

## Man's Dilemma in Harold Pinter's Play

### *The Birthday Party*

**Instructor: Huda Kadhim Alwan**

#### **Abstract**

Harold Pinter often portrays the dilemma of obliterated figures that are incapable of feeling of their own existences. These figures feel exhausted and frustrated in a world that deprives them their humanity. They retreat into a limited world where they look for security and protection. The characters' feeling of security is threatened by outside forces represented by intruding persons who stand for the mysterious powers that are indefinable. The conflict between these intruders and the characters finally ends with the characters' defeat. The reason for the intruders' attack on the victims remains ambiguous and is not explained. The element of mystery pervades Pinter's plays and represents one of its main characteristics. This paper attempts to investigate how Pinter treats this dilemma in his first play *The Birthday Party* (1957). How man does escape from his reality, what kinds of danger attack man, why man cannot fight against these threats, are the questions which this paper is trying to answer.

**Keywords:** dilemma, obliterated figures, mystery, threats, frustration

### Introduction

Modern drama is a reaction to the many crises that people witnessed during the twentieth century. Playwrights became preoccupied with the vital issues of their lives. Attempts were made to deal with the actual problems of modern society, thus the romantic view of life was avoided. Actually, the two World Wars were crushing blows upon humanity. Their outcome was awful and unforgettable. The world became a real dystopia; hence, man's illusions of a dream world were completely destroyed. The playwrights presented modern man as a lost, alienated, and hopeless creature in a destructed community.

The English dramatist Harold Pinter wrote at a time when man was totally exhausted by the trauma of these two wars. Mystery is a general atmosphere in his plays. Pinter describes the superficial details in his character's everyday life, at the same time he portrays what lies beneath the surface. For example, in the first scene Meg leads a dialogue over some unimportant details with Petey whom she is presumably married to. This dialogue reflects the disharmony, the boredom and fear which are important elements in the relationship of this marital couple.

The element of mystery is never clarified in Pinter's plays. The characters are threatened by two kinds of dangers; the outside world and the internal world of the characters, but they are unable to name the sources of these dangers. Consequently, they yearn for security and endeavor to create it within through shutting out the outside world. However, this security is illusory for the area is insecure and destined to be broken by the violent forces that occupy the outside world. Thus, security becomes an illusion, a vain hope, a part of man's fragility in a world that allows no one to remain alone .<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the situation in ancient Greek dramas where the characters usually suffer because of a flaw in them, Pinter's characters suffer because they exist in

a fragmented and torn world that defines their defeat. Simon O. Lesser clarifies that both Meg, the “shabby woman who takes care of this establishment” and her husband Petey are fixed in “the world of everybody being”<sup>2</sup>. The playwrights of this period generally pointed out the shrinking of a once great world. This is revealed by the intentionally limited use of settings and stage props.<sup>3</sup>As with many playwrights, notably his late contemporary, Samuel Beckett, Pinter refuses to explain what his plays are about. They are what they are and he vigorously rebuffs all attempts by actors and directors to draw him into discussion on ‘meaning.’

### **Pinter and the Absurd Theatre**

As Pinter has not given explicit explanations and background briefings to his work, there is a view that his material comes from a tortured imagination, an imagination that draws on a world that has little to do with the every – day life of normal humans and that has little relevance to us.<sup>4</sup> Martin Esslin argues that Pinter rejects the theory of the “well – made play” because it tends to give much information about each character's background and motivation. Human beings are complex creatures and their psychological make – ups are contradictory. That’s why it is impossible to know the real motivation behind their actions. Any play which gives a detailed description of the motivations of the characters involved in the action is far from realism.<sup>5</sup> One of Pinter's main concerns as a playwright is the difficulty of verification. In his speech at the National Student Drama Festival in Bristol (1962), Pinter states:

The desire for verification on the part of all of us, with regard to our own experience and experience of others, is understandable but cannot be satisfied. I suggest there can be no hard distinctions between what is real and what is

unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false. A character on the stage who can present no convincing argument or, nor information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations give a comprehensive analysis of his motives is as legitimate and as worthy of attention as one who alarmingly, can do all these things. The more acute the experience the less articulate its expression.<sup>6</sup>

Esslin places Pinter among the poetic absurdists for, like other absurdists, he is not interested in telling stories, but rather in exploring states of being and revealing patterns. In such plays, one is not interested in what is going on in the present but rather, in the unfolding pattern or poetic image. Pinter does not choose to write his plays using the narrative form because it does not help him to make the audience confront the incomprehensible. He writes using the poetic image because it does not develop. It is “static because it represents a mood whereas a narrative form moves steadily till it reaches the crux where the expected solution becomes available.” Like absurdist playwrights, he changes direction from the “well – made play” to the absurdist poetic play because of their feelings of the absurdity of existence.<sup>7</sup>

Pinter shows the theme that man's life is absurd because it is totally without purpose, or aim except that of surviving the next day without coming face to face with the meaninglessness of existence. This theme needs not to be gloomy as the dramatists often point that life is only meaningless because its basic nature is not understood. If humans could only face up to the fact that they were alone in the universe, with no divine purpose to their lives, then a realistic mode of living could be thought out. Most dramatists show their

audiences the meaninglessness of life, but they give a little idea of any hope for a new, or a better life.

Dramatists of the absurd believe that life is not rational; it does not follow any laws or logical pattern. They transfer this irrationality to the stage. Their plays have no plot, make nonsense of chronology, and contain obscure incidents. Plays of this nature were a great shock to the audience when they were first performed. They obeyed none of the laws of conventional drama, and because absurdity is amusing, the plays are frequently very comic. They are capable of widely differing interpretations. Pinter insisted on the precariousness of man's existential security in his plays.

His device for expressing this theme is the "usurper", a menacing figure who, either actively or passively, undermines the existence of other characters, and who is sometimes undermined himself.<sup>8</sup> In early plays like *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, and *The Birthday Party* this figure appears as a mysterious agent in direct conflict with a gradually disintegrating victim. Later works, such as *The Caretaker*, explore more complicated relationships between the usurpers and their victims. The plays become subtle psychological studies of characters that are at once aggressive, yet in need of personal relationships to give them the security which they desperately require.<sup>9</sup> Thus Pinter suggests that human beings need to communicate with each other because this would provide them with the security they need to make their lives meaningful. Pinter tries always to emphasize the gap between his characters and their lonely existence. The weaknesses in their personalities are ascribed to their selfishness; therefore they cannot start rewarding relationships wherein they can find real security.<sup>10</sup>

In Pinter's plays, the characters' feelings of loneliness lead them to look for things that can provide them with security. They build around themselves the wall of isolation as means of security which represents either a futile

attempt to escape as in *The Birthday Party*, or a sterile, passive condition, as in *A Slight Ache*. The characters' inability to start relationships with others represents a modern sort of tragedy, where the hostile world and man's very nature prevent him from exchanging love or friendship with others. In order to show the characters' troubled psyches Pinter usually chooses as his central image a room that provides the characters with a feeling of safety. Predominantly, they are scared of what is outside the room for they are surrounded by a dark, hostile and mysterious world.<sup>11</sup>

The importance of the room in Pinter's plays does not come out of its being an architectural feature but a means to describe a state of mind. The household that the room shelters, one person or several, presents a body of feelings and attitudes that give both a special emotional identity. The characters that enter the room develop a state of inaction that involves the denial of some aspects of existence. They stay in their rooms because of their feelings of fear or inadequacy, or as a result of their facing traumatic experiences. They cut themselves from certain aspects of life which are vital and important to man such as family relationships, competitive striving, sexuality...etc., and lead a safe but limited existence in a place which is sheltered but confined. In *The Birthday Party*, for example, Stanley Webber is taking refuge in his room because he is running away from his family and his home as well as from a nameless organization that he has betrayed into a world of "inaction and infantile, Oedipal[sic] sexuality".<sup>12</sup>

Pinter depicts the dilemma of the modern man whose self integrity has been threatened by external pressures. Modern man no more feels that he holds a stable position in the scheme of things. To shed light on man's dilemma, Pinter presents characters that withdraw from nature and live in confined places.<sup>13</sup> To the contrary of the characters in classical tragedies, Pinter's

characters do not have the redeeming sense of the self for modern drama tends to reflect man's loss of self and faith in an ordered universe.<sup>14</sup>

A sense of menace and violence fills Pinter's play *The Birthday Party* and remains unrelieved by the close. Pinter underlines this with tense, quick – fire sequences of dialogue; however, we learn as much from the silence and gestures as from what characters say. From the dialogue, Pinter attempts to ensure that we can recognize how language has become an inadequate form of communication for those people, as they cannot understand each other even on the simplest level. The idea that life is an illusion is conveyed by the fact that we are never allowed to be sure who the characters are, how they are related to each other, what they might have done, or what would happen to them.<sup>15</sup>

Pinter depicts the absurdity of the human condition and presents this tragic vision mixed with some humour for he sees life in its absurdity as basically funny. Funny moments are seen in life particularly in cases of human beings who build their own worlds of illusions and self-deceptions. This fictitious world contradicts their real state. Actually, this condition is exemplified in Meg's character that seems comic and pathetic when she thinks herself the belle of the ball.<sup>16</sup>

### **Dilemma**

Dilemma is a Greek word that means double proposition, or perplexing situation; it presents two different possibilities, and both of them seem practically acceptable. It is a rhetorical device in which a conflicting situation arises for a person to choose between right and wrong where both seem of equal worth. Several times, dilemma involves an ethically wrong decision that may produce desirable outcomes but could have moral consequences. Or it involves a decision, in which a person needs to choose one of the two choices,

and both equally well or equally bad.<sup>17</sup> In literature, dilemma is a struggle occurring within the mind of a character. Therefore, it gives readers an insight into characters' lives. There may be a single or multiple dilemmas in a story. However, the purpose is the same that is to create a tension and complexity in a narrative by adding confusing and conflicting ideas. It also creates suspense and excitement in the story from the beginning towards the end.<sup>18</sup>

Simply, the leading characters have to struggle, evolve and make choices in a story to change effectively. The human dilemma is evident in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* from the very beginning. "Pinter also stages his play within the limited space of a single room."<sup>19</sup> The room represents a place like a womb. It exposes a yearning for their existence when they are dependent on their mothers. Pinter's dramatic work presents the human dilemma where man attempts to come out of the horrors of war and lodge himself in the domestic space. Man's dilemma happens when he tries to move from one space to another and falls somewhere in between.

### **Man's Dilemma in The Birthday Party**

As man grows up, he feels that he has to be in contact with other people and other spaces which are different from his early childhood in which he lived under the protection of his parents. Then his life changes expectedly as a mature person. Man sometimes fails to cope with the prerequisites of this new life. This would lead him into some unconscious defense through which he could hide his failure. It also leads him to the feeling of inferiority and powerlessness.

The opening scene of the play presents Meg, the landlady of the house. She is a simple elderly woman. Her husband Petey is sitting at the breakfast table with a paper and he begins to read while she talks about different topics. She



seems to think that her cornflakes are nicer than anybody else's. She treats Stanley, a man in his thirties and the only lodger in the house, as a spoiled child and as a kind of lover at the same time. She begins to flirt with him, she goes up to his room, tickles the back of his neck, and says "I've had some lovely afternoons in that room."<sup>20</sup> This sexuality and cloying attention sometimes disgust Stanley.

Stanley is an ex-pianist. He claims that he used to work with certain people who arranged for his concerts, but at the moment of action of the play, he does not work as a pianist. He isolates himself from the outer world by living in a room which is like a shelter for him because it gives him the feeling of security, but this kind of feeling is threatened by the outside world. He feels scared when he knows that Meg is expecting some visitors. This fear is almost like a prophecy of doom in the Greek tragedy. It is not clear why he feels so anxious about these visitors.<sup>21</sup>

The invention of the past in the play can take the form of elaborate stories, such as Stanley's tale of his career as a pianist, which spins off from his ludicrous claim that he is considering a job offer in Berlin, to be followed by a world tour. The speed with which Stanley builds his fables is further shown in the way he instantly revises his claim of having played all over the world and settles for having played all over the country. His story is psychologically revealing for bitterness seeps through even when his original intention is only to portray himself as a successful pianist. At the end of the monologue, Stanley cannot stop complaining sulkily about having been summoned to a concert in a hall that turned out to be boarded up, which is the one component of his account that is likely to be true. Stanley's weakness and defensiveness are portrayed through his own vision of the past, which was ironically meant to boost his image in his own eyes as well as in other characters'.<sup>22</sup>

Stanley accepts the unpleasant situation of Meg's mothering. He lacks interest in everything around him, he does not like to go out, he just wants to lie in bed, or to sit indoors like a child afraid of facing people. His treatment of Lulu, the girl next door carries the suggestion of his immaturity. She is willing to be interested in him in spite of her complaints about his not washing or shaving, but he turns down the chances she gives him of going out with her.<sup>23</sup>

Stanley's withdrawal from society has its roots in his past experiences. He tells Meg about one of these experiences when he was a pianist. Once, he claims, he has given a concert in London. But that success did not last, because in the second concert, some people interfered to destroy his career as a pianist:

They carved me up. It was all arranged, it was all worked out. My next concert. Somewhere else it was. In winter I went Down there to be play. Then, when I got there, the hall was closed, the place was shuttered up , not even a caretaker. They'd locked it up .... They want me to crawl down on my bended knees(1, 33).

This painful experience may help one to excuse Stanley's present behaviour. His preference to live in a child – like state and his dependence on Meg reflect his feeling of insecurity, but he sometimes shouts at Meg and this shows his conflict. However, he does not want to be separated from her because separation means that he would become a mature man and he has to face the outer world, something which he refuses to do.<sup>24</sup>

While the title and the dialogue refer to Meg's planning a party to celebrate Stanley's birthday: "It's your birthday, Stan. I was going to keep it a secret until tonight , " even that " fact " is dubious , as Stanley denies that it is

his birthday : “ This isn't my birthday , Meg ” , telling Goldberg and McCann: “Anyway, this isn't my birthday...

No, it's not until next month,” adding, in response to McCann's saying “Not according to the lady [Meg],” “Her? She's crazy. Round the bend” (II, 41).

Meg suggests that she will celebrate Stanley's birthday although she does not know the day of his birth. She announces that she is going to celebrate his birthday in the presence of Goldberg and McCann who arrive at the house. Goldberg, who likes to play the role of a highly sociable man, suggests that they should give him a party. Stanley retreats to his room when he knows that the two men appear on the scene and he returns after their departure. Meg shows him her present which is a boy's drum. At the beginning he is surprised, then, he puts the drum round his neck and begins to beat it in a normal rhythm, but later he beats it in a savage way because of his fear of Goldberg and McCann who threaten to destroy his tenuous security.<sup>25</sup>

The birthday party with its drum, its switching off lights, its game of blind – man's buff , releases the violence , in a further stroke of theatre .The shock of bringing together farce and melodrama is controlled by their separate familiarity .With the conventions loosened by the theatrically acceptable evasion of probability, the central scenes of interrogation , the human breaking and bewilderment , can occur in their own terms .The savagery of Stanley's reaction reflects the depth of his despair because he seems to understand the meaning of his acceptance of the present (boy's drum).This scene reflects Meg's personality as well. Giving him the drum, she exposes her subconscious passion to keep him close to her and it expresses her fear of loneliness. His way of beating is like a wild primitive man.<sup>26</sup>

In the same birthday party, Stanley tries to rape Lulu although he feels inadequate as a man, in attacking her in what seems a rape attempt; he

unconsciously seeks a new source of the protective Edenic womb – life he has lost. Losing this protected world makes him feel insecure, frightened and vulnerable. When Meg fails to protect him from the torment he is subjected to, he tries to look for a new source of protection in Lulu who proves that she is not a mother figure and she can never be Meg's substitute. She demands his response as a man rather than a child.<sup>27</sup>

In both Pinter's and Beckett's plays, people keep silent in order to avoid talking, and talk in order to avoid silence. Meg wants to be surrounded by others in order not to be alone. Meg's conversation is the paradigm of existential chat. She plays her futile word games for the serious purpose of having her own existence confirmed by the sound of a reciprocal voice, by the mere sequence of a mutual exchange.<sup>28</sup> Meg's marital relationship lacks harmony and mutual understanding and this leads her to find a substitute lover in Stanley.

Stanley tries to escape before the party starts but he is prevented with increasingly open threats of violence by McCann who breaks Stanley's eye glasses during the party. In doing so he is destroying the thing which symbolizes Stanley's status as an artist. The drum is an image of deterioration and the final destruction of his career as a pianist. By breaking the drum, he puts an end to his being Meg's little boy and this reflects his desire to liberate himself from her maternal shackles.

Throughout the play, Stanley confronts many psychological pressures imposed upon him by some external forces. He is unable to make confrontation with the outer world. He exposes his vulnerable personality in the birthday party where he appears as a man who avoids the courageous confrontation with the things that disturb his life and turn it into a prison. Before the birthday party starts, Stanley sits in the corner of the room silent and pathetic

recollecting his past as a successful pianist. It appears that human memory is one of the internal powers that can enslave man and give him no chance to be free from his boundaries.<sup>29</sup>

As Bob Bows observes in his review of the 2008 Germinal Stage Denver production, at first "*The Birthday Party* appears to be a straightforward story of a former working pianist now holed up in a decrepit boarding house," in this play as in his other plays, "behind the surface symbolism ... in the silence between the characters and their words, Pinter opens the door to another world, cogent and familiar: the part we hide from ourselves;" ultimately, "Whether we take Goldberg and McCann to be the devil and his agent or simply their earthly emissaries, the puppeteers of the church – state apparatus or some variation therefore, Pinter's metaphor of a bizarre party bookended by birth and death is a compelling take on this blink - of - an - eye we call life."<sup>30</sup>

Pinter creates a nostalgic world of the past which perhaps exists only in the minds of the characters. His nostalgia arises from the mundane memories of his characters and drives its force from the contradiction between a character's present and imaginary memories of the past. As the characters grow down to earth, they arouse sympathy to a great extent. Pinter does not give his characters any chance to escape into the world of the past memories and in doing so he puts them in a very difficult situation.<sup>31</sup>

In an interview with Jeremy Isaacs in 1997, Pinter gave credence to another widely canvassed interpretation. Stating that our lives in Britain are constrained, and he identifies Stanley as a man who will not follow society's rules. Pinter posited that Stanley is not necessarily a very pleasant character, but a free one and Society finds him intolerable, so it sends Goldberg and McCann down to "get him".<sup>32</sup> There are strong indications that Goldberg and McCann have a mobsters' job to do:

Goldberg what do you think of that, McCann? There's a Gentleman living here. He's got a birthday today, and he's forgotten all about it. So we're going to remind him. We're going to give him a party... we'll bring him out of himself (I, 43).

Goldberg and McCann play the role of the persecutors who torment Stanley and bring his destruction; they are themselves victims to outside forces. In this play, the characters try to understand both the power that is after them and their own conditions. In presenting a character like Stanley, Pinter tries to portray the character's feeling of internal sin and guilt feeling and external crime and punishment. Stanley's internal crime is his incestuous feelings towards his mother. He moves to a new place and becomes the spoiled son of his present family. Then he displaces the present father, Petey, to establish a lover – son relationship with his wife. However, he does not admit his sin until his confrontation with Goldberg and McCann. Stanley feels that he is entangled in relationship with Meg and he is unable to liberate himself from it. Meg recognizes that Stanley is menaced by the strangers' presence, but, she cannot protect him. Petey is also unable to save him, though he realizes the evil intentions of the two men.<sup>33</sup>

The two men, Goldberg and McCann drag Stanley out of his refuge and bring him face to face with reality. When Stanley confronts McCann, he finds him tearing a sheet of paper into five equal strips. Stanley twice picks up a strip of the paper that McCann tears but the latter prevents him “Mind it. Leave it” (II, 49). This scene shows symbolically how the two men, who could be

representatives of society, tear him into pieces in order to prevent him from achieving his dreams as an artist. Stanley's destruction of his past career as a pianist in an earlier scene may lead to this interpretation.

Goldberg and McCann contribute to the transformation of Stanley from a boy to a man. They try to make him feel some responsibility towards others, his old mother and perhaps a fiancée he left. After provoking his guilt to the point that he finally screams, the menacers consider their main task of killing the old Stanley is done, and Goldberg tells him "You're dead" ( II, 62 ). But he is not dead yet because he kicks Goldberg in the stomach.

Goldberg and Meg engage in a kind of war for the possession of Stanley. Goldberg gets the final triumph because of his strength of will. He succeeds in separating Stanley the infant from the womb of his mother and leaves him facing moral, social, and familial obligations outside. He causes a kind of forced birth. He tells Stanley that rising each day ought to be more like birth.<sup>34</sup> Act three shows that Stanley has become a new man the morning after his birthday party. Goldberg talks to Stanley about the future ahead after his symbolic rebirth. He describes the new world as full of material benefits. Goldberg agrees to provide him not only with material things used by grownups but also with "baby powder", and he finally calls him "Stanny boy" (III, 93 – 94).

In the final scene, Petey behaves with a feeling of responsibility towards Stanley. In an attempt to avoid thinking about Stanley's defeat and his failure to save him, Petey opens the newspaper to find five strips of an inside sheet flutter to the floor. They "remain on stage, mockingly radiating the destructive power of Goldberg and McCann".<sup>35</sup>

Man may be imprisoned by his thoughts and doubts that make him unable to establish a healthy relationship with other people. The image of Stanley at the end of the play is that of the nostalgic adult who leaves the world of

childhood or the image of Adam driven out of paradise to face the hardships of life.

Pinter does not talk explicitly about the situation at all; Meg knows deep down, that Stanley has gone, but she cannot and will not admit it. Four times Meg repeats that she was the belle of the ball, but actually it was the disastrous party through which her substitute son was destroyed and taken away from her. It is clear that she does not want to say anything about the impression she made at that party. She is trying to hang on to the illusion that everything is still as it was, that the disastrous party was not a disaster but the success she had hoped for.<sup>36</sup>

The play reflects the dilemma of man living in a fantastic world of persecutory anxiety. The characters in this play keep a close link with their primitive selves. That is why they do not appeal to the readers or to the audience as adult human beings. Pinter depicts the dilemma of man who is battling against some internal forces.<sup>37</sup> The play depicts the dilemma of self in its confrontation with the mysterious, represented by death and also depicts the terror of loneliness. That's why characters have nostalgic thoughts of the past.

### **Conclusion**

Pinter's plays reflect the failure of the human relationship to protect man from feelings of solitude and fear. This is reflected through dialogues that reflect man's failure to unmask his true self to others because this leaves him vulnerable to other's attack. *The Birthday Party* is Pinter's first full – length play which combines some characters and situations of his early plays. The play portrays the suffering of man who withdraws from social life and lives in a state



of passivity and indecision. It portrays man's fear of outer threats that are imposed on his life and destroy his defenses. These threats may symbolize two struggling tendencies with man's psych each tries to get dominance. The final picture is that of a man, lonely, vulnerable, victimized and helpless. His vision is tragic and ironic. He is searching for identity and understanding, for ways to cope with human loneliness in a world that is socially confused.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Martin Esslin , *The Theatre of The Absurd* , revised edition (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980) , p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> Simon O. Lesser, "Reflections on Pinter's *The Birthday Party*" *Contemporary Literature* .Vol. 13. No 1. University of Wisconsin Press, 1972 , p. 36.  
(URL:[http:// www.uwpress.wisc.edu/journals/journals/cl.html](http://www.uwpress.wisc.edu/journals/journals/cl.html))  
accessed January, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Hasina Wahida, Living in a no Man's Land: Space, Identity and Human Dilemma in Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* . *Lapis Lazuli -An International Literary Journal (LLIJ)* Vol.3/ NO.2/Autumn 2013, 8  
(URL:[http:// www.pintersociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Hasina-Wahida-](http://www.pintersociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Hasina-Wahida-))  
accessed February, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> John Somers, *The Birthday Party: Its Origins, Reception , Theme and Relevance for Today (University of Exeter, U. K, 2008), P. 1.*

<sup>5</sup> John Pesta , " Pinter Usurper , " in *Pinter : A Collection of Critical Essays* , Arthur Ganz (Englewood Cliffs, N . J. Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> See Pinter's speech to the Seventh National Student Drama Festival in Bristol, *Sunday Times*, London, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1962, quoted in Esslin, *Peopled Wound*, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Esslin , " Godot and His Children : The Theatre of Samuel Beckett Harold Pinter", in *Modern British Dramatist: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed., John Russell Brown (New Jersey. Prentice - Hall, 1968) , pp. 60- 63.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Stephen, *Harold Pinter* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1980) , p.12.

<sup>9</sup> John Pesta, p. 123.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid . , pp. 131, 135.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid . , p. 134.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Ganz , “ Introduction ,” in *Pinter : A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs , N. J. Prentice - Hall, Inc. , 1972) , pp. 13 , 14.

<sup>13</sup> John Lahr , “ Pinter and Chekhov : The Bond of Naturalism ,” in *Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays* ( Englewood Cliffs, N. .Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1972, p.62.

<sup>14</sup> Katherine H. Burkman , *The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter : Its Basis in Ritual* (Ohio : Ohio State University Press , 1971) , p.20.

<sup>15</sup> Susan C. W. Abbotson , *Thematic Guide to Modern Drama* (London: Greenwood Press, 2003), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Esslin , pp. 272 , 273.

<sup>17</sup> “Dilemma.” Dictionary Definitions. (URL:[http:// www.yourdictionary.com](http://www.yourdictionary.com)) accessed January, 2015.

Dilemma - Examples and Definition of Dilemma. <sup>18</sup>  
(URL: [http:// www. literarydevices.net/dilemma](http://www.literarydevices.net/dilemma))

<sup>19</sup> Hasina Wahida, p.85.

<sup>20</sup> Harold Pinter. *The Birthday Party*. 1976 ; rep .( London : Eyre Methuen, 1980), II, p. 41. All further citation to the play are taken from this edition.

<sup>21</sup> Ronald Hayman, *Contemporary Playwrights: Harold Pinter* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1975), p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Skemman “ I'm not in the mood for a party tonight ” The Orwellian Roots of the Pinteresque , May / 2011.  
[Skemman.is/stream/get/.../Magnus Teitsson AB ritgero\\_ pdf](http://Skemman.is/stream/get/.../Magnus%20Teitsson%20AB%20ritgero_.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Ronald Hayman, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in William Baker and Stephen Ely Tabachnick, *Harold Pinter* ( Edinburgh , Oliver & Boyd , 1973 ) , p. 53.

<sup>25</sup> Ruby Cohn , “ The World of Harold Pinter ,” in *Pinter : A Collection of Critical Essays* , ed., Arthur Ganz , p. 96.

<sup>26</sup> Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson , *Harold Pinter* ( London Methuen & Co. Ltd , 1983 ) , p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> Charles A. Carpenter , “ *The Birthday Party* ” , in *Insight IV* , ed . Hermann J. Weigand ( Frankfurt : Hirschgraben – Verlage , 1979 ) , pp . 107,108.

<sup>28</sup> Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson , Pp. 42 , 43.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in William Baker and Stephen Ely Tabachnick, p. 52.

<sup>30</sup> Bob Bows, "The Birthday Party" Rating: \*\*\* (out of four stars)", *The Denver Post. Entertainment*. 11 April 2008  
(URL:[http:// www.denverpost.com/theater/ci\\_8964419?source=infinite](http://www.denverpost.com/theater/ci_8964419?source=infinite))

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in William Baker and Stephen Ely Tabachnick, p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> John Somers , p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Patrick Roberts , *The Psychology of Tragic Drama* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul , 1975), pp.77,78.

<sup>34</sup> Charles A. Carpenter, p. 105.

<sup>35</sup> John Pesta , p. 127.

<sup>36</sup> Martin Esslin , “ Language & Silence ” , *The Theatre of The Absurd* , p . 37.

<sup>37</sup> Patrick Roberts , p. 84.

**Bibliography**

Abbotson , Susan C. W. *Thematic Guide to Modern Drama* . London:

Greenwood Press, 2003.

Almansi , Guido and Simon Henderson . *Harold Pinter*. London:

Methuen & Co. Ltd , 1983.

Baker, William and Stephen Ely Tabachnick. *Harold Pinter*. Edinburgh:

Oliver & Boyd , 1973.

Bows, Bob. "The Birthday Party" Rating: \*\*\* (out of four stars)", *The*

*Denver*, Post. Entertainment. 11 April 2008 .

[http://www.denverpost.com/theater/ci\\_8964419?source=infinite](http://www.denverpost.com/theater/ci_8964419?source=infinite)

Burkman , Katherine H. . *The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter: Its*  
*In Ritual* . Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1971.

*Basis*

Carpenter , Charles A. " *The Birthday Party* ," in *Insight IV*. ed.,

Hermann J. Weigand . Frankfurt : Hirschgraben – Verlage , 1979.

Cohn , Ruby . "The World of Harold Pinter ," in *Pinter : A Collection*

*of Critical Essays*. ed., Arthur Ganz . Englewood Cliff, N. J.

Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1972.

"Dilemma." Dictionary Definitions. [http:// w.yourdictionary.com](http://w.yourdictionary.com)

Esslin , Martin . "Godot and His Children: The Theatre of Samuel

Beckett and Harold Pinter ", in *Modern British Dramatist :A*

*Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed., John Russell Brown. New

Jersey Prentice - Hall , 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_. " Language & Silence", In *The Theatre of The Absurd*.

Revised edition , London : Eyre Methuen , 1980.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Peopled Wound Pinter Plays of Harold*. London: Methuen  
young books, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1970.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Revised edition. London: Eyre  
Methuen , 1980.

Ganz , Arthur . "Introduction," in *Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays*.  
Englewood Cliffs, N. J. Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1972.

Hayman , Ronald . *Contemporary Playwrights: Harold Pinter*. London:  
Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1975.

*Essays*. John, Pesta . "Pinter Usurpers," in *Pinter: A Collection of Critical  
, Hall Inc. Ed., Arthur Ganz. Englewood Cliffs, N. J. Prentice  
1972.*

Lahr , John . " Pinter and Chekhov : The Bond of Naturalism ," in  
*Pinter : A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs , N . J.  
Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1972.

Lesser ,Simon O. "Reflections on Pinter's *The Birthday Party*."  
*Contemporary Literature* .Vol. 13. No 1. University of Wisconsin  
Press, 1972.

[http:// www.uwpress.wisc.edu/journals/journals/cl.html](http://www.uwpress.wisc.edu/journals/journals/cl.html)

Pesta , John . " Pinter Usurpers. " In *Pinter : A Collection of Critical  
Eassys*. Ed., Arthur Ganz (Englewood Cliffs , N . J. Prentice-  
Hall, Inc. 1972.

Pinter , Harold . *The Birthday Party* . 1976 ; rep . London : Eyre

Methuen , 1980.

Roberts, Patrick. *The Psychology of Tragic Drama*. London:

Routledge /content /content & Kegan Paul , 1975.

Skemman . “ I'm not in the mood for a party tonight ” The Orwellian

Roots of the Pinteresque . May / 2011

Skemman. is / steam / get / ... / Magnus\_Teitsson\_AB\_ritgero\_ pdf

Somers , John . *The Birthday Party : Its Origins , Reception , Theme and Relevance for Today*. University of Exeter, U. K, 2008.

Stephen , Martin . *Harold Pinter* . London : Longman Group Limited , 1980.

Wahida , Hasina . Living in a no Man's Land: Space, Identity and

Human Dilemma in Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* . *Lapis Lazuli -An International Literary Journal (LLIJ)* Vol.3/ NO.2/Autumn 2013,8.

[http:// www.pintersociety.com/wp-](http://www.pintersociety.com/wp-)

content/uploads/2013/11/Hasina-Wahida-

## معضلة الانسان في مسرحية هارولد بنتر حفلة عيد الميلاد

الباحثة : هدى كاظم علوان

### الخلاصة

غالبا ما يصور هارولد بنتر معضلة الأشخاص المندثرين والذين لا يستطيعون الإحساس بكيانهم يشعر هؤلاء الأشخاص بأنهم مستنفذين ومحيطين . وهم يتراجعون إلى عالم محدود يبحثون فيه عن الأمان والحماية. إن شعور هؤلاء الأشخاص بالأمان مهدد من قبل قوى خارجية متمثلة بأشخاص دخلاء والذين يمثلون القوى الخفية التي لا يمكن دحرها . إن الصراع ما بين هؤلاء الدخلاء والشخصيات ينتهي أخيراً بهزيمة الشخصيات . ويبقى سبب هجوم الدخلاء على الشخصيات مبهم وغير واضح . ان صفة الغموض هي عامة في مسرحيات بنتر و تمثل واحدة من صفاتها الرئيسية . يحاول هذا البحث مناقشة تعامل بنتر مع المعضلة في أولى مسرحياته حفلة عيد الميلاد (1957) . كيف يهرب الإنسان من واقعه ، ما هو نوع الخطر الذي يهاجم الإنسان ، لماذا لا يستطيع الإنسان مقاومة هذه التهديدات ، هي الأسئلة التي سيتم الإجابة عنها من خلال هذا البحث .

كلمات المفتاح : المعضلة، الأشخاص المندثرين، الغموض، التهديدات، الاحباط

### About the Author :

Instructor Huda Kadhim Alwan has a B. A. in English Language / College of Arts / University of Baghdad. She got her M. A. in English Literature/ College of Languages. She works in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research / Scholarships and Cultural Relations Directorate. She has published three researches in English Literature/ novel between 2011-2015.

Email : [huka.master@yahoo.com](mailto:huka.master@yahoo.com)