

Chapter One: Introduction

Harold Pinter is an English playwright, who achieved international recognition as one of the most complex and challenging dramatist. His plays are noted for their use of understatement, small talk, reticence to convey the substance of a character's thought. The thoughts are embedded within the lines, in the gaps and the pauses. His plays are ambivalent in their plots. They typically begin with a pair of character whose stereotyped relations and role-playing are disrupted by the entrance of a stranger. The audience sees the psychic stability of the couple break down as their fears, jealousies, hatreds, sexual preoccupations, and loneliness emerge from beneath a screen of bizarre yet commonplace conversation.

Human beings are suffering from a number of problems in this modern age. There are many problems in their relationships, sex, communication, behavior, etc. Pinter's *The Homecoming* also tries to explore the serious problems of English society of his time. The plot follows the events that take place when the eldest brother in the family of three, returns home from the United States. He brings along with him his wife of the past six years. She is beautiful, civilized, and seems sexually charged even in the way she moves. The males in the house are an uncouth bunch of London working class types. They comprise a grumpy, profane, and misogynistic father, a sleazy and clearly criminal middle son, a thuggish younger son who is a would-be boxer, and an unassuming and much put-upon uncle.

The presence of this attractive female in their midst sets off primal, atavistic forces which challenge the moral and social order both on stage and off, leading to a climax and resolution which still has the power to generate wildly varying responses. It is endlessly debatable and offers itself to analyze from many angles. The play offers

a penetrating insight into the patriarchal attitudes directed at women. The all-male members of Max's family are marked with inclination towards physical and verbal abuse, treating women as whores and sluts. While the presence of Ruth defies and challenges the male pre-dominance, the dark attitudes towards women stay as the family's hallmark. The question that arises lies in the interpretation of Ruth, who famously opts to stay with the family and, possibly, work as a prostitute. This thesis deals with the exploitation of Ruth by the male members who behave in a mysterious way when it concerns women. Therefore, this research deals with the enigmatic behavior of Max's family.

Biography and Literary Contribution of Harold Pinter

Pinter was born in Hackney in a working-class neighborhood in London's East end. Both of his parents were Jewish and he was the son of a tailor. As a child Pinter got on well with his mother, but he did not get on well with his father, who was a strong disciplinarian. On the outbreak of Second World War, Pinter was evacuated from the city to Cornwall. He was educated at Hackney Downs Grammar School, where he acted in school productions. At school one of Pinter's main intellectual interests was English literature, particularly poetry. He also read works of Franz Kafka and Ernest Hemingway.

After two unhappy years Pinter left his studies at London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. In 1949, Pinter was fined by magistrates for having, as a conscientious objector, refused to do his national service. His father paid the fine in the end, a substantial sum of money. He started writing poetry for little magazines in his teens. As a young man, he studied acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and the Central School of Speech and Drama. Later he left to undertake an acting career under the stage name David Baron. He traveled around Ireland in a Shakespearean

company and spent years working in provincial repertory before deciding to turn his attention to playwriting.

Several of Pinter's plays were originally written for British radio or TV. In the 1960s he also directed several of his dramas. His major plays originate often from a single, powerful visual image. They are usually set in a single room. The struggle for survival or identity dominates the action of his characters. His plays are noted for their use of silence to increase tension, understatement, and cryptic small talk. Equally recognizable is the nameless menace, erotic fantasy, obsession and jealousy, family hatred and mental disturbance.

In 1950 Pinter started to publish poems in *Poetry* under the name Harold Pinta. After four more years in provincial repertory theatre under the pseudonym David Baron, Pinter began to write for the stage. *The Room* (1957), originally written for Bristol University's drama department, was finished in four days. His first radio piece, *A Slight Ache* was broadcast on the BBC in 1959. His first full-length play, *The Birthday Party* was first performed by Bristol University's drama department in 1957 and produced in 1958 in the West End. The play dealt in a Kafkaesque manner with an apparently ordinary man who is threatened by strangers for an unknown reason. He tries to run away but is tracked down. Although most reviewers were hostile, Pinter produced in rapid succession the body of work which made him the master of the comedy of menace.

In 1960 Pinter wrote *The Dumb Waiter*. With his second full-length play, *The Caretaker* (1960), he made his breakthrough as a major modern talent. That was followed by *A Slight Ache* (1961), *The Collection* (1962), *The Dwarfs* (1963), and *The Lover* (1963). *The Homecoming* (1965) is perhaps the most enigmatic of all Pinter's early works. In the story an estranged son, Teddy, brings his wife Ruth home to

London to meet his family. At the end Teddy returns alone to his university job in America. Ruth stays as a mother or whore to his family. Everyone needs her.

Gist of *The Homecoming*

The Homecoming is set in a large room in an old house in North London. This is the home of Max, a retired butcher and Sam, a chauffeur, who are brothers. There is also Max's three sons, Teddy the eldest, is an expatriate American professor. The next is Lenny, who appears to be a pimp and Joey is a would-be boxer in training, who works in demolition. The play opens with Lenny reading the newspaper. Max enters looking for scissors and is ignored by Lenny. Max talks about his late wife Jessie and his late friend MacGregor. He speaks of Jessie with both fondness and shocking disapproval. Max also talks of his special understanding of horses. Lenny tells Max to shut up and then says that Max's cooking fits only for dogs. Sam enters and Max insults him about his driving and the fact that he is not married. Joey enters from a workout at the gym, and Max turns on him, saying that his trouble as a boxer is that he does not know how to attack or defend himself. Max also threatens to throw Sam out when he is too old to pay his way. Sam pointedly reminds Max that Mac and Jessie were very close friends.

The next scene, a few hours later, opens with Teddy and Ruth standing at the threshold to the room. Teddy is Max's eldest son, a Ph.D. who teaches philosophy at an American University. Ruth is his wife of six years about whom the rest of the family knows nothing. They have been on a trip to Europe, and Teddy has brought her to meet the family. Ruth, though at first claiming to be tired, decides to go out for a walk. After Ruth leaves, Lenny enters. The reunion between the two brothers is civil but without any sense of warmth. Teddy goes to bed and Lenny goes and gets a clock that he suspects of disturbing his sleep. Ruth enters and after some surprising small

talk, says that she is Teddy's wife. Lenny pays no attention to that. He launches into a long story which ends with his beating up a whore, whom he would have killed except for the bother of getting rid of the body. He then tells another long story that ends with his beating up an old woman.

Literature Review

A highly ambiguous, enigmatic, and even a cryptic play, *The Homecoming* has been the subject of extensive critical debate for over forty years. According to Janet Ingraham Dwyer, it exposes issues of sex and violence in a highly realistic yet aesthetically stylized manner as:

The play is plotless, as well as meaningless and emotionless, lacking character motivation. The play is puzzling and not understanding that it might have a multiplicity of potential meanings. The play is the last and best play of Pinter's fecund early period. It is a culmination of the poetic ambiguities, the minimalism, and the linguistic tropes of his earlier major plays. (43)

The Homecoming is now considered by many critics to be Pinter's masterpiece, was not universally admired when it was first produced in England by the Royal Shakespeare Company at London's Aldwych Theatre, on June 3, 1965. Many critics, while praising the production, found the play itself to be baffling and enigmatic in the extreme. In that essence, William C. Vanderwolk writes that:

Pinter refuses to provide rational justifications for action, but offers existential glimpses of bizarre or terrible moments in people's lives. Every syllable, every inflection, the succession of long and short sounds, words and sentences, is calculated to nicety. And precisely the

repetitiousness, the discontinuity, the circularity of ordinary vernacular speech is here used as formal elements. (209)

Both critics and audiences responded to Pinter's gift for dramatic suspense and sharp, biting comedy. They sensed that there is a great deal more going on in the play than can be easily articulated. As Richard Bernstein put it that:

The secret of the play does not lie in our providing a neat crossword-puzzle solution. *The Homecoming* does in fact deal with many themes, such as emotional impotence, Oedipal desires, personal loneliness and isolation, appearance and reality, and familial power struggles, to mention a few. Despite and perhaps because of the play's ambiguity, it has remained a centerpiece in Pinter's canon. (76)

The play initially presents itself as a domestic drama. It introduces the working-class family in their living room as they fight and quarrel one another with a combination of argument, teasing, and bad mouthing. The play is complex, confrontational, and brutal about human nature. Jed Deppmen comments that it is also linguistically rich, laden with levels of personal and social criticism and characterization, darkly funny, and frequently disturbing because:

The Homecoming is about the family as predator. More specifically, it is about men dependent on their macho image for self-assurance and even more dependent on a powerful woman for social and emotional security. Max and his two younger sons possess maleness without masculinity. To them a woman is a sexual-social status symbol rather than a sexual-emotional partner. For the same reason, their violence is not a matter of purposeful attack, still less defense, but a show of superiority and a reassurance of male status. (26)

As the play goes on, the characters expound on morality and philosophy, yet they always seem real and alive. The dialogue adds layers of meaning and referentiality to the physical action. They develop in relation to one another through interaction, observation or reflection. There is throughout the play a sense of suppressed violence. The repressed is as exciting as the represented, and when the play finally reveals itself in the last scenes, the effect is like a creeping nightmare which has finally burst into reality. Susanna Lee writes that:

It is about men who were born into an oppressively claustrophobic family culture but who are both motherless and fatherless. There is more than a hint in the text that Max is not the father of his sons. They were conceived when he was scouring the country enlarging his butcheries business. The symbolism of this is oblique but deadly. Max and his sons are each others sterile and resentful underlings. Such men live by exploitation and by violence, real or imaginary, and their needs are impersonal and brutish. (79)

Pinter does not allow us to understand his characters. They are either aloof or loathsome. The plays biggest fault is its lack of motion. No one changes, no one moves forward, there is really no motivation to finish the play. Tracey Schwarze points to:

The play's alleged difficulty exists, even 40 years after it was written in the frustration of the expectations an audience might bring to the theatre. It is the idea, for example, that a play will signal how an audience is supposed to respond, or will provide a clear moral viewpoint from which the action might be judged. This effectively exposes the abyss beneath the surface of social intercourse. The terror

of mere existence opens between the gaps of his language, and is acknowledged in the anxiety behind the laughter of the audience. (128)

Despite shifts in the moral, social, and political climate since the play premiered, Pinter's *The Homecoming* remains a challenging work of theatre. The peculiarities of staging and language become immediately evident. For a start, Robert Scholes says there is the unnatural stillness of the actors because:

The Homecoming is a vexing avant-garde conundrum. Now it is an essential reading on every modern-theatre syllabus. Time has made the audience and the actors more aware of Pinter's game. This relaxation allows for a greater appreciation of the gusto of his humor, as well as of his intellectual daring. The play has gone from controversy to classic. (24)

Thus, this play raises basic philosophical questions about the nature of so-called family values and the meaning of love among family members. Occasionally, one finds critics of the play, aware of Pinter's reputation for ambiguity, questioning even Teddy's and Ruth's references to the fact of their being married.

Chapter Two: Existentialism

The term 'existence' is derived from the Latin root ex "out" and sistere from stare "to stand". Thus, existence means to stand out in the universe. Now existentialism is used to describe a vision of the condition and existence of man, his /her place and function in the world and his/her relation or lack of it with God. It is a very intense and philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood.

Jean Paul Sartre defines existentialism as an attempt to continue life by creating a system in which one realizes human loneliness and human subjectivity (Sartre 10). In this way the focus of existentialism is on being and subjectivity as opposed to logical reasoning and objectivity. It is based on individual experience rather than abstract thought and knowledge which is shown in philosophy. Thus, existentialism is less of an 'ism' than an attitude that expresses itself in a variety of ways. Because of the diversity of position associated with existentialism, no single strict definition is possible. However, it suggests a major theme that stresses on concrete individual human existence. Regarding its subjectivity, individual freedom and choice, Nietzsche explains thus:

Hence there is no single existentialist philosophy, and no single definition of the word can be given. However it may be said that with the existentialist the problem of man is central and that they stress on man's concrete existence, his/her contingent nature, his/her personal freedom, and his/her consequent responsibility for what he/she does and makes himself/herself to be. (817)

The existentialists concern is with the problem of human being. They focus on human's concrete existence, human's personal freedom and their responsibility for choice.

Existential Struggle

Existentialism is a branch of philosophy that deals with the interpretation of human existence with its emphasis on the freedom of human individual. The first responsibility of existentialism according to Sartre is, “to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him” (16). The term existentialism gives emphasis to the meaninglessness, purposelessness and the absurd situation of human existence. It maintains that existence precedes essence which implies that the human being has no essence because he is no more than what he is. The sense of alienation and estrangement give rise to widespread of despair from the established order and values. This term came into prominence particularly in Germany and France as a philosophical movement after the world wars.

Regarding the concept of existential order, Sartre illustrates the two important philosophical issues concerning freedom. The first is the individual’s freedom which is restricted by others’ judgments of his action and the second is the definition of one’s self-identity. An individual suffers not only when others restrict his freedom of action but also when others define him. Although he acts freely and defines himself through his actions, his activities occur in the social circumstances where his activities are judged by others. As a result, these social circumstances contribute to the definition of the individual’s self. Sartre in his article *No Exist* sees the conflict of inter personal relations as, “each individual aims to be free and to avoid becoming subject to others’ control” (69).

Moreover, the individual-self is defined by our actions. If our actions come to half in death, they become our essence. Only our actions determine our essence because there are no alternative chances. The sense of loneliness, estrangement and alienation are the inflexible situation of being bound by our own actions. The sense of

other is the unavoidable human situation of being free which confines the individual's own judgment. There is no way to define individual's freedom without the consciousness of loneliness and alienation.

Existentialism, as a philosophical movement flourished after the devastating World Wars. The cataclysm of the First World War was followed by the great economic depression of the thirties. Before healing that wound, humanity saw the nuclear holocaust of the Second World War. The social and intellectual situation of that period was influenced by the Nietzschean declaration of the death of God. People realized the lack of unity and order in the society. They could not believe in rationality so, they denounced traditional form of norms and values. Their faith on God had already begun to decline. There was no center or central authority that could bring peace and harmony in this world.

As a result of sense of loss and alienation increased people suffered from frustration, anxiety and absurdity. Existentialism became an appropriate philosophical perspective that could address the contemporary situation. Existential scholars and artists vividly depicted the alienation of individuals as well as their essential loneliness and uncertainty along with individual's reaction to the predicament in their fictional and non-fictional writings. Negative aspects of human existence such as pain, frustration sickness, and death became for existentialists the essential features of human reality. Though existentialism, as a philosophical movement, flourished during the aftermath of world wars, we can see the seed of existential thought rooted in the philosophical investigation from the ancient Greek period.

Existentialism as a distinct philosophy began with the Danish Christian thinker Kierkegaard in the first half of 19th century. He is critical of Hegel's philosophical system which analyzes existence in an abstract and impersonal way. He swerved the

study of philosophy to the subjective, emotional and living aspect of human existence as against Hegel's objective and abstract notion of reality. He discusses man's essence with the existential predicament and limitations, hope, despair and anxiety. The development of modern existentialism is preceded by the works of German phenomenologist Frenz Brento and Edmund Husserl. They were immediately followed by modern existentialists. Phenomenology studies the human consciousness as it gives stress to subjectivism.

According to phenomenological concept, all understanding and perceptions is subjective. An individual plays a central role in perception. The doctrine of intentionality holds that everything depends upon the consciousness of an individual who perceives things other than himself as objects. Phenomenology gives emphasis on the individuality. So the existential notion of individual can be considered as the systematic growth of phenomenological concept of intentionality.

Sartre divides existentialist thinkers into two groups: theistic and atheistic. The theistic group includes Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel who are supposed to believe in the Christian faith. In the second atheistic group, Sartre puts himself with Heidegger, Nietzsche and other French existentialists who do not believe in god. The atheistic existentialists discard the concept of God as an authentic shelter. They regarded human being as optimistically forlorn, free and supportless creatures. The absence of God implies the loss of value.

Atheistic existentialists deny the existence of God. Frederich Nietzsche is the forerunner of atheistic existentialism who declares the death of God. Following Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus developed this mode of existentialism. These scholars do not believe in any transcendental being. So, man is the author of himself, where he has the complete freedom of choice. Therefore, human individual is totally

responsible of every act. For them man is a single creature searching helplessly for the personal meaning of life in this hostile world. According to Camus, “The absurd is born out of confrontation between human and unreasonable silence of the world” (32).

Kierkegaard is an existentialist because he accepts the absurdity of the world like Sartre and Camus. But he does not begin with the postulate of non-existence of God. He begins with the principle that nothing in the world, nothing available to sense or reason, provides any knowledge or reason to believe in God. Kierkegaard’s moral and religious seriousness offers a more promising basis for the development of existentialist themes rather than the basically nihilistic, egocentric, and hopeless approach of Nietzsche and Sartre. Thus, while Sartre strives for a time a higher profile in the fashionable literary world, theistic Existentialists, like Nikolay Berdyayav, Paul Tillich and Martin Buber continue Kierkegaard’s work with updated approaches to traditional religions. It is really beyond most human capacity than the vicious pseudo-religions of communism and fascism.

Another French existentialist Albert Camus reflects the loss of certainties in the post-modern world. In his view, each individual has a design in their own life as a project. The choice and responsibility of the project falls entirely on them. Camus is concerned with the freedom and responsibility of the individual, the alienation of the individual from society and the difficulty of facing life without the comfort of believing in God or in absolute moral standards. He is associated with existentialism because of the apparent absurdity and futility of life, the indifference of the universe, and the necessity of engagement in a just case.

Heidegger is known as the leading existentialist thinker. His interest is in the ‘question of being’. For him being is not realized in normal situation. It does not

occur all the time. It is realized in the state of boredom, anxiety as he states, “It erupts when one is bored, profound boredom drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like a muff lining fog, removes all things and men and oneself along with it into a remarkable indifference. This boredom reveals being as a whole” (4). He explains the distinction between beings and being. He believes that we have been living in an incompressible, indifferent world. The universe is alien to us. According to Heidegger, to consider individual only the representation of mass is the recurrent mistake of metaphysics. He feels that, man should face explicitly the problem of being. He has to determine his own existence, create his own possibility and make choice and commitment. Human beings can never hope to understand why they are here in this world. Instead, each individual must choose a goal and follow it with passionate conviction.

Sartre is the leading advocate of existentialism. Establishing existentialism as the humanistic philosophy, he argues that, “by existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity” (10). Then existentialism gives dignity to man. It encourages human action. He thinks that there is no fixed human nature or essence and so the individual has to choose his/her being.

As human existence is self-conscious without being predefined, we as autonomous being are ‘condemned to be free’ compelled to make future directed choices. Every individual simply follows custom of social expectations in order to escape this angst. We have escaped the responsibility of making our own choice, of creating our own essence. We are free to create our own interpretation of ourselves in relation to the world, to create a project of possibilities, of authentic actions as the expression of freedom. According to Sartre, the individual has the potentiality to

become more than what he or she is since “man is nothing else but what he makes of himself” (15). Each individual has to make his own universe with a meaning of his own. Sartre claims that, “there is no reality, except in action” (32). Sartre divides living as authentic and inauthentic. He chooses authentic living stressing that one must choose and make a commitment to make better.

Existence and Essence

As mentioned, the word existence is the state or fact of being real or living. Sartre says a book ‘exists’ by its dark dead letters and it comes to life when a reader comes and leads towards essence that is existence of black letters as a book. He says that we write or writers want to exist in the form of book. The readers precede them towards the essence that is existence. Along with Camus and Samuel Beckett, he developed the existential philosophy to its farthest point. As already stated, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger are the chief influences upon these three great philosophers and writers. Sartre puts himself in the category of atheistic existentialists who ignore the absolute power of gods and goddesses.

Sartre defines his ontology in terms of the opposition of being-in-itself and being-for itself. In the course of inquiring into the meaning of being, he makes such a distinction. It is the consciousness that distinguishes these two realities. Human beings, being conscious of oneself are for-itself as other things since they are not conscious of themselves. Sartre also associates freedom and responsibility by saying that they go hand in hand in existentialist theory. In this regard he writes, “because we are free and create our own individual essence through our actions, we are also responsible for who we actually become” (44). In this way, Sartre, like other existentialists open freedom of choice and action, personal responsibility, subjectivity, anguish as so on giving rise to the view of existence preceding essence.

Sartre declares that Marxism is the contemporary philosophy. So it must come to recognize the human being's existentialist freedom. He has made a contrast to a divine viewpoint of the world and on human nature with a human viewpoint where there is no divine element. When God thought about creating the world, he conceived it first, he had in mind what the world was going to be and what human nature was going to be. These were the essences of the world and of humanity, the things that will make them what they are. Thus, to God, essence precedes existence. As Sartre does not believe in God, so there is no place for essence of humanity to be before human existence. To us, existence comes first, essence later. Indeed, the essence is whatever we decide it is going to be. Human existence or being differs from the being of object in that human being is self-conscious. This self-conscious also gives the human subject the opportunity to define the self. The individual creates his/her self by making self-directed choices.

Existential Choice

Camus believes that human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe. The universe does not possess any inherent truth, value or meaning. "This universe", states Camus, "henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile" (qtd.in Ellman 852). Camus reaches to a conclusion to declare the condition of man absurd when he realizes that the speculative system of past provided no reliable guidance for life. When the absurd man becomes aware of his futile living, he is naturally filled with anxiety and helplessness. Then one realizes that forlornness, anguish and despair are the characteristics of life. To get liberation from the anxiety of the absurd world if one chooses to submit oneself to the hand of god or death, either of these choices is ridiculous. He believes that one needs to accept the challenge but not to commit suicide and bow before God.

Camus lays emphasis upon choices. Sisyphus is given the choice. He does not surrender to God and makes a choice. He believes that choice leads us to absurdity but joy comes out of that absurdity. As Ellmann and Fieldelson remarks, he sees man, “arriving through admission of absurdity, at an affirmation of his own worth” (806). He focuses on struggle against absurdity for humanism and optimism. Credit for the development of existentialism goes to the trio of French existentialists Sartre, Camus and Beauvoir. These scholars brought existentialism to its high point. During mid-twentieth century existentialism is defined in two categories: Theistic existentialism and atheistic existentialism or aesthetic existentialism. Encompassing the broader aspects of existentialism, *New Encyclopedia Britannica* comments:

Existentialism can take diverse and contrasting directions. It can insist on the transcendence of Being with respect of existence, and by holding this transcendence to be the origin or foundation of existence, it can thus assume a theistic form. On the other hand, it can hold that human existence, poising itself as a problem, projects itself with absolute freedom, creating itself by itself, thus assuming to itself the function of God. As such, existentialism presents itself as a radical atheism. (73)

Existentialism focuses on the lack of meaning and purpose in life of human existence. It concerns the authentic role people take in the world where values and certainties are smashed into fragments. How people can cope with negative aspects of human existence like depression, frustration, pain, anxiety, alienation caused by modern society. Along with the consideration of the role of time and awareness of death, these questions seem to be the concern of existentialism. This philosophy is concerned with the existence of the individual's life and death. They do not go with

traditional attempt to get the ultimate nature of the world in abstract system of thought. Instead, they search for what it is like to be an individual human being in the world. Whether the thing is true or false, that depends on the decision the individual makes. What is true to one may be false to other. So, truth is subjective according to existentialism.

The existentialists conclude that human choice is subjective because an individual finally must make their own choices without the help from such external standards as laws, ethical rules, or traditions. As individuals make their own choices, they are free, but because they choose, they are completely responsible for their choices. The existentialists emphasize that freedom is accompanied by responsibility. Freedom is not new with the existentialists. Renaissance humanists are also the supporters of human freedom and take it very positively. Due to freedom, man can expose unlimited potentiality. But the existentialists take freedom as a curse. Sartre says, "We are condemned to be free" (56). Because of freedom, there is no one to dictate us what to do and what not to. We have to do ourselves.

According to this philosophy man is a sole director of his destiny. In fact, existentialism goes back to man's pre-philosophical attempts to attain self-awareness and understanding of existence. That means the elements of existentialism can be found in the classical philosophy. The connection of being and thinking is Greek insight and it is this very insight that the modern existentialists are trying to reestablish. The ancient Greek thought is revolutionized by Socrates who shifts the attention of the study of philosophy from nature to man. Socrates asks people to understand the need of the self as he made people responsible towards the self. In this context Richard Tarnas comments:

In Socrates' view, any attempts to foster true success and excellence in human life had to take account of the inner most reality of a human being, his soul and psyche. Perhaps on the basis of his own highly developed sense of individual, selfhood and self control, Socrates brought to the Greek mind the new awareness of the central significance of the soul, establishing it for the first time as the seat of the individual making the moral and intellectual character. (33)

The Medieval age is characterized by the belief in god. Everything is seen through the eyes of god so man is expected to surrender before god for salvation. Augustine asks man not to go outside himself in the quest of truth. He affirms the existence of human ego in the soul. He gave importance to the individual self. The existential trace can be found in the works of Montaigne as well. He writes about himself rather than handling other issues. He assigns importance to the self. In the same vein, Charles Van Doren writes that:

Montaigne's main aim was to reveal with utter honesty and frankness the author's mind and heart. Montaigne makes no attempt to conceal his faults but he does not beat his breast, either and demand forgiveness. He is content to report what he is, what he thinks, what he feels, he doesn't hide anything. He makes the exploration of his self. (89)

Montaigne in his essay reveals what he thinks and what he feels. He does not hide anything as he makes the exploration of his self.

Existentialist thinkers begin from the human situation in the world. It is the modes of existence, his relation of despair, the human being's tendency, to avoid authentic existence, his relation to things for his own body to other beings with whom

he cannot come into genuine communication and the suffering of life. Starting from the study of being, existentialist thinkers originate their own doctrine with their own emphasis on particular aspects. Very often their view point is conflicting and sometimes contradictory, yet this philosophical attitude of being, as a whole, can be described as the existentialist movement. It stresses upon the being of the human being. It is necessary to make separate discussion of some of the existential philosophers. Below follows the discussion on some prominent figures and their concept of existentialism in short.

Kierkegaard advocates that individual existence is prior to everything. In contrasting philosophy from Plato to Hegel with authentic Christianity, he emphasizes the concepts of individual, of choices, of dread and of paradox. When a man comes to realize that he is solely responsible for his decisions and destiny he feels unnerved. Freedom is his bliss, into freedom to subjective. There cannot be any truth that is objective and universal. Man only believes in the existence of God and not in Christian doctrine. Thus, he argues that there are two options for the individual to choose either he have to choose God and get redemption from the angst and ethnic-religious choice or have to reject God and go to perdition, and atheistic choice. According to him, the choice is, paradoxically, criterion less and it is individual himself who has to fix criteria by making choice.

Nietzsche is a radical German critic of the western tradition. He strongly emphasizes that life should be the center of everything. Gaarder remarks that, "Nietzsche, Christianity and traditional philosophy had turned away from the real world and pointed toward 'heaven' or the world of ideas" (455). He stresses on this world but not heaven or the world of ideas. For him historical knowledge does not serve life. He classifies that one needs education "for the life and action, not for a

comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egoistical life and the cowardly bad act. We wish to use history only as far as it serves living” (152).

To sum up, existentialists are obsessed with the meaning of life. They focus exclusively on the individual. Though life is very difficult and does not have any objective or universally known values, yet, it attempts to find happiness and meaning in a world characterized by alienation, isolation, loneliness, frustration, authenticity and absurdity. It deals with man’s disillusionment and despair. It maintains that man is full of anxiety with no meaning in life. Man’s autonomy, assertion of his subjective self, his denial of traditional values, institution and philosophy his exercise of choice and freedom, and his experience of the absurdity and the meaninglessness of life is some of the existential themes which is reflected in the writings of the exponents of existentialism.

Alienation

In a broader philosophical context, especially in existentialism and phenomenology, alienation describes the inadequacy of human being or mind in relation to the world. Alienation is the estrangement, or separation of individuals from one another, so that they do not identify with each other as a group. The human mind, as the subject of perception, relates to the world as an object of its perception, and so is distanced from the world rather than living within it. This line of thought can be found in Kierkegaard, who examines the emotions and feelings of individuals when faced with life choices.

Alienation is the feeling of being isolated from other people and separation resulting from hostility. In social science, alienation is associated with the problems caused by rapid social change, such as industrialization and urbanization, which has

broken down traditional relationships among individuals and groups. It is most often associated with minorities, the poor, the unemployed and other groups who have limited power to bring about changes in society. Many twentieth century philosophers, both theistic and atheistic, and theologians draw many concepts from Kierkegaard, including the notions of angst, despair, and the importance of the individual. In Sociology and critical social theory, alienation refers to an individual's estrangement from traditional community and others in general. It is considered by many that the atomism of modern society means that individuals have shallower relations with other people than they normally would.

Chapter Three: Enigmatic Behavior of Max's Family in Harold Pinter's

The Homecoming

Pinter is engaged in breaking down certain old, honored value systems in *The Homecoming*. It is about the good mother, the loving father and the loyal brothers. *The Homecoming* is also about men dependent on their macho image for self-assurance. It is even more dependent on a powerful woman for social and emotional security. Max and his two younger sons possess maleness without masculinity. To them a woman is a sexual, social status symbol rather than a sexual, emotional partner. For the same reason, their violence is not a matter of purposeful attack, but a show of superiority and a reassurance of male status and existence.

The Homecoming deals with many themes, such as emotional impotence, oedipal desires, personal loneliness and isolation, appearance and reality and familial power struggles. There is a great deal more going on in the play that can be easily articulated. But this research deals with the issue of the enigmatic behavior of Max's family. The word enigmatic means mysterious and difficult to understand. Putting or placing the word enigmatic into the context of the drama, it reflects on the behavior of the characters. Each and every character from Max to Ruth behaves in a very peculiar way, in order to extract maximum mileage or concession from the other person. The dialogue spoken by these characters makes the audience or readers confused to accurately describe the characters in a distinctive way.

The common thread that binds all the characters in this drama is their enigmatic nature. Starting with Max, the patriarch of the family, he seems to order everyone, but nobody seems to listen to him. He vents his anger to his dead wife but at the same time utters Ruth to stay with the family. Sam is the driver but also a closeted homosexual who is not very comfortable regarding it. Lenny is the pimp who

coerces Ruth to become a prostitute. He does not seem to have respect and regards for his sister-in-law, and therefore for no women. There is also Teddy who is not able to become an assertive husband. All the above males ultimately depend on a single woman, Ruth, to make the fire in their kitchen burn.

In a patriarchal setup, it is expected of the males to provide for and take care of the women and children. But in Max's family, the opposite is true. They depend on a single woman to feed them, to take care of them and to sexually satisfy them. Ruth is also a mother to Teddy's three children back home. The males do not even give a thought about these children when they lure Ruth to stay with them. All these activities of the males show their mysterious nature of character where they are seen to behave opposite to their prescribed roles. But more importantly, the play offers a penetrating insight into the dark male attitudes directed at women. The all-male members of Max's family are marked with inclination towards physical and verbal abuse, treating women as whores and sluts. Though the presence of Ruth defies and challenges the male existence, the dark attitudes towards women stay as the family's hallmark. At the beginning of the play Max describes his wife as:

MAX: Mind you, she wasn't such a bad woman. Even though it made me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bad bitch. I gave her the best bleeding years of my life, anyway. (9)

Though he abuses his wife, he has great interest in Ruth. It becomes evident that the men are yearning for a female presence in the home not only for sexual use but also as a mother, which Ruth fills well, and as Jessie filled well before too. The missing wall in the home is symbolic of a woman missing in the family structure. Ruth falls into her role, as if she seemingly wants to. Then she finds herself in a position in which she has power in a house comprising of men. She uses what she knows to use in order

to get what she wants. From being manipulated she becomes the manipulator. No matter how we look at it, the actions of Pinter's characters remain mysterious and confusing.

Mysterious Max and His Family

Things and characters in the play are not what they seem. We would expect a family comprising of male characters to be free from bickering associated with female presence, but it is not so. Rather, it is a family filled with hatred, selfishness and violence. Ruth appears to be a happily married woman with the proverbial American dream life. Yet something is still lacking in her life, which her homecoming exposes and seems to satisfy. The play is about each character trying to reconcile themselves with their ugly past. It shows how each character is trying to assert him/her over others using their peculiar power and advantage. In one instance, Sam and Max argue over cooking as:

SAM: Yes, the boy's been working all day and training all night.

MAX: What do you want, you bitch? You spend all the day sitting on your arse at London Airport, buy yourself a jamroll. You expect me to sit here waiting to rush into the kitchen the moment you step in the door? You've been living sixty-three years, why don't you learn to cook? Who do you think I am, your mother? Eh? Honest. They walk in here every time of the day and night like bloody animals. Go and find yourselves a mother. (16)

The family comprises of Max who is the aggressive patriarch and plays the dual role of father and mother. He relies on his violent language and conduct to stay in control. He does not seem to have a close relationship with his family, because he has never

been there for them. He was occupied by his expanding butcher business. His moral attitude towards life is reflected in his children and what they have turned out to be. For him, his power comes from insulting others and holding the position of Father. Along with him there is Sam, Lenny, Joey and Teddy. Each character in the play has a different agenda. What he or she says and does might prove more of acting out of strategy than a simple expression of need or desire. All of the above mentioned characters behave in a way the audience or readers do not expect of them.

Sam works as a private chauffeur for a limousine company. He is a homosexual, floating through the kitchen in his yellow ascot, banging pots and feeling unappreciated. Lenny is a smiling, snake-like pimp. He is portrayed as sleek, aggressive and dangerous. He moves with ambiguous grace between humor and menace with the lift of an eyebrow. He also presents a lean, impish, slightly scruffy figure, sly and devious, always ready for a smile, but also on the lookout for enemy attack. But the cockiness is all on the surface. Actually he is as insecure as his father. This comes out in his stories of violence against women which were probably bred in his still adolescent imagination. But contrary to his demureness, he blows his own trumpet when he says that:

SAM: Yes, he thought I was the best he'd ever had. They all say that, you know. They won't have anyone else, they only ask for me.

They say I'm the best chauffer in the firm.

I don't press myself on people, you see. These big businessmen, men of affairs, they don't want the driver jawing all the time, they like to sit in the back, have a bit of peace and quiet. After all, they're sitting in a Humber Super Snipe, they can afford to relax. At the same time, though, this is what really makes me

special . . . I do know how to pass the time of the day when required. (13)

The youngest brother Joey is the most macho but also the most docile. He is training part-time to be a professional boxer and is thick witted. He is an aspiring prizefighter, whether he is attacking a mattress with his fists or visibly drooling over his leggy sister-in-law. He thinks all women are available and he lurches at her. He rubs himself obscenely against her thigh. But if the woman becomes a powerful mother figure then he will fetch and carry like an anxious servant.

Teddy works as a full-time Doctor of Philosophy and cannot be truly regarded as belonging to the family. He is different from the rest of the family in being calmer and passive. He has not told his family that he is married, and like Max, is the father of three sons. It is not only because of his six years' absence. It is because of his total alienation from the family by dumping his wife on them after realizing that she is a whore. Sam and Teddy are similar passive figures who stand apart from the sexual, physical tension and power that the household consists of.

Ironically, he introduces a factor that causes disorder in his family, with the bringing of his wife Ruth, home. He probably leaves his family in the first instance because he could not fit in. Surprisingly, he has to leave again by the end of the play. It is either he is unable to change or unwilling to change. He exercises feeble influence on his wife to go with him. His intellectual strength however is rendered useless in the face of reality. He cannot influence his wife, family and he is utterly passive to make a change in an immoral world. During one of their conversations, Teddy and Ruth argue over:

TEDDY: Why don't you go to bed? I'll find some sheets. I feel . . .
wide awake, isn't it odd? I think I'll stay up for a bit. Are
you tired?

RUTH: No.

TEDDY: Go to bed. I'll show you the room.

RUTH: No, I don't want to.

TEDDY: You'll be perfectly all right up there without me. Really you
will. I mean, I won't be long. Look it's just up there. It's the
first door on the landing. The bathroom's right next door.
You . . . need some rest, you know. (22)

The men in the play seem to operate on the fringes of working-class society, some distance from respectability. That is why the male family members insult each other in ways usually reserved for women. It sabotages the family by recognizing it as the perfect unit for delivery of pain and humiliation. They live in a large home in unfashionable North London, where the turf war reigns supreme. It is the site of their perpetual sadomasochistic battle of words and sometimes physical violence. For them a show of affection or even respect can result in argument like, "Stop calling me Dad" (5), Max complains.

Therefore, we can come to the conclusion that, all the male members of Max and his family seem to be disillusioned with life and alienated among them. All of them seem to be different in behavior and attitude from the way they are described or portrayed by the dramatist. Adding to it, all of them seem to be in a constant struggle in their individual lives. This leads us to the issue of them being alienated and frustrated with life. And with the entry of Ruth into their home and lives, they tend to become more anxious. This play is also about men who are born into an oppressive

family culture but are both motherless and fatherless. There is more than a hint in the text that Max is not the father of his sons. They were conceived when he was roaming the country enlarging his business. Max and his sons are each other's resentful underlings. Such men live by exploitation and by violence, real or imaginary. There is a degree of family possessiveness which can only express itself as exploitation.

The Entry of Ruth

Ruth's presence exposes a tangle of rage and confused sexuality in the male household. The masculine family regards women as a direct threat towards their position in the house. With their assertive personal opinions of women, they conclude that women are like whores, even deducing that Ruth is uncontrollable. The prostitution and rapes that are spoken of are a way of satisfying sexual urges and this gives the men control. Their proposition of pimping Ruth shows the playwright's perception of the typical modern family attitudes towards women in western society. In the end she decides to stay with the father and his two sons after having accepted their sexual overtures without protest from her overly detached husband. In the end, she accepts Max's request to stay behind as:

TEDDY: Ruth . . . the family have invited you to stay, for a little while longer. As a . . . as a kind of guest. If you like the idea I don't mind. We can manage very easily at home . . . until you come back.

RUTH: How very nice of them.

MAX: It's an offer from our heart.

RUTH: It's very sweet of you.

MAX: Listen . . . it would be our pleasure. (75)

Ruth is Teddy's wife for six years and is the only feminine figure in the play. The readers and audiences are surprised by the treatment meted out to Ruth by her in-laws. We along with Ruth would have expected her to get a grand welcome but that was not to be. From the very first impression she is looked upon as a sex symbol by all the males. She is only introduced as Teddy's wife, but later overshadows the husband, in terms of influence in the family by filling the vacuum left by late wife of Max. She settles in fast filling four major gaps. They are the domestic role as in cooking, providing emotional care for her man-children, sexual gratification and finally economic value for them. Her presence also underscores the woman's role in the society in a family. Before her coming, the family is riddled with rancor and discord.

Ruth's coming is the real homecoming because it affords her the opportunity for self discovery of her innate femininity and sexuality. Her exertion of sexual power overpowers them as they have been deprived of a central mother and sexual figure since Jessie died. In Max's family with the absence of Jessie, a mother figure was missing and therefore they all felt alienated and lonely. This led to their collective existential crisis. Teddy has never really appreciated this part of Ruth, despite all the physical comfort America and her marital fold affords. Ruth wins over the house through sexuality and apparent cleverness. Her sexual dominance and quick wits are the power that ensures her demands of a three- room flat and a personal maid. She demands and says:

RUTH: I would want at least three rooms and a bathroom.

LENNY: You wouldn't need three rooms and a bathroom.

MAX: She'd need a bathroom.

LENNY: But not three rooms.

RUTH: Oh, I would. Really.

LENNY: Two would do.

RUTH: No. Two wouldn't be enough.

I'd want a dressing-room, a rest-room, and a bedroom.

LENNY: All right, we'll get you a flat with three rooms and a bathroom. (77)

When Ruth enters, she appears to defeat the men's power, but not with violence. It is her cunning, rather than her conventional intelligence that enables her to work her own requirements into the deal she makes with the family. It is her position that allows her to triumph. As an outsider, she disrupts the comfortable routine of their lives. Her sexuality and apparent intelligence become part of the way in which she takes control of the house. While the men of the family believe violence to be the way, this changes when she enters their lives.

Ruth's behavior can also be taken as enigmatic. Being the legally wedded wife of Teddy, she has complete right to demand her proper position in the house. But she does not do so and this is a mystery. Instead she subtly, makes the men offer her a deal to stay in the house, where she will have the power to control them. It is also extremely surprising to note that she leaves Teddy without giving a second thought to it. She also abandons her three children as though she did not possess them.

With the inclusion of a woman in their midst, all hell slowly breaks out at home. The action involves a kind of mating dance performed by the various male characters when provoked by Ruth. Brief bouts of violence and sexual play tumble through the conventional room. Over the following time, Ruth seduces both of Teddy's brothers. She decides to abandon her children and husband and stay in North London, where she will earn her keep as one of Lenny's whores. She has no objection to this work, and drives a bargain that is distinctly to her material advantage. Teddy

leaves for America without her. The homecoming of the title is, as it turns out, not Teddy's, but Ruth's. She says:

RUTH: You would have to regard your original outlay simply as a capital investment.

LENNY: I see. Alright.

RUTH: You'd supply my wardrobe, of course?

LENNY: We'd supply everything. Everything you need.

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

LENNY: You'd have everything.

RUTH: I would naturally want to draw up an inventory of everything I would need, which would require your signature in the presence of witnesses. (79)

Ruth undermines the strength of the males through her sexuality and alert mind which both serve to overpower the rough plans and ideas of the men. Her manner of questioning their actions and what they tell her undermine their long held confidence in what they do as being right.

In one instance, Teddy's attempt to persuade Ruth to retire for the night is fruitless and he has no control over his wife's future. It could be inferred that Ruth is only acting in this way in England as she has found a release from the boring life of America. In an effort to gain power control, Lenny tries to capture Ruth's attention, but she defeats him with her proposition in seducing Lenny in the give and take exchange scene:

LENNY: Give me the glass

RUTH: No

LENNY: I'll take it

RUTH: If you take the glass . . . I'll take you

LENNY: How about me taking the glass without you taking me?

RUTH: Why don't I just take you? (53)

Ruth's suggested intelligence becomes a vehicle for her sexual power that distracts attention from Teddy. Her actions have defeated her husband as he makes no attempt to stop what she is doing. Her role as mother and wife is seemingly forgotten as she abandons family life to establish herself as a prostitute for her husband's family. She holds the power of mystery and intrigue over the men. Her air of mystery is an element of what allows her to control the men. As she is both a mother and a whore, she satisfies the fantasy. It is apparently desired by Lenny as he questions his father about the night he was conceived.

Max's household is without a female figure and as such, feminine presence with its attendant air of love, warmth is lacking. Ruth's arrival appears to fill the gap left by Max's former wife, Jessie. Though the men in the play exhibit raw physical strength, Ruth is able to overpower them such that they begin to eat from her hand. This shows her ability to control the men as she wishes on her own terms. Her position as a mother is shown through her cooking abilities and the need for attention from her "children", the men. Through her presence, violence ceases, the whole family becomes a unit. Max confesses this as he says:

MAX: Well, it's been a long time since the whole family was together, eh? If only your mother was alive. Eh, what do you say, Sam? What would Jessie say if she was alive? Sitting here with her three sons. Three fine grown-up lads. And a lovely daughter-in-law. The only shame is her grandchildren aren't here. She'd have petted them and cooed over them, wouldn't she, Sam?

Mind you, she taught those boys everything they know. She taught them all the morality they know. (45)

As the drama moves, Ruth transforms into the woman who can give pleasure without any need. She has the power to make men feel masculine while regarding them as necessary objects. Thus, Ruth finds herself again and relaxes into her own kind of womanliness, which is expected of her and which she desires. It is a combination of servitude and command. We would have expected Ruth to be demure and subservient among the presence of the males. But in a subtle way, she executes her plan to be at the top of these males.

As there is no real mother figure within the household, the men have lapsed into a way of life in which they can show no affection to each other. The missing wall in the house, removed after Jessie's death, symbolizes the absent female influence. After Teddy comes home with his wife, Ruth, Max invites her to remain in London. She agrees to come home as the family's missing mother figure and possibly also a prostitute whom Lenny can pimp. Upon first seeing Ruth, Max believes that his eldest son, Teddy, has brought a "filthy scrubber" into "my house" (42). When Max first meets Ruth he finds out how she entered the house:

MAX: Who's this?

TEDDY: I was just going to introduce you.

MAX: Who asked you to bring tarts in here?

TEDDY: Tarts?

MAX: Who asked you to bring dirty tarts into this house?

TEDDY: Listen, don't be silly-

MAX: You been here all night?

TEDDY: Yes, we arrived from Venice-

MAX: We've had a smelly scrubber in my house all night. We've had a stinking pox-ridden slut in my house all night.

TEDDY: Stop it! What are you talking about? (42)

In the play, the characters are hollow with insecurity, but they lunge and stumble purposefully towards their destinies. To these men, Teddy's wife Ruth is both a threat and a salvation. Her presence is threatening because it is both explicit and impersonal. It is an attribute of hers rather than part of her as a person. The men have met their match. Ruth regards them as commodities, accessories, sources of power and convenience, precisely as they regard her. To such primitive men, a woman is part mother and part whore. In closing scene, she embarks coldly on satisfying both needs and liberating herself into captivity.

In addition to the play being about Teddy's homecoming, its ending suggests that another symbolic homecoming on a variety of levels is Ruth's. In the beginning, Max demands that Teddy and Ruth leave his house, yet by the end of the play, he is sobbing and yearning for attention from Ruth. Symbolically, Ruth comes home to herself. She rediscovers her previous identity prior to her marriage to Teddy, and to this woman-less family. But, in the process, she renders her own family with Teddy similarly without the role of mother, wife and woman. This decision of hers is the most enigmatic in the play. By the end, Ruth appears to have assumed the multiple roles of Jessie. Jessie is the London family's missing wife and mother, the missing woman in their household. Sam and Max talk about Ruth's three children:

SAM: Don't be silly.

MAX: What silly?

SAM: You're talking rubbish.

MAX: Me?

SAM: She's got three children.

MAX: She can have more! Here. If she's so keen.

TEDDY: She doesn't want any more. (70)

The play presents man in his primitive basest form where survival is the basic name of the game. The crude, primordial and communal nature of man is also explored. It shows that man removed from the artifice of comfort and civilization is worse than animals. In the typical communal society, everything is collectively owned and shared, sex inclusive. This explains the normality of all the household of Max attempting to have their own share of Ruth without any shame or remorse. However by the end, when Ruth decides to abandon her family in America for a life of prostitution, it is left for the audience to decide who has actually won in the battle of sex.

The Internal Power Struggle

Among the men of the house a continuing, back-biting struggle for power rumbles along. As the play begins there is conflict between Lenny and his father, Max. Having been insulted by Lenny, Max threatens him with his stick, saying "Don't you talk to me like that. I'm warning you". However, nothing comes of this threat. The only element of power that can be inferred comes from the way in which Lenny makes no response. Perhaps he has previous experience of Max's anger, or it could be that both parties know that there is no point in pursuing the matter. Although they fight, they work together to devise plans for establishing Ruth as a prostitute. It is unclear who the plans will benefit as the patriarch orders:

MAX: Well, you are going to have to share her! Otherwise she goes
back to America. You understand!

It's tricky enough as it is, without you shoving your oar in. but there's something worrying me. Perhaps she's not up to the mark. Eh? Teddy, you're the best judge. Do you think she'd be up to the mark?

I mean what about all this teasing? Is she going to make a habit of it? That'll get us nowhere. (73)

The position that the late mother, Jessie, once held is filled by Ruth. Like Jessie, Ruth is considered in both an abusive and an affectionate way. Max initially refers to his daughter-in-law as a "tart", "a stinking pox-ridden slut" (78). He later says that she is "lovely and beautiful" and craves her attention. When Ruth unites the family, Max remarks that "It's a long time since the whole family was together". She provides the centre that has been missing in the family and the men focus around her. Since Jessie died, the rest of the family has been headed by Max as the father figure. On one side, she is portrayed as a nice person and on the as a negative person. This creates confusion in the way she is judged by the readers that adds to her mysterious nature.

After arriving, Ruth is immediately drawn into the family's ugly psychological games and quickly proves a worthy opponent. Soon, the game involves both of Teddy's brothers taking extreme liberties with Ruth. The male characters were enjoying their communal existence before the coming of Ruth. With the arrival of Ruth, they not only commonly appropriate her, but also begin to explore and exploit how she can be put to economic advantage, through the prostitution business they intend to establish her in. The family's sense of tyranny and dominance greatly influences their way of perceiving women. Therefore Ruth in return becomes an outcast. The male members talk about the economic aspect to keep Ruth with them in the house as:

MAX: Well, how much is she worth? What are we talking about, three figures?

LENNY: I asked you where the money's going to come from. It'll be an extra mouth to feed. It'll be an extra body to clothe. You realize that?

JOEY: I'll buy her clothes.

LENNY: What with?

JOEY: I'll put in a certain amount out of my wages.

MAX: That's it. We'll pass the hat around. We'll make a donation.

We're all grown-up people, we've got a sense of responsibility.

We'll all put a little in the hat. It's democratic. (69)

As Ruth is able to provide both emotional and sexual care, she is desired by all the men. She appears to use a different part of her personality to gain control over each of the men. However, whether or not Ruth's new role is simply an old position brought to life again, is unclear because she reveals little about her past and that becomes another mystery of her personality. Her manipulative power and insight into the required family structure enable her to take control of the family.

Regardless of the family's attitude towards women, Teddy becomes speechless as his family takes their opportunity to take control of Ruth. Being a soft and vulnerable figure, Teddy evades their arguments and feels betrayed by his family. This reduces him to a total stranger whose homecoming is unwelcome. However, despite being a stranger, he asserts his personal opinion of Ruth. Defeated by Ruth upon first entering the house, he attempts to seek control of her by persuading her to return to her three boys in the states. Furthermore, Joey also rejects the idea of Ruth

being with Teddy and the family decides to pimp her. Teddy begins to realize that he has married a “whore” and has stuck with such a “whore” for six years:

LENNY: EH, Dad.

I've got a better idea.

MAX: What?

LENNY: There's no need for us to go to all this expense. I know these women. Once they get started they ruin your budget. I've got a better idea. Why don't I take her up with me to Greek Street?

MAX: You mean put her on the game?

We'll put her on the game. That's a stroke of genius, that's a marvelous idea. You mean she can earn the money herself – on her back?

LENNY: Yes.

MAX: Wonderful. The only thing is, it'll have to be short hours. We don't want her out of the house all night.

LENNY: I can limit the hours.

MAX: How many?

LENNY: Four hours a night.

MAX: Is that enough?

LENNY: She'll bring in a good sum for four hours a night. (72)

The attitude of the men towards women is decidedly ambivalent, enigmatic and mysterious. It is represented by the father, Max's, description of his late wife, “Mind you, she wasn't such a bad woman. Even though it made me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bad slut” (31). The only other female character

is the long-dead mother, Jesse. She is spoken of a number of times during the play by various characters. Jesse is both the backbone of the family and slut-bitch of a wife, as described by her husband Max. He presents his wife in an even more ambivalent light later on when he says, "I've never had a whore under this roof before. Ever since your mother died" (17). So, the mother is represented as having been both a mother-figure and a prostitute.

The family lives in the same house and though they live side-by-side physically, their emotional alienation and consequent loneliness is obvious. Perhaps the most alienated of all the characters is Teddy and Ruth. They seem to have chosen to remain emotionally separate from the others. Teddy very clearly states this when talking about his works. He has chosen not to be emotionally involved with anyone. He apparently has chosen to specialize in a very abstract branch of philosophy in order to maintain what he calls his "intellectual equilibrium." This field allows him to work with little contact with others. By the end of the play, he packs his baggage ready to leave his family again as:

MAX: I've got one on me. I've got one here. Just a minute.

Here you are. Will they like that one?

TEDDY: They'll be thrilled.

Good-bye Lenny.

LENNY: Ta-ta, Ted. Good to see you. Have a good trip.

TEDDY: Bye-bye, Joey.

JOEY: Ta-ta.

RUTH: Eddie.

Don't become a stranger. (80)

The men's attitude towards Ruth is one of the most important features of this play. The men appear to hold power through unity. By clubbing together in this way, they think that they have found a way to control Ruth the way they like. At this point however, they do not expect to be overpowered once again by Ruth. Her sexual dominance and quick wit is the power that ensures her demands of a three roomed flat and a personal maid.

The play manages to be as disturbing, dark, enigmatic, and appallingly funny. The male characters in the play present a façade of masculinity, yet they are innately weak. They fight and quarrel among themselves like women. They as a result resort to use of violence both physically and verbally to cover up this character frailty. Another evidence of this is the number of threats given that is never matched by action. Max threatens to evict Sam a couple of times, but it never goes beyond a mere threat. Though men show these physical traits, it takes the coming of Ruth to show how weak they really are. She is able to show that a smart and subtle feminine move could outwit physical violence. All the males had felt a sense of alienation in one form or the other after the demise of Jessie. One can feel a sense of loneliness in their lives and this makes their life absurd and meaningless. As stated above, there was no camaraderie among the male family members. Though they lived under one roof they were always constantly fighting with one another.

Chapter Four: The Ambiguity of the Characters

The present research work has analyzed Harold Pinter's one act drama. *The Homecoming* from an enigmatic perspective. Enigmatic is a subtle word to describe. It is subtle in the sense that we can derive multiple meanings from the word. Therefore, we have to look at the context to determine the meaning of the word. The dictionary defines it as mysterious and difficult to understand. In the drama, the word refers to the traits of the characters, the way they behave among themselves and with each other. Therefore, the present study has analyzed all the characters, especially Max and Ruth. It has found that these two characters despite being male and females respectively shatter their gender roles. Max behaves more like a woman while Ruth gradually ascends to the position of patriarch in the all male household.

First and foremost, everything in the play is as real as imagined to be. That creates confusion for the audience and readers. The family is under the tension of the presence of a woman in the house, who could disease the family. It acts as a mob to pimp Ruth. There is no love or respect, for the family is full of verbal violence. It shows the breakdown of the family, testified by the presence of Ruth in the house. Family conflicts pervade the play throughout, even before the homecoming of Ruth. Pinter simply refuses to supply any framework. The play is set in a dingy interior and there is throughout the play a sense of largely suppressed violence. The exchanges between the characters seem to be composed substantially and the words that the characters actually say are divorced from what they mean. The dialogue is conducted in language whose naturalism is subtly undermined, tuned, and poeticized.

Second, soon after Ruth's introduction to the family, they think of her as a replacement for Jessie. As soon as her capabilities of both mother and whore are proven, she is elevated to the status of queen. This realization takes place in a wild

scene when Teddy is trying to usher Ruth out of the house to leave for America. He must have made the connection of what his male relatives had in store for Ruth. But the family asks Ruth to stay, with the provision that she earns her own keep. Teddy submits to the family's wishes, and just when it seems consensus has set in place a disturbing future for Ruth, she enters the room and ruptures their agreements. With the poise of a businesswoman she negotiates and actually accepts the deal, provided that a contract is drawn.

Third, the message of the play is extremely difficult to understand that points to its enigmatic nature. There is no any clear theme to extract after watching the play. The males behave in such a manner that is not expected of them. Max the patriarch tries to assert his authority but in vain. Lenny and the others do not care for Max and each and every person is in the process of deceiving each other. They shout at each other, gossip, quarrel and use abusive language. It is only when Ruth arrives they unite as one and plan to lure her in becoming a prostitute.

The findings presented above have led to the conclusion that the play is enigmatic and mysterious. It exposes issues of sex and violence in a highly realistic yet aesthetically stylized manner. It provides the audience with an exploration of an alternative outlook of the female role in the household. Somewhat outrageous to think about at first, Pinter suggests through the play that the matriarch function as both virgin and whore or both mother and lover.

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