

Violence, Alienation, Cruelty in Harold Pinter's Selected plays: A Social and Political Study

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Abstract

This paper aims to elucidate the themes of violence, alienation, loneliness, and cruelty found in Harold Pinter's selected plays. It makes an effort to offer a fresh interpretation of these ideas and tackle the subject of when cruelty, violence, estrangement, and loneliness are justified. Harold Pinter frequently uses violence in his plays to highlight control, power dynamics, and the more sinister sides of interpersonal interactions. Pinter is renowned for exploring conflict and tension in seemingly commonplace relationships in his works. Although physical violence can also occur, political and societal violence predominates in his plays' acts of cruelty. Pinter employs subtle and complex forms of cruelty and violence to both challenge and unnerve audiences, as well as highlight the darkest facets of human nature and society. They frequently provide freedom for the audience's interpretation and introspection since they are unclear. Pinter's plays clearly explore the issue of man's estrangement and loneliness as a result of the cruelty that permeates contemporary society. The main characters experience social isolation and loneliness. They avoid social situations and the outdoors out of a fear of uncertainty or antagonism. They stay alone in society and misunderstand one other, making it difficult for them to maintain meaningful relationships with others around them. Either by nature or as a consequence of external pressure, they are alienated and lonely. These people grow far and alone from the society they live in as a result of the experiences they have. Ultimately, *The Caretaker* depicts cruelty and alienation while *The Birthday Party* and *One for the Road* lay more focus on violence via the interactions between the individuals, illuminating the subtleties of power struggles, deceit, and exploitation in interpersonal relationships. Pinter examines how a variety of impulses, including insecurity, power, and survival, may lead to overt or covert acts of violence, estrangement, cruelty, and alienation. In order to accomplish this goal, the study will mostly rely on post-Marxist scholars such as Hannah Ardent and Erich Fromm. The article will use their ideas of power, subjugation, alienation, and violence to decode the intricate manipulation of violence, cruelty, alienation, and loneliness in these plays. The researcher attempts to expose and evaluate these issues socially and politically from the perspective of post-Marxist theorists.

Keywords: Violence, Alienation, Cruelty

Introduction

It can be described as an act of force, or an act of a violation to the rights. Arendt (1969) maintained that violence is not part of the essence of the political. For her, violence is instrumental. Certainly, most attempts to define violence tend to integrate the idea of an act of physical force with a violation. Thus, for example, Steger (2013) points out that violence includes a sort of meanings, including "to force", "to injure", "to dishonor", and "to violate".

The common connection between "violence" and "violation" is not necessarily to be required, as it may bring on confusion rather than clarity. Actually, while acts of physical force often require some form of violations, there are times when a violation arises without the need of any physical force, or, alternatively, acts of physical force may happen without the need of violation. Thus, the relationship between violence and force, and between violence and violations, will be studied independently of each other. Separating acts of physical force from acts of violations can evaluate the importance of identifying two competing standpoints on violence, where the approach will continue to determine whether the concept of violence ought to be defined narrowly (violence as force) or more broadly (violence as a violation).

The definition of violence provides a nice illustration of the complex interplay between concept and commitment. There are roughly three types of definition to be found in the philosophical, political, and sociological literature on violence. We might label these "wide," "restricted," and "legitimate." Wide definitions, of which the most influential is that of "structural violence," tend to serve the interests of the political left by including within the extension of the term "violence" a great range of social injustices and inequalities. This not only allows reformers to say that they are working to eliminate violence when they oppose, say, a government measure to redistribute income in favor of the already rich, but also allows revolutionaries to offer, in justification of their resort to violence – even when it is terrorist – the claim that they are merely meeting violence with violence. Their own direct physical violence is presented as no more than a response to and defense against the institutional or quiet violence of their society.

Although Arendt (1969) tells us that there has been a reluctance to deal with violence as a phenomenon in its own right, there is nevertheless a consensus of theorists from the Left to Right to think that "violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power"

Arendt (1969) challenges that Power is understood to be power over. If this is the way we think of power, then it makes perfect sense to claim that the ultimate kind of power is violence. It goes to the very heart of her political thinking. Power and violence are not only distinguishable; they are antithetical. Where power reigns there is persuasion, not violence. And when violence reigns, it destroys power.

Arendt (1969) insists that serious political thinking requires making careful distinctions. The failure to do so indicates not only a certain deafness to linguistic meanings, which would be serious enough, but it has resulted in a kind of blindness to the realities they correspond to. And she distinguishes "power," "strength," "force," "authority," and "violence." Each of these key terms refers to distinct and different phenomena. Although my focus will be on power and violence, let me briefly review her range of distinctions.

Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is "in power" we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name. The moment the group, from which the power originated to begin with (*potestas in populo*, without a people or group there is no power), disappears, "his power" also vanishes.

Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow. All of these antiquated beliefs about the relationship between violence and power or between politics and war are no longer relevant. Instead of peace following World War II, there was a cold war and the creation of the military-industrial-labor complex. To speak of "the priority of war-making potential as the principal structuring force in society". War is the fundamental system of society

within which various secondary kinds of social organization compete or conspire--all of this is feasible.

Violence gained popularity in domestic affairs, especially in revolutionary contexts, and became a questionable and increasingly ambiguous tool in international relations. The Marxist proclaimed that "Power grows out of the barrel of a gun". Marx was certainly aware of the role of violence in history, but this role was secondary to him; It ended not with violence but with the contradictions in the old society. An outburst of violence preceded, but did not lead to, the emergence of the new society. In the same way that he compared the birth pangs that preceded, but did not cause, natural childbirth, he viewed the society as violent members of the instrument set; but the real power of the ruling class was not violence, or dependency. The ruling class was defined on the basis of its role in society, or, more generally, on the basis of its role in production. It has often been noted, and sometimes regrettably, that revolutionaries left under the influence of Marx's teachings rejected violent means to use the implicit "dictatorship of the proletariat" that oppresses the people in Marx's writings came in after the revolution and was meant to remain as rigidly dictatorial as that of Rome. Political violence conjures up the massacres of the innocents in the world. The disasters of political violence are complicated because so many political movements keep on withstanding both the principle of violent struggle and the struggles themselves - often for long periods - so that violence produces its own objects. It makes interior meanings. In these regards, the more one emphasizes on political violence itself the more rather than the less bizarre it becomes (Apter, 1997).

Violence in The Birthday Party and One for the Road

The Birthday Party can be read as a mixture of naturalism and stock humor on the one hand, and comedy and subversion on the other (Begley, 2005). Violence is associated with many other aspects of *The Birthday Party*. The first issue is the recurrence of violence throughout history. The second issue is the collective endorsement and acceptance of the state's tolerable disinterest in 'faceless violence'. Grimes (2005) explains the co-optation in the play as follows:

Violence (recall Stanley's attempts to control his situation physically, from the attack on Goldberg to the assault on Lulu) is no longer a viable outlet for rebellion or social dissatisfaction by the oppressed. There is 'nowhere to go' with any feeling of political discontent. In our one-dimensional society, there is no place from which to contest society's values, modes, and ideologies. What "protest" may exist is co-opted and absorbed by society itself.

Another related view is that inclusion in society dehumanizes the individual. The violence against Stanley has a transformative purpose. By using 'psychological abuse' to include Stanley in the lives of many consumers and conformists or middle-class people, Goldberg and McCann seek to eliminate any counter-aspirations of the victim. Fromm & Marx (2013) confirms:

Marx saw that political force cannot produce anything for which there has been no preparation in the social and political process. Hence that force, if at all necessary, can give, so to speak, only the last push to a development which has virtually already taken place, but it can never produce anything truly new.

He claimed that violence is the midwife of every outdated civilization giving birth to a modern one. One of Marx's greatest insights is that he goes beyond the conventional notion of the middle class; he rejected the notion that political force alone could usher in a new social order and the creative capacity of force. Marx believed that violence could only have a temporary relevance and could never play a lasting role in the development of society.

Of course, the idea of the Holocaust cannot be avoided in this game. There are many signs of destruction. Goldberg tells Petty that Stanley needs "special treatment" (Pinter, 1986). This phrase refers to the official Nazi term for the gassing of Jews. Another hint is mentioned when Goldberg says "you will be together" (Pinter, 1986). This refers to Nazi totalitarianism when every aspect of life (political, social, economic, artistic and philosophical) is regulated according to Hitler's vision. The name of the car may also be an allusion to the Nazi use of trailers as gas chambers to kill Jews. This means that the use of violence is very rooted in European history and is repeated in various forms throughout history therefore organized religious abuse had developed from the use of violence against heretics and blows the fence to weapons of mass terrorism (Grimes, 2005). Significantly, the concepts of 'integration' and 'integration' were also applied to communists in the US. of the 1949s and 1950s. From the perspective that communists and their association with Soviet intelligence represented a threat to the federal government. The world is a beautifully chaotic place; it's simple like that, so any violence in the games comes out naturally. It seems to me a necessary and unavoidable thing, as Pinter himself admits in an interview. "The violence", he explains, "is really only an expression of the question of dominance and subservience, which is possibly a repeated theme in my plays" (Bensky, 1966). He further says, "Violence has always been in my plays; from the very beginning (. . .) we are brought up every day of our lives in this world of violence". Esslin (1967) has rightly argued that "Pinter's early dramatic work is concerned with fear, ambiguity, and violence, as well as the elements of absurdity. Therefore, most of his plays begin comically but turn to physical, or psychological or potential violence_ sometimes, in varying sequences, to all three"(P.24). Pinter is persistently intrigued by the role of cruelty and power in familial and erotic relationships. Pinter's interest in power politics, brutality and violence is evident in his early plays: *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Room* (1957), *The Dumb Waiter* (1957), *The Caretaker* (1959), *The Hothouse* (1958), all of which carry issues of violence.

Attempting to explain the significance of the play, Catherine Itzin divides the play into four parts with Stanley representing the pivot. In the first level, Stanley is the nonconformist to whom society (in Goldberg and McCann) claims back and forces him to be equal. The second part presents Stanley's symbolic loss of identity which is a painful death. In the third part, Stanley is born and removed from the womb, and is forced to meet adult sex. One last other way the play could be seen is that Stanley's subconscious fears and guilt are literally dramatized and consumed.

As for *One for The Road*, It is a violent play, but not because of acts that are depicted on stage; rather, it is violent because there are constant references to violence that happens off stage. Pinter's belief that the contemporary society is a brutal police state is illustrated in the play. The drama conveys the idea that a person is better off dead if the powerful people dislike his appearance, politics, manner, or morals. The protagonist Victor is being held captive by a totalitarian government and its compliant officer Nicolas. Victor has clearly been subjected to torture. Although Pinter did not explicitly address the violence in the play, it is implied by the small area and the non-verbal clues. The play's plot opens with Victor, a mere scholar, being questioned by Nicolas, a purportedly holy man of authority. "I think I deserve one for the road" (Pinter, 1988) is an allusion to the glasses of scotch that Nicholas continues pouring for himself in the title *One for The Road*. While he drinks, he often talks to himself because Victor doesn't say anything much of the time. He began chatting to Victor informally about how his son and wife were mentioned, as well as how his books were knocked around and his rugs peed on. He asks Victor whether his son is okay and then remarks on how gorgeous the wife is and how everyone is in love with her. Nicholas is asked by Victor to murder him, but he declines. Here, there is a blackout that is followed by Nicky, Victor's seven-year-old kid, being heartbrokenly

questioned. Subsequently, he asks his wife Gila and torments her with meaningless inquiries until she gives him the information he desires, which is obviously untrue:

NICOLAS: Do you think we have nuns upstairs? Pause. What do we have upstairs? GILA: No nuns. NICOLAS: What do we have? GILA: Men (PP.13-14).

However, the most of the violence that the audience witnesses in this play is moral or psychological. When Nicholas tells Victor how important he is and how bad his position is, he displays symptoms of megalomania. He informs him that his son is viewed by the state as nothing more than a damnable brat for having dared to spit on the nation's warriors and implies that his wife is being repeatedly raped. One may view questioning as a form of indoctrination and an obvious instance of violence. Psychological violence is defined as a harmful effect that, like any other form of violence, definitely has its limitations "the individual freedom" by accompanying physical auxiliaries (Derriennic, 1972).

This is quite applicable to Arendt (1969) view what is related with the totalitarian regime. "The decisive difference between totalitarian domination, based on terror, and tyrannies and dictatorships, established by violence, is that the former turns not only against its enemies but against its friends and supporters as well"(Arendt, 1969). Violence is associated with power, and can clearly affect living standards and social order. Power can be described as an instrument of terror to intimidate and even suppress society. The climax of the terror comes when the police state begins to devour its children, as yesterday's killer becomes today's victim. And this is when the power disappears completely. There are now many plausible explanations for Russia's Stalinization—none, I believe, such as the Stalinist operatives themselves recognizing that continuation of the regime would prevent revolt, with fear being the best safeguard indeed, but it would crush the whole nation.

Victor doesn't believe in violence and because he is intelligent, he remains silent. Afterwards, don't care how important you and your family think you are, you sometimes regard as good as absent to your country. Nicholas seems filled with his false beliefs about how the country and its president should come first, and worse, he imagines himself to be religious, or actually thinks he's being a detective in which he is willing to do whatever is right the activity in order to obtain information. He manages to force Gila to completely change the course of action by repeating her annoying questions. She informs her spouse before to being questioned: "Your wife and I had a very nice chat but I couldn't help noticing she didn't look her best. She's probably menstruating. Women do that" (Roof, 1988) Of course, it is totally implausible that her lack of health is due to the fact that an entire regiment sexually assaulted her. Yes, it's the same clichéd thought that the woman's entire life revolves around her menstrual cycle, so therefore, if she seems anxious, she must be.

One way to read the play is in terms of gaze politics or power dynamics. Victor's last look at Nicolas, for instance, is said to be a stare not look, a "difference which may indicate either a shock or the beginnings of a subversion of Nicolas's system" (Roof, 1988). Actually, Victor's expression of dread and submission on his face makes his stare everything from defiant. His gaze is really, as Grimes (2005) puts it, "framed and subsumed by Nicolas" (Grimes, 2005).

It is not enough to say that power and violence are not the same in politics; Pinter's play illustrates how totalitarian regimes are wary of intellectuals. Nicolas's contempt for thought is rooted in his conviction that it poses a threat to the natural, peaceful, and ordered way of life that the State has preserved (Grimes, 2005). "Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance". This suggests that it is inaccurate to consider nonviolence to be the antithesis of violence; in fact, discussing peaceful power is superfluous.

Power cannot be created by violence; it can only be used to destroy it. Marx and Hegel placed a great deal of faith in the dialectical "power of negation," which allows opposites to coexist peacefully because contradictions advance rather than impede development. However, this confidence is based on a much older philosophical prejudice that holds that good can emerge from evil and that evil is merely a transient expression of a still-hidden good. These long-held beliefs are now harmful. For the sole reason that they inspire hope and dissipate fear—a false hope used to dispel real fear—many people who have never heard of Hegel or Marx agree with them. By this, I do not want to equate violence with evil; rather, I want to emphasize that violence cannot be understood in terms of its opposite, power, and that we must look at the origins and nature of violence in order to recognize it for what it is.

In essence, the play's dread lies in its tragedy of complete victimization and the unstoppable way that this victimization is specific to physical effects: Nicky is killed, Victor's tongue is severed, and Gila is sexually assaulted. Pinter's political morality, according to Knowles (1991), is derived from the tangible, real-world effects of tyranny, such as the physical realities of torture, suffering, and death. Grimes (2005) shows that Pinter not only reifies power but "creates images of it in action that are extraordinarily painful and forceful," as well.

Pinter affirms to Pinter & Gussow (1994) in the New York Times: "I feel the question of how power is used and how violence is used, how you terrorize somebody, how you subjugate somebody, has always been alive in my work". Power, terror, and subordination are all political issues. His theater depicts how difficult it is for people to break free from these traditions, typically allegorically but occasionally overtly. His political plays are usually defined by this battle. Pinter believed that the system was flawed and that individuals were dehumanized. "His anger via his characters was directed against the system" (Cohn, 1962). This is made clear through the portrayal of characters like Stanley from *The Birthday Party*, who admits that his is different, but despite this revelation he is not a threat to the system he has completely corrupted, with the agents of the system. Goldberg his McCann takes him to an unfamiliar place he keeps his individuality intact until the end. He is shown to be trying, but his image of a complete breakdown of his character, a rebirth into a new identity very different from his original identity and the order of which he was independent of the relation point to the ultimate destruction of the individual.

The easiest way to define Pinter's plays is as threat plays. It is clear that physical violence is an extreme type of aggressiveness used for maltreatment or murder. These plays depict a deadly outside force endangering human existence. Gale (1977) believes that "the threat to a person's security by unknown outside powers and the disintegration of his individuality under the onslaught of the attacking force". Additionally, Orley (1968) discusses the recurring motif in Pinter's early plays, "The central character tries to escape from metaphysical menace of the outside world by holding up in some seemingly safe burrow" (P.126). As a result, violence plays a crucial role in the resolution and the conflict becomes an inevitable aspect of the circumstance.

Social Effects of Alienation

Following World War II, it was said that no amount of building, bridge, or new city foundation could save the European psyche from becoming hopeless and pessimistic. However, this predisposition toward pessimism is not the only factor contributing to the war threat facing society. It is important to acknowledge that a significant portion of the West, or Western culture, has long suffered from internal despair. Humans are so alienated from one another in today's civilizations that their only means of communication has been to have a shared goal. People's self-interest has formed the basis of their relationships (Pappenheim & Ak, 2002).

According to Marx, human communication is so isolated that instinctive isolation is visible, but the connection to the human soul seems irrelevant. In these respects, individuals convey messages that all social relations to each other are only in some way insensitive (Pappenheim & Ak, 2002). Marx considers the alien phase to mean that man not only withdraws from his own possessions; He is alienated from the very creation by which these things are done, from the natural world in which he lives, and from other men as he is defined and expressed, and there is a great difference between the writers who now use the word alien. While most writers claim that the notion is only conceivable to people, other academics point out that it may be extended to non-human entities as well—such as God, the cosmos, and nature. Some people who limit its application to humans think it is limited to describing specific people and not society as large. A lot of these authors contend that an individual's discordance with the society in which he lives is an indication of his alienation. Others go on to say that society may also be ill or distant, so that someone who is unable to fit in with the current culture need not necessarily be considered alienated. Not only did Marx introduce the idea of alienation, but Hegel believed that all forms of reality has separation and distance, has affected him deeply (Pappenheim & Ak, 2002). Alienation, as part of a process of consciousness, is a basic idea in Hegel's philosophy. But Hegel conceives alienation only at the level of consciousness; as Marx points out, its external dimension doesn't matter to him. For Hegel, the problem of alienation is central only as a stage of consciousness. Hence, his view contrasts with the modern use of the term "alienation", for Hegel, it has a positive meaning. In this sense, even though Marx picked up the concept of alienation from Hegel, there is a substantial distinction between the Hegelian view of alienation and Marx's conception of alienation (Borchert, 1996).

According to Fromm (2013), alienation means that man does not conceive himself as the influential agent in this world, but that the world (nature, others and he himself) control him and are devoid him of his productivity. They stand above and against him as objects, however, they may be objects of his own creation. Alienation is vitally facing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object.

A remarkable range of psycho-social disorders, including loss of self, anxiety, loneliness, meaninglessness, isolation, loss of belief or values, and poor communication, are among the traits that other philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists contend are linked to alienation. Generally speaking, the term "alienation" has been used to characterize a wide range of occurrences, including any sense of dissatisfaction or estrangement from society. Feelings of isolation, helplessness, meaninglessness, and loneliness are frequently associated with alienation, as is the idea that morality has collapsed or that society has lost its moral core. People seek financial stability at any costs in an effort to meet the demands of modern living as their society grows more and more modernized. As a result, individuals become even more totally focused on reaching their objectives and show complete indifference to the wants and needs of others. The fundamental belief that society does not adequately address the needs of the people who make up its membership is the root cause of alienation. This emotion is seen as an indication of a person's discontent with specific social structures. Individual sentiments of alienation, meaninglessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement might be used to characterize this discontent. Literary characters that struggle with other people's emotions convey a sense of estrangement from other people. Alienation is a strong force that pushes people into violent ideas, self-pity, loneliness, and solitude. In addition, people might feel cut off from their own communities, their intimate relationships—such as family and loved ones—and the religion they were brought up with. In rare cases, this feeling of alienation can even reach the person's sense of separation from God. One of the main themes of the modernist movement, which emphasized reliance on science and technology, is alienation. People progressively get alienated from society when they relocate from rural to urban settings which

they should normally be an integral part of. Modernism examines how our connections with one another and with social institutions—like families, workplaces, and schools—have been progressively weaker, which has made us more alienated and independent in our thought processes. There are several applications for both alienation and isolation. Living in an increasingly confusing and impersonal world that is heavily crowded, having face-to-face interactions dehumanizes individuals and drives them apart from their neighbors.

The modern man has ascended to a level where he lives a more opulent and comfortable existence, but at what cost? He has lost hope for a meaningful and joyful life (Pappenheim & Ak, 2002).

Once the global economy began to grow and support the nations' physical growth, alienation-related issues grew with time. Large cities had significant infrastructural and demographic expansion during the time. Because people who live in rural regions have distinct social views from those who live in urban areas, this situation affected the type of social connections among individuals. Large cities provide boundless optimism and more opportunity for personal growth for a large number of people. Many people relocate to large cities in the hopes of realizing their aspirations. But for a great number of others, particularly those who are estranged, they feel hopelessly stuck in their own world and filled with disappointment, alienation, and loneliness. Despite the sophisticated, idyllic ambiance that defines cities, most individuals there experience loneliness, isolation, and the apathy of others to their concerns. Therefore, encountering the people living among the strange throng is unavoidable. Living a life like this makes individuals feel alienated, which weakens their feeling of community and causes them to tend to mind their own business. The ethnic diversity of the population in cities also erodes interpersonal bonds and acts as a communication barrier. They appear to be inhabitants of the realm of strangers. The causes of estrangement in our day and age are growing more significant and intense every day (Hall, 1985).

The idea of alienation and its connection to the contemporary social structure and alienated people have received a lot of attention lately. The term "alienation" has been used to characterize a number of social phenomena, such as the emotions of harshness, meaninglessness, isolation, and loneliness as well as sentiments of unhappiness with society. Newspapers frequently publish stories on personal issues, which are among the main causes of suicide. These issues include severe diseases, profound sadness, and unhappy lifestyles. The absence of authentic interpersonal interactions and the loss of human touch are the main causes of feeling alienated. Issues like severe diseases, unhappy lifestyles, and profound sadness are among the main causes of suicide.

In *The Caretaker* we can find a reflection of this sense of alienation in Aston and

Davies's dialogues:

Aston: Where were you born then?

Davies: (darkly) What do you mean?

Aston: Where were you born?

Davies: I was... uh... oh, it's a bit hard, like,

to set your mind back... see what I mean...

going back... a good way... lose a bit of track,

like... you know... (Pinter, 1960)

Davies continues to express this situation with this quotation:

Eh? Oh, well, that was... near on... that'll be...

That'll be a little while ago now. But of course what it is, they can't find the right kind of people in these places.

What they want to do, they're trying to do away with these foreigners, you see, in catering. They want an Englishman to pour their tea, that's what they want, that's what they're crying out for. It's only common sense, en't? Oh, I got all that under way... that's... uh... that's... what I'll be doing. (Pinter, 1960).

Moreover, Davies enlarges this definition and expresses the alienated figure of people with their language, race and shape in this quotation;

Davies:All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them, all of them aliens had it. And they had me working there...they had me working...All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, the lot of them, that's what, doing me out of a seat, treating me like a dirt. When he comes at me tonight I told him. (Pinter, 1960)

The problem of alienation in society has become more pronounced in modern society. Consequently, almost all life in the cities is necessarily an impersonal and negative state. The problem of alienation has become a common sentiment associated with urban people living like caged animals in a large zoo designed specifically for humans. The turning point in the play comes as the characters make irresistible attempts at dialogue, and their continued reception poses a first-order disaster, therefore

Uncontrollable violence. Clear communication and emotional warmth is what they are looking for to minimize their alienation. The play is an example of how humanity expresses happiness, in a hospitable world.

As seen in *The Caretaker*, characters' increasing feelings of alienation from one another as a result of a communication breakdown sometimes result in confrontations, cause them to behave strangely, and occasionally inspire them to commit violent crimes against one another or themselves.

Cruelty and Alienation in *The Caretaker*

Victimization is Pinter's primary way of expressing the idea of cruelty. Cruelty is found in the pattern of abuse where one character meets another in a struggle for dominance, control and survival. A victim and victimizers are produced by this kind of interaction. In this interaction, the victim loses all defenses, strategies, and justifications, leaving them vulnerable and nude. Cruelty is the outcome of victimization as much as the process of victimization. As a result, cruelty serves as both a tool and a goal. In addition, cruelty is associated with the metaphysical because it deprives man of his defense mechanisms and forces him to face the complexity and perversity of his own nature. Therefore, the goal was to demonstrate how Pinter practically represented the philosophical concept of cruelty.

One of the key elements in Pinter's plays is cruelty. Characters may be cruel in a variety of ways; it can be shown in their actions, attitudes, and situations. Regardless, the focus of this

part will be on analyzing the notions of cruelty and alienation in the play constructed in the style of absurd drama. In Pinter's *The Caretaker*, two alienated brothers named Aston and Mick reside in a solitary, gloomy chamber and endeavor to discover their true selves through a man named Davies, who represents society. Aston and Mick carve out a space for themselves in a harsh world and search for a friend to help them get through it, but paradoxically, all they discover is the harsh truth of their alone. The characters' tragic ends and the ensuing atrocities they experience prove unavoidable in a hostile or even uncaring world.

Over the course of two weeks, *The Caretaker* is broken up into three acts. Pinter sets up a dramatic scene when three guys from the working class face each other. The family patriarch Mick (in his late twenties) has a single room where the action takes place. At the moment, Mick shares a home with his older brother, Aston, a thirty-year-old man with mental health issues that began when he was forced to get a harsh electroshock treatment at a mental health facility. In a nearby cafe, Aston encounters Davies, an elderly man. After saving Davies from a brawl, Aston offers to let him stay in his bed for the night. Aston extends an invitation to Davies, an outsider, to spend some time with them. Davies accepts this offer and makes an effort to blend in, becoming closer to Mick and Aston over time while pitting one against the other. Even if the two brothers do not get along right first, they eventually accept the fact that brotherhood exists and do not give up on one another. *The Caretaker* begins with Mick examining the space closely. A Buddha is perched on a gas burner. Mick leaves the room as soon as he hears someone arriving. Davies and Aston go into the room. Davies yells that he detests "Poles, Greeks, and Blacks" in response to the rude treatment he received at the café (Pinter, 1960). He informs Aston that he requires new shoes. Davies acknowledges that Bernard Jenkins is his true name and that he longs to be identified by someone else. The next morning, Aston gets up early and tells Davies that he couldn't sleep because of the noise. As he prepares to depart, Aston hands Davies the door key and starts looking around the room. Mick slips inside in the meanwhile to slip his own keys into his pocket. Mick knocks Davies to the ground after observing him for some time. Mick then looks beneath the covers for Davies's pants.

Davies tries to tell Mick in the second act that he is Jenkins and that he wants his pants back. In defense of himself, he claims that he has been invited to stay in the room and that he is not an invader. To find out what type of man Davies is, Mick poses a series of questions to him. Mick is adamant that he is the home's owner. Then, Davies's luggage, which he had left at the café, is brought in by Aston. The two brothers start a game where they try to prevent Davies from getting his luggage by flinging it at each other. Davies eventually gets his hands on it and heads back to his bed. Mick exits the room, and Aston reports Davies about the room, making it clear that it belongs to Mick. Aston also mentions that once he builds the shed to be used as a workshop, he would decorate the upper portion of the house. Davies accepts Aston's employment offer as a caretaker. Although Davies is concerned about the position, it is clear that he is happy to get such an offer. Mick informs Davies, with a nice demeanor, that Aston is a lethargic and hesitant worker. Davies accepts Mick's offer to take care of him, giving him experience in the workforce. These conflicts create a cruel atmosphere between characters. This is a kind of actions which bring up cruelty in society.

Aston makes the decision to complete the task in the garden shed. Mick finds it hard to have a meaningful conversation with Aston. Mick explains how he intends to work with Davies to transform the property into an opulent residence. Davies makes an effort to avoid talking to Aston. As opposed to that, he wants to get close with Mick. Aston soon makes his way back with a pair of shoes for Davies, who keeps complaining that he can't wear them since they don't have laces. Instead of receiving black laces, Davies reluctantly takes a pair of brown ones. Then he says he can't accompany Aston to the Sid Cup. Because of Davies's snoring, Aston is unable to sleep and wakes up during the night. Aston tells Davies to wake up, saying he and Mick get

along now. Davies makes a threat to check Aston back into the mental health facility. Taking out his knife, he goes after Aston. Drawing on his partnership with Mick, Davies accuses Aston of squandering his time in the structure, characterizing it as a "stinking shed" (Pinter, 1960). Aston is so enraged that he begins stuffing Davies's possessions into his backpack. Davies says goodbye and heads out to fetch Mick, who will handle Aston's situation.

Mick and Davies return to an empty room the following morning. Mick is initially cordial, but he becomes irate when Davies says a few disparaging things about Aston's electric shock therapy. Davies is told to go right away by Mick. He tosses the Buddha to the ground in a fit of rage, where it breaks into pieces. Mick claims he is sick of maintaining the home and planning renovations. He now plans to give Aston complete control over it. As the performance comes to a close, Aston has turned his back on Davies and he remains mute. Davies can only close the door behind him. His attempts to fit in with the others' lives are completely ineffective. Pinter draws attention to the plight of the individual who is hopelessly imprisoned in a harsh environment via Davies's perspective.

Pinter used language as a deceitful instrument in *The Caretaker*. Davies acts cordial toward the brothers even though he doesn't like any of them. In an effort to win their trust and earn their confidence to confide in him, Davies employs deceitful language. Mick is likewise skilled at lying—indeed, he is more adept than Aston in use words to trick others. There is no need for Aston to misuse words, to explain his feelings abruptly. His psychotherapy and electric shock treatment prevents him from hiding the motives behind his actions. His honesty in sharing his psychotherapy with other people is quite remarkable (Misra, 1992). Mishra (1992) finds the following:

In *The Caretaker* each of the three characters is distinctively model in the art of lying. All are incorrigible liars. Mick is clever, a consummate liar, pretending and lying as a matter of habit, but he lies are not sharp enough to effectively distort truth. Davies, similarly, is a chronic liar, but he appears to be more psychopathic than artful in his distortion of truth. He often blurs truth and falsehood, and sometimes in his linguistic helplessness appears to be senile, involving an inability to distinguish fact from fancy. Language in successful Pinter plays thus serves as a medium of characterization not only at the superficial, social level, but also at deeper levels of psychology

The play's characters are cruel to one another and alienated from one another. Both their language and conduct exhibit reflections of this. They don't always feel compelled to answer questions that other people ask them. For instance, when Aston asks for Davies's true name and country of origin, Davies first ignores him before responding in a brief and evasive manner (Misra, 1992).

Aston: Welsh, are you?

Davies: Eh?

Aston: You Welsh?

Pause

Davies: Well, I been around, you know... what I mean...I been about..

Aston: Where were you then?

Davies: What do you mean?

Aston: Where were you born?

Davies: I was...uh...oh.., It's a bit hard like, to set your mind back...

see what I mean...going back... a good way...lose a bit of track, like...

you know... (Pinter, 1960)

Aston wants to know more about Davies and his hidden existence, so he uses language to try to find out more. Davies, meanwhile, would rather withhold any details on his personal life. A genuine conversation between two people would not sound like the exchange between Aston and Davies. When Davies is given the position of caretaker, he finds it difficult to express his feelings and thoughts:

Davies: You see, what I mean to say... what I am getting at is...

I mean, what sort of jobs....

Pause

Aston: Well, there is things like the stairs... and the... the bells.

Davies: But it'd be a matter...wouldn't it...it'd be a matter of a broom...

Isn't it?

Aston: Yes, and of course, you'd need a few brushes. (Pinter, 1960)

Most of the conversations between Mick and Davies exhibit a similar sort of dynamic, with the former controlling the latter with lengthy, persuasive remarks. (Misra, 1992) The play's most talkative character, Mick, utilizes words to "disarm Davies and discredit him" (Misra, 1992). Actually, the majority of the conversations between Mick and Davies end up being a form of interrogation in which Mick, the victim, asks Davies a series of questions. Pinter also skillfully employs pauses and quiet in his plays. The audience is left wondering what will happen in later portions of the play as characters encounter one other in quiet. At the end of *The Caretaker*, when Davies asks Aston for permission in his chamber and receives no answer, there is "a long silence". This "long silence" symbolizes Davies's complete lack of hope in staying with the two brothers. Davies loses his opportunity to live in a cozy house when he finds out that Aston won't allow him to stay with them (Bloom, 1987). Pinter's plays mainly deal with the themes of cruelty and alienation. Both from society and from themselves, his characters are alienated. In their civilization, there is cruelty and violence. Some of them are homeless, abandoned characters, yet even if they have families, some of them are estranged. (Peacock, 1997) Because of this, authors depict in their writing the idea of cruelty as the outcome of a human being's inability to communicate with others. A person eventually experiences solitude and lives alone. Therefore, Pinter's characters frequently live alone and exhibit cruelty. For example, this exchange from *The Caretaker* serves as an example of how poorly they communicate:

Mick: ... But he doesn't seem to be interested in
what I got mind, that's the trouble. Why don't you
have a chat with him, see if he's interested?

Davies: Me?

Mick: Yes. You're a friend of his.

Davies: He's no friend of mine.

Mick: You're living in the same room with him, en't you?

Davies: He's no friend of mine. You don't know where you
are with him. I mean, with a bloke like you, you know where

you are (Pinter, 1960).

Their conversations make the cruelty clear. He doesn't refer to him as a friend, even though they share a room; instead, he treats him like a bed or chair among his possessions. Their characters' peculiar identities are another problem they face. The people live apart from one another in a nasty, self-centered, estranged, and lonely society. Pinter emphasizes in one of his interviews the need to give up cruel ways and turn to nonviolent ones.

I feel...that instead of any inability to communicate, there is a deliberate evasion of communication. Communication itself between people is so frightening that rather than do that there is continual cross-talk, a continual talking about other things, rather than what is at the root of their relationship (Almansi, 1987).

Pinter uses a lot of mystery, as *The Caretaker* makes very evident. The audience is drawn in by this enigma as they look for truth beneath the obvious folly. Aston extends an invitation to Davies to stay at their house as he is looking for a friend. The intruder, Davies, quickly establishes his influence over Aston. But Mick overcomes Davies, not his brother. Davies first turns down Mick's tempting offer of the caretaker position. As a result, Mick makes threats to kick Davies out of the house—the final place that has been provided for him. It is generally widely recognized that *The Caretaker* plays a strong subject of isolation and loneliness. The main characters in this work frequently experience loneliness and isolation from one another, either as a result of their own actions or as a result of negative forces being applied to them. They misunderstand one other and remain isolated in their own world, making it difficult for them to build and maintain meaningful relationships with others around them. Lack of communication is a major theme in the majority of Harold Pinter's plays. Understanding one another is hampered by the characters' lack of communication in their behaviors, circumstances, and manner of life. In *The Caretaker*, two separated brothers named Aston and Mick live in a solitary life. The two brothers set themselves up for a life of loneliness, look for a friend to share it with, but ironically, all they discover is the harsh truth of their own alone (Ahmed and Mohammed, 2019).

In the play, three characters—two brothers and an elderly tramp—signify the state of humanity. It so occurs that the elder brother, Aston, breaks up an angry altercation between a vagabond named "Davies" and a coffee shop where Davies is rumored to work as a cleaner. In his sixties, he is an outcast, a vagabond, alone, and without a job, a place to live, a family, or a distinct identity. The fact that he has no acquaintances confirms his feelings of loneliness and despair, as indicated by this description. He begs for a pair of shoes, displaying his extreme poverty as well as his ensuing hopelessness and despair at the priests' lack of generosity and their cruel treatment of him, treating him like "nothing better than a dog" (Pinter, 1960). Because of this, Davies is conscious of his lower social position and does not like to believe that he is better or equal to others. Immediately taking offense at the Scotchman's power to command him, he lashes out, declaring, "He's not my boss... nothing superior to me".

A careful reading of the issue of alienation reveals a parallel between Aston's and Davies' circumstances. In actuality, despite their different motivations, the two men are lonely and ache for a meaningful companionship. However, it soon becomes apparent that Aston is mentally unstable and seldom able to perform manual labor, which exposes his suffering (Gascoigne, 1967). When we compare the two men, we can see that Aston is used to being relatively open with other people by conversing with them, but Davies does not trust anyone and tends to keep somewhat enclosed and alone within himself.

In fact, ever since his terrifying hospital experience, Davies was the first to draw his favorable attention. We may conclude that, despite Davies's unclean look, Aston just loved him. On the

other hand, Davies could hardly believe that Aston was willing to provide him a place to hide from the threat posed by the outside world. Aston is providing more than just charitable giving. This item demonstrates and validates his need for a true friendship and someone who might be able to look after him. But Davies is dishonest and untrustworthy; his pledge to assist Aston is untrue and untrustworthy. Regretfully, Davies had other opportunities to overcome his loneliness, but he chose not to take advantage of them. Aston confides in Davis in the mental hospital, intending to find sympathetic companionship. Also, Davis is not the type to judge other people fairly. His fear of being laughed at by Aston, for example, is not unreasonable. His misunderstanding causes him to misunderstand Aston's gentle gesture, perhaps out of friendship. Paradoxically, he trusts Aston's younger brother "Mick" as strong and good-hearted, while Mick is the person to be intimidated. He is seen asking Mick for a watch to tell the time because he cannot tell the time without a watch and consequently will not know where he is (Pinter, 1960).

Although Aston doesn't seem to be affected by what Davis says, his situation is similar to Davis' tragedy. Aston has tried to do the right thing to overcome his loneliness and companionship, but his humility is severely and painfully damaged, and Davis's selfishness and self-absorption judge and reject his kindness, hence his silence deadly is reasonable and justified (Ahmed & Mohammed, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, violence and cruelty in contemporary society lead to alienation, isolation, disgust, loneliness, intimidation, fear, murder, and death. This situation will definitely be a part of our lives for years to come; however, the struggle against it will also continue; not only ideologically, but also socially and politically. It is motivated by a strong desire to deal with human reality situation. The Theater of the Absurd deals with basic problems of life and death, cruelty, violence and alienation, thus fulfilling the theatre's primary responsibility to represent conflicts arising from the problematic nature of the universe.

According to Pinter, violence is a universal motif in his plays and is an inherent part of the universe. According to him, violence is a way for people to show their conflict between dominance and submission. He fosters a panoptic environment in which violence is both the object and the subject of victimization. Pinter portrays the use of violence by the totalitarian state as always justified. His exploitation of violence is straightforward since he always presents it as an oppressive instrument used by the state apparatus to achieve its goals. He doesn't develop a sophisticated or rational argument of violence. Furthermore, his plays could not be considered very dramatic because they are essentially exact extracts from the experiences of prisoners or their families rather than having any genuine creative or imaginative elements. Pinter shows how estrangement from others is inevitable for individuals. Man strives so hard to get over his loneliness, yet he never succeeds. Davies's experience provides proof for this notion. By coincidence, Aston saves Davies from loneliness, and the latter overcomes his estrangement; nonetheless, he shows no gratitude for this favor. By pitting one sibling against the other, Davies succumbs to his human frailty notwithstanding Aston's genuineness and kindness. Aston, meantime, concentrates on his own estrangement, which has been brought about by a variety of factors. Not only is the society in which he lives to blame for his mental illness and treatment, but also his useless mother and possibly delusional brother Mick are also to blame for Aston's predicament is due to his cruelty which leads to cruelty to others.

In The Caretaker, the concept of cruelty causes alienation. Two estranged brothers named Aston and Mick live alone in a gloomy room, trying to discover their true selves via Davies' portrayal of society. They carve up a life for themselves as lonely people, searching for

someone to share it with but discovering nothing but their loneliness. My work's central theme is the characters' tragic conclusion, as well as their similarities and life perspectives. Alienation emerged when modernization and society drew them apart. Their estrangement from society and modernism surfaced as a result of their cruelty.

Based on the aforementioned, we may infer that the author affirms that alienation is an inevitable part of being human. A more circumspect analysis of the topic of alienation reveals, however, that loneliness may also stem from human shortcomings or be imposed by hostile circumstances that conspire and work together to harm a person. Ultimately, his contemporaries saw Harold Pinter as a rebellious young playwright who triumphed in his anti-establishment animus, his avoidance of individual identity, and his crack at ontological certainty.

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