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THE AESTHETICS OF HAROLD PINTER'S DRAMATIC ART²

Abstract: The British playwright Harold Pinter (1930–2008) is undoubtedly one of the greatest and most extraordinary modern playwrights, with the writing career which spanned over fifty years. The world Pinter depicts in his dramas is deeply political, violent, malevolent, and absurd at the same time, and is certainly reflective of dread, the precarious condition inhabited by most of contemporary humanity. A whole gallery of Pinter's characters (in his early plays) are not driven by ambition to make progress in such a world, they don't care to dispute the public arena, they are uninterested in changing the world for better or for worse. On the contrary, those characters are sad citizens of intimacy, fear, the horrific nature of which unmasks itself in claustrophobic rooms they are entrapped in, where power games, domination, and the struggle for liberation originate. Pinter's characters are obsessed only with their own survival, governed by the 'territorial imperative'.

The paper aims at analyzing thematic preoccupations, dramatic devices and major dramatic and poetic elements of Pinter's plays, with the emphasis on his connection with the 'Theatre of the Absurd'. The focus is also on the concept of the hidden violence of language and linguistic absurdity as used by Pinter.

Key words: existence, a claustrophobic room, mystery, terror, violence, language, absurdity, Theatre of the Absurd.

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The British playwright Harold Pinter's work has been regarded as a great achievement due to his distinctive dramatic style, and his meticulous attention to exploration of human predicament in his drama. His unique treatment of human existence caught in the intricate web of repressive politics and never-ending power games earned him over fifty awards, prizes, and other honours, and most notably the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2005.³ It is worth noting that Pinter owes much to the legacy of William Shakespeare to whom he dedicated the essay, "A Note on Shakespeare", the first essay within his collection of essays, poems and notes entitled *Various Voices - Prose, Poetry, Politics 1948-1998*. In the essay Pinter pays homage to Shakespeare for his commitment to writing of the open wound which is at the heart of the world. Pinter continues the tradition of Shakespeare by writing of the open wound which, especially in the era of violence our contemporary world thrives on, keeps on pulsing and is at the pinnacle of its fever.⁴ A unifying obsession in Pinter's early plays is certainly the concept of claustrophobic and austere rooms, the concept which Pinter obviously borrowed from Henrik Ibsen, whose naturalism has been a critical touchstone of value in valorizing his achieve-

³ Pinter is also known for his unfaltering political activism against foreign policies of Great Britain and the USA in particular. He strongly opposed all wars conducted by the civilized West, ranging from the 1991 Gulf War, the 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, the United States' 2001 war in Afghanistan, to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In his famous Nobel Prize speech named *Art, truth & politics* (2005) Pinter infuriatingly spoke about the crimes committed by the USA since the Second World War, revealing the truth of those crimes hidden under the 'vast tapestry of lies'. Pinter sees the USA as the leading terrorist country in the world: "The United States supported and in many cases engendered every right wing military dictatorship in the world after the end of the Second World War. I refer to Indonesia, Greece, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Haiti, Turkey, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, and, of course, Chile. The horror the United States inflicted upon Chile in 1973 can never be purged and can never be forgotten." Pinter also emphasizes the need for people (art) to deconstruct the "vast tapestry of lies upon which [they] feed", i.e. the necessity of finding out and knowing the truth, a mission which he feels to be the primary vocation of every artist. The search for truth must never stop, "it can never be adjourned, it cannot be postponed. It has to be faced, right there, on the spot." It is worth noting that Pinter quotes an extract from a poem "I'm Explaining a Few Things" by Pablo Neruda, a Chilean poet, humanist, and political activist who was yet another humanist poet to be persecuted and eventually forced to exile by the repressive regime in Chile. Pinter explains that he quotes Neruda because nowhere in the contemporary poetry [has he read] such a powerful visceral description of the bombing of civilians." Pinter's Nobel Prize speech could be read online at www.nobelprize.org. Besides Pinter's connection with Neruda, there is a natural bond (and friendship) existing between Pinter and another Chilean artist and activist, Ariel Dorfman. Namely, Dorfman first saw Pinter's play *The Dumb Waiter* in Chile in the early 1960s and immediately felt its profundity and truthfulness which could be mapped onto any part of the oppressed world, particularly onto Latin America at the time. Dorfman has never failed to acknowledge the influence Pinter's dramatic craftsmanship has had on his own aesthetics and writing style. He dedicated to Pinter his best known play *Death and the Maiden*, and his first book was an examination of Pinter's plays. Dorfman's famous play *Purgatorio*, which Pinter loved and desired to direct but was blocked by his illness, was also produced under the influence of Pinter.

ment as an iconoclastic dramatist. Ibsen's plays not only represent but also actively explore the relations between humans and their environment, between individual action and the constellation of larger sociohistorical forces surrounding the individual's quest for a personal vocation. Namely, in Ibsen the private family room functions as the "trap", the centre of significant immediate relationships on which the larger determining social forces operating beyond it impinge as events seen through windows or messages sent from outside. Those rooms also serve as the crucial area of experience where social insecurities and sexual tensions are most immediately felt.⁵ As a result Ibsen's influence, Pinter wrote his first play and named it *The Room* (1957).

Pinter's plays are imbued with the feelings of disintegration, evasiveness, and domination as manifested both in his language and themes. He is predominantly concerned with the struggle for power both within a human being, and between an individual and a powerful mechanism or another dominant person. He has also been intrigued by the question of existence as the individual is often doomed to inner turmoil, hence loses a sense of self. Pinter's plays have been studied by many literary critics. However, their attempts to put his plays under any category have failed due to their idiosyncratic nature. Austin Quigley, a university professor and a literary critic, draws the conclusion about Pinter's plays that it is very difficult to argue that the plays as a group exemplify the large general truths of any existing theory about the nature of society, personality, culture, spirituality" (Quigley 2001: 7). In fact, this quality of his drama makes it difficult to analyze owing to an absence of theoretical ground with which critics would feel more comfortable. The presentation of a realist setting as well as a naturalistic dialogue has caused Pinter to be associated with social realism of the Realist Drama. Nevertheless, his drama does not aim at an overt social criticism. Actually, he himself regards his plays as realistic even though they do not display any realism. Ambiguity and evasiveness to communicate are extant in the early plays of Pinter (*The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, *The Dumb Waiter*), which is a quality that identifies his theatre

⁴Early Pinter was also strongly influenced by Samuele Beckett, but Pinter quickly broke loose from Beckett to create his own unique and readily identifiable style of writing. Whereas Beckett's characters seem ultimately unaware of and unconcerned by their connections to one another, Pinter's characters are consumed by the need to keep a watchful eye on one another, to defend themselves, and to challenge each other.

⁵The Marxist critic Raymond Williams is perhaps the most passionate admirer of Ibsen's dramatic art. His views on Ibsen and the appreciation of his dramatic craftsmanship could be read in: Williams, Raymond, *Drama From Ibsen to Brecht*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1968.

It should also be noted that James Joyce, who read Ibsen's works at the age of eighteen, frequently acknowledged the powerful influence of Ibsen's genius, which certainly gave rise to Joyce's production of his only play *Exiles*.

with that of the Absurd.⁶ A parallel has often been drawn between his dramatic expression and that of the Absurdist as their main concern is to discern the common human lot, which is delineated as a prevailing lack of meaning, and hence lacking a purpose for life. According to Martin Esslin, “the Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought” (Esslin 2004: 24). Absurdity is also manifest in “what happens on the stage, (which) transcends, and often contradicts, the words spoken by the characters” (Esslin 2004: 26). Pinter’s one-act play, *The Room* (1957), reflects his chief themes, particularly the one characterized by the “commonplace situation that is gradually invested with menace, dread, and mystery, the deliberate omission of an explanation or a motivation for the action” (Esslin 2004: 235). In a similar way, his full-length play, *The Birthday Party* (1958), entails the elements of mystery and terror, situating the main character in a house outside of which he expects the emergence of menace. *The Caretaker* (1960), his second full-length play, includes the element of the absurd without the mystery and violence of the earlier plays. The play is rendered funny to an extent beneath which lies the tragedy. His one-act plays are titled “Comedies of Menace”, a term which has become emblematic of Pinter’s recurring theme and style. The label is paradoxical in nature as it integrates comical and terrorizing elements simultaneously. Although Pinter’s early drama is typified as an expression of the feelings of fear, ambiguity, and restlessness, it also embodies the element of absurdity. The tragic is often rendered comic by the use of farcical, rhythmic and repetitive language. The initial comedy of a Pinter play often culminates in sombre matters:

Such comic passages also help create an atmosphere of menace, mystery, evasion, and matters deliberately concealed. Frequently Pinter’s plays begin comically but turn to physical, psychological, or potential violence – sometimes in varying sequences, to all three (Dukore 1988: 24).

Pinter himself acknowledges the relation between the absurd and the comic: “An element of the absurd is, I think, one of the features of [*The Caretaker*], but at the same time I did not intend it to be merely a laughable farce” (Esslin 2004: 247). So, in his earlier plays, the sense of menace is in the mysterious setting or the bitterness behind the laughter.

The fusion of humour and tragedy is recognizable in Pinter’s plays. The playwright makes use of the comedy not to arouse laughter but to provide insight to his characters’ inner world. Thus, it is not just a coincidence that the individu-

⁶ It was Martin Esslin (1918-2002), a Hungarian-born English theatre critic and writer, who coined the term ‘The Theatre of the Absurd’ which came to label the works of such dramatists as Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Harold Pinter.

als' most fearful and compelling experiences are often accompanied with an element of comedy, behind which they find a shelter to conceal their anxiety and real feelings. In fact, Pinter himself admits that "more often than not the speech only seems to be funny – the man in question is actually fighting a battle for his life" (Bensky 2005: 63). Therefore, what appears to be funny is not indeed funny, which becomes obvious as Pinter's subject matter grows more and more sombre. Esslin suggests that Pinter's plays "can be very funny up to a point when the absurdity of the characters' predicament becomes frightening, horrifying, pathetic, tragic" (Esslin 2004: 51). While in Pinter's earlier plays the characters seem to be entrapped in a claustrophobic room, the later plays depict more recognizable social settings. Moreover, the later plays like *A Night Out* (1960), *The Caretaker* (1960), *The Homecoming* (1965), and *No Man's Land* (1975) differ from their predecessors because of their less ambiguous nature. According to Bernard F. Dukore, these plays are:

less enigmatic, mysterious, or unrealistic than Pinter's earlier work. No character suddenly and unexpectedly goes blind. Though interrogation is disturbing, it is not irrational or self-contradictory. No character leaves through one door and returns through another, and unseen forces do not demand exotic food (Dukore 1988: 47-48).⁷

However realistic they are, Pinter's more recent plays still tend to embody the element of mystery to some extent. Therefore, the playwright does not alter his preference for a certain degree of obscurity in his plays.

In Pinter's drama, the emphasis is put on dialogue rather than action; accordingly, the plot does not follow a straight line. In fact, the action is not progressive; instead, it seems repetitive and circular. The plays keep going with the characters' diverse moments of victory, disillusionment, fear, and fulfillment. Austin Quigley argues that these opposing feelings make Pinter plots multi-linear because of the "elements of progress, regress and circularity constantly leading towards and beyond moments of insight, agreement, harmony and union, that, no matter how fondly anticipated or remembered, refuse to stay firmly in place" (Quigley 2001: 22). The use of multi-linear plot with a digressing structure provides a basis

⁷ Dukore is referring to Pinter's earliest plays *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, and *The Dumb Waiter*. In *The Room*, Rose abruptly and inexplicably goes blind after her husband has beaten to death the intruder into their room; in *The Birthday Party*, two representatives of the vicious system, Goldberg and McCann, subject Stanley Webber to a bizarre interrogation process imbued with torture and irrational accusations due to his wrongdoings in the past, culminating in Stanley's both physical and psychological breakdown; in *The Dumb Waiter*, it is Gus who engages in Socratic dialogue with Ben so as to challenge and figure out the system and get an insight into what is awaiting him, his murder, which is essentially the price he has to pay for his daring questioning of the system embodied in Wilson.

for employing dialogue as the source of expression. Pinter's use of "contractually oriented social interaction" between different characters reflects "complex nature of social exchange" (Quigley 2001: 22). Thus, speech for interaction is emphasized over action in Pinter's realm.

Pinter's use of language is closely related to his belief that truth is unverifiable.⁸ In line with the awareness of a slippery ground for reality, the playwright presents the everyday speech in its bare form. Ariel Dorfman, a Chilean writer, poet and playwright, and a close friend of Pinter's whose works have been irreplaceably and uniquely inspiring for Dorfman, admires Pinter's dramatic art for its ability to be lyrical without versifying, and poetic "merely by delving into the buried rhythms of everyday speech."⁹ Martin Esslin states that "Pinter's clinically accurate ear for the absurdity of ordinary speech enables him to transcribe everyday conversation in all its repetitiveness, incoherence and lack of logic and grammar" (Esslin 2004: 243). He argues that "non sequiturs in small talk" occur because of "the delayed-action effect" when a character tends to be less quick-witted than the other, as a result of which failure to listen leads to misunderstanding" (Esslin 2004: 243). Nonetheless, Pinter does not accept the idea of the characters' lack of communication; instead, he employs "a deliberate evasion of communication", "continual cross-talk" and "a continual talking about other things" since the interpersonal communication is extremely tormenting and menacing (Esslin 2004: 244). Additionally, the recurrent subtextual use of such dramatic devices as silences and pauses¹⁰ not only serves this purpose of evasiveness to communicate but also entails the presence of an unstated meaning beneath the surface level of the spoken words. Indeed, a great deal can be learned when characters keep reticent in the course of the dialogue. The speech often tends to elude the reality; therefore, silence can hint at characters' revulsions, need for domination as well as their genuine motives. These devices can also be effectually utilized as a strategy by the characters to deprive others of some information so that they can hold the power.

Pinter constructs the lives of his characters in everyday situation. Esslin maintains that "Pinter, essentially, remains on the firm ground of everyday reality" (Esslin 2004: 36). His concern is to shed light to the plight of contemporary man

⁸ In his Nobel lecture Pinter reinforces his idea of the paramount importance of truth stating that "truth in drama (life) is forever elusive. You never find it but the search for it is compulsive. The search is what drives the endeavour. The search is your task", and then went on to say that sermonising in political theatre "has to be avoided at all cost" as "Objectivity is essential."

⁹ "[Pinter] understood that if you push reality hard enough, it will end up exposing under its surface another dimension – fantastic, absurd, delirious. He suggested that the worst hallucinations of fear are not immune to the pendulum of humor. But all of these lessons in dramatic craftsmanship pale next to what he taught me about human existence and about – dare I say the word? – politics" (cited from Dorfman's essay on Pinter "The world that Harold Pinter unlocked" published in *The Washington Post*, December 27th, 2008. The essay can be read on www.washingtonpost.com).

within his ordinary setting and occupations. His characters do not seem to be occupied with too high ambitions; in fact, theirs is merely a struggle for their own lives as they are governed only by the territorial imperative or an instinct for survival. He opts for ordinariness in his portrayal of characters to the extent that his most striking characters often turn out to be tramps and abject people without a shelter or an occupation.

Pinter sets up his plays in a room, where frequently two characters appear to be trapped in their sense of intimidation (*The Dumb Waiter*). Martin Esslin maintains that "The room [...] is one of the recurring motifs of Pinter's work" (Esslin 2004: 235). For instance, in the one-act play, *The Room*, the room inhabited by an old couple serves as a refuge for them in a sinister world. According to Esslin, in this play, there is "a return to some of the basic elements of drama – the suspense created by the elementary ingredients of pure, preliterate theatre: a stage, two people, a door; the poetic image of an undefined fear and expectation" (Esslin 2004: 235). Similarly, in *The Dumb Waiter*, a basement room without windows and with a door opening to a mysterious outside creates this sense of tension as the two hired assassins are waiting for their orders.

This undefined menace emanating through a room gives way to the themes of ambiguity or mystery prevalent in the majority of Pinter's works. Neither the identity of his characters is wholly manifest nor are the ulterior motives beneath their actions revealed candidly. Everything that has happened embodies ambivalence, abandoning the individual in a world dominated by an utter sense of sinister. Possessed by this baleful feeling, human beings remain highly vulnerable to any threat that may originate from outside. This repeated sense of awe within a Pinter brings forth another theme of his: the struggle for power. This urge in the dominant/subservient relationship, is also a dramatic and technical tool, which appears in diverse forms such as word games and violent physical exercises, in which the characters are involved in a battle for control. In his set of Memory Plays, too, Pinter deals with the themes of manipulation and subjugation in the attempts of characters to exploit a make-believe memory. Each character presents his/her own sub-

¹⁰ The most famous words in a Pinter script are his stage directions, i. e. two words: *silence* and *pause*. Pinter calls for a great many gaps between the spoken lines, but they are not empty gaps; quite the contrary, there are torrents of aggressive feeling pouring through them. The characters are staring at each other, and their refusal to speak constitutes an attack or a defence. According to Pinter, there are two types of silences:

"one when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of a language locked beneath it. That is its continual reference. The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen which keeps the other in its place. When true silence falls we are still left with echo but are nearer nakedness. One way of looking at speech is to say that it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness." (Harold Pinter, *Complete Works: One*, Grove Weidenfeld, New York, 1990, pp. 14-15).

jective and distorted version of the past, striving to evade reality and their genuine selves, so as to dominate the other man.

The state of tyranny and desperation accompanies this theme of dominant-subservient relationship. Pinter's dramatic world has predominantly been a violent one like a police state in which the individuals are subjected to an unreasonable treatment of torture, imprisonment and dehumanization – seen as disciplinary and punitive tools used by totalitarian systems for the purpose of their sustainability. According to Erich Fromm, a German-American psychoanalyst and humanist philosopher, the source of power of totalitarian regimes (systems) springs from their exclusive reliance on irrational authority: "The source of irrational authority is always power over people. That power could be realistic or relative, in the sense of feelings of anxiety and helplessness of person who has been made submissive to it. Power on the one and fear on the other side are constant pillars on which the irrational authority builds itself. Critique of such an authority [...] is forbidden."¹¹ Pinter acknowledges his obsession of violence as it is "really only an expression of the question of dominance and subservience, which is possibly a repeated theme in [his] plays" (Bensky 2005: 61). After all, this expression of terror in everyday life gives his plays a political touch, especially in those plays, he calls "more recent *overtly* political plays", like *One For the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language*¹² (1988) and *Party Time* (1991). Austin Quigley argues that these three plays encompass large political mechanisms presented offstage, which are "radically indifferent to individual suffering" (Quigley 2001: 20). Therefore, in its essence, Pinter's drama is an expression of exploitation, victimization and power assertion.

Once Pinter's characters are sucked into the vortex of menace, it is difficult for them to find their way out. They inevitably wind up being defeated and feeling an existential anguish, in which they are no longer alive either literally or metaphorically. Stanley Webber, in *The Birthday Party*, after being attacked and tormented by two representatives of a nefarious organization, is unable to see and walk on his own two feet by the end of the play. The challenge of the menacing systems characters engage in deprives them of their energy and desire for life. Despite their negligible power, the characters do not give up struggle at once. Even though they do their best to challenge and overcome the vile systems, their efforts and coping strategies to effectively respond to menace prove fruitless in the end, causing them to find solace in their silence, or in evasion of the reality. In *The*

¹¹ Erich Fromm, *Čovjek za sebe*, Naprijed, Zagreb, 1965, str. 20-21 (my translation).

¹² In 1985 Pinter went to Turkey with Arthur Miller to investigate and protest against the torture of imprisoned writers and victims of political persecution. Pinter's experience in Turkey, especially his knowledge of the Turkish oppression of Kurds and the suppression of their language, inspired his 1988 play *Mountain Language*.

Birthday Party, Stanley Webber, a failed pianist, remains helpless from the outset of the play, when he tries to make the two strangers leave the shabby boarding house he has found shelter in. His failure in this first attempt leads to a series of further defeats. As his tactics of questioning and evasion fail, Stanley, already symbolically a dead man due to his lack of articulacy and the fact that he is reduced to what Pinter describes as 'a rattle in the throat' is taken away by his pursuers to some greater authority (Monty), in order for him (Stanley) to be reborn, i.e. re-oriented and 'adjusted' in the image of Monty (Pinter 2002: 13). In *One For the Road*, one of the characters, Victor, chooses another strategy, silence, to defy the system which torments him and his family. His deliberate avoidance of speech makes his tormentors disillusioned, and even frustrated. Unfortunately, he also ends up in failure with his son killed, his wife and himself becoming psychological wrecks. The Old Woman and her son in *Mountain Language* resort to muteness as a defense mechanism against the system whose inhuman exercise of power initially outlaws the use of their mountain language. In the end, they are allowed to speak in their mother tongue. Nevertheless, the woman persistently withholds her speech, and the loss of the means of communication epitomizes her metaphorical death, for the death of language means the end of the character.

After the vicious treatment they are exposed to, Pinter's characters are psychologically shattered. What makes their mental state more vulnerable is the fact that they are extremely lonely people. They vainly yearn for the warmth, love, protection and respect of others. In *The Room*, Rose's husband Bert is utterly unresponsive to his wife's care of him and his meals and keeps reading the newspaper and leaves for work without uttering a word. Essentially, Rose's fussing over her husband's tea as she prepares it for him is her bid for his attention and protection, as she feels terrified of the potential visitors to their rented flat. In *The Dumb Waiter*, one of the thugs, Gus, tries to engage in a meaningful dialogue with his partner Ben, but is continually ignored by Ben who, by reading the newspaper, deliberately blocks Gus' questions. Thus, the activity of *reading the newspaper* functions as one of Pinter's characters' main devices whereby they ignore each other or refuse to speak to each other.

There is much more to Pinter's absurd drama than the mere satirical use of the language. His dreadful subject matter as well as the prevailing atmosphere of idiosyncrasy contributes to his reputation as a writer of menace. The atmosphere of menace and terror, in fact, permeates the theatre of Pinter. Nothing is explicitly spelled out. Neither the characters nor their motives are expounded. The main-spring of menace in Pinter is usually the outside forces, which are latent. Such threatening forces are embodied by the mysterious, sadistic figure of Wilson whose orders for the execution of their next victim Ben and Gus are expecting in the basement, but instead get orders for unknown exotic food, and those orders

turn out to be impossible to be met. In a similar fashion, Monty is an omnipotent yet invisible godlike figure in *The Birthday Party* who sends his emissaries Goldberg and McCann on a mission of finding and punishing the runaway Stanley, because of his refusal to obey Monty, an offence to be punished severely. Such forces remain invisible until the last moment so as to promote the sense of suspense.

Pinter's individuals are often enclosed in a room, delineating the borders between inside and outside, where the man's terror is uncovered. On the other hand, another form of menace is extant within the individuals on account of their inner conflicts since their desires for a contact with others and the inability to achieve this contact are both horrifying. The human urge for love¹³ and respect is a potent gateway to menace if this urge is not gratified. After all, menace can emerge not only on an interpersonal level but also on a much more individual level where man is entirely preoccupied with his personal problem of existence. He longs for the fulfillment of his sense of identification when it seems to be threatened.

Ambivalence accompanies menace in the villain/victim intercourse as the dominant character may at times become the object of violence while the victim takes possession of power. Thus, there may not be a clear definition between a victim and a victor. The quest for domination induces violence, in the forms of verbal or physical attacks, as the character strives to gain and preserve power over others. As a result, the prevailing inequality between the individuals leads to an inevitable self-destruction of relationships. In this struggle, characters can find comfort neither in their physical surroundings nor in an understanding relationship with others. They are driven into a state of lack of self-esteem due to an overwhelming desire for respect. The individual's insatiable need to gain respect/dignity is not fulfilled, stimulating his/her self-questioning, which culminates in a sense of disintegration of self-image. Pinter's themes dwell upon man's predicament in a layered manner, embarking on his relationship with the outside world, then moving towards his inner anguish about the self.

Pinter's primary concern, in his one-act plays in particular, is very much to do with the expressive role of *The Theatre of the Absurd* pertaining to human condition. Dukore draws a parallel between the world of Pinter and that of the absurdist by emphasizing the malevolent and absurd element:

Because events and actions are unexplained, and apparently illogical or unmotivated, the world seems capricious or malevolent. One can rely upon nothing.

¹³ "The full answer [to the problem of existence] lies in the achievement of interpersonal union, of fusion with another person, *in love*. This desire for interpersonal fusion is the most powerful striving in man. It is the most fundamental passion, it is the force which keeps the human race together, the clan, the family, society. The failure to achieve it means insanity or destruction – self-destruction or destruction of others" (Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, Harper & Row, New York, 1956, pp. 33).

What is apparently secure is not secure. A haven does not protect. A weapon vanishes without warning. Linguistic absurdity may suggest the absurdity of the human condition. Fear of a menace may suggest the universal trauma of the man in universe (Dukore 1988: 25).

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Радоје Шошкић

ЕСТЕТИКА ДРАМСКЕ УМЈЕТНОСТИ ХАРОЛДА ПИНТЕРА

Резиме

Рад аналитички сагледава основне драмске, поетске елементе као и тематске преокупације својствене Пинтеровим драмама *Соба*, *Насиојник*, *Без њоџовора*, *Рођендан*, *Једна за њуи*, *Брђански језик* и др.. Обрађене драме карактерише изразито политички тон, пошто се Пинтер у њима конзистентно бави тематиком насиља, су-ровости, тортуре и егзистенцијалног страха као топоса искуства човјека модерног доба. Сем тога, у својим отворено политичким комадима, Пинтер досљедно инкорпорира катаклизмичну слику свијета као друштвено-политичке тираније супротстављене појединцу који из таквог конфликта излази као жртва. Појединац који критички преиспитује систем односно одбије покорност истом неминовно постаје жртвом нехуманих и окрутних метода дисциплиновања и кажњавања које савремени тоталитарни режими примјењују у сврху сузбијања субверзивног понашања. Пинтерови ликови су самотне и беспомоћне индивидуе које вапе за љубављу, међуљудским сједињењем и заштитом; за њих је цивилизација/свијет постала један скучени простор, сведена на собу која је замка, не пружа уточиште од свијета насиља, и у којој не могу да мисле ништа више него што је голи опстанак. Њихови поступци су вођени територијалним императивом, док њихове односе према другим ликовима суштински одликује тзв. одбрамбена агресивност. Атмосфера мистерије која подједнако прожима радњу, ликове, њихове идентитете, прошлост и мотиве, и остаје наразријешена до краја комада, потом минималистичка конфузија која обавија Пинтеров сценски реализам, и лингвистичка апсурдност која прожима комично-гротескну реторику и лексику ликова, који пате од реалног страха и живе на екстремном рубу егзистенције, свакако приближавају Пинтерову истински оригиналну умјетност Театру Апсурда.

Кључне ријечи: егзистенција, мистерија, клаустрофобична соба, насиље, језик, апсурд, Театар Апсурда.