate within their comfortable and secure framework.

The kitchen-sink domestic realism which developed the mid-1950s British drama is well reflected in Harold Pinter's dramatic work, whose stage settings, characters and speech patterns powerfully reproduce a recognizable social context. On the other hand, against the obscure side of a psychologically motivated action which Harold Pinter explores beneath this conventional pattern, the playwright intentionally excludes from his carefully constructed drama the conventional, realistic exposition.

By setting forth no preliminary or background information about his characters' past or origin, Pinter designs totally unreliable characters, whose real motives and intentions can rather be deciphered from what they do not perform, than from their overt manifestations. The reader cannot trust the characters, as they hide their desires and needs behind masks.

Harold Pinter's work has also been associated with the drama of the absurd, but this affiliation has its limits and needs to be used with caution. The meaninglessness of life and the futility of existence which this type of theatre has advocated are embraced by Pinter to a certain extent. He outlines a world of individuals whose alienation from reality and incompetence in out-facing daily life are still carried out in very specific and, thus, realistic local settings. Such inadequate

attitudes are mainly determined by the dramatis personae's desperate efforts to keep their most intimate delusions and dreams under the guise of an adequately shaped identity, rather than by a fatalistic and hopeless loss of meaning and significance as it happens in the plays of the Absurd.

It is widely recognised that Harold Pinter developed a type of play whose psychological and absurd influences caused a lot of incongruities at the level of language, setting and character creation which definitely led to the dissolution and subversion of the surface realistic convention. This fact is furthermore attested by the playwright's full and exclusive commitment to none of the familiar conventions of the two master dramatic genres, comedy or tragedy. Consequently, playing games is another recurrent feature of Harold Pinter's dramatic technique which he constantly inserts in his tragicomedies with a view to outline that the characters' primordial means of carrying their existence is staging double-edged (humoristic/ominous) performances that are the essence of their ritualistic lives.

Harold Pinter's dedication to the major modernist interest in the exploration of sheer individualistic experiences and perceptions is supplemented by his partial turn towards postmodernism, too, which aims at showing that life is heterogeneous and that it can never be reduced to single, definitive norms or judgements.

The next chapter, entitled "*Spatial Configurations*" (2.1 *Territorial Confrontations*; 2.2 *Body and Object Negotiations*), aims at presenting the implications of Harold Pinter's complex ways of organizing and structuring the scenic space according to extremely simple architectural details, based on a minimalist approach which converts the setting into an appropriate field of confrontation for adverse beings and sequences of action.

In relation to the spatial distribution of the characters across the stage setting, the present chapter makes reference to Deleuze and Guattari's theory of flow (*Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987)). Thus, although the individuals, as members of a community, are affiliated to a common system of norms and codes wherefrom any deviation should be declined, each human being is constantly passing through changes which make him/her break the standards and be very mobile in his/her progress through life. This mobility is primarily caused by the urgent necessity to satisfy one's personal needs and pleasures and by ever shifting desires, which constantly change their direction.

Harold Pinter's characters occupy a space where there occur frequent collisions between opposing pleasures and, thus, opposing 'territorialities'. This perspective is strengthened by Henri Lefebvre's practical analysis of space (*The Production of Space* (1991)) from within circumstances and relationships which lead to its

creation, from within concretely lived experiences. Harold Pinter's plays shape spaces that are produced by the incompatible and conflicting interests and intentions the characters struggle to hide beneath the socially accepted conventions. The settings and their spatial features become a powerful means of decoding the desires that really pertain to the individuals who are afraid of standing the risk of a mobile existence.

According to their contradictory desires, each character acts in a distinct space which, in its turn, competes to produce, within and around it, safe, specific ways of behaving which will never threaten to unmask one's private longings and deprivations. The productive function of space is supported by Michel Foucault's complex assembly 'power-knowledge-space' (*Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings. 1972-1977*) which he devised in relation to the complex practices of the modern institutions of 18<sup>th</sup> century society. The various modes of production and coercion this society set up were meant to implement and authorise correct ways of thinking, speaking and acting in space, as opposed to what was being categorized and excluded as abnormal and deviational.

Harold Pinter's plays explore the confrontation between two distinct types of inhabiting and creating space. The subject is often antithetically positioned in space, on the one hand as a central point around which space and its relationships are distributed, i.e. as a source of space production, and on the other hand as an indistinct point of spatial reference, i.e. as a spatial product, easily captured and assimilated by others. Contrary to the characters who prefer the unharsh and simple path of already existing conventions, the characters who create and dictate a particular setting around them are those that do no fear to take a stand for their most intimate and urgent needs.

Pinter's individuals avoid all forms of territorial associations moreover since Julia Kristeva's theory of the abjection (*Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection* (1982)) promotes loss and absence as an inevitable part of existence driven by the instinctual and less conscious need to mark the borders of the self. The desire to remain fixed in one's constructed space of isolation and to resist any change that might cast the subject into the full and complex processes of life is strongly embodied by the characters of *No Man's Land* and of *The Caretaker*. The intruders or foreigners, coming from outside the comfortable space of the inert individuals, try to appropriate objects and territories which do not belong to them and, thus, to offer them a new configuration which will necessarily be related to their primordial needs. Kristeva identifies 'the abject' as that which is thrown out and rejected from oneself, because it impends the fabricated borders of the self to the point of reducing them to emptiness. In Harold Pinter's plays the intruder, as the abject character, acts as a constant reminder that the self is so

poorly equipped and that its boundaries are so precarious that they may easily be infected or reduced to nothingness.

Adequate control over the structures and boundaries of a place presupposes adopting the appropriate corporeal techniques and attitudes which are aimed at preserving order and eliminating any expression of anomaly. Bodily manifestations may either stand for order and stability, or for chaos and disorganization. The latter postures are out of place because they defy and go beyond the normative corporeal boundaries and the prevalent cultural imperatives. They are considered elements of pollution because their rootlessness makes people very mobile in shifting positions as they fluctuate between borders or territories with such an ease that their exclusion or repression becomes a difficult task for those that rarely abandon their comfortable places. For Pinter these characters perturb and contaminate the space with their strange demands as they manage to surprise the others with their confident movements across the space, with their unalarmed manipulation of objects and with their easy accommodation to the territory they seek to dominate.

According to Michel Foucault (*The History of Sexuality. An Introduction*, Vol. 1 (1978)) by submitting bodies to inspection and control, 'power' strategies do not only work in the direction of placing interdictions and restrictions on deviant/abnormal instances, but they simultaneously produce and distribute a variety of discourses, identities, corporeal manifestations and desires. Since bodies represent an immense source of unrestrained pleasures and instinctual forces, the individuals who abandon their constrained conventional positions (women, tramps, figures from a long-forgotten past) give voice to their perverted desires through eccentric bodily postures. The main goal of Pinter's characters, irrespective of whether they situate themselves on the side of conventionality or on that of abnormality, is to attain power by imposing their singular space position as the supreme law. Therefore, it is this strong clash of bodily expressions which gives the concept of power an ambiguous status to be constantly submitted to a harsh process of negotiation.

Those who are not comfortable on the terrain of sexuality and who mainly live at the level of abstract norms and codifications, prefer to balance out their incapacity to respond to the materiality of their existence and thus to the concrete needs of their bodies with fabricated, artificial representations. Men's discussions on sex take the form of narratives about brutal attacks on women whose unaccepted and polluted sexual behaviour (whores, cheating wives) may transform them into victims in the hands of men. Female characters, on the contrary, display bodily postures which show them as openly and unrestrictedly giving voice to their sexual energy and to the physical pleasures of their bodies. Women are

not ashamed of putting forth their sexuality and in their preference for actual, rather than for abstract experiences, for life in the proper sense of the word, they manage to reverse roles with men. Power belongs to those who prove to be ready for action on the scene of life.

Luce Irigaray (*This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985)) challenged the patriarchal system of thinking where men, as possessors of the 'phallus' and as producers of the normative patterns, were considered entitled to subordinating women and to confining their movements, their bodies and their desires. The manner in which Irigaray disagreed with the premises of patriarchy is well reflected in Harold Pinter's plays, at the level of his female characters. Women possess the capacity to venture into diverse territories, to adopt multiple bodily stances and to appropriate and internalize, as well as modify their environment according to their bodily specificity and their distinct sexuality.

Against this background, the current chapter also comments on the way characters relate to the objects within their space. Plays such as *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* or *The Dumb Waiter* attest that objects overwhelm the linguistic and theatrical space, but, in their uselessness and non-functionality, they point to an environment where characters struggle to confer meaning to their world, to take control of objects/spaces that do not belong to them, to gain mastery through alienation.

The third chapter, entitled "Uses and Abuses of Language" (3.1 *Language – a Means of Elusion. Avoiding the Painful Encounter with the Other; The Theory of Politeness – Preserving the Illusion of the Self*), undertakes research of the communicative acts initiated and established by Harold Pinter's characters from strained, artificial conversations on seemingly trivial matters to peripheral, irrelevant narratives and jokes that have no connection with what really matters for the characters. These estranging speech acts are aimed at shaping appropriate linguistic territories where individuals can easily avoid disclosing their most intimate intentions and thoughts. In *Being and Time* (1953) Martin Heidegger redirects our attention to the fact that one can never escape 'habitation' which grants the individual the possibility to confer meaning to the objects and entities around, to signify his/her current place in the environment and to become a fully engaged agent. This inevitable vicinity to and incorporation of and by the Others, which is strongly grounded in *Humanism of the Other* (1972) by Emmanuel Levinas, too, is a fact which language can never break away from.

Each discursive production is in direct correlation to the manner in which the individual places himself in the world and embraces the Others. Through language the subject defines its mode of being which is reflected in his/her response towards a concrete state of affairs, a specific object, individual or relationship.

Consequently, language causes and accredits the individuals to voice and make present the objects of their concerns and of their interests. Harold Pinter's characters turn to their advantage this peculiarity of language and thus through a strict process of selection they articulate and render present only those objects, identities and situations that suit their supreme purpose which consists in preventing any attempt of assimilating or being assimilated by others. Characters do not live at the level of language, as they actually manifest and reveal themselves behind their linguistic masks and fabrications. Individuals do not wish to allow the Others to know or understand their way of being.

Each individual lives by his own stable constructs and tries to keep the disordered and disruptive manifestations of otherness unvoiced. *The Birthday Party* is a good example of how the individuals, deprived of the possibility to accomplish their deep, self-identifying desires, reach the strange situation of having to engage into unhealthy relationships and to develop inappropriate affections. Their existence gains substance only through surrogate, artificial connections which distance both them and the Others from their true self.

From Jacques Lacan's *Ecrits* (1966) and the two important moments of the process of subject formation, i.e. 'the mirror-stage' and the resolution of 'the Oedipus complex', this chapter extracts a different perspective of the Other: the Other as the one against whom the subject orients all its desires and needs and the Other as the one who imposes restrictions and places inhibitions on the desires of the subject.

Language, through its referential system, reproduces the possibility of loss. Conversations exhibit how the subject, stimulated by an extreme desire for protection, takes shelter under disguised talk where every signifier operates as a veiled term for the suppressed and thus illicit sides of one's existence. Since the unconscious, as the place where all the repressed signifiers gather, constitutes an active force which permanently pushes its structures to the fore, demanding recognition, the linguistic constructions rather reveal a divided and estranged subject, split between the outer projections and its internal locations where the most obscure pleasures lie. Desires describe as estranged possessions that are actually submitted to the force of the Other.

Pinter's plays show the insubstantial and delusive character of a monolingual world which refuses Bakhtin's 'carnavalesque' manifestations of otherness. In its exclusive usage of a single form of language, this world remains totally attached to official and normative performances, those that block the entrance of foreign voices. Although the message is strongly controlled, much more when individuals are dominated by an alarming sense of possession, communication accidentally breaks down making it a perfect medium for the emergence of symptoms of the repressed, unarticulated desires. In moving towards the Others, as a way of

accepting their beliefs, individuals face a double-edged risk, the risk of a straightforward acknowledgement of their deepest desires and that of having these intimate needs cut off by outside obstacles.

The central aim of the fourth chapter, entitled “*Representations of the Past*” (4.1 *The Narrative of the Past. The Past – a Means of Dissimulation*; 4.2 *Indebtedness to the Past: Memory and Amnesia*), is to probe into the act of performing the past as an adequate terrain for staging extremely tense battles of confrontation between incompatible characters and their discordant views and/or modes of existence.

The primary advantage of the past narratives derives from the fact that the narrators have the possibility to achieve a distance from the recounted events and to direct the entire process of telling according to their own purposes. As telling stories replaces the convention of performing concrete actions, the narratives of the past become a form of doing, of being anchored in life and acting in response to it. Kristin Morrison in *Canter and Chronicles* (1983) considered that these narratives ensure a slow and gradual movement into the inward and hidden structures of an individual so that the shift from the outer to the inner world is less abruptly performed than in their traditional counterpart, the soliloquy.

It seems to be much easier to elaborate fantastical and fictional recitals of the past than to accept the present. These narratives offer access to privacy, as they reveal important details about the way the past performers and players relate to the world and how their obscure desires and needs unconsciously drive them into creating certain stories of the past. As it is produced and performed through the act of memory, identity itself becomes a narrative product rather than the result of acting and reacting in various situations of life. This well-devised structure of narrative elements is promoted to avoid becoming vulnerable in the hands of the others and to keep unvoiced the most perturbing and intimate desires and anxieties.

In referring to the fabricated nature of identity, Madan Sarup in *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World* (1996) emphasizes that in its dependence on text production, identity is never backed up by concrete actions. Taking into account that identity is the exclusive offspring of strongly calculated and biased acts of memory, serious doubts exist in relation to its stability and truthfulness.

Harold Pinter’s male characters usually resort to narratives as a way of reproducing, transmitting and authenticating the codes and structures of patriarchy. The characters who remain fixed in their narrative constructions will be confronted with and defeated by those individuals who are tied to the reality of their desires and who are not afraid to come face to face with their fears and vulnerabilities. In *The Homecoming* Lenny, one of the male characters, proves to be able to exercise his highly acclaimed violence and hatred of women at the level



of narrative only, without properly transferring this abuse to real life situations. On the other hand, Ruth, the only woman in the play, does not use narratives, but replaces them with concrete physical actions and proposals which, in this case, become more threatening and more immediate in their effect. Ruth actually manages to perform what the men are just talking about.

In their study on narratology, entitled *Narratology: An Introduction* (1996), Omega and Landa proposed 'the narrative of Oedipus' as the paradigm of every narrative. Thus, each narrative is organized around two distinct positions: the active one which is attributed to men who are entitled to create stories, to establish cultural patterns and to generate action, and the passive one which is approached by women who occupy a fixed place; their lives are fabricated by and submitted to the representations of the male-created stories. Harold Pinter demonstrates that this situation can be reversed. By acting outside the conventional postures of narratives, women prove their flexibility and independence.

In dealing with stories, Harold Pinter brought into focus another aspect of narratives which ultimately helped the characters give meaning and purpose to their illusory lives. As Paul Ricoeur explored in *Time and Narration*, vol. 1 (1983) the wonderful benefit of stories consists in affiliating the individuals to meaningful and consistent structures of existence and in giving them the chance to manifest their agency. In *Old Times* the battle for power is carried out at the level of narrative creation. By appropriating the past according to one's individual needs and desires, the duelling characters and narrators succeed in rendering contradictory versions of the past. The story that manages to bring forth the most lifelike arguments in favour of its past description and interpretation will win the confrontation.

Characters choose to deal with stories rather than with direct experiences, as narratives are less threatening than actions are. The process of telling narratives distinguishes itself as a calculated movement to be performed by the character who finds it impossible and unbearable to act his/her individuality in the daily life of the present. In *Landscape* Beth becomes a fully aware agent of her life story and strives to counterattack, using the efficient weaponry of the narrative construct, her husband's efforts of imprisoning her into an easily-to-be-controlled paradigm. Beth manages to distance herself from her husband either because she does not share his worldview or because she is no longer satisfied by it. The performed stories serve as a mask or as a delusory legitimisation for those who seek to keep their most abstruse features closed in.

The organisation of life events into narratives keeps individuals connected to the temporality of life and coheres with the way the narrators make sense of their passage through time and give meaning to their daily experiences and encounters. The narratives Harold Pinter inserts in his dramatic work could be considered

to follow the direction of Heidegger's phenomenological perspective on time. In Heidegger's terms, time is derived from our mode of being in the world, from our appropriation of and involvement in the world, just to be subsequently projected onto the outside. As they ignore Heidegger's three-dimensional unity of past, present and future time and they occupy a terrifying position in the world, Harold Pinter's characters develop an inauthentic relation to time. This inauthenticity determines them either to reiterate memories of the past, because the present offers no solace or possibility of escape and the future lacks perspective, or to remain absorbed in a totally alienating image of the present because the past may be too painful and difficult to be grasped.

The present enables taking hold of the past, recuperating it and being reconciled with it. Harold Pinter's narrators use this quality of the present to focus on the traces and the signs the past events have left behind them in order to break down the listeners' systems of thinking. They construct stories out of sufferings and give voice to narratives of disturbing memories which defeat categorization and oppose collective memory. *Ashes to Ashes* and *Family Voices* explore the impossibility to disconnect oneself from one's roots. The past holds its distinct place in one's life and individual development; without it being acknowledged and preserved as such, one can never go further. The past is a spectral voice which emerges into the present and summons every individual to remember it and to recognize its legitimacy. Repressed or lost away memories haunt the characters and ask their right to speak and gain substance through a distinct narrative.

Thus, Harold Pinter follows the steps of a postmodernist direction of thought, as individuals seem to find it easier to live in a constructed universe and to adopt a fictionalized identity. In this universe there is either the possibility of turning back to the past, as a way of doing away with the responsibility of the present, or the similarly destructive choice of living in a false present.

The last chapter, entitled "*Representations of Sexuality*" (5.1 *Women Transgressing the Norm*; 5.2 *Women – the Embodiment of Otherness*), addresses the concept of sexuality and its conventional configurations. The archetypal structures of sexuality are subject to manipulation and whether they are confirmed or invalidated the end point is to do away with those representations that might compromise one's secure and comfortable invented existence.

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978) Michel Foucault referred to sexuality not as a biological imperative, but as a social and cultural construct and as an assembly of different practices, strategies and discourses affecting bodies, actions, behaviours, relationships. He reached this conclusion by focusing on the large number of 'discourses' about sexual behaviour and bodily pleasures which emerged in the modern society of the late eighteenth

and nineteenth centuries. These discourses functioned as an instrument of social control and normalization as they placed restrictions upon the bodies and the actions of the individuals. They, thus, produced various standards of normality with the purpose of examining and controlling the inner nature of human beings. The bodily postures and movements, the activities and the immediate desires and emotions of the modern individual are all submitted to constant observation, interrogation and classification in order to eliminate the dysfunctional and the marginal.

As a discursive product, sexuality is a terrain to be handled by social discourses and their disciplinary techniques which aim at integrating behaviour into what is considered to be the norm. Sexuality is not dictated by the biological functions of bodies, but as a constructed system of regulations it operates upon bodies; it uses them so as to exercise and reinforce its norms and it ultimately invests them with legitimacy. Foucault conceived the body as a cultural and social construct articulated according to the appropriate naturalizing practices. Harold Pinter embraced this view and in his plays the body appears imprinted with a specific cultural and social content. Since various significations are ascribed to them in the multiple discourses about sex and implicitly about the body as the main object of sexual examination, bodies are used to gain power.

Following the Foucauldian perspective, Judith Butler (“Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” (1990)) does not consider ‘gender identity’, what is commonly differentiated as femininity and masculinity, as natural, but rather as an act of performing roles in accordance to the norms and restraints imposed on us by the cultural context we live in. As artificial constructs, sex and gender are in need of acts of performance in order to re/shape and re/define their boundaries and their representations. Identity, as the gender or sexual category an individual belongs to, earns validity through such culturally confirmed processes.

Feminine characters in Harold Pinter’s plays take advantage of ‘the performative’ quality of sex and gender in order to undermine the signifying practices of patriarchy and to point out that the socially constructed male hegemony is nothing but a theoretical, discursive illusion with no support in real-life situations. In *A Slight Ache* Flora openly confesses and stands for her sexuality. Thus, she exposes the total incompatibility between men’s alleged dominance, expressed through a rigidly fabricated moral code, and their emotional impotency and fragility when confronted with situations perturbing their closed system. Flora has the capacity to shift roles and thus she demonstrates that gender identity is just a matter of performativity. Going from wife to lover, she transgresses pre-existing social and moral norms, acting in the end as sexual aggressor. Without Flora’s

gestures of confirmation, her husband's entire system shatters apart. Flora has decided to give more credit to her own desires and to undermine a system which is too false to satisfy her needs.

Refusing to include sexuality into knowable and controllable patterns, the apparently weak characters of *The Collection*, Bill and Stella, make use of the obscure and baffling representations of sexuality in order to retain their true essence beyond codification and to show that cultural configurations are not fixed as they can be submitted to constant renegotiation and reinterpretation. Stella overcomes her domestic confinement by openly confessing to her husband her infidelity. Her account leaves her husband, James, with a lot of questions and doubts about her nature and excludes him from her world. Whereas men cannot cope with women professing their sexual freedom or with women's multiple roles and ambiguous sensations, women are more prepared than men to transgress gender constructions.

In *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) Judith Butler considers that the socially constructed representations of gender always function in an ideological and prescriptive manner as a force which stabilizes identity and includes it into a fixed arrangement. Gendered individuals are supposed to display and rehearse a series of essential attributes and traits. This type of thinking leads to the rejection and marginalization of those in whom incoherent or unbalanced gender properties are identified.

Luce Irigaray's position is that femininity functions as the necessary background against which masculinity defines itself in its integrity and rationality and ordains its discourse as the governing norm. Women are expected to accept their subordination to men's desires and to sustain and transmit the validity of men's fantasies. Still, due to the biological lack that characterizes them they situate themselves beyond the strict classifications and definitions of a predominantly 'phallogentric' language. They constitute the sex which breaks down the constraints of men's system of representations, giving voice to a large possibility of experiences whose unpredictability may represent a real threat to men's mastery. As Irigaray advocated in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985) women can articulate unacceptable and uncomfortable sensations from within the very norms they are trying to challenge.

In his plays, Harold Pinter shows how women are rather perceived as a terrifying and ambiguous presence which men do not know how to classify or to handle. Their gestures to cross over the limitations of their role are mainly related to their sexuality. Giving voice to their needs and desires, sexual and erotic fantasies, to the primacy of bodily pleasures, women cast themselves off the rigidity of male stereotypical images.

Women's subjection to men's desires or women's desire of the Lacanian phallus guarantees their place and position in the symbolic phallogocentric order where they act as the opposite or supplement of men, as objects to be used and consumed. Thus, the female body is frequently marked as a site of disease, of abnormal eroticism and uncontrolled desires, a place where the failure to conform to norms can generate disorder. It is common practice among men to devalue women as morally corrupt and lascivious, as whores, as bearers of disruptive bodily desires threatening the stability of the masculine system of beliefs.

In *The Homecoming* Ruth acts, in the first instance, as all women are expected to do, legitimizing the masculine structures and narratives. Ruth's submission to the patriarchal fantasies and wishes shows that she confirms the mother/whore stereotype and the classification of women as commodities to be exploited by men. She readily accepts to offer her services and to become the maternal and sexual provider of the needs of a group of aggressive and misogynist men. She creates a safe field for men as this is her only way to guarantee the satisfaction of her own needs, without being castigated by men. Femininity comes to occupy the medium of solid action and factual operation, while men remain caught in the ineffectual web of fiction, waiting for their desires to be confirmed and satisfied by women.

Men can perform their mastery only when women wilfully and unquestionably let their presence or absence, appearance or nonappearance be staged by their husbands/fathers. Women should admit the validity of the patriarchal culture and should perform their expected roles in order to ensure the continuity and the orderly transmission of the master ideology. In Harold Pinter's plays women are capable in the end to assert their self-sufficiency and to occupy a subject position outside the dominating gendered conceptualisations. However, they do not reach this point and thus, they do not achieve power, by adopting a rebellious attitude or by revolting in an overt manner against a too deep-rooted thinking. They rather choose to pretend that they are still repositories of patriarchal desires and codes. Women definitely act as the Other who chooses to confirm men's conventional standards and expectations in order to create its own space of unconstrained manifestation of Otherness.

The dissertation demonstrates that power is achieved by the individuals who are not afraid of acknowledging and facing their most hidden desires and who are consequently willing to perform their disturbing needs outside or behind conventional representations. They speak in the name of the marginal, the one which struggles and manages to acquire its own terrain of manifestation at all levels that Pinter's dramatic context makes distinct use of: language, space, narration and gender.