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## The Representation of Gender Roles in Pinter's Plays Birthday Party and Old Times

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## **Table of contents:**

Acknowledgements.....I

Abstract.....II

General Introduction.....01

### **Chapter One: Harold Pinter and Gender**

I.1 Introduction.....03

I.2 Pinter the dramatist.....03

I.3 Pinter's language and style.....03

I.4 Summary of plays.....04

    I.4.1 Birthday Party.....04

    I.4.2 Old Times.....05

I.5 Sexuality..... 06

### **Chapter Two: Birthday Party play**

II.1 Introduction.....07

II.2 Characterization of male and female characters.....07

II.3 Psychoanalytic study of the play.....09

II.4 Masculine Anxiety.....10

II.5 Neurotic character .....12

II.6 Women under patriarchal society.....14

II.7The application of theory.....17

II. Conclusion.....18

### **Chapter Three: Old Times play**

III.1 Introduction.....19

III.2 Psychoanalytic study of the play.....	19
III.3 Sexuality as a means of power and control.....	19
III.4 Deconstructing gender role.....	23
III.5 Androgyny in the play .....	24
III.6 The application of theory.....	24
III.6 Conclusion.....	24
General Conclusion.....	25
Selected bibliography	

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation tends to demonstrate two different plays of the British playwright Harold Pinter, *Birthday Party* (1958) and *Old Times* (1970) from the gender perspective which is apparent throughout the characters performance and the depiction of male and female behaviors from social and psychological view. The work is based on Judith butler's theory of 'Gender Performativity', throughout Pinter's representation of his characters. The first chapter introduces an overview about Pinter's life and work; also it represents some definitions about gender concepts concerning the selected work. Literary critics have examined the characters' performance and their issues; after the war, and the impact of the social and political transformations in the British society through the second chapter *Birthday Party*, the examination of gender changes appears on both masculine and feminine figure that they expressed their fear and anxiety from the outside and the conflict between them, also it exposes women's life under a patriarchal society who lived under oppression and male's subjugation. For the third chapter *Old Times* shows the psychological struggle and the sex war between characters by recovering their memories, the examination of male figure fighting for their own power and authority through sexuality. However, the representation of women's emergence after the war, and their capabilities to become dominant and powerful.

## General Introduction

Since the Second World War, gender identity and relations have been the central theme of preoccupation in theatre. Considerable studies have been done to examine gender trouble as an interdisciplinary concept. The role is to highlight the gender role of men and women in British society and their struggle to overcome their anxiety and fear, due to the social and political transformations which happened after the war. The aim of this dissertation is the representation of gender roles in post-war Britain throughout the dramatic works of Harold Pinter plays *Birthday party* (1958) and *Old Times* (1970).

Indeed, theatre is essentially a public space, which is generally subject to masculine dominance. This is depicted in Pinter's plays, which did not only deal with political issues and the problem of identity, but also they dealt with some other issues related to gender trouble. Theatre provides an important critique of the way in which British society engaged with issues of gender and sexuality.

As a subject of post modern theatre, the study of gender role in society requires to analyze the masculine and feminine behaviors' as well as their thought. Throughout the selected plays, we will explore the differences between sexes, and masculine issues in British society. Therefore, the description of women status between the periods of 1957 to 1970 shifted from subjugation to dominance.

Based on previous research which indicates the fear of male characters and their anxiety from the external world, it was hypothesized that the concept of masculinity degrades its position in patriarchal society in terms of fear and anxiety. Also, to which extent the theory of Freud is reflected throughout Pinter's characters. How the status of virility is threatened due to the rise of feminism during 1970.

My work is based on Judith Butler's theory of "Gender performativity"; it will be examined characters' behaviors and performance, throughout the representation of their acts and their reaction toward society.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters, the first chapter introduces an overview of Pinter's life and work; and some basic definitions about gender concepts related to the selected work. The second chapter deals with the psychological analysis of characters and the representation of gender role in the play, by analyzing the masculine issues and women oppression. The third chapter represents the gender role through character's performance, how male character faces his fear and anxiety through sexuality, and the transition of women status from homosexuality to heterosexuality and struggling to become powerful.

### 1.1 Introduction:

This chapter presents the British playwright Harold Pinter's life and work, he is regarded as prominent modern writer and he is well-known for his specific style of writing for his plays. Moreover, Pinter's characters are mainly described their action through performance, but language is more affective, their silence, pause... In addition, to some definitions concepts of gender.

### 1.2 Pinter the dramatist:

One of the most influential European writers of the twentieth century awarded Nobel Prize in Literature in 2005. Harold Pinter belongs to the post war decades when the British society was submitting or undergoing a major transformation in social, political field or domain and in the Theatre; it was the era when modernity was being challenged by the new literary movement of Postmodernism. The critic of Theatre Martin Esslin in his book of *'The Theatre of The Absurd'* the basic belief that man's life is basically without meaning or purpose and that human beings cannot communicate.

This led to the abandonment of the traditional dramatic form and coherent dialogue, the futility of existence being conveyed by illogical and meaningless speeches and ultimately by complete silence'. Martin Esslin, perhaps the most influential critic of The Theatre of the Absurd, notes that the dramatist Ionesco defined the word 'absurd' as 'that which is devoid of purpose' and continues 'Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless'.

### 1.3 Pinter's language and style:

Pinter perhaps Beckett's main disciple, though he lacks the latter's philosophical, existentialist preoccupation. His anti-naturalistic, minimalist often violent drama, in which silence, pause occupy the dramatist's attention as much as speech, the impossibility of



communication. His characters move in avoid, in a bizarre world best defined by the adjective “Pinteresque”.

“Pinteresque” has come into common usage as a term capturing the essence of Pinter’s unique, innovative, and highly influential style. Those dramatic measures which include his characters, his theme, and his language make up of his innovative theatrical style.

In Pinter’s plays, language functions in a way as a crucial means of characterization, a way to serve as a weapon of attack or for defense, or a way to provide ambiguity metaphor for the past.

The root of new movement which was called the “Theatre of the Absurd” comes back to the existential thought. The word Absurd is derived from the French philosopher Albert Camus ‘Myth of Sisyphus’ (1942), which described individuals’ life after the wars as meaningless, senseless.

The absurdist playwright Pinter obviously influenced by the movement, he creates his own world in writing plays or directing.... His career appears through his specific style of drama language, elliptical, half-sinister, half-humorous stretches of dialogues. Pause and silence, non-sequitur ... In Pinter’s plays, language becomes a vehicle for the characters to achieve their power and identity.

Moreover, the frequent pauses, silences, and tautology display the psychology of characters, and it make possible for the audience recognize the inner side of characters.

## **1.4 Summary of plays:**

### **1.4.1 Birthday Party:**

*The Birthday Party* was Pinter’s first full-length play, written in 1958. The play revolves around the elderly couple Petey and Meg, who run a boarding house. Their only lodger, Stanley, is a young man who already lives there for about a year. When the two strangers, Goldberg and McCann, come into the boarding house it becomes clear that Stanley is escaping . Meg thinks it is Stanley’s birthday that day and invites both men and her neighbour

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Lulu to a birthday party. Before the birthday party begins, Stanley is being in a cross examined by Goldberg and McCann and it does not become clear what it is the cause .That Stanley had done and why they are after him.

Afterwards, Meg and Lulu enter and the birthday party begins. When it is Stanley's turn he begins to strangle Meg and suddenly the lights go off. By the time the lights go on again, Stanley is forcing over Lulu. The next morning, Goldberg and McCann want to leave and take Stanley with them. Petey tries to hinder them, but soon gives up and let them take Stanley.

### 1.4.2 Summary of Old Times:

Deeley and Kate have led a quiet daily life for many years. Anna is the only friend of Kate and she has not met Kate for 20 years. At the beginning of the play, the couple is sitting in the living room, discussing Anna's visit, while Anna's figure remains still in dim light at the window. After a moment, Anna turns from the window and moves towards the couple, joining their talk. Later, the three recover about things past, comparing memories of a time when they may or may not have known one another. Confusingly, the memories run together, diverge, and recombine so that it is difficult to tell who did what, with whom, and when. Whatever the "truth" of the past may be, the reality that the characters react to is the one which they are spontaneously inventing. Here the characters use memory as a weapon of psychological domination.

### Definition of sexuality:

Sexuality is a difficult term to define since, as will be shown, it does not simply relate to 'sex'. Michel Foucault's groundbreaking *The History of Sexuality* has revolutionised the way contemporary theorists perceive sexuality; it was he who suggested that 'homosexuality' as an 'identity' that could be applied to an individual was a fairly recent invention, with the terms homosexuality and heterosexuality. Foucault shows that sexual perversions before the latter part of the nineteenth century were dealt with as acts that anyone could perform and be punished for, but a marked shift was effected when the 'homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life,

a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality’.

### **1.1 Introduction:**

The dramatic work of Pinter *Birthday Party* (1957) has been regarded a most successful play, which explores the struggles between dominating and dominated characters. Throughout character's performance, Pinter described the post-war effects whether social or psychological impact. Moreover, male characters as the protagonist Stanley and others are more suffered from fear and anxiety from the outside; in other word 'Masculine anxiety', whereas female characters like Meg and Lulu lived under a patriarchal society where women are dominated, subjugated and marginalized.

In fact, it's clear that Pinter embodied Gender trouble throughout his character implicitly, masculine issues.

### **1.2 Characterization of characters:**

#### **Stanley Webber:**

Stanley, in his late thirties, is an unemployed musician he is the only lodger at the Boles' boarding house. Stanley the protagonist appears sleepless night, passive, unshaven, and unwashed. He fears from the outside, he feel scared for the coming strangers McCann and Goldberg. His disturbed psychological state has started affecting his physical appearance; however, he shows symptoms of physical and mental decline. Stanley starts playing a childish game with Meg; he must act a both surrogate child and husband. Although, he is not able to hide his disgust with this relationship, he uses a kind of irony and provocation to Meg and abusing to her.

**The couple Boles:****Meg Boles:**

Petey's wife, Meg Boles is a good woman in her sixties; she represents a traditional woman and stereotype. She appears in her serving role, as a house wife which reflects the subordination to her husband Petey, and takes care for her lodger Stanley.

Meg is unlikeable figure in the play, that she is subservient, subjugated, oppressive wife.

The couple Boles is childless and they own a boarding house, and Stanley Webber is the only lodger, she treats him as a surrogate child, she insists calling him a 'Boy' and mothering him. That giving her the opportunity to invade his privacy to bring down to breakfast; as well as her husband Petey. Meg seems a sensitive and decent woman, she is also rather sentimental.

**Petey Boles:**

Like his wife, Petey is in his sixties. He is a deck-chair attendant; the couple Boles owns their boarding house, Petey is dull and ambitionless, no more inclined than his wife to find challenges beyond the confines of their rooming house.

**Nat Goldberg:**

When he does talk, McCann usually just adapts to the mood set by Goldberg. Usually, too, he defers to Goldberg's age and authority, even obeying the older man's peculiar request that McCann blow into his mouth. However, at times he seems more Goldberg's equal partner, especially during the interrogations of Stanley, when, just as voluble, he become Goldberg's co-inquisitor.

**Dermont McCann:**

McCann, in his thirties, is Goldberg's younger associate. Unlike Goldberg, who reveals a Jewish heritage, McCann is an immoral Irish Catholic, possibly a defrocked priest. Like Goldberg, he exercises careful self control, a quality which contributes to the sinister impression of both men. He is also methodical and compulsive, as is revealed in his ritual habit of carefully tearing Petey's newspaper into strips. He differs

from Goldberg in important respects, however. More reticent, he is not as superficially warm or outgoing, and when he does speak he seems more inclined to echo Goldberg than to offer new observations. He is also physically more intimidating than Goldberg, who deliberately covers his viciousness with a mask of fatherly interest in the others and disarms everyone with his nostalgia. It is McCann who shoves Stanley at the party and snaps and breaks his glasses.

### 1.3 Psychoanalytic study of characters

Among the female criticism of Pinter's work Elizabeth Sakellaridou in her book of *'Pinter's female portraits'*, demonstrates and analyses Pinter's characters from psychological perspective, she introduces the protagonist Stanley as a modern man, and he represents the basic ideas of existential thought: the essence of existence, confrontation and delusion, and confronting and revolt. Female characters Meg and Lulu are playing a subordinate role, and they are considered less likeable than men in a patriarchal society. Meg represents an important figure for her relation to male characters.

The relationship between Stanley and Meg is merely based on motherhood feeling, according to Erich Neumann. Although Neumann has not disentangled himself entirely from the Jungian tendency to interpret archetypes through male psychology, his analysis is very illuminating in the case of Meg, whose portrayal follows a similar archetypal pattern.

Provided that the image of the feminine in *The Birthday Party* has been conceived along archetypal lines, it is not surprising that most critics look at Meg in relation to Stanley, in the light of a somewhat morbid mother-son relationship, and talk of her thwarted maternity, her crushing motherliness and senile sexuality and foolish, disgusting infatuation with her lodger. A similar opinion was expressed by Dr Franzblau, a New York practicing psychiatrist, who summed up Meg's presence in *The Birthday Party* as 'the universal, clinging, infantilizing, seductive *'Mom'*. From her, Stanley gets only illicit pleasure, infinite coddling, meanness and poverty of mind and emotion.'

Such psychoanalytic interpretations may be plausible enough because they have some relevance to the multi-layer potentialities of the play; they capture some of its spirit. But they view Meg in relation to the men only and they ignore her existence as an autonomous being. For a fuller understanding and a more objective interpretation of the feminine principle in the play there are more up-to-date theories which combine a sociological approach with recent findings about female psychology.

#### 1.4 Masculine Anxiety

According to a literary critic Andrew Willey explores that Harold Pinter's play deals with a more masculine issue; the fear of reconciling masculine alienation with feminine reassurance is carrying through *The Birthday Party* (1958) that demonstrates their position throughout critical opinion.

Pinter's has manipulated the female character Meg is particularly fascinating Goldberg and McCann plainly have an predominating negative impact on Stanley, and they ultimately provoke Petey, that led him keeping silent all the time. Their effect on Meg, however, is minimal and insignificant. Indeed, she is the first person who manages to disturb Goldberg:

*Meg: I hope I look nice in my dress.*

*Goldberg: Madam, you'll look like a tulip.*

*Meg: What colour?*

*Goldberg: Er – well, I'll have to see the dress first.*

*(Pinter, 1991: 33)*

Goldberg's hesitation at this point is the only occasion in the play when he is wrong. Meg's may be a negative capability, due to her irrational response to Goldberg's conversation provides her with a large measure of protection from the threat he represents. Whether the women in the play represent, in their turn, a threat to the men, however, is another matter.

However, the depiction of anxiety in *The Birthday Party* is less about the impact of women on men, than about the destructive reaction of men toward that impact. It is the masculine anxieties themselves, in other words, rather than the sex differences that have given rise to those anxieties. Stanley is not treated only as the victim of women, but also of the predictions imposed upon him by society.

Some analysis of *The Birthday Party* have described Stanley's relationship with female characters 'Meg and Lulu', on the one hand, and Goldberg and McCann, on the other, unexpected reactions and different. That view explores Stanley's psychological status, being neurotic that lies at the heart of the play. If Goldberg and McCann's presence in the house is treated as a direct consequence of the peculiar nature of Stanley's relationships with Meg and Lulu, then the retributive nature of society's dealings with emergent male adolescent sexuality becomes the focus of the play.

Stanley's loose his identity from the world into the feminine interior space that is Meg's domain forces him to escape from sexual maturity. His avoidance of suggestions from both Meg and Lulu that he should go outside the house reinforces his retreat into this inappropriate interior space. Here, the conflict of his quasi-Oedipal relationship with Meg becomes more and more difficult to deal with, till the arrival of Goldberg and McCann.

Stanley fails to measure up to the expectations of a normative heterosexist society brings nemesis upon his head. It is not retribution for action or inaction in his past that is being visited on Stanley, but the punishment for his sexually inactive present. His failure to play the role of the dominant and active heterosexual male in his dealings with Lulu is probably the final reason for the arrival of Goldberg and McCann. His exit from the house, then, is perhaps indicative of the trauma imposed on young men by societal expectations in the realm of sexuality and gender role play.

Stanley, of course, is no longer a particularly young man – 'a man in his late thirties', as described by Pinter in his list of characters, and so his failure to conform even by that age makes the violence. Alternatively, Stanley is a man who, having achieved the sexual role



expected of him in his adolescence, has then retreated from it. Pinter has described the situation as one in which ‘the hierarchy, the Establishment, the arbiters, the socio-religious monsters arrive to effect alteration and censure upon a member of the club who has discarded responsibility’.

Part of the responsibility Stanley has discarded is presumably sexual, hence his disturbance into Meg’s, and Goldberg and McCann’s effort to bring him back to the fold.

### **1.5 Freud Neurotic Analysis of male character Stanley:**

Pinter’s dramatic work *Birthday Party* has been selected to expose the miserable state of individuals in this universe, also it shows society’s role in making people neurotics, through the representation of protagonist Stanley as a victim of this negative status. The play is regarded an allegorical tale (figurative) of individual who is an artist, a non-conformist, but it forced to be conformist through physical and mental torture. The selected work has been studied according to the perspective of psychologists Sigmund Freud (1962; 1989) and Carl Jung (1964).

The issue would be studied through a psychological literary theory, because it would be difficult to get the meanings of Pinter’s words. The Scottish doctor Cullen identifies the term neurosis, to the sickness of motion (action) and sense, while Russon states, ‘*we call it neurosis when (self) dissociation is a problem....when some sector of a person’s behavior stands as a hindrance to achieving normal self-hood*’.

In the sense that, the psychologists have shared the same meaning of the term neurosis; which defined as an internal psychological illness and it occurs due to self dissociation.

Some studies indicate that human beings are required to repress themselves in order to have better adaptation to society so that they may be called the so-called civilized people; in other words, individuals must be aligned with society’s transformation to reach the civilization.

Thurschwell argues that '*society as a whole is based on repression; in the course of everyday lives we all learn to repress*'). While Eagleton confirms that, "*when this repression becomes excessive, we are likely to fall sick. This form of sickness is known as neurosis*"). Also he discovers neurotics disorder related to one's 'cultural, political and economic spheres of life'.

The evaluation of Pinter's works critically by applying psychoanalytic theory concerned to the neurotic disorder in his characters, while considering society as a root cause of it. The playwright Pinter claims that individuality, alienation and freedom of modern man are threatened from society and authority.

Freud's theory of repressed unconscious that resultantly relates neurotic anxiety in human beings, providing ideas of Jung Carl that neurotic disorder have been elaborated to focus on the role of society to make people neurotic. Freud relates his theory on neurosis with his doctrine of repressed desire for sexuality, in the same time he admits by the importance of social and economic field of life reality principle. This principle aims to the ego's sense of realistic and rational adaptive expectation, and it develops from Pleasure Principle.

Freud considers neurosis to be rooted in individuals past life, while Jung regards it to be rooted into one's present life, but both of them believe it to be related to social aspect of life. This juxtaposition reflects Jung view's that modern man is in totalitarian case of powers that are beyond his control, according to him this domination is ruthless "*keep him on the run with restlessness, vague apprehensions, psychological complications...above all a large array of neuroses*".

Jung and Freud agree that repression in different situations and settings is similar that pushes individual of being out of the edges of normality into the realm of mental disorders and abnormalities. They believe that whenever one's personal freedom is attacked by any institution, eventually one becomes indifferent and led them to disorders such as neurosis.

### **The analysis:**

Concerning the play, Stanley the protagonist is the prototype of neurotic character that his alienation becomes a symptom of neurosis. Freud claims that "*raising difficulties in [man's] relations with his environment and the society he belongs to*". In the sense that, individual has

faced difficulties to build relationship with others, this failure is regarded a symptom to neurosis. A neurotic person attempts to avoid relationships, which led him to make his own world, alienation and freedom from the world outside.

According to Freud “*the desire for freedom may be their revolt against some existing injustice*”. Jung also considers neurosis to be a result of “*a dissociation of personality due to existence of complexes*”. In other words, dissociation and conflict of individual with society are characterization of neurotic person.

Pinter’s characters have always been termed as escapists because they are in search of refuge or escape, either in a house or in a room. Stanley, who has rescued himself in a boarding house avoiding the world outside. He is enjoying a peaceful and secure life there but whose freedom is threatened by some unknown mysterious powers.

### **1.6 Women under patriarchal society:**

The description of Pinter’s female characters in *The Birthday Party*, Meg plays subordinate role to her husband and she represents a stereotypical woman. The title suggests, the celebration of someone’s birth, here Stanley’s or rather that of his rebirth. Meg begins to prepare for the party; she is dressed in the dress her father gave her. She persists in forcing each of the men to compliment her.

Meg expresses strong disappointment and her own preference for a boy, her wish reflects the principle of the superiority of the male, which is a masculine value in a patriarchal society, which Meg has unconsciously internalized. Or does her wish reveal the ambivalent need of a mother-mistress relationship with her lodger. Hence, the appearance of Meg in later scenes mother Stanley. On the birthday party, she babbles out her childhood memory of her father to McCann. She remembers her little pink room with all its musical boxes. There she was cared for and had no complaints. Yet she also admits her father was going to take her to Ireland, but went away by himself.

**Subservient woman:**

The cause of Meg's problem becomes clear. She was rejected by her father and never able to develop emotionally beyond her oedipal days. This rejection was so painful that she learned to transform pain and unpleasantness. At the end of the play, all she can remember of the macabre party is that she was the belle of the ball. But she has to convince herself it is true: "Oh, it's true. I was. Pause. I know I was" Meg has the wishes of a child, a woman, and a mother all rolled into one. "*Her readiness to apply to herself Stanley's adjective, 'succulent' reveals her subconscious awareness of these repressed wishes*".

MEG: Was it nice?

STANLEY: What?

MEG: The fried bread.

STANLEY: Succulent.

MEG: You shouldn't say that word.

STANLEY: What word?

MEG: That word you said.

STANLEY: What, succulent-?

MEG: Don't say it!

STANLEY: What's the matter with it?

MEG: You shouldn't say that word to a married woman.

STANLEY: Is that a fact?

MEG: Yes.

STANLEY: Well, I never knew that.

MEG: Well, it's true.

STANLEY: Who told you that?

MEG: Never you mind.

STANLEY: Well, if I can't say it to a married woman who can I say it to?

MEG: You're bad. (I, 27)

The word 'succulent' in itself an inoffensive word innocently becomes a potential sign of abuse against women in Meg's repressed feminine consciousness. The slang associations of the word cover all her would-be roles. Succulent means juicy and rich. Suck refers to the function of her mothering breast. Succor is the help or aid she gives to Stanley, the refugee. Ironically, Stanley first used the word to refer to the fried bread. Such is the way that life has passed Meg by. Reacting just like Rose, she becomes indignant at what she imagines to be the lack of respect for her marital status and she herself by flirting with him openly:

MEG: Stan?

STANLEY: What?

MEG (slyly): Am I really succulent

STANLEY: Oh, you are. I'd rather have you than a cold in the nose any day.

MEG: You're just saying that.

STANLEY (violently): Look, why don't you get this place cleared up! It's a pigsty. And another thing, what about my room? It needs sweeping. It needs papering. I need a new room! He recoils from her hand in disgust, stands and exits quickly by the door on the left... (I, 29)

Meg's taking up the word 'succulent' which she had formerly rejected with horror, shows her erotic nature, which she had earlier tried to suppress. Stanley takes advantage of her weakness to make demands on her and assert his male power over her. Meg at the end of the play seems to be empty-headed, ignorant and easily deceived, living in silly illusions, unable to suspect the sinister game that has been played out in her house.

Stanley begins to play a childish game with Meg, he exploits and abuses her. He uses the dominance as a power. Pinter has described Meg as the familiar stereotypes in a male-dominated society.

A literary critic Sakellaridou points out in her book of *'Pinter's Female Portrait'* That Meg and Lulu "are marginal and secondary, and n always defined by their relation to men

*as mother-whore and never having any extra-domestic activities or interests whatever.”*

Meg is the subservient woman, subservience being the price they pay for survival. The irony is that the price for survival for these characters is the loss of dignity and identity.

### **1.7 The application of Philosophical Theory to Literature:**

The theory of gender performance or gender performativity was first coined in Judith Butler's book 'Gender Trouble' in 1990. Butler's theories are based on gender identity and gender role through performance, treated the notion of destabilizing gender identities as well as the issues of different sexes. Butler fascinated by J.L Austin's work on the notion of the performative.

According to the feminist philosopher, gender performativity is that gender differences are socially constructed rather than biologically. According to this definition the impact of society and culture creates gender roles and these roles occur throughout individual's behavior, acts and performance.

The description of gender role in Pinter's play evolves by characters performance. Masculine trouble in *Birthday Party* apparently on the protagonist Stanley who has suffered from the fear of the external world, and the expectation of the society in post war era, hence the problem of identity. His refuge to the internal world (boarding house) with women 'Meg and Lulu' has a great impact on his psychology. The maternal treatment of Meg than the oedipal wish.

Stanley is masculine character biologically, but he is regarded a feminine through society.

**II.8 Conclusion:**

The representation of male characters in *Birthday party* struggling their fear, and confronting their psychology, due to the transformations affected on their gender role that masculinity degrades due the anxiety. On other hand, female characters represent the oppression of men and authority.

### 1.1 Introduction :

This chapter introduces the dramatic work of Pinter *Old Times* (1970); he explores the psychological conflict between characters through recovering their memories. Critical views have treated the issue of sexuality or sexual desire between characters, either the relation between Kate and Anna (homosexuality) in the past or the relationship between Kate and Deeley (heterosexuality) in the present.

Throughout the play Pinter attempted to show the emergence of women, and their capabilities to liberate and becoming free due to the rise of feminism. On other hand, he presented the masculine position over this change, by showing their power and dominance through sexuality. Indeed, the representation of Gender trouble is apparent and basically illustrated through the play.

### 1.2 Psychoanalytical study of play:

*Old Times* is the full-length stage play was written in 1970, it deals with ambiguity and the subjectivity of memory. In critical analysis by Elizabeth Sakellaridou shows Pinter's characters in their role of reconstructing the past.

Considerable interpretations concerning the play, it may a dream and Deeley is a nightmare, or the past intimate relationship between Anna and Kate is vivid till the present and it may cause obstacle between couple relationship (Kate and Deeley), or that Kate and Deeley are playing some sort of a game as necessary sexual foreplay, or it may that Deeley has been dead for five years. The last interpretation explores Pinter's point of view toward women, and the complete neglect of Deeley. who is the male character.

### 1.3 Sexuality as a means of power and control:

The selected work of Pinter '*old Times*' presents a central theme of his work which is one of the dominant themes of the twentieth century art; the struggle for meaning in fragmented world. Pinter's characters are uncertain, irrational, the struggle between them for power and to control. Pinter the playwright criticizes and investigates the sensibility of men to get their power and no matter what the social coast.



Studies have examined the ways of male character (Deeley) go to achieving this aim and the role played by female characters (Kate and Anna). Power and authority are two main concepts related to analyze the issue of sexuality.

The representation of sex war in the play appears through the relation between the couple Deeley and his wife Kate, the battle is for physical possession. Deeley, Kate and her friend Anna are characters whom existing in the past and present. The couple lives in a farm house near the sea, they are waiting for Kate friend's arrival, they have not seen each other for twenty years, since they were living together in London, working as secretaries. This visit may be seen as a dream in Kate's mind and Anna is only her passionate self, may be the desire for a homosexuality relationship that happened in the past with Kate. Hence, Pinter identifies Anna as an aspect –her passionate self, from which she has threatened Kate in her heterosexual, domestic relationship with Deeley.

Deeley profits to use this sex confrontation to enforce his power over Kate, who seems at the beginning of the play ambiguous and accepts such domination. Anna is trying to regain Kate as she possessed her twenty years ago. The two female characters had a Lesbian relationship between them, but Kate stopped it by marrying Deeley. There was a shift from homo-to heterosexuality. Kate was hardly satisfied in her relationship with Anna:

*Deeley: Did you think of her as your best friend?*

*Kate: She was my only friend.*

*Deeley: Your best and only.*

*Kate: Your best and only.*

*(Pause)*

*If you have only one of something, you can't say it's the best of anything.*

*(Old Times: p 43)*

Throughout this conversation, Deeley tries to insist that Anna is her best friend, but Kate denies the 'best', and he trying to discover the kind of the relationship between his wife and Anna, in other word Deeley is uncertain for this relationship. Kate's last statement probably

includes Deeley as well Anna, he is the only person she has right now, so he is not the best partner she could have. Anna's visit may cause a threat to the couple's relationship, Deeley is afraid of being abandoned, if Kate may desire to return her gay affair:

*Deeley: Are you looking forward to seeing her?*

*Kate: No.*

*Deeley: I shall be very interested.*

*Kate: In what?*

*Deeley: In you. I'll be watching you.*

*Kate: Me? Why?*

*Deeley: To see if she's the same person.*

*Kate: You think you'll find that out through me.*

*Deeley: Definitely.*

*(Old Times: P 7-8)*

According to the conversation, Deeley suspects Kate's infidelity, his aim is to test her in order to find the truth through Kate's reaction to Anna. Deeley stay with Kate and Anna along the time and he did not leave them alone. Masculine anxiety appears through Deeley's performance, he is afraid that Homosexuality may take over from Heterosexuality and feel scared that Anna may seduce Kate.

Sex is to Deeley a source of power and a symbol of domination, while Anna trying to seduce Kate back to homosexuality. In Act I, Kate informs her husband that Anna theft her underwear which implies a Lesbian seduction. The sex war between Deeley and Anna over Kate is to subjugate her.

The description of Deeley as the only man in the play uses his power as a masculine force by expressing or showing his sexuality. He may want to enter a sexual game with both women, as he says at the beginning that he wished he had met them before. That means he

never met Anna, their meeting would be erotic seduction and he always identifies Anna with Kate.

In Act II, Kate refutes the homosexuality relation by telling her story about a man in their room and that she plastered his face with dirt from a window box:

*He was bemused, aghast, resisted, resisted with force. He could not let me dirty his face, or smudge it, he wouldn't let me. He suggested a wedding instead, and a change of environment.*

(Slight pause)

*He asked me once, at about that time, who had slept in that bed before him. I told him no one.*

*No one at all. (P*

It seems that Kate could abandon Lesbianism for heterosexual; she succeeded to alter her life. Kate's performance represents the liberal modern woman; she didn't accept the male dominance or any authority, she seems powerful and dominant. She sits on her divan, with Anna lying on it, defeated and Deeley sitting on the armchair apart from the sofas, waiting Kate reaction. She succeed to overcome the memory of her double ego (Anna) homosexuality, at the same time, she has refused to offer Deeley's desire.

*Old Times* is a play about self and inner self, due to the fear and loneliness the characters have chosen to escape through sexuality, each of them has an irrational aspect in his/her personality. The characters are suffered from fear and anxiety, they couldn't escape or refuse, they have a high sensitivity to sex with its twin manifestations. The notion of sex has power over the characters, and it caused lot of changes in their lives by shifting one gender seduction to another.

Kauffmann confirms that " *the sexual vulnerability in us, imminent as the vulnerability to death, acknowledged or not, struggled against or submitted to, is what Pinter has circumscribed in this play*".

In other words, sexual desire is a part of human nature; the characters wouldn't escape or ignore it. It is inevitable; they must co-exist with this feeling.

#### 1.4 Gender deconstructing:

*Old times* play concerns with memories of the past; the characters have used it as a way to keep their identity, according to Steven H. Gale sees this function of memory as crucial: “*Landscape, Silence, Night, Old Times...are almost completely devoid of any action and, most important, they are concerned with memory*”.

A literary analysis by Andrew Willey and Catherine Rees in their book of ‘*The plays of Harold Pinter*’; that characters restore their memories of the past, considering as a ground of confrontation and gender-based versions of past and present reality are fought through the play. According to Martin Esslin in ‘*Pinter the playwright*’ views that *Old Times* as a battle between the sexes which is clearly won by women: In the end the two women occupy the marital beds, the husband sits between them, symbolically dispossessed of marital rights: the ‘odd man out’.

Another point of view by Richard Allen Cave: “*Pinter contrives through his structure in Old Times to release his audience’s imagination into the sexual consciousness of each of his characters to see how the fundamental forces which condition their particular masculine or feminine identities and give desire in them its individual quality will erode any relationship they attempted to form and conform their isolation.*”

In the sense that, the essentialist views the relationship between gender and sexuality is irrational engagement between both sexes as long as sexual desire forms part of heterosexuality.

In the light of feminist and post feminist theory viewed by Marc Silverstein in his books “*Harold Pinter*” and “*The language of cultural power*” that “*while the play examines the importance of the gaze for the elaboration of patriarchal power relations, it also deconstructs the scopic division of labor that casts man as the active bearer of the look and woman as passive object of the look*”.

Deconstructing of gender roles appears through Kate’s and Anna’s performance, that Pinter re-empowering women in the play, he provides an alternative vision of the relative degrees of sexual empowerment.

### **1.5 Androgyny in the play:**

From the literary study of Elizabeth Sakellaridou, the androgynous treatment of Kate and Anna is appeared through their independent existence. Deeley prefers to perceive them archetypal as representing two opposite aspects of the female principle Kate as a remote, respectful figure and Anna as seductress or a sex object. Then he attempts to integrate the two conflicting images. In this mental process, Deeley follow the same method.

The autonomy of the two women characters in *Old Times* and the complexity of their individual personalities suggest Pinter's mastery of the female psyche and his success at conceiving real living women and not male fantasies of them. In other words, androgynous reaction of masculine character toward women explores the British society in 1970

### **The application of philosophical theory to literature:**

Butler argues that sex and gender are both equally culturally and socially constructed; she believes that certain gendered behaviors are natural; illustrating the ways that one's learned performance gendered behaviors, in the sense that, the common association between femininity and masculinity is an act of sorts, a performance one that is imposed upon us by normative heterosexuality in the case of Kate and Deeley. The couple begins heterosexual relationship after the intimacy relationship between Anna and Kate creates gender trouble, which affected negatively on the psychology of Deeley. His fear from being a man, he used his sexual desire to proof his power.

**III.7 Conclusion:**

The representation of gender role in the play throughout characters, by recovering their memories, and the sex war between Deeley and Anna toward Kate. Indeed, Kate succeeded to make her position and avoid homosexual relationship and becomes dominate.

## General Conclusion

My research explores the representation of gender role in Pinter's dramatic works *Birthday party 1957* and *Old Times 1970* in postwar Britain. Throughout the plays, Pinter has described the aftermath of second war on his characters, especially on their psychology and performance. The portrayal of character's reaction toward these transformations, altered from one to another. British society passed difficult moments due the social and political changes, as well as the problem of identity.

Pinter's characters are described as non-conformist, escapist from the reality, even though they have attempted to struggle their fear. The selected work demonstrates male and female role in British society, and their capabilities to face their destiny.

Considerable literary works have been done to analyze the gender role in Britain throughout their psychology. In the case of *Birthday party* play, the portrayal of the protagonist Stanley as a lodger, escapist, he enters the internal world with women; he tries to practice his masculinity on Meg, who treated him as her son. In reality, Stanley's problem toward the outside, and his feeling scared from the coming of strangers, have a great impact on his acts and psychology. According to psychologists Freud and others, have been described Stanley's status as neurotic; it defined as an internal sickness due to society's repression. Freud's perspective admits that society is the root of individual's fear, and it changes from the past to the present in related to society's transformations. Stanley's masculinity affected by society and the characters Goldberg and McCann represent the social conditions.

Here, we explore the gender role of Stanley is socially constructed, even though he is a male character, because of his anxiety and the expectations of the external world. Apparently, affect negatively on his masculinity and behaviors as a man. In other point concerning the female character Meg who lived under patriarchal society, she represents a stereotypical woman in British society where the oppression and subjugation.

*Old Times* play demonstrates three characters recovering their memories of the past; the couple Kate and Deeley lived together as well as a heterosexual relationship. The coming of Kate's friend Anna forms a danger to Deeley, after the discovering the homosexual relationship between his wife and Anna in the past. Kate confesses that her friend stole her underwear when they lived together, she tries to prove to her husband that she abandoned this relation. There was a sex war between them; Anna attempts to seduce her friend again; and Deeley tries to keep his relationship with Kate.

The British society in 1970 witnessed the rise of feminism, the rise of women's consciousness, and the belief of being equal with men had spread.

The masculinity of Deeley is in danger, because of the homosexual relationship of female characters. He thinks that his virility based on sex, he tries to show his power through sexuality, the gender role of Deeley is affected by society. His feeling scared from social changes makes him in trouble. His gender role is socially constructed, his status as a male biologically but his performance is different.

According to literary study by Andrew Williey who describe Pinter's female characters in their deconstructing role, that Pinter has re empowered women, and he represents their power throughout their abilities of having sex (homosexuality), and the possibility of being strong and powerful, to face or to abandon their previous actions or relationship in case of the character Kate.

The gender roles of female characters are also socially constructed; the impact of society on their performance and behaviors as women is alter through time, becoming strong, powerful, liberal and dominant mainly are characteristics of male personality. The androgynous treatment of Deeley over the female characters is apparently in their performance.





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