

**Tribhuvan University**

Ruth as Mother-whore in Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in English

By

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### **Abstract**

Pinter's *The Homecoming* unveils women's position in a patriarchal society under the title "Ruth as Mother-whore in Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*." Conditions of female character are analogous to commodities. Ruth, a benign female protagonist is controlled, ruffled, and reviled by the belligerent, noisome and devious male characters. Women are incessant victims of patriarchal social structure; trivial roles and duties are assigned to them in accordance with the constructed gender categories. Hence, to liberate them from such biased and unnatural discrimination of the patriarchal structure and absolute gender categories which privilege males over females should be dismantled.

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## I. Introduction

This study is a polemic on Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*. The portrayal and exploitation of one and only female titular character and heroine, Ruth, will be the central focus of the study. Pinter depicts his female protagonist Ruth, as a mother-whore, since she keeps an illicit relationship with her brothers-in-law in front of her husband, Teddy and outsells him. Still, her father-in-law, Max, calls her a "mother of feeling", "a mother of quality" (60). Ruth being mother of three children stays in London for being a harlot instead of going back to America with her husband Teddy, a professor. This rebellion nature of Ruth displays her wish for freedom. Introducing Ruth as a degraded harlot from a loving mother, Pinter's *The Homecoming* textualises women's refutation of traditional confinement of women's roles. The playwright has, thus, created a broach for feminist vituperation letting lose a Pandora Box of Troubles for the cultural and radical feminists. The following chapters will venture to vindicate the issue dismantling the traditional binaries considering it as cultural and social rather than natural.

Harold Pinter, the son of a Portuguese-Jewish tailor, was born on October 10, 1930 at Hackney in London. As a child, he got on well with his mother, but he didn't get on well with his father, who was a strong disciplinarian. On the outbreak of World War II, Pinter was evacuated from the city to Cornwall; to be wrenched from his parents was traumatic event for Pinter. He lived with 26 other boys in a castle on the coast.

He attended a drama and speech school as well as the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. At the outset of his literary career in his teens, he produced a considerable number of his poems and prose works for little magazines under the name of Harlod Pinta. As a conscientious objector he declined the call for National

Service, and was twice tried and fined. In 1949, he became an actor (under the name David Baron), played repertory in Ireland and the English provinces, and started to write a novel. He wrote a play, *The Room*, in 1957 at the suggestion of a friend at Bristol University, where it was immediately produced.

Harold Pinter became prominent with *The Caretaker* (1960), a haunting farce comedy that was subsequently filmed. Like his earlier *The Birthday Party* (1958) and his later *The Homecoming* (1965), it evidences the influence of writers such as Franz Kafka, Luigi Pirandello, and Samuel Beckett (also, as Pinter later acknowledged, that of American gangster films) more than those of his “angry” young English contemporaries. There is, it is true, a strong anti- Establishment note in his plays and an echo of Absurdist drama like that of Eugene IONESCO. But the most striking quality of Pinter’s plays is their evocation of terror. It is that quality- allied with farcical dialogue and “business”\_ which led reviewers aptly to dub Pinter’s drama the “comedy of menace” (Hawkins-Daddy 606). His other major plays consist of *The Dumb Waiter* (1960), a suggestive and more amusing play. It was subsequently produced together with *The Collection* (1962, originally televised in 1961), a Pirandellian one –actor about a married couple, a possible adulterer, and a jealous homosexual. In *Tea Party*, social and sexual insecurities topple a wealthy industrialist who marries an aristocrat but is involved with his sensuous secretary; feeling guilty he becomes blind and collapses during a family tea party when he perceives (rightly or wrongly) his wife’s brothers seducing both women in his very presence. *The Basement* (1967), *Landscape* (1968), *The Lover* (1963), *The Servant* (1963) etc. are some of his other renowned plays.

Pinter received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005 and became one of the three playwrights to receive this prize. Harold Pinter, an English Playwright,



achieved international success as one of the most complex post World War II dramatists. His plays are noted for their use of silence to increase tension, understatement, and cryptic small talk. Equally recognizable are the 'Pinteresque' themes- nameless menace, erotic fantasy, obsession and jealousy, family hatred and mental disturbance.

Quest for security and shelter, self-identification, and verification of truth, the philosophical implications and social satire are the main themes in the works of Pinter which are presented in suspenseful yet often comic plot. He writes about family life. For Pinter lower class English family life is not a family at all, instead of a home, the house is a cage in which the inmates snarl and scratch at one another; life there is a vituperation.

Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* is an exploration of women's real pathetic conditions. It presents incessant brutal conditions over women. Cruel and violent male members, Max, Lenny, and Joey treat female character and protagonist Ruth as an object and means of getting pleasure. She is treated no more than a living object. Despite her awareness, she cannot retaliate whatever they ask because of power domination and different trivial roles assigned to women in a patriarchal society. At the debut of Ruth, in Act I, Max degrades calling her, "a tart, and a pox-ridden slot" (41). In the Act II, Lenny wants to consume her and asks her to dance with him; "Just one dance, with your brother-in-law before you go" (58). Joey takes her upstairs and spends about two hours caressing her. Max later asks her to buttress him which he thinks will make him young even in his Seventies. They propose Ruth to stay with them leaving Teddy to be a whore and to assist their family. It is explicitly understood through Lenny's dialogue as he says, "She will bring a good sum four hours a night" (72). Teddy cannot refute and explicitly states that he would

not mind if she stays with them. At the end of the play, she agrees to remain in London with them leaving her husband and sons. Teddy leaves for America. Her desires are not buttressed rather snatched by those violent family members for their own sake.

According to the feminist concept in patriarchal social structure, women are treated as objects. They can be exchanged with goods in the market. Women can be manipulated and utilized according to the men's desire. This research tries to prove the oppression, exploitation and victimization of a woman in Harold Pinter's play *The Homecoming*. The victimization and exploitation of women are not on the basis of natural aspects rather on the basis of social construct and traditional patriarchal viewpoint. Gender oppression and women's subordination are seen as a natural means of exploiting females. Hence, gender roles surpass males over females.

In *The Homecoming*, Ruth is physically and mentally hurt. On the one hand, she has become a means of entertainment for the males and on the other hand, she is compelled to sell her body for their livelihood. Her will does not count, and make any sense what counts is the desire of those vicious male members.

This study will try to disclose the degradation and exploitation of male over female in the text *The Homecoming* by Harold Pinter. Males are dominating and exploiting women in the name of conservation which is extraneous. They are utilizing norms and values constructed by themselves on the basis of power relations which have the patriarchal basis. The males' loop-sided behavior towards female is nothing more than an act of injustice.

### **Literature Review**

Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* started receiving critical responses immediately after its first publication in 1965. John Lahr, in his introduction to A

Casebook on Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*, calls it a "triumph of craftsmanship and artistic intention" (169). Katherine H. Burkman views that it focuses "clearly on the fertility goddess and her place in the ritual renewal of life" (108).

Another critic Alrene Sykes finds this drama as an assault on the normal expectation about family life. He states:

Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* derives much of its impact from its calculated assault on the viewer's normal expectations about family life. Pinter's lower-class English family is in no usual sense a family. Instead of a home, the house is a cage in which the inmates snarl and scratch at one another; life there is a community vituperation. In what obviously passes for everyday discourse, Max, the family patriarch, describes his dead wife as having a "rotten stinking face," himself as "lousy filthy father," his brother as a "tit" and a "maggot" (37).

Likewise, Arnold P. Hinchliffe misreads *The Homecoming*'s heroine Ruth as; "the most misunderstood of all of Harold Pinter's characters, is generally condemned as a shocking, licentious woman, even a nymphomaniac, and it is unanimously assumed by her critics that in the end she agrees to become a harlot" (150).

Austin Quigley states that Pinter's *Homecoming* consists of traditional plot, the progressive revelation of character, the development and resolution of conflict. To dismiss the narrow requirement, the dialogue must convey clear messages. As he says:

The words spoken by characters present speech acts affecting one another even when these fictive utterances refer to the situation and space in which they are pronounced in a contradictory, confusing, or unreliable fashion. The more unreliable, contradictory, or tenuous the

reference of the dramatic speeches is, however, the shakier the basis for constructing character and conflict in terms of traditionally realistic fullness and consistency. The sense of a governing story “narrated” indirectly through the direct interplay of characters’ utterances fades, and in its place. The audience must construe a series of changing situations and fluidly define shifting conditions and positions of utterance. These more abstract patterns are the subject of study. (15)

Martin Esslin remarks that Ruth was a prostitute even before she married Teddy. “Ruth is indeed coming home to her former self...” (70). He further reads the play as “a wide known euphemism for prostitution” (78). His unfortunate reading into the text, coupled with rigid, even prudish, adherence to received morality about matters of sex provides him with his best ammunition against Ruth. He fancises: “The country house, she so lovingly recalls as the scene of her nude posing by the lace, where drinks and cold buffet were served, sounds more like the scene for orgies than place for photography” (159).

Similarly, William Empson finds Ruth as ambiguous:

There is a considerable doubt that Ruth will remain with family and work not only as a prostitute but as a lackey. It is also necessary to acknowledge that possibility that she might. The final point, Ruth’s dominance is of course ambiguous, and this central ambiguity like the multiple ambiguities throughout play functions both aesthetically and ethically. (171)

On the other hand, Ruby Cohn reduces all of Pinter’s characters to villains or victims:

Reductive attempts to separate “good guys” from “bad guys,” villain from victim, are out of place throughout Pinter’s work and only limit appreciation. However, while Pinter’s ambiguities can embrace multiple

and contradictory qualities of each character's ambiguity doesn't endorse moral fence sitting or an ethical relativism certain acts are responsible. (56-58)

James R. Hollis comments *The Homecoming* as extension of love from friendship and familial love to erotic:

The *Homecoming* does less to define love than to extend appreciation for the rich variety of expression and forms of love ranging from friendship and familial love to erotic, throughout past and into the future from conception, through old age and death. Lenny inquires; however, evil his intentions, about the night of his conception all express love for another. (78)

The critics do not seem to explore the issue of women's degradation, objectification and their quest for freedom. In the play, the protagonist and titular female character, Ruth, has come back to London to meet her kin and kith with her husband Teddy in a debut visit. But Max, her father-in-law demeans her calling her tart, pox-ridden slot, in his first sight. Immediately, her brothers-in-law, Lenny and Joey show illicit sexual advances towards her in front of her husband, Teddy. Rather than trying to understand her feelings and freedom, they propose her to be a family whore. They hope to live in her earnings that she will bring some money to run their family by selling her flesh by night in a brothel house which they are themselves going to manage for her. Their attitude explicitly depicts their male dominated patriarchal mentality to objectify a woman for their convenience. There are many more such traces which exploit, dominate and make women the chief victim of the society in the level of mental, physical and spiritual level respectively. This study will unfold the causes of this aspect of women's degradation from Cultural Feminism in textual analysis.

## II. Feminism as Cultural History

### Feminism

Feminism is a school of thought which attempts to delineate women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences, and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation. It, as a successful politico-cultural movement, dismantles the patriarchal social norms and values that are against the natural law of equality, to equate them. It proclaims that if men are rational human creatures, and so are women. It is a voice that goes against male hegemony, their inability to understand women's idiosyncratic nature, distortion and above all the ideology of the males. Feminism, thus, is a massive complaint against patriarchal monopoly, and declares to abolish the dogmas of domination to establish a vigorous and equal society for both male and female.

Feminism as "the women's liberation movement is a part and parcel of the creation of a new society in which there are different forms of discrimination. This society cannot be separated from the process of its making" (Rowbotham qtd. in Bryson 257). Feminism focuses on physical economic, political, psychological, and cultural identity and equality and opposes gender roles, stereotypes, and discrimination against women based on the assumption that women are passive, submissive, and physically helpless.

Moreover, all feminist activities including feminist theory and literary criticism consider their ultimate goal is to change the world by promoting gender equality. Thus, all feminists' activities can be seen as a form of activism. It campaigns on issues such as reproductive right, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual violence. The themes explored in feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, especially

sexual objectification, oppression etc.

Feminism, however, is a grass root movement which crosses the boundaries of class and race. As culturally specific, it addresses the issues relevant to women of the corresponding society. It rejects the idea that certain characteristics or interests are inherently masculine, which are positive and superior and that certain characteristics or interests are inherently feminine, which are negative and inferior. The basis of feminist ideology is that rights, privileges, status and obligations should not be determined by gender.

Feminism as a movement started only after Second World War, especially in decade of 1960s when the voices of minorities like African-American, Jewish, Chinese-American etc. emerged as movements. In this period, suppressed voices got chances to revolt. So, 1960s was the beginning decade of its institutional development. Earlier also feminists felt that females are in fact made inferior not by nature but by social mechanism.

Feminism is a successful cultural movement of 1980s which attempts to dismantle the patriarchal social norms and values, that is against the natural law of equality, to liberate women. As a movement, it places women as human beings equal to men. It is a voice against the inadequacy, the distortion as well as ideology of males. It is a commitment to exterminate the ideology of ascendancy to establish a healthy and equal society for both male and female.

The term 'Feminism' was first used by the French dramatist Alexander Dumas in 1872 in a pamphlet "L" to designate the emerging movement for women's rights. It gradually emerged to be a world-wide cultural movement to secure a complete equality of women with men in the enjoyment of all human rights-moral, social, religious, political, educational, legal, economic and many others. It studies

the dominations of women in many fields, from different perspectives. Therefore, Rosemarie Tong states:

Feminist theory is not one, but many, theories or perspective attempts to describe women's oppression to explain its causes and consequences, and to describe strategies for women's liberation. The more skillfully a feminist theory can combine description, explanation, and prescription, the better that theory is. (1)

Feminism is not only a study of problems but also it seeks its solution and its impact as well. It is a theory based on reason. That is why; some critics call it 'feminist science'.

Feminism is a struggle against the hardship and neglect imposed upon women, "Patriarchy continually exerts forces that undermine women's self-confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as a proof that women are naturally and therefore correctly, self-effacing and submissive" (Tyson 85). Feminism struggles against this sort of falsity for the establishment of patriarchal regime. And hence, it is not against the males of society but against their monopoly and dictatorship. It proclaims to fight against the yore established, phallogocentric ideologies, patriarchal attitudes, and male interpretations on literature, social science, economics, politics, religion etc. So, roles associated with men and women are not natural but cultural as Tyson states:

The belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed, to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power. In other words, to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political and social



power. That is, the inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically, produced.

(84)

Right from the ancient period women were taken as puppet to amuse males. They said that females lack certain qualities which males possess. Aristotle declared that 'the female is a female by virtue of certain lack of qualities', and St Thomas Aquinas believed that woman is an 'imperfect man'. When John Donne wrote '*Air and Angels*' he alluded to Aquinas's theory that form is masculine and matter feminine: the superior, godlike, male intellect impresses its form upon malleable, inert, female matter. (Seldon and Widdowson 203)

Sophocles wrote a drama *Antigone*, in 441 B.C. where there is a female protagonist who revolts against the patriarchal rules in favor of humanism. She defiles the rules of government where males themselves could not speak against the King's order. Critics find it as a first step to women's voice for liberation. Medieval life was routinized according to Bible and its interpretation of the priests. Women's position was positioned as the male members wanted and myths positioned them. This period became Dark Age for human beings. But at the end of this period female also came into public places. Earlier public debate was conducted solely by men but from the fifteenth century women's voices were beginning to be heard. The first woman to write about the rights and duties of her sex was the French-woman Christine de Pisan. (Bryson 11)

In the seventeenth century, for the first time significant numbers of women protested against the received ideas about their sex in pamphlets and books mostly published anonymously. Among them Aphra Benn (1640-1689) was dramatist. Mary Asteel was another theoretician; recently, she has been described as the first

English feminist. She equated the relationship between king and subject with husband and wife. But she said, “Women’s work need not be limited by the need to attract a husband.” She insisted that a “Woman’s duty to obey her husband did not involve any recognition of his superiority” (Bryson 15). This is to say that she also rejected the superiority of men over women. She said that men are not fit to educate children. An educated woman should choose to reject the domestic slavery involved in marriage, therefore, advised women to avoid matrimony.

Women’s first text with feminine spirit was Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which discusses male writers like Milton, Pope, and Rousseau; Oliver Schreiner’s *Women and Labour* (1911); Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), which vividly portray the unequal treatment given to women seeking education and alternatives to marriage and motherhood; and Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949), which has an important section on the portrayal of women in the novels of D. H. Lawrence. Male contribution to this tradition of feminist writing includes John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Woman* (1869) and *The Origin of the Family* (1884) by Friedrich Engels. (Barry 121) Since then women writers have been exploring their experiences through books and articles but they are frequently marginalized by the male literary canon. In this book, she demanded the equal education to women because mind doesn’t know sex. Thus, it has been said that her feminism was basically a demand for equality with bourgeois man, and certainly the *Vindication* does address itself to women of the middle class, and she consistently seems to assume that the existence of servants is necessary if domestic work is to be more mindless drudgery. This means, women are capable of reasoning and should be educated accordingly. In her work *Letters on Education* published in 1790 Catherine Macaway, English historian,

claimed that differences between sexes are products of education and environment. She demanded equal education to the boys and the girls for the equal development of knowledge. She attacked the way in which women's minds and bodies had been distorted to please a man.

American feminist Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) was another important book for the women's social and political rights. It is believed that the emancipation of women and searching for their identity has started from the nineteenth century onwards. Then from the beginning of the twentieth century many feminist came and tried to dig out women's oppression from different perspectives. Before twentieth century most of the feminist were liberal influenced by eighteenth century's liberal humanism. But in Twentieth century radical feminist also came into the field. Many other feminists also came with different perspectives who are the feminist literary critics. (Bryson 22)

### **Feminist Literary Criticism**

The feminist movement of literary criticism is concerned with the representation of women in literature and position of women in society. The feminist literary criticism of today is direct product of the 'women's movement' of the 1960s. The primary aim of this movement is to liberate women from oppressive restrains especially the cultural restraints of society which has fixed the women's identity within narrow confinement. The main strain of feminist movement strongly refutes the cultural assumption of women which attempts to fix women's identity within male dominated canon.

Feminist movement has realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature, and considers it as a vital to combat them and questions the authority and their coherence. In this sense, the women's movement has always

been crucially concerned with books and literature.

Feminists pointed out, for example, that in nineteenth-century fiction very few women work for a living, unless they are driven to it by dire necessity. Thus, feminist criticism in the 1970s, the major effort went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy that is the cultural 'mind-set' in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality. Critical attention was given to books by male writers in which influential or typical images of women were constructed. Necessarily, the criticism which undertook this work was combative and polemical.

In the 1980s, in feminism, as in other critical approaches, the mood changed. Firstly, feminist criticism became much more eclectic, meaning that it began to draw upon the findings and approaches of other kinds of criticism—Marxism, structuralism, linguistics, and so on. Secondly, it switched its focus from attacking male versions of the world to exploring the nature of the female world and outlook and reconstructing the lost or suppressed records of female experience. Thirdly, attention was shifted to the need to construct a new canon of women's writing by rewriting the history of the novel and of poetry in new prominence. These are the characteristics of feminist criticism. (Barry 122)

Some feminists seek equal status as the male in society in every field. Women also should be given the position of human being equal to male while some other feminists who take males as enemy of their rights of freedom. They want their own individual existence and identify not the identity and existence given by male members of the society. Some feminists from English speaking countries try to reconstitute the ways of dealing with literature in order to do justice female point of view, concerns and values. Louis Tyson, in this context says, "Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature and other cultural productions reinforce or

undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women” (81).

The outstanding contribution of revolutionary nineteenth- century and early twentieth century authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft and her daughter Mary Shelley, George Eliot, Charlotte Parkins Gilman, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir are of great importance. Feminist literary criticism developed mostly since the beginning of the late twentieth-century women’s movement. The movement incorporates the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Michael Barrett, Betty Friden who examined a female ‘Self’ constructed in literature by male authors to embody various male fears and anxieties. They researched the social realities through the writings of male authors of contemporary era. Their main concern is on the contemporary social reality which deals with the female issues. Though these late twentieth –century feminists are not standing on the base of earlier feminist directly those earlier feminist’s contribution helped them to specify their field. They created a battleground for modern feminists’ research or study.

Mary Wollstonecraft, in her *book A Vindication of the Rights Women* refutes Rousseau’s ideas of different education for boys and girls which he stated in his work *Emile*. In the book different education is prescribed for Emile and Sophy, Emile’s future wife. For Rousseau, men’s and women’s natures and abilities were not the same, and these biologically given differences defined their whole role in society, with men becoming citizens and women wives and mothers. (‘Little girls always dislike learning to read and write, but they are always ready to learn to sew’, *Emile* p. 331). Wollstonecraft quarreled with Rousseau refusing to accept that women were less capable of reason than men, or that vanity weakness and frivolity were the natural attributes of her sex. (I’ve, probably, had an opportunity of

observing more girls in their infancy than J. J. Rousseau, qtd. in Wollstonecraft 129) Wollstonecraft insisted that women should have an independent right to education employment, property and the protection of the civil law; this she argued was needed to ensure that women were not forced into marriage through economic necessity and wives were not entirely dependent on the goodwill of their husbands. Women therefore needed legal rights in order to make independent rational choices and achieve virtue. (Bryson 24)

Similarly, Virginia Woolf in her book *A Room of One's Own* states that women don't have money and a room of their own, that is they don't have separate space for writing. If a woman is given privacy and economic independence the women also can develop and write work of art as male writers do. Due to the lack of private property and freedom women are being prevented from realizing their creative possibilities by patriarchal society. Rejecting feminists issue she hopes to achieve balance between male self-realization and female self-annihilation. Hence, tradition of women writing is affected by male tradition. She also draws a survey of women writers from 16th to 19th century. She is not against males but hates patriarchal norms and values. She wants to balance society with equality for both males and females. She is womanish but not feminist and dislikes the word 'feminist' (817-825).

Such feminist activities gave birth to a modern feminist Simone de Beauvoir. She published a book *The Second Sex* (1949). It's a narrative of women's existential otherness. A mark of otherness is one's inability to shape one's psychological, social, and cultural identity. She analyzes men's depiction of women in biology, psychoanalysis, history and literature. Her book played an important role in changing clear idea of the fundamental questions of modern feminism in the fifties.

According to her ‘One is not born a woman; rather one becomes a woman. It is just a gender concept. “Other” is a place given to women. She opines that females are free to choose to come out of null but paternalism regards women as other. They treat women as weaker sex or second sex. Women are considered as essential other. She argues that male is considered as self and subject and female is treated as object or other. She says that males are represented as the whole humanity in general. The paternalism regards women as enigmatic or mysterious. Moreover, she says that it is just a social construct based on male domination. *The Second Sex* (1949) also deals with myths where women are shown as witch. She warns, “The myth must not be confused with recognition of signification” (994-1000).

Despite various activities, no significant development in feminism is seen before the 1960s. During the late sixties the impact of feminism began to be felt in literary criticism. It moved forward progressively and reached its zenith during sixties with American Showalterian concept of gynocriticism. Gynocriticism treats the women as writers. It studies/judges the texts produced by women from women’s perspective. The women readers identify the career of women writers. Gynocritics constructs a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature. It eschews the inevitability of male models and theories and seeks a female model.

Feminist criticism properly began after the publication of Kate Millett’s book *Sexual Politics* (1977). Millett examines how power relations work and how man manipulates and perpetuates male domination over women. It announces her view of ‘patriarchy’ which sees it as pervasive and demands “a systematic overview\_ as a political institution”. Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male, and this power is exerted, directly or indirectly, in civil and domestic life to constrain women. Millett borrows from social science the

important distinction between 'sex' and 'gender', where sex is determined biologically but 'gender is a psychological concept which refers to culturally acquired sexual identity. ( Seldon and Widdowson 214)

Elaine Showalter appeared with *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). Her book examines the British women novelists from Bronte to Lessing from the view point of women's experience. Some of them changed their names into male names. While other did not publish their works due to the lack of courage of contemporary to compete with males in the male dominated patriarchal society. She blames all the theories are manly and they consist of falsity and try to suppress women and their idiosyncrasies. She divided the time into three phases: Feminine Phase (1840-1880), Feminist Phase (1880-1920), and Female Phase (1920 onwards). These periods represent the imitation, protest and rejection of self-discovery of female values respectively. *A Literature of Their Own* encourages women to take strength in their act of independent in the world and constructs a reliable map of the achievements of English women writers. Showalter says that women write differently not because they are different psychologically from men but because of their social experience is different.

A book *Thinking About Women* (1968) by Mary Ellman, apropos the sperm/ovum nexus and deconstructs male dominated ways of seeing by suggesting that we might prefer to regard the ovum as daring, independent and individualistic (rather than 'apathetic') and the sperm as conforming and sheeplike (rather than 'enthusiastic'. It reveals that the western culture internalized application of gender stereotypes to almost everything. She attacks what she calls the "phallic criticism" (204). "She associates the maleness with a certain style of writing which is oriented towards fixity of meaning and which is rigid, definite, and closed. *Thinking About*



*Women* finds males who write like female and some females who write like male.

In her view, not all men write male ways, nor do all women writers adopt a female writing style” (Tyson 96).

Likewise, *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979), a chief text on feminism, appeared by Gilbert and Gubar. This text is a reply to Harold Bloom’s *Theory of Anxiety of Influence*. Gilbert and Gubar say that women do not fit into Bloom’s patriarchal model. They have not any identity of authorship, because they do not have literary tradition unlike Bloom’s attitude. They say anxiety is prior to influence. Women, now, are well aware of patriarchal as male domination over female. The concept of patriarchy has been revealed as man-made idea according to masculine purpose. They are capable of exposing the true identity of patriarchy and realizing the significance of their own identity.

Most of the French feminists are influenced by psychoanalysis especially from Lacan’s reinterpretation of Freud. Before Lacan feminism and psychoanalysis experienced a kind of hostility to each other. The French Feminists Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray challenge the inherent worldview of patriarchal structure.

Helen Cixous, in her essay, *The Laugh of Medusa* (1976), essays to establish female superiority over male. In this book, she asks women writers to put their body into their writing. She tries to escape from the pleasure of male and wants to seek her own pleasure. Her view is that women must be free to feel herself as independent considering her rebellion against traditional belief. Rosemary Tong says:

Applying Derrida’s notion of difference of writing she constructed feminine writing (portraiture famine) with masculine writing (literature). Understood psychoanalytically, masculine writing as

rooted in a man's genital and liberal economy, which is emphasized by phallus. (224)

Both Cixous and Irigaray agree feminine sexuality and the female body are sources of feminine writing. Irigaray tries to liberate women from the male philosophical thought but Cixous tries to liberate from male behavior. Irigaray focuses on liberal economy. As Tong reveals, for her "patriarchy is [...] the manifestation of masculine liberal economy and will remain the order of the day until the repressed 'feminine feminine' is set free" (288).

Feminist criticism, in all its many and various manifestations, attempts to free itself from naturalized patriarchal notions of the literary and the literary critical. (Seldon and Widdowson 204)

### **Cultural Feminism**

Cultural feminism is the ideology of a female nature or female essence reappropriated by feminists themselves in an effort to revalidate undervalued female attributes. It is the theory that there is a fundamental personality and psychological differences between men and women, and those women's differences are not only unique, but superior. This theory of feminism takes note of the biological differences between men and women- such as menstruation and childbirth – and extrapolates from this the idea of an inherent "women's culture." For example, the belief that "women are kinder and gentler than men," prompts cultural feminists call for an infusion of women's culture into the male-dominated world, which would presumably result in less violence and fewer wars. At its core, the theory ascribes to a form of gendered essentialism.

Cultural feminism seeks to improve the relationship between the sexes and often cultures at large by celebrating women's special qualities, ways, and experiences, often believing that the "woman's way" is the better way, or that the culture discussed is overly masculine and requires balance from feminine perspectives. Hence, cultural feminism is a form of difference feminism.

### **Theorists of Cultural Feminism**

Cultural feminism commends the positive aspects of what is seen as the female character or feminine personality. It is also a feminist theory of difference that praises the positive aspects of women. Early theorists like Jane Addams and Charlotte Perkins Gilman argued that in the governing the state, cooperation, caring, and nonviolence in the settlement of conflicts society seem to be what was needed in women's virtues. Cultural feminism was a basic theme in all of Addams' writings.

Traditions of settlements of conflicts of women has continued to the present day in several arguments: women's distinctive standards for ethical judgment, caring attention as a mode of women's consciousness, different achievement motivation patterns, a female style of communication, women's capacity for openness to emotional experience, women's fantasies of sexuality and intimacy, and women's lower levels of aggressive behavior and greater capacity for creating peaceful coexistence.

According to Jane Addams' on *Cultural Feminism*, article, Addams frequently used women as the source of her ideas and topics of analysis. She wanted to expand the scope of women's activities, therefore changing the basic structure of values and relations throughout society. In addition to this generalized approach, Addams specifically studied prostitutes, women in the marketplace, especially working-class women, and pacifism. An intellectual stream feeding Addams'

cultural feminism was radical feminism.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's, *Herland* (1915) gives fictional expression to cultural feminism in her account of a society of strong women guided by female concerns of pacifism and cooperation. Margaret Fuller, a journalist, critic and women's rights activist, was another who contributed to cultural feminism. Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) initiated the cultural feminist tradition. It stresses the emotional, intuitive side of knowledge and expresses an organic world view that is quite different from the mechanistic view of Enlightenment rationalists.

The contradiction of cultural feminism, the same as for such other utopian movements as Marxism, is that, despite its intention, the women it has liberated and infused into the public world of production are women exactly like men, who are termed "The Mass Women".

Cultural feminists believe that there are fundamental, biological differences between men and women, and that women should celebrate these differences. Women are inherently more kind and gentle. Cultural feminists believe that because of these differences, if women ruled the world there would be no more war and it would be a better place. Essentially, a woman's way is the right way and better way for everyone. Western society values male thought and the ideas of independence, hierarchy, competition and domination. Females value ideas such as interdependence, cooperation, community, sharing, joy, trust and peace. Unfortunately, says the cultural feminist, these ideas are not valued in contemporary western societies. Cultural criticism often draws upon such political theories. It tends to be much more politically oriented than new historicism.

## **Problems with Cultural Feminism**

According to Linda Alcoff, “Man has said that woman can be defined, delineated, captured, understood, explained, and diagnosed to a level of determination never accorded to man himself, who is conceived as a rational animal with free will”. Where men’s behavior is underdetermined, free to construct its own future along the course of its rational choice, the nature of women has over determined her behavior, the limits of her intellectual endeavors, and the inevitabilities of her emotional journey through life. (406)

Cultural feminists, today, believe that the traditional realm of women provides the bases for the articulation of a humane world view, one which can operate to change the destructive masculine ideologies that govern the public world. However, contemporary feminists do not believe that this transformation will happen automatically they do not believe that the differences between women and men are principally biological. (Donovan 2000)

Thus, cultural feminists argue that male supremacist culture is the problem of a process in which women are defined by men, that is, by a group who has a contrasting point of view and set of interest from women, not to mention a possible fear and hatred of women. The result of this has been a distortion and devaluation of feminine characteristics, which now can be corrected by a more accurate feminist description and appraisal. Thus, the cultural feminist reappraisal construes woman’s passivity as her peacefulness, her sentimentality as her proclivity to nurture, her subjectiveness as her advanced self-awareness. Cultural feminists have not challenged the defining of woman but only that definition given by men. Critics of cultural feminism, particularly those of the men's rights groups, assert that cultural feminism is misandric in nature, and also claim that there is no evidence to

support that a woman's way is any better than a man's. Because cultural feminism is based on an essentialist view of the differences between women and men and advocates independence and institution building, it has, say its critics, led feminists to retreat from politics to “life-style”. Alice Echols, the most prominent critic of cultural feminism, credits Redstockings member Brooke qilliams with introducing the term cultural feminism in 1975 to describe the depoliticisation of radical feminism.

### **Feminists on Gender**

Feminists go against the traditional notion of gender. According to them, sex is biological whereas gender is cultural construct which privileges men. Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive, they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive whose gender roles have been used very successfully to vindicate such inequality which still occur today. As Louis Tyson puts;

Gender roles exclude women from equal access to leadership and decision making positions (in the family, as well as in politics, academia, and the corporate world), paying men higher wages than woman for doing the same job (if women are even able to obtain the job), and convincing women that they are not fit for careers in such areas as mathematics and engineering. (85)

Many people today believe such inequalities are the things of the past because anti-discriminatory laws have been passed, such as the laws that guarantee women equal pay for equal work. However, these laws are frequently side-stepped. An employer, for instance, can pay a woman less for performing the same work as a man. (or more work than a man) simply by giving her a different job title. So,

women still are paid only about seventy cents for every dollar earned by men.

Feminism, therefore, distinguished between the word sex, which refers to our biological constitution as female or male, and the word gender, which refers to our cultural programming as feminine or masculine which are categories constructed by society rather than by nature. Louis Tyson believes men are superior to women maintain monopoly in different spheres as he puts:

The belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed, to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power, in other words keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political and social power. (84)

That is, inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically, produced. For example, it is a patriarchal assumption, rather than a fact that more women than men suffer from hysteria. To get beyond patriarchy feminists must look at their relationship to patriarchal ideology as dynamic situation; as Tyson states:

We must constantly struggle to understand and resist the various ways into which patriarchy dictates our lives; although, we cannot always see all the ways in which it does so. Individually and collectively, we will move forward in some areas even as we remain static and backslide in others, but we must continue to move forward—to understand and resist patriarchal ideology—wherever and whenever we can. (93)

According to Louis Tyson, feminist theorists and critics believe we should be especially cautious about using frameworks that are themselves patriarchal, such as psychoanalysis and Marxism because they embody various elements of patriarchal ideology. Freud's theories, for instance, believed that women suffer from what he called "penis envy". Despite Marx's insights into the ways in which economic forces determine the lives of both genders, he failed to realize the ways in which women have been oppressed by men no matter what their economic class. Yet, Marxism helps us to understand how economic forces have been manipulated by patriarchal law and custom to keep women economically, politically and socially oppressed as an underclass. Deconstruction is also a useful tool for feminists in helping them to see the ways in which patriarchal ideology is often based on the false categories of binary oppositions.

### **Nexus between Gender and Power**

Gender is, according to Webster's New World Dictionary, "in most Indo-European languages and in others... not necessarily correlated with sex." Because gender is not natural but cultural, it is in some sense a role and thus intimately connected with, our culture's privileged site for problematizing the relation of the real and the role, the authentic and textualized, the natural and the mediated.

Similarly, the poststructuralist cultural historian, Michael Foucault, believes that the nexus between 'power' and 'gender' is discursive. It clearly has much in common with Louis Althusser's 'ideology' and Gramsci's 'hegemony'. Such a discourse, then, produces claims to knowledge and it is these claims – which we accept—that give it its power. There is then an intimate relationship between knowledge and power. Knowledge, for Foucault, is the product of certain discourse, which has enabled it to formulate, and has no validity outside it. The 'truths' of



human sciences are the effects of discourses, of language. Ultimately in Foucault's scenario knowledge is produced by power. (Bertens 155) Discourse goes on to determine the way we talk and think about the field question (sexuality, mental illness, and so on). The idea of discourses as vehicles for power have been immensely productive in literary studies. Foucault locates power firmly in language and language is the business of literary studies. He, however, places language in the centre of social power- rather than textual power- and of social practices.

Gender, according to Foucault, is the construct of the same social institutions where male are associated with powerful, rational, and female as vulnerable, irrational and means of consumption. For example, certain dichotomies are imposed as definitive of human existence and are operated in ways which have direct effects on society's organization. "Discourses are produced in which concepts of madness, criminality, sexual abnormality and so on are defined in relation to concepts of sanity, justice and sexual normality. Those discursive practices have no universal validity but are historical dominant ways of controlling and preserving social relations of exploitation" (Seldon and Widdowson 164).

From a Foucaultian perspective, power is neither universal nor reified biologically but exists discursively within historical dimensions that are not fixed. Power relationships between males and females are biologically determined, there exists no such discursive space in which power can be engaged to sustain or subvert an existing relationship. Power is static and therefore cannot function as subject or object of political change. (Heuvel 804-813)

For most traditional historians, history is a series of events that have a linear, casual relationship: event A causes event B, event B causes event C, and so on. (Tyson 278) But for new historicists, history cannot be understood simply as a linear

progression of events. According to new-historicists, power doesn't emanate only from the top of the political and socioeconomic structure. According to French philosopher Michael Foucault, whose ideas have strongly influenced the development of new historicism, power circulates in all directions, to and fro from all social levels, at all times and it's not static.

Power is the basis of Foucault's analysis of society. That power is created through discourse, a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place it expresses a particular way of understanding human experience.

Discourses wield power but it is always in a state of flux. So, new historicists believe that relationship between individual identity and society is mutually constitutive. (Tyson 281) "Rights," "natural" and "normal" are matters of definition. Thus, in different cultures at different points in history, homosexuality has been deemed abhorrent, normal, criminal, or admirable. The same can be said of incest, cannibalism and women's desire for political equality. In fact, Michel Foucault has suggested that all definitions of "insanity," "crime," and sexual "perversion" are social constructs by means of which ruling powers maintain their control. We accept these definitions "natural" only because they are so ingrained in our culture.

New historicism, which emerged in the late 1970s, rejects both traditional historicism's marginalization of literature and New Criticism's enshrinement of the literary text in timeless dimension beyond history. The term 'new historicism' was coined by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt whose book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from Moore to Shakespeare* (1980) is usually regarded as its beginning. It's a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period. Another American critic Louis Montrose defines it as a combined interest in 'the textuality of history, the historicity of texts' (Barry 172).

### III. Women as Commodities: Patriarchy and Gender

#### Brief Summary: A Cultural Feminist Point of View

Harold Pinter's play *The Homecoming* opens with a father talking with a son; but the locus of authority has mysteriously shifted from father to the son who callously remarks: "Plug it, will you stupid sod, I am trying to read the paper" (2). When Max tries to reassert his parental power, Lenny only casually retorts: "You know what, you're getting demented." Not only is the role of the father out of joint in the Pinter world; the whole family situation reeks of perversity. An elder son, Teddy, who has become a philosophy professor in America, brings his mysteriously cool yet sensual wife back to his family home for a visit. Ruth, the wife, sexually arouses Teddy's father and his two younger brothers, Lenny, a pimp, and Joey, an erstwhile boxer. After making love with brothers in front of Teddy, Ruth decides to stay on in England to care for the family's sexual needs (in the meantime agreeing also to join Lenny's string of prostitutes in order to pay her own way). To all of this, Teddy quietly acquiesces. (Warner 341-353)

So baldly stated, the action of the play does indeed seem animalistic, a further illustration of a modern decadence made all the more shocking by the casual attitude the central protagonists retain throughout. Pinter may, however, be seeking another, and redemptive, kind of "shock." Indeed, he uses an extreme metaphor (for such we may construe the whole family situation he describes) in an effort to force his audience into recognition of a spiritual poverty more terrible than any affront to its conventional morality. Moreover, Pinter's spectators have nearly lost the capacity to be critical of this spiritual desiccation because it arises from something so innate to their way of thinking, their way of creating values. For this reason Pinter must resort to metaphors replete with violent inversions of conventionalist, rationalistic

culture; for *The Homecoming* is a drama which describes man's plight in the godless world of science and reason.

Pinter's *The Homecoming* draws a subject matter directly from life in its ambiguity, dysfunction, farce and menace. The crudity and bullying endemic to the all male "large house in London" ménage which is the setting for Pinter's *The Homecoming* is neither artificial nor hyperbolic.

A vague menace technique has been used in *The Homecoming*. The play, in fact, is set in a parlor, and themes are of favorites of Ibsen- Strindberg realism, generation, heredity, family, and home. It is divided into two Acts and Ruth, the only female character is the protagonist. Male members, Max, Sam, Teddy, Lenny, Joey, dominate the family and one way or the other they exploit Ruth.

Out of public view, ordinary people say and do disagreeable and even appalling things all the time, not least in their unvarnished racism and sexism, and in the unkindness and hostility which becomes a reflex among small groups yoked together in intimate unhappiness. Pinter portrays these truths with an unblinking eye; but art is not mere replication, and Pinter is an artist. The difference is made by the extraordinary human twist at the end, after a skillfully managed intensification of moral horrors which seem to be leading in quite another direction.

The story is deceptively simple. A retired butcher of choleric mien lives with his brother and two of his three sons in a large north London house. As events unfold in characteristic Pinteresque fashion it becomes plain that this ill-assorted male-only family suffers a deeply odd dysfunctionality – but an entirely believable one. The butcher is Max, a widower, whose venomous hatred for his deceased wife is matched by the tender regard for her nourished by his mild-mannered brother, Sam, a chauffeur. Then, late one night as the family sleeps, Max's oldest son Teddy

turns up, accompanied by his attractive wife (she used to be model of an ambiguous sort) whose existence is not yet known to the rest of the family. The couple is enroute from Venice, where they have been holidaying, to America, where their three sons await them. Teddy has been successful in America, earning a Ph.D. and becoming a college professor of philosophy. His wife Ruth is also English, but they met in America – which, as it transpires, she dislikes, although Teddy loves it – its cleanliness, and the swimming pool at home.

Interpretations of *The Homecoming* abound. The most common is to see it as the tale of a struggle for power, unexpectedly won by the stranger and incomer Ruth. A better view is that it is a tale of an uneasy and bitter balance of power kept by the various strategies of the harmed, lamed, wretched domestic arrangement of the four men in the house – Max by bullying, Lenny by stealth, Max's brother by passive aggression, and Joey, the youngest son, who is keen on boxing, by unintelligent absorption in his sport so that he is exempt from confronting the others directly. Teddy, the philosopher, has long since escaped; but he is brought back by misplaced nostalgia.

Into this counter-Eden he brings a counter-Eve, an Eve turned serpent; a wise and knowing serpent, infinitely more powerful than the denizens of the garden. Ruth too is odd – there are hints of something broken in her past: her mind, or morals – but the defective, fractured nature of the household stirs something in her, and step by step she enters its entrails. At first, it seems as if she is a disturbed nymphomaniac, giving herself without scruple or thought to her husband's younger brothers, indifferent to what her husband or anyone thinks – but Teddy seems anyway not to mind, as if he knows that she is not to be judged by ordinary standards.

Max and his two younger sons decide to keep Ruth. Lenny, it transpires, is a pimp, and he suggests that she pay her way by prostituting herself in the West End. They all gleefully agree. When they explain the plan to Ruth she not only concurs but drives a hard bargain about the flat they will provide for the work, and other amenities. And then suddenly it seems that she has mastered them but she is not really aware of the fact that she is going to be exploited. Their need for a woman, for the feminine principle to be central in their lives, for her presence and what it yields, has captured them utterly. After the sleaze and unpleasantness of the conversation in which the men plan to put Ruth on the game by night while she cleans and cooks and services their own sexual needs by day, the revelation of female power and the abjection of male need for it could not be more complete.

The basic problem in Pinter's *Homecoming* is coming to grips with reality: We see Pinter's characters in the process of their essential adjustment to the world, at the point when they will be able to confront, and come to terms with, reality at all. The only characters who do not have a "homecoming" are Lenny, the pimp, and Joey, the demolition worker; only a pimp and a demolition worker are at home in this savage world. For the rest, illusions break down, and they "come home" to the true realizations of what they are. Max "comes home" to the truth about Jessie cuckolding him. Teddy "comes home" to his wife being a prostitute and his marriage, a shambles. Ruth "comes home" to the realization that the life she lived as a respectable woman in America was an illusion. Sam "comes home" to revealing Jessie's infidelity to Max. Sam is the only character to speak the truth about what he is thinking. The effort is so prodigious in an environment where everybody speaks circuitously that it takes the whole course of play and nearly kills him at the end.

### **Status and Relationship between Male and Female**

The matriarchal structure of the family in *The Homecoming* had broken down with the death of Jessie, wife of Max, mother of Lenny, Teddy, and Joey, and the tarnished object of ideal womanhood in the eyes of Max's brother Sam. Jessie, we learn, was "the backbone of this family" (46). The physical and emotional sustenance and the moral nucleus for the five men. When Ruth is brought back by Teddy to his boyhood home as a replacement, Max is at first virulent with her, calling her a "dirty tart" and "a stinking pox-ridden slut" (41), perhaps because Jessie herself had been a whore. Ruth allows Lenny to dance seductively with her and kiss her, and actually ends up on the floor with Joey on top of her; but then she turns the tables, ordering Lenny to turn off the music and provide her with food and drink, and teasing Joey and leading him on, yet never permitting him to "go the whole hog" (66). Despite clear evidence that Ruth will have everything her own way and no other, Max suggests that "Maybe we should keep her" (69). Teddy, having placed the decision to remain squarely on Ruth, withdraws to what she regards as a sterile wasteland of "rocks and sand and insects" (53), leaving Ruth with her "kith and kin" where she belongs. But Ruth can "rescue" this English male domain laid waste because of the absence of the fructifying Earth Mother, Pinter seems to suggest that much less chance exists of revivifying the new American wasteland, because it's over intellectuality is devoid, at present, of any recognition of the need for responding on an instinctive, and even primitive, basis to archetypal rites. Teddy leaves, happy that Ruth pleases his family; and for her part Ruth will now be able "to fill deep emotional voids" that "marriage and the family have failed to satisfy" (Printice 458-478).

Figures of authority in the drama “*The Homecoming*” are all males and the victim is one and only female character, Ruth. Male characters judge her in terms of her profession. For them thinking, attitude, feelings, relations, and behaviours are not important rather extrovert activities and appearance of women. Max, the ageing but still aggressive patriarch, considers his own daughter-in-law, a tart when he sees her in his home:

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’ve 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. (41)

Max internalizes the so-called universal concept of masters/servants and considers Ruth, a whore even though she is introduced as with him as his daughter-in-law by his son, Teddy. He says:

I’ve never had a whore under this roof before. Even since your  
mother died. My word of honor. (to Joey) Have you ever had a whore  
here? Has Lenny had a whore here? They come back from  
America, they bring slopbucket with them. They bring the bedpan



with the. (to Teddy). Take that disease away from me. Get her away from me. (42)

Such an attitude towards female character is the deeply rooted patriarchal attitude about the relationship between male and female are roles and boundaries of female determined by patriarchal norms, values, and desires. Males treat women in terms of their job and outlook because they think that they are commodity of their hands. Women are commodity for males because males define themselves socially and culturally superior. They are the dealer of economic and other possible means in the family and in the society. So, they can be sold and bought for their livelihood. Then, male characters of the play treat women as mother-whore, slut, and harlot and collectively consume Ruth in front of her own husband, Teddy.

On the contrary, Ruth, the only female character of the play, *The Homecoming*, is wretched without self-respect. Staying with her husband, she had to serve her husband and look after their children in America. After getting back to London she is treated as an object to quench the sexual thirst of violent family members. Especially, Lenny, a small-time pimp and Joy, a boxer and her father-in-law openly, which can be inferred from: "He leans her back until she lies beneath him. He kisses her. He looks up at Teddy and Max. Its better Then a rubdown, Lenny sits on the arms of the sofa. He curses Ruth's hair as Joey embraces her" (59).

This is the perfect patriarchal power domination which has snatched the freedom of the meek woman. Ruth, the victim of the violent family members is the representation of the entire woman race based on socially constructed gender.

Although, Teddy is a professor of philosophy and spouse of Ruth, becomes dumb and cannot refute because he is also the member of the same family and the product of the traditional patriarchy which bolster the gender roles.

In another scene, with Lenny, Ruth's passiveness has been shown, which is considered as one of the characteristics of a woman assigned by male hegemony. Lenny does most of the talking, and his words threaten her with sexual advances and violence. As in the dialogue with Teddy, she answers in two or three words or phrase as he chatters about his tic, his assault on the prostitute, his encounter with the old lady and her iron mangle. His anecdotes imply threats directed against Ruth. Her stillness and silence reinforce our earlier impression of her withdrawal.

Likewise, during Max's reviling Ruth as a "stinking pox-ridden slut" she stands quietly. After Max's outbursts of violence against Joey and Sam, she joins him in a cliché domestic conversation:

MAX. You a mother?

RUTH. Yes.

MAX. How many you got?

RUTH. Three. (43)

Her control of her emotions in these everyday lines suggest that her reaction to Max's vituperations is one of superior acceptance rather than growing rejection. Here Ruth is treated as submissive towards the males.

Pinter further complicates our impression of Ruth. In the act I, he stirs our sympathy for the woman in two encounters. At first he uses his characteristic device of the trivial symbol which communicates powerful emotion.

The symbol works in contrast to Teddy's fumbling hesitation in describing Ruth's happiness at the university: "It's great life; at the University... you know... it's a very good life. We have got a lovely house... we have got all ... we've got everything we want. It's a very stimulating environment" (50). This speech prepares us to sympathize with Ruth's conflicting evaluation of her life:

RUTH ... I was born quite near here.

Pause.

Then ... six years ago, I went to America.

It's all rock. And sand. It stretches ... so far ... everywhere you look. And there are lots of insects there. And there are lots of insects there. (53)

We can deduce Ruth to be an unhappy woman whose alternation stillness and aggression come from her imperfect adjustment to her circumstances. We can consider her as the sympathetic heroine and the chief victim of the play. Having achieved our sympathy for Ruth, however, Pinter destroys it by showing her in a sequence of increasingly more shocking and repulsive actions. We may at first try to reconcile them with our sympathy: "her dance and kiss with Lenny may be the natural actions of a frustrated woman whose husband is weak. But her treatment of Joey is shown less excusable. Not only does she turn promiscuously to the third brother, but she turns out to be "a tease." The final destruction of our sympathy comes with the cold-blooded way in which she accepts their proposition that she becomes the family prostitute. Frustration and unhappiness are no longer adequate explanations for her conduct.

Pinter; however, doesn't let even our judgement of Ruth's corrupt nature pass unmixed. When Max first begins to explain the arrangements to her, Ruth reacts ambiguously. As teddy tells her the family would like her to stay, she replies:

MAX. It's an offer from our hearts.

RUTH. It's very sweet of you. .

MAX. Listen ... it would be our pleasure.

Pause. (75)

The above dialogues vindicate that a woman is easily deceived by males. A mother of feeling is reduced into a family prostitute. Max's words are obviously ironic: we can examine them in the light of the plans he has made with Lenny and Joey before she enters. But what of Ruth? Pinter gives us nothing on which to base a judgement. For a moment we sense that Ruth may be being innocently drawn into a corrupt scheme.

On the contrary, the male member, husband of Ruth is given a prestigious job of philosophy professor. He can affirm that he is superior. He attempts to assert his own superiority, as he says:

I am the one who can see. That's why I can write my critical works. Might do you good ... have a look at them ... see how certain people can view ... things ... how certain people can maintain ... intellectual equilibrium. Intellectual equilibrium. You're just objects. You just ... move about. I can observe it. I can see what you do. It's the same as I do. But you've lost in it. You won't get me being ... lost in it. (62)

This shows the male prerogative which always creates hierarchy between male and female and draws its position considering women as inferior, meek, submissive and irrational.

Although, nothing in the play suffices to account for why Ruth acts as she does. Pinter sets her actions in several contexts which enrich our understanding of what she does. She is paralleled to Max's dead wife Jessie: she is the only woman in the house since Jessie dies; like Jessie she is an unfaithful wife; like Jessie, she has probably borne illegitimate sons (Max asks Teddy if his sons are all his; Lenny taunts Max with questions about the night he was made, ironically suggesting that Max didn't make him; like Jessie, she will dominate the household. Pinter never

explains her acceptance of their proposition and her using it coldly.

Moreover, Ruth is the only character whose actions are so violently contradictory. Max is consistently abusive; Lenny's cynical corruption is evident from the first dialogue with his father and his particularly apparent to us in the comic contrast of formal style and brutal violence in his tales about the prostitute and the iron mangle.

The characters in *The Homecoming* treat each other so violently. As Pinter himself has said that the violence is really only an expression of the question of dominance and subservience. The male characters cannot live in egalitarian rather repeat authoritarian power struggle. They bully over Ruth. Ruth is given no options other than wife or whore, mother or earth mother. It is because of the family which has oppressive patriarchal structure. Max, for example, repeats with Ruth the oscillation of his relationship with Jessie, alternating between as image of woman as wife- mother and an image of woman as whore. The cultural feminists cannot tolerate such degradation of a loving mother into a degraded whore believing that it's not because of biological difference but due to gender, a social construct constructed by male dominated society. Max desires Ruth for his identity of young man.

Ruth is not the only victim of this family. Jessie, spouse of Max and mother of Teddy, Lenny and Joe was also deserted similar to Ruth years before. As Max says; "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"(60).

Ruth is treated as a consumable good in the market. It is clearly seen through the dialogue between Joey and Lenny when she goes upstairs with Joey;

JOEY. I didn't get all the way.

LENNY. You didn't get all the way? Pause. With emphasis. You didn't get all the way? But you had her up there for two hours.

JOEY. Well?

LENNY. You didn't get all the way and you've had her up there for two hours!

Joey. What about it? (66)

This explicitly delineates that a male member is always considered as good even if he is impotent and eunuch like Joey. He is still superior and prestigious though Ruth speaks out an extraordinary statement in his inability:

Don't be too sure though. You've forgotten something. Look at me. I ... move my leg. That's all it is. But I wear underwear ... which moves with me ... it ... captures your attention. Perhaps you misinterpret. The action is simple. It's a leg ... moving. My lips move. Why don't you restrict ... your observation to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant ... than the words which come through them. You must bear that ... possibility ... in mind. (52)

Despite, Teddy being the husband of Ruth, cannot repudiate anything which is befallen on Ruth rather placidly accepts Ruth's descent to whoredom, which it even comes as relief:

Ruth ... may very well have been a prostitute, or very nearly one, before Teddy met and married her. If she was unable to adjust herself to a life of respectability in America ... she must have caused poor Teddy a lot of embarrassment on the campus ... Hence, Teddy may be genuinely relieved to find himself rid of his wife. If Jessie ... also was a prostitute, or a near prostitute ... then Teddy as much as the rest of

the family may will be used to a cool and businesslike discussion of such transactions. Hence his lack of surprise and cool acceptance of the new situation would be quite natural. (Esslin 251)

These lines openly examine that such conflicts and female domination, there are conscious manipulations of physical space, speech, and memory which are deployed tactically by male characters to gain dominance over female. The male characters have internalized “deep rooted” cultural reasons for their actions. It is a biological force that constitutes a source of conflict for females. Gender is a social construct or an “ideology.”

At the end of the Act II of the play, Ruth, the solitary female character vividly contrasts with other. The titular homecoming of Pinter’s play may apply to Ruth as well as to Teddy. Ruth, who “was born here” (69), reveals by her actions that she is, accustomed to the ways the men of her paternal family interaction with her and with each other. Apparently she is aware that Teddy is devious, because he doesn’t make any effort to protest when his father and brothers make open advances to his wife. She seems to tolerate, if not encourage them. In fact, it is the husband in the end who makes the family’s proposal to the wife that she stay on as mother, mistress to everybody, and as a prostitute. It’s the greatest gulf between manner and matter, a small masterpiece of collective one-upmanship:

TEDDY. Ruth ... the family has invited you to stay, for a little while longer. 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. (75)

She senses her husband deceiving for his description of his family as warm, non-ogres, she seems alert to the linguistic stratagems he employs when he takes her into his father's house. Her initial encounter with Lenny, which is a struggle for domination between them, demonstrates her proficiencies. Despite this fact, she is condemned to be victim. Not only is he unable to ruffle her by disrespectful, derisive and vicious mockery, it is she who insults, bullies, and demeans him to the point of losing control of himself.

Ruth smells some doubts of trouble in their offer; "I think I would be too much troubled" (75). Nevertheless, Max presents himself in a shrewd manner and shows ironic loyalty and even admires her:

MAX. Trouble? What are you talking about? What trouble? Listen, I'll tell you something. Since poor Jessie died, eh, Sam? We haven't had a woman in the house. Not one. Inside this house. And I'll tell you why. Because their mother's image was so dear and other woman would have ...tarnished it. But you ... Ruth ... you're not only lovely and beautiful but you're kin. You're kith. You belong here.

RUTH. I'm very toughed.

MAX. Of course you're touched. I'm touched. (75)

This is another version of deceitfulness to a woman. It shows the shrewdness of a man and meekness of a woman. Here, Max is not offering her to stay there, as there is not presence of a woman, a symbol of completeness rather a source of financial supporter. This intention is lucidly observed in the dialogue of Teddy:

TEDDY. But Ruth, I should tell you ... that you'll have to pull your weight a little, if you stay. Financially. My father isn't very well



off.

RUTH. (to MAX). Oh, I'm sorry.

MAX. No, you'd just have to bring in a little, that's all. A few pennies. Nothing much. It's just that we're waiting for Joey to hit the top as a boxer. When Joey hits the top ...well ... (76)

Indeed, the sole aim of that noisome family is to use Ruth as much as they can for their own advantage making her a prostitute by night and fulfilling their own sexual desire and as a servant by the day. Despite having their own, home they offer her a flat; "We'd get you a flat" (76). The following dialogues one way or the other imply that intention:

RUTH. Where?

LENNY. In town.

Pause.

But you'd live here, with us.

MAX. Of course you would. This would be your home. In the bosom of the family.

LENNY. You'd just pop up to the flat a couple of hours a night, that's all.

MAX. Just a couple of hours, that's all. That's all.

LENNY. And you make enough money to keep you going here. (76)

Ruth determines the conditions of her stay in the proviso scene: Lenny will be her pimp, furnishing her with an elaborate flat in Soho: Joey will be the perpetual oedipally fixated child, head on her lap; Max will be both the dying father and the lover past his prime, denied the kiss that he pathetically begs of Ruth:

LENNY. Do you think she understands...He begins to stammer.

What ... what ... what ... we're getting at? What ... we've got in mind? Do you think she's got it clear?

Pause.

He falls to his knees, whimpers, begins to moan and sob. He stops sobbing, crawls past.

SAM'S body round her chair, to the other side of her. I'm not an old man. He looks up at her. Do you hear me? He raises his face to her. Kiss me. She continues to touch JOEY'S head, lightly.

LENNY. stands, watching. (82)

It delineates a brutal scenario of a woman of the same household having kin and kith relationship. A naked truth is revealed demeaning Ruth to a prostitute, familial harlot and a servant by so-called own kin and kith.

Prostitution, in fact, is a form of brutal cruelty on the part of men that constitutes a violation of women's human rights, wherever and however it takes place. It makes all women vulnerable, exposed to danger, open to attack- that pornography is a collective, social-class representation of women's vulnerability, and that women who migrate to work in prostitution may not be trafficked in the traditional sense but are "vulnerable to the only means of economic existence available to them because they are women, and because they are women they are homeless, and poor. In *The Homecoming* a woman, Ruth, is subordinated through specific practices that tends either implicitly or explicitly to reaffirm the assumption that universal claims about women and men (subjects and masters). The author, in *The Homecoming*, presents trafficking and prostitution as phenomena that both epitomize and replicate the master/subject model of power, creating and reflecting Ruth's identity as subordinate.

Max calling her a tart, slut, scrubber, whore, slopbucket, bedpan, and disease, and when family proposes that she remains as a prostitute for Lenny and services them as well; she calmly negotiates. At the end of the play she sits as if enthroned. Max is on his knees before her; Joey's head is in her lap; Lenny stands mute, watching perhaps in obedience; and Teddy, who may be an encumbrance, is gone.

Ruth remains calm and retains her controls when her brothers-in-law make sexual advances towards her. They all verbally and physically revile her. She accepts (!) and Teddy goes back to their children.

### **Epistemological Quest in *The Homecoming***

*The Homecoming* provides dramatic exploration of the epistemological possibilities open to man in his efforts to overcome his crippling alienation from his own self. Some apparently rambling conversations about horse racing between Max and Lenny in the opening scene adumbrate the play's epistemological theme. Lenny asks his father what he thinks are the chances for a horse called Second Wind at Sandowne Park. His inquiry leads to Max's fulminations:

He talks to me about horses. You only read their names in the papers. But I've stroked their manes. I've held them; I've calmed them down before a big race. I was the one they used to call for. Max, they'd say, there's a horse here, he's highly strung, and you're the only man on the course who can calm. It was true. I had a ... I had an instinctive understanding of animals. (10)

As a prototype of modern man, Lenny experiences the horses only as names in the papers. Hence, his knowledge remains abstract, in some ways unreal. ("... the fillies are more highly strung than the colts, they are more unreliable, did you know

that? No, what do you know? Nothing,” Max remarks in the same scene.) Max has an “instinctive understanding” of the horses that goes beyond the rational knowledge according to the racing forms to a full experience that does not reduce the horse to some form of abstraction: “The times I’ve watched those animals thundering past the post. What an experience. Mind you, I didn’t lose, I made a few bob out of it, and you know why? Because I always had the smell of a good horse. I could smell him” (10). Max “knows” the horses more fully than Lenny because he has experienced them existentially. It was, he remarks, “a gift. I had a gift” (10). Modern man, caught in the fabrications of his abstracting intellect, has lost that gift. (Warner 340-353)

Ironically, however, it is Lenny who hopes for the victory of Second Wind. Speaking from his fuller knowledge, Max gives the horse no chance. The symbolic implications of the horse’s name are, on the level, immediately clear. It implies some kind of renewal, a second chance for a dispirited world. Indeed, the word “wind” was once, as its etymology reveals, synonymous with the word “spirit.” Hence, Lenny’s desire for Second Wind’s victory might be construed, on a subtler level, as reflecting his unconscious desire to achieve Max’s “instinctive understanding” and thus rid himself the spiritual desire, later in the act, for a “breath of air” (23). Teddy, the abstracting philosopher, responds: “The last thing I want is a breath of air. Why do you want a breath of air?” (24).

The products of a tradition which uses language in such a way as to split up single meanings into a number of separate and often isolated concepts, Lenny and Ruth may be unconsciously revealing their desire to return to a more unified perception of reality.

Indeed, Lenny and Ruth, like the other characters in the play, are obsessed with the question of knowing, of how reality is perceived. When Ruth returns from her “breath of air,” she meets Lenny. In the course of their conversation, he describes a meeting with a certain lady who was “falling apart with the pox.” He then discusses in detail his impulse to kill the woman and the reasons he “only gave her another belt in the nose and a couple of turns of the boot and sort of left it at that” (31). Ruth’s only reaction to this gory detail is to ask calmly:

“How did you know she was diseased?”

Pause

I decided she was.

Silence (31)

Lenny’s answer could simply express his brutishness, but the symbolic configuration of the play suggests more is involved. For Lenny there is an essentially subjective basis to cognition. The lady’s disease is not something simply to be scientifically or objectively verified; rather it is a reality imparted by his mind. What attracts Ruth is not his callous brutality but this capacity for subjective awareness in contrast to her husband’s apparently sterile objectivity. Other examples of this concern with “knowing” abound in the text. Angry with his brother Sam, Max berates him:

Listen, Sam. I want to say something to you. From my heart. I want you to get rid of these feelings of resentment you’ve got toward me. I wish I could understand them. Honestly, have I ever given you cause? Never. When Dad died he said to me, Max, look after your brother. That’s exactly what he said to me. Sam’s answer is simply: How could he say that when he was dead?”

MAX. What?

SAM. How could he speak if he was dead?

Pause (39)

If one is to seek the wholeness, one must run the risk of “living in the present.” The risk for modern man, cut off from the sanctuaries of the past, is the danger of becoming existential “stranger” (and it is this that Ruth, in her last words to her husband, cautions him against: “Don’t become a stranger” (80). But if the risk is great, at least there is the chance of authentic selfhood. (Barry 26)

### **Isolated Woman Self in *The Homecoming***

Pinter’s women characters do not have the self respect and male characters cannot accept the equal existence of women. Women are not judged in terms of their pros rather on the basis of their job they have adopted and their looks. Patriarchal social structure essays to confine women in the narrow boundary which takes women as objects and goods for their use. They equate women as the costumers take objects produced by capitalists. *The Homecoming* also presents similar male characters that do not care about the contribution of women. They forget the fact that a woman is also the source of themselves. They forget the ecstatic happiness they require for their lives and women are always repressed. It is because they control and create the social norms and values of the society which is absolutely lopsided but not natural.

Women are isolated from their own selves and lack the self respect. They are placed with the exchange value of the commodity. On the other hand they are compelled to be stud which is a kind of harlot in itself on the other hand they patriarchal behaviors cause them to be socially outlasted, individually deserted and made a character to be risible for their own benefits.

Ruth is living so miserable life in *The Homecoming* sacrificing her wish and desire oppressed by her own brothers-in-law and father-in-law. She is jealous of the freedom holding by the males but she is sandwiched due to patriarchal social construct and structure. She is annihilating her freedom and desire and living for the sake of others. Hence, her self is not a real self; rather she is alienated from her own real self.

Women try to maintain their position by refuting through speech but cannot bring it into action which is overlooked by male members. Women's value, it suggests, can be maintained only in their jobs and appearance not in thought. That is why Ruth was a model for body before she got married with Teddy. As Ruth says herself; "No ... I was a model for the body. "A photographic model for the body" (57). She is considered as an object to sell and buy as she was a photographic model for body.

Besides, the male members of the family want to sell her body to sustain their lives, they themselves want to consume her. An ironic fact is that, Max later calls her "a mother of quality", "a mother of feeling." Hence she is betrayed verbally as well as physically.

Ruth at the outset of the story desired to go back to America to look after her children:

RUTH. Do you want to stay?

TEDDY. Stay?

Pause

We've come to stay. We've bound to stay ... for a few days.

RUTH. I think ... the children ... might be missing us. (22)

However, her desires do not have any value here in front of what patriarchal society thinks and wants really matters. So, women's real self is denied and artificial one is accepted.

The woman whose husband and own family members desert her verbally as well as physically cannot live as a human being in the society. She is treated nothing more than a conscious living object. She is double isolated from herself and the society. Ruth has fluctuating-self, the elements of her identity that combine and change in the presence of the other member of the family. In *The Homecoming* Ruth is less than inarticulate—she is mute.



## Conclusion

An avid study unveils the causes behind the oppression of female character, Ruth, in “*The Homecoming*.” To draw out the causes of this desertion this study is centered on the study of the characters and their behaviours towards each other. The family is full of noisome and violent male members who are devious towards the one and only female character and heroine, Ruth. The chief issue of the play itself is also the relationship and attitude among the characters.

The research examines the different events and conversations among the characters that vindicate the males’ attitude and perspective towards female which is not better than attitude and behaviour to the object. The woman character, Ruth is treated as subservient worker and object for the convenience of male dominated patriarchal society. Ruth is well aware of this fact but cannot retaliate rather she sacrifices her and descends herself from a loving mother to a degraded familial whore. She does not go against extant norms because of trepidation of social bond.

Pinter’s most of the plays present the story of violent families. Among recurring themes are the quest for security and shelter, self-identification, social satire, and verification of truth. The philosophical implications and the social satires are presented in suspenseful yet often comic plot. In *Tea Party* (1965), a family play like *The Homecoming*, social and sexual insecurities topple a wealthy industrialist who marries an aristocrat but is involved with his sensuous secretary; feeling guilty he becomes blind and collapses during a family tea party when he perceives his wife’s brother seducing both women in his very presence. *The Basement* (1967), presents grim ménage a trios that culminates in the girl’s two lovers’ duelling over her with broken milk bottles.

Pinter has presented Ruth largely in a negative way. Males exercise power and strength primarily to control and emasculate the women. Men subordinate women just to satisfy their own desires. They just realize their wife's gain as wholly their own loss. They can never think their wife's gain is also their own since losing self means fulfilling the woman and finding self. The matriarchal structure of the family in *The Homecoming* had broken down with the death of Jessie, wife of Max, mother of Lenny, Teddy and Joey.

Ruth is the chief victim of patriarchal social structure in the play *The Homecoming*. She has no identity except harlot or whore. She strives for security and identity. In the family, there is no kin and kith like relations but of dominance and dominated; oppression and oppressed. Males are super-ordinates and females are subordinates. It is no more than master/subject relations.

This dyadic master/subject model is pervasive in the play that helps us understand male power as domination and in the process fixes the meaning of sex and gender, masculinity and femininity. So, this research finds that Ruth's oppression is not natural rather is caused by males' discourses, practices, and social relations wherein the category 'woman' is constructed in a way that implies subordination.

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