

The Dramatic Significance of the Intruders In Selected Plays of Harold Pinter

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Abstract

Harold Pinter is one of the exponent dramatists of modern English drama. His plays are distinguished from all others by their sense of mystification, suspense and ambiguity. This springs from the gap between the surface action and the hidden or underling meaning of the action of characters. This creates a hidden reality and a multiplying meaning.

In many of Harold Pinter's plays, the conflict is set in motion by the arrival of a visitor (intruder) at the door. Within this unexpected admission a particular power struggle emerges, and by the end of the play, someone has lost the struggle and someone has won.

This study deals with the dramatic significance of the character of the intruder and how this character is employed dramatically by the playwright. This study is divided into three chapters and a conclusion.

Chapter one is introductory. It deals with the life and works of Harold Pinter. Chapter two concerns with Pinter's most famous play, *The Birthday Party*. It tells the story of Stanley who lives in a boardinghouse and is followed by two men who come to take him back to Monty. Chapter three deals with Pinter's first successful play, *The Caretaker*. This play is about two brothers and a tramp who is invited by one of them. The coming of this tramp starts a war of dominance. The three characters struggle throughout the play to dominate the place they live

in. The study ends with a conclusion that sums up the findings of this study and a bibliography.

Harold Pinter as a Dramatist

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) is one of the most prominent and influential dramatists of modern English drama. He wrote twenty-nine plays and twenty-one screen plays and who directed twenty-seven theater productions¹. Two important facts should be noticed about Pinter; first he was born to Jew parents and second he worked as an actor before he became a playwright. Pinter was born in Hackney, a working class neighborhood in London. His father was a tailor and used to work for twelve hours a day to secure a good life to his family. But he eventually lost his business and had to work for someone else². Pinter grew in a very critical period in modern history. He witnessed World War II. He was evacuated to castle in Cornwell to avoid the German bombing. The experience of war and destruction had a great influence on his views that he refused to enlist as a part of his national services. He ended up paying a fine for not completing his national service³.

Pinter's literary life started with acting. He worked for the regional theatre in 1950s⁴. The first play he wrote was *The Room*, a short play presented in 1957. But his first full length play was *The Birthday Party*, which was premiered in London in 1958. It was attacked severely by critics and closed within a week. The only one who offered a descending opinion was Harold Hobbson of the Sunday Times⁵.

The theater of the absurd was the expression of its age. The former ages with all their certainties and religious beliefs have been shattered and man is left to a life that has lost all meaning. The absurd drama tends to express the absurdity of the human condition after the traumatic events of World War II. So, it strives to portray

the senselessness of human situation by achieving a kind of unity between its assumption and the form in which it is expressed.

Almost all of the writers who had influenced Pinter's dramaturgy were either founders or forerunners of the avant-garde Theatre of the Absurd. Eventually, Martin Esslin (1964), in his classification of the absurdist writers in his book, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, considers Pinter as "one of the most promising exponents of the Theatre of the Absurd . . . in the English speaking world."⁶ Pinter's plays have many features in common with the theater of the absurd. In his plays there is a breakdown in communication, irrationality, and meaningless repetitive actions of characters as most absurdist have in their plays. However he succeeded in creating a dramatic style of his own. Pinter joins form and content using language to present a picture of reality itself.⁷ He is concerned with the needs a character voices as the reason behind the language used. His concern is with the shape of words of his creative dramatic world. This concern enables him to possess a distinctive style which is given his name that entered the dictionary as an adjective Pinterish or Pinteresque. Ronald Hayman states that: "No adjectives have been derived from the name of Osborne Beckett, Whiting or Arden but the word Pinterish or Pinterisque is already familiar which must mean that his style is the most distinctive or at least the most easily recognizable."⁸

Pinter's drama is also characterized as "comedy of menace"⁹, a genre where the writer allows us to eavesdrop on the play of domination and submission hidden in the most mundane of conversations. In a Pinter play, the apparently funny scene is simultaneously frightening and inhumane in terms of what the characters are experiencing. Menace is felt through his work. For example, in the early plays Pinter uses cabaret devices and blackouts to bewilder the audience or create a mood of menace.

Critics have applauded Pinter's mastery of pauses and silences for their expression of modern alienation and lack of genuine connection between human

beings¹⁰. Pinter used silence, dots and pauses throughout the dialogue in his plays. This strategy or breaks in the fluent speech have their meanings; a pause is a bridge that gives the audience the idea that the speaker was on one side before it and became on the other after it. Silence is a dead stop when a confrontation has become too extreme. The three dots is a tiny hesitation. So any part of the dialogue that Pinter intends to give a message or impart a particular effect is followed by a pause or a silence. This technique makes the message sink into the consciousness of the audience. Through the silence, pause and dots Pinter transports his audience to the world of horror by making them share the psychological stress and tensions of his characters¹¹.

Pinter's characters are not fully revealed, there is a kind of ambiguity of their past lives. This is partly because the dramatic world reflects or deals with a short climactic period in the lives of his characters. Drama starts with entrance of an outsider to create the warring elements of drama. It is also because Pinter seeks a higher degree of realism in the theatre . People in real life deal with each other without knowing their history and background. Finally, it is impossible to know the real motivation of human actions because of the complexity of the psychological nature of human beings.¹²

The major body of Pinter's works can be seen in terms of thematic progression. The first stage of Pinter's works with *The Room* (1957), *The Birthday Party* (1958), and *The Dumb Waiter* (1960) presents the idea of an individual's fear without exploring the origin of menace. In the second stage including *A Slight Ache* (1961), *The Dwarfs* (1963), and *The Caretaker* (1960) Pinter begins to explore the cause of menace that develops from emotional

needs. The third stage with *The Collection* (1962), *The Lover* (1963) and *The Homecoming* (1965) emphasizes movement and

change, with Pinter exploring different psychological needs. The fourth stage with *Landscape* (1969), *Silence* (1969), *Old Times* (1971), *No Man's Land* (1975) and *Ashes to Ashes* (1996) is an extension of Pinter's vision and his main concern, present in his work since the beginning, the problem of self and the sense of isolation of the human condition¹³.

The Birthday Party

The Birthday party (1958) is Pinter's first full length play. Critics and reviewers, with the exception of Harold Hobson, attacked the play severely as they found the style obscure. It only ran for a short time on the stage. The play was revived in 1959 and this production helped to turn the tide in Pinter's direction¹⁴. The play is set in a seaside boarding house kept by a couple in their sixties. Meg a slovenly but motherly woman and her husband Petey, a silent but kind old man. The central character is Stanley, a man in his thirties. He is the only resident in the house. He is pathetic and isolated man who finds a refuge in the house.

The play begins with Petey sitting at the breakfast table reading a paper. His wife Meg prepares breakfast for him. Her attitude is a mixture of suffocating motherly attentiveness and Self-praise. Their dialogue is full of repeated and meaningless questions. They are talking but not communicating. This normal scene is shortly cut when Petey informs Meg that two men are interested in staying at the boarding house. Meg is thrilled by the news but the way Stanley reacts, when he hears of the coming of the two strangers, is completely different. Stanley's reaction seems exaggerated. He looks agitated and starts asking Meg several questions:

Stanley : When was this? When did he see them?

Meg: Last night.

Stanley: Who are they?

Meg: I don't know.

Stanley: Didn't he tell you their name?

Meg: No. (Act I p.20)

This reaction creates suspense and the dramatic situation takes its shape with news of these outsiders. Stanley asks these questions perhaps because his isolation is threatened by these intruders. He is an isolated man who seeks a refuge in Meg's boarding house. He clings to the security of that house and refuses to go out. Meg almost forces him to leave his room for breakfast and he even refuses to take Lulu, their neighbor in a picnic. The scene with Meg illustrates his immaturity and the need to act in a childish way. He puts up with her fussy mothering which even goes to the extreme of asking him: "did you pay a visit this morning?" (Act I) He likes to do nothing but lie in bed and sit indoors like a child afraid of going to school.¹⁵ The way he is treated by Meg and even Lulu and Petey carries the indication that Stanley is surrounded by a protective circle of maternal and warmth affectation. This circle is about to be penetrated by the coming of the intruders. So Stanley's sense of danger and loss of ease is due to what Esslin called "Man's fear of being driven out from his warm place of refuge on earth."¹⁶

The two intruders arrive before the end of Act One and it soon becomes clear that they are after Stanley. The two men talk about the job and they seem determined to do it. Their job is to take Stanley back to Monty. The nature of this place is never revealed. It might be a secret organization which Stanley has betrayed or a mental institution where Stanley was and escaped. Whether MacCann or Goldberg agents of this organization or male nurses of a mental institution, they represent a source of threat to the safe and secure world of Stanley. Their presence lit the stark of struggle in the play. The struggle between two forces, the inside force and the outside force. The inside force is

represented by Meg, Lulu and Petey. And of course the outside force is the two intruders. Both forces are fighting over Stanley, one is protective and the second is destructive. The intruders are determined to take Stanley with them and the defenders seem ineffective and unaware of their intentions. Even Stanley is unable to save himself.

He asks Lulu to run away with him but when she asked him where, he confesses he has no plan. He merely wants to get away, to escape.

The meeting with the two intruders is inevitable and their presence is used as an external event that exposes Stanley's sense of guilt. He makes a pathetic effort. First of all to convince McCann that he isn't the man they are looking for. He also tries to get rid of Goldberg by pretending to be the manager of the boarding house and saying that they don't have a room for him. Stanley's deep sense of guilt and the sense of being indebted to others explain his helplessness in the face of the intruders who have breached his haven and threatened his secure life.

Act one ends by a scene with Meg giving Stanley his birthday present, a toy drum. This present sums up her attitude to the substituted son who can't bear her but has no strength to escape. Her fussy attentiveness shows an intrinsic desire to give and receive attention¹⁷. This drum has a symbolic and dramatic value. Stanley, as he claims, used to be a pianist:

Stanley: Played the piano? I've played the piano all over the world .All over the country.(pause) I once gave a concert .

Meg: A concert?

Stanley: (reflectively) Yes .It was a good one too. They were all there that night..... Meg: What did you wear?

Stanley (to himself): I had a unique touch . Absolutely unique..... .then after that you know what they did? They carved me up.Carved me up.

My next concert..... I went down there to play.Then,when I got there,

the hall was closed, the place was shuttered up.....I'd loke to know who was responsible for that.....They want me to crawl down on my knees.
(Act I p.22-3)

Haymann suggests that the drum is an ingenuous attempt to give to the failed musician something that will make up for his not having a piano¹⁸. Stanley's

reminiscence of his concert shed the light on the idea that Stanley stands for the artist who must resist the strait jackets of clichés which society would force on him¹⁹. Act One ends with Stanley putting the drum around his neck and beats it, marching around the table. But he loses control and starts banging it frantically.

Act Two culminates in the actual party, which Meg has arranged for Stanley. She invites McCann, Goldberg and Lulu. The tension is built up slowly before the party. McCann, to amuse himself tears a sheet of newspaper into vertical strips. When Stanley isn't allowed to touch them, the audience can't help wondering why. This scene is full of hidden menace no actual violence is used but there is a sense that the two men have certain authority over him. MacCann forces him to stay and Goldberg starts to interrogate him with rapid –fire questions:

Goldberg: When did you come to this place?

Stanley: Last year.

Goldberg: Where did you come from?

Stanley: Somewhere else.

Goldberg: Why did you come her?

Stanley: My feet hurts.

Goldberg:Why did you stay?

Stanley: I had a headache..... (act two p. 48-9)

Then after so many questions and accusations that put him under deep pressure like betraying the organization or killing his wife. MacCann snatches his glasses and keep asking him very teasing questions .

The pressure of the interrogation makes Stanley aggressive that he attacked Goldberg by kicking him in the stomach. This scene is interrupted by an offstage drum beating. Meg is coming down the stairs in her evening dress playing the drum. The drum beat ends the conflict and the birthday party starts with Stanley still protesting .

that it isn't his birthday. The party is the center of the play, the nexus of the two circles around Stanley, one protective, one destructive. The intruders here represent the power of conformity. It is a power in relation which is such as to direct or determine the behavior of others²⁰. This assumption can be seen through the nature of the two intruders. Goldberg can be seen as the brain of the two. He is always full of advice and reminiscences to his inferiors. He has many names like Nat , Simey, Benny and other names. He talks about himself with all the self-satisfaction and self-made man. As for MacCann, he represents the muscles. The party begins and the lights are turned off. Stanley moves from one spot to another but ironically his friends cannot perceive the danger he is in.

The threat the intruders represent and the pressure they put him under with their menacing attitude have thrown him back into a rather primitive effects. James R. Hollis states that Stanley "at the end of act one had been pushed back upon his deepest and most primitive emotions (in reference to the drum beating) and act two concludes with total dissolution of his personality and his reversion into primitivism,"²¹ Each point of violence or near violence, it is Stanley, who seems so unaggressive, who is the attacker, and a woman who is the victim. When the stage is in darkness and after the game of blind man's

buff that Goldberg suggests to play and when MacCann snatches Stanley's glasses and breaking them deliberately. Stanley tries to strangle Meg and rape Lulu.

The last act takes place the following morning, Stanley's friends have never quite understood what went on the night before. A large car sits outside . When Stanley finally enters , he is radically transformed. He is clean, shaven. He wears a black jacket, White collar, and a bowler in one hand and broken glasses in the other. He is silent and totally shattered. Goldberg and MacCann promise to take care of his very need:

Goldberg: We'll make a man of you.

MacCann: And a woman.

Goldberg" You'll be reorientated.

MacCann: You'll be rich. (act three p. 83-4)

These words are meaningful and meaningless at the same time, they are like a web which Stanley cannot escape. His only reply to their promises is an anguished cry. The two intruders take Stanley with them saying that Monty will take care of him. When Petey protests he is told that maybe Monty would like to see him too. The anonymous threat is enough to silence Petey.

Stanley's final docility is an indicative of his acceptance of guilt. In the day before, Stanley warns Meg that someone is coming to take her in a car with a wheelbarrow . She was frightened by this unspecified threat. This fear indicates that there is a sense of secret guilt. Ironically it's Stanley who is carted away by the big car. This is like a prophecy of doom in a Greek tragedy²²

The intruders in this play can be seen as the representatives of social conformity with the victim who is brain-washed and reborn according to the will of the outside world. Neither the house nor the motherly Meg can protect him. The intruders demonstrate the oppression of authority and how it breaks the will of the individual.

The Caretaker

The Caretaker is Pinter's first artistic and commercial success²². It received The Evening Standard Award for best play of 1960²³. It is a three-act play that deals with two brothers and a tramp. Aston and Mick are two brothers who live in the same house. They inhabit one room which brings us back to the idea of the room as a haven from the outside world. Mick is a successful business man. He owns a van and he seems to be buying and selling things. As for Aston, he seems to be entrusted with the task of taking care of the house which Mick has bought. The house is inhabitable except for one room which is cluttered up with old furniture and other junk which Aston has been accumulating. The play opens with Aston bringing in Davies, an old man in his sixties, whom he has saved from being beaten in a brawl in a café. The reason of the fight as Davies says was that he refused to remove a bucket of rubbish, which was not his duty. He says that his work is a cleaner in the café. He insists on doing the job proper to his position. The way he talks gives a good idea about him. Davies is a man who lacks self- knowledge. He is bitter and full of race-hatred. He rails against the Greeks, Poles and the blacks. He is full of resentment at his lowly position and the way people treat him. He complains to Aston about the way he was treated in the monastery:

All I'm asking is a pair of shoes.....It is taken three days to get here,
I said to him, three days without a bite, I'm worth a bite to eat, en
Get out round the corner to the kitchen , he says, get out round the corner,
and when you've had your meal, piss off out of it.....Meal?
I said, what do you think I am, a dog? Nothing better than a dog .
What do you think I am, a wild animal? (Act I p. 14-15)

He is a rootless wanderer who is keen to establish that he has rights. He always talks about his desire to go to Sid Cup to take his papers. He says he wanders under the name of Jenkins while the papers prove that his real name is

Mac Davies. These papers are supposed to prove his true identity. So his utmost dream is to get to Sid Cup because the papers " Prove who I am! I can't move without them papers." (Act I p.20). He asks Aston for a pair of shoes to wear. His desire to go to Sid Cup is not fulfilled because he has no shoes , "Shoes ? It's a matter of death and life to me."(Act I p. 13) and because of the bad weather, "If only the weather would break! Then I'd be able to get down to Sid cup." (act I p.19).Ironically when Aston offers him a pair of shoes, he refuses saying that he can't wear shoes that don't fit or they are too pointed.

As for the host, Aston, he seems to be a kind man who is compulsive about accumulating objects from junk shops like cupboards, vases, drawers and tools, he even bought a statue of Buddha. These things give the room its special atmosphere. He thinks they "might come in handy" (Act I p.16)and this might be the same reason behind bringing Davies with him. The room can be seen as an extension of his personality. He has a vague good will, he doesn't say much but he keeps lingering over petty household jobs like putting a plug in the toaster and he has a fumbling friendship with Davies²³. He suffered a bitter experience in a mental hospital where he had an electric shock treatment. Nevertheless, Aston invites Davies to stay with him in the room "till...you get yourself fixedup." (Act I p, 16). He even let him alone in the room and gives him the keys of house and the room which shows that he trusts him:

Davies: Well..... don't you want me to get out?

Aston: What for?

Davies:When you're out.

Aston: You don't have to go out..... I've got a couple of keys. This door and the

front door (he hands them to Davies.) (Act I p.24)

What creates the real tension in the play is Mick. He is very effective when silent .

He provides an air of mystery and tension from the beginning of the play by appearing and then going out when he hears the voices of Aston and Davies. He also provides violence and suspense from the first meeting with Davies. He attacks him by seizing his arm and forces it up his back and then he forces him to the floor. The way he treats him, in spite of the fact that he knows he is brought by his brother, indicates the fact that Davies is not welcomed by Mick. He treats him like an intruder or a thief. The act ends with this violent scene. Mick seems determined not to let an intruder into the house like an animal that would view its territory. His reaction to the old man is very confusing to the audience as well as to Davies himself. He alternates between scaring and making friends with him. Davies and for the first time feels lucky and safe in the room, he is treated kindly by Aston which gives him a sense of security and peace. He is given a sort of break from the life of tramping. This feeling is soon shattered by the hostility of Mick. Unlike, *The Birthday Party*, The victim and the central character is the intruder, Davies, not the two brothers who are the inhabitants of the house. Mick starts the second round of menace towards Davies with his interrogation:

Mick: What's your name?

Davies: I don't know you. I don't know who you are.

Pause

Mick: Eh?

Davies: Jenkins.

Mick: Jenkins?

Davies: Yes.

Mick's repetitive questions shows that he is possessed with an immature jealousy. He is jealous of Davies because he is given the bed that used to be his. Taking the bed stands for taking his place and threatening his relationship

with his brother. He is afraid of losing his brother to Davies. The relationship between

the two brothers doesn't seem to be normal. Aston never mentions to Davies that he lives with his brother . When Davies asks Aston if the house was his , he simply answers that he is in charge of it . As for Mick from the very beginning says: "... You're speaking to the owner, this is my room. You're standing in my house." (II p. 34) He accuses him of being a thief and he threatens to take him to the police station . He also says that he has taken his bed and stinks the place out. But with the entrance of Aston, Mick changes his mood and starts to talk to Aston about the leak in the roof of the room . This change of mood , especially the manner with Davies is mick's strategy to get rid of him. He always plays tricks on him. He frightens Davies in the darkness by using a vacuum cleaner that he makes him draw his knife to defend himself.

The central theme in the play is the struggle of dominance and possession. Mick tries to possess both the house and his brother. His dream of making the house a luxurious residence makes him fight for it against any intrusion even if it was by a pathetic tramp. At the same time he is ready to make friends with Davies to woo him away from Aston by offering him the job of a caretaker of the house:

Mick:..... Look I got a proposition to make to you. I'm of taking over the running of this place,

you see? I think it could be run a bit more efficiently.....How taker?

This offer confuses Davies. He is uncertain to which of the two brothers is the actual owner of the house. But when he realized the superiority of Mick, he decides to work with him.

Aston provides him the security and base that he desperately needs, yet he tries to play Mick against him and achieve the position of dominance in the house. Davies is very deceptive. He deceives himself and others. His deception

is built on overestimation he makes of himself. He is a great snob²³. He finds himself superior to the Indians next door. He blames them for the noises he has been making in his sleep. He accepts the job of a caretaker not as a privilege but as a right. He even finds himself superior to Aston, at least he's never been in a mental hospital.

The tension between Aston and Davies increases. Aston complains that Davies talks in his sleep and Davies complains about the open window near his bed. Davies knew about his experience in the hospital and instead of sympathizing with him, he takes advantage of his story. He sides with Mick and acts as his friend. He treats Aston as a lunatic:

Mick: Yes, you are a friend of his.

Davies: He is no friend of mine.

Mick: You're living in the same room with him, en't you?

Davies: He's no friend of mine. You don't know where you are with him. I mean with a bloke like you. You know where you are. (Act III p. 61).

So when Aston complains of the noises Davies makes in his sleep. Davies reacts with anger. He pulls his knife and threatens him. Aston suggests that it is time for Davies to find some other place to live, When Davies claims that he is put in charge of the house by Mick and it is Aston who should leave, Aston put Davies' things and hands it over to him.

Davies' last attempt to keep his place in the house is Mick. He complains to Mick about his brother but he goes so far as to suggest that Aston should be sent back to the mental hospital . Mick's attitude changes and he calls Davies a wild animal and barbarian. The game of dominance has ended with the victory of the two brothers . Davies has lost the favour of both brothers . The play ends with Davies desperately pleading for shelter in the room. Davies is the intruder and he has to be thrown out.

Conclusion

Pinter is one of the most influential dramatists of his age . In spite of the fact that he is considered as an absurdist , he succeeds in having a distinct style of his own . Pinter insists on the fact of the impossibility of verification and the impossibility of predicting and analyzing human's motives and actions. From this conviction springs the ambiguity and vagueness of the identity, background and history of the characters in his plays. So in a number of his plays he used the characters of the intruders so as to serve many dramatic purposes . Drama arises when a person or persons are up against an antagonist and drama continues till the persons reacts to the opposing persons. It is like an obstacle that takes the shape of another human will.

Pinter succeeds in sketching the character of the intruder so as to be seen on different levels. It can be seen as a way to start the warring element of drama . With the presence of the intruder a power struggle emerges. The intruder can be seen as a symbol or metaphor of the authoritarian intervention that destroys the identity of others and break their will. The intruder is also used as an external event that reveals the protagonist's hidden sense of guilt. The intruder is also used as a threat that exposes the inner personality of the other characters and their willingness to manipulate and dominate each other.

Notes

¹ Ramji Lall. Harold Pinter: *The Birthday Party: A Critical Study*. New Delhi, Rama Brothers. 2010 p. 4

² H. Aliakbari, Harold Pinter the Absurdist, existentialist playwright. In Journal of social sciences and Humanities of Shiraz University. Vol 23, no.1, 2006.

³ Ramji Lall. p. 6

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ronald Hayman. *Contemporary playwrights: Harold Pinter*. Heinmann. London, Edgucational books Ltd. 1975. P. 19

⁶ Martin Esslin. *The Theater of the Absurd*. England, Penguin books Ltd.1988. P.273

⁷ Chandra Shekhar Tiwari. *Harold Pinter and the Theater of the Absurd*. Lapiz Lazuli: An International Literary Journal. Vol. 2 No. 2 2012.p. 13

⁸ Ronald Hayman. P. 1

⁹ www.biography.com

¹⁰ Mercy Georg. *Language of Silence in the Plays of Harold Pinter*. In I Jellh an International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities. Volume II issue VI October 2014.p. 81

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Martin Esslin. p. 272

¹³ Chandra Shekhar Tiwari.p. 14

¹⁴ Ronald Hayman. P. 19

¹⁵ Ronald Hayman. P. 21

¹⁶ Marti

Esslin.p271

¹⁷ Ronald Hayman. P. 22

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Yuan Yu. *International Journal of Humanities and social sciences*. Vol. 4 No. 9 July 2014. P. 243

²¹ James R. Hollis. *Harold Pinter, The poetic of Silence*. USA. Southern Illinois University Press, 1970. P. 39

²² Ronald Hayman. P. 21

²³ Ronald Hayman. P. 39

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الأهمية الدرامية لشخصية المتطفل في مسرحيات مختارة لهارولد بنتر م.م. زينب لطيف عباس/ مديرة العامة لتربية ميسان

الملخص

يعتبر هارولد بنتر أحد أبرز كتاب المسرح الإنكليزي في العصر الحديث . إذ تميزت مسرحياته بنوع من الغموض والأثارة . ينبع هذا الغموض من الفجوة بين المعنى الظاهري والمعنى الباطني الذي قد تثيره الشخصية من خلال أحداث المسرحية .

يبدأ الصراع في العديد من مسرحيات هارولد بنتر عند وصول زائر (المتطفل) عند عتبة الباب . وبالسماح لذلك المتطفل ينبثق صراع بين قوتين ينتهي عادة بفوز قوة ما وخسارة الأخرى . إن هذا البحث يتعامل مع الأهمية الدرامية لشخصية المتطفل و كيف يتم توظيفها من قبل الكاتب . ينقسم البحث الى ثلاث فصول وخاتمة .

يعتبر الفصل الأول مقدمة للبحث ويتضمن حياة الكاتب وأهم أعماله . أما الفصل الثاني فهو يطرح مسرحية ” حفلة عيد الميلاد ” وهي أهم مسرحيات بنتر . تحكي هذه المسرحية قصة ستانلي الذي يسكن في نزل على الشاطئ ويلحق من قبل رجلين يرومان إعادته الى مونتري . أما الفصل الثالث فيتناول مسرحية الخولي وهي أول نجاح فني لبنتر تدور أحداث المسرحية بين أخوين ومتشرد الذي يصطحبه أحد الأخوين الى المنزل . و بقدم هذا المتشرد تنشب حرب السيطرة والتحكم . إذ يتصارع كل شخصية في المسرحية من أجل السيطرة على المكان او على الشخصية الأخرى . ينتهي البحث بخاتمة تلخص أهم ما توصل اليه هذا البحث من نتائج