

T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE



**THE REFLECTION OF POSTMODERN LITERATURE IN
PINTER'S PLAYS**

M.A. Thesis

SİNEM DURSUN

İstanbul, 2013

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SUPERVISOR
ASSIST. PROF. DR. GORDON MARSHALL

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APPROVAL PAGE



T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ

Yüksek Lisans Tez Onay Belgesi

Enstitümüz İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Yüksek Lisans Programı Y1112.020026 numaralı öğrencisi **Sinem DURSUN**'un "**The Reflection Of Postmodern Literature In Pinter's Plays**" adlı tez çalışması Enstitümüz Yönetim Kurulunun 20.06.2013 tarih ve 2013/15 sayılı kararıyla oluşturulan jüri tarafından *ay. bil. l. j. te* Tezli Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak *fabul.* edilmiştir.

Öğretim Üyesi Adı Soyadı

İmzası

Tez Savunma Tarihi : *4.7.13.*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Assist. Prof. Dr. Gordon Marshall and I would like to express my deepest gratitude to him for his priceless inspiration, encouragement, and helpful suggestions throughout the study. This study would not have been completed without his motivating feedbacks, positive approach and patience. I am also grateful to my graduate professors, Prof. Dr. Veysel Kılıç, Prof. Dr. Visam Mansur, Assist. Prof. Dr. Gamze Sabancı for contributing to my intellectual growth.

First and foremost, I would like to thank to my parents, Feridun Dursun and Nuray Dursun, my brother, Kadir Kemal Dursun, and my sister, Sibel Dursun Aydın, for always believing in me and supporting me throughout my life with their unconditional love and care. I wish to express my thanks to my nephews, Efe Aydın and Ege Aydın for cheering me up with their endless energy and cheerfulness whenever I feel depressed.

Furthermore, I am grateful to my friends Olcay Ergülü, Eylem Altuntaş, Şaziye Konaç and Kerem Geçmen who encouraged me with their stimulating suggestions, provided me with a number of books and shared their M.A. experience with me for the sake of supporting me in my hard days.

These individuals have helped me grow immeasurably both as a scholar and as a person, and I cannot adequately express my gratitude. Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart.

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ÖZET

Dursun, S. Pinter'in Oyunlarına Postmodern Edebiyat'ın Yansıması. İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, TR. Yüksek Lisans Tezi. İstanbul. 2013.

Duraklamaları, sessizlikleri, anlam belirsizlikleri ve oyunlarda paranoya yaratan ve tedirgin edici atmosferin yaşanmasına neden olan davetsiz misafirleriyle, Harold Pinter'in oyunları eleştirmenlerin, izleyicilerin ve okurların dikkatini çekmiştir. Pinter'in oyunları izleyicide, okurda ve eleştirmenlerde bulanık, tamamlanmamış, karmakarışık, belirsiz olma hissiyatı uyandırmıştır. Aslına bakıldığında, Pinter'in oyunlarına mal edilen bu sıfatlar postmodernizmin özellikleridir. Pinter'in oyunları, postmodern devrin ürünleri oldukları için, bu dönemin etkilerini edebiyatta, özellikle tiyatro eserinde görmek adına bu oyunlar benzersiz birer örnektir. Bu etkiler, Pinter'in oyunlarının belirsiz ve çok anlamlı olmasının altında yatan sebeplerdir. Bu çalışma, Pinter'in oyunlarında postmodern edebiyatın yansımalarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bunu başarmak adına, birçok yazar ve eleştirmen tarafından postmodern edebiyatın özellikle üstünde durulan özellikleri tek tek açıklanacaktır. Sonrasında, Pinter'in *The Homecoming* ve *The Hothouse* oyunları bu özellikler ışığında incelenecektir. Pinter'in birçok oyununda, davetsiz misafirler, güç mücadelesi, duraklamalar ve sessizlikler başlıca konular olarak ele alınmış ve ayrı ayrı incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada, oyunlar postmodern edebiyatın ışığında incelenirken, yukarıda bahsedilen konuları destekleyen durumlar, farklı bakış açılarını sunmak adına birer örnek olarak kullanılmıştır. Bu nedenle, oyunlar postmodern edebiyatın özellikleri olarak kabul edilen dil oyunları, büyük anlatıların yıkımı, parodi, alay, yazılırlı metin başlıkları altında incelenecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: dil oyunları, büyük anlatıların yıkımı, parodi, alay, yazılırlı metin.

ABSTRACT

Dursun, S. *The Reflection of Postmodern Literature in Pinter's Plays*. Istanbul Aydın University, Institute of Social Sciences, English Language and Literature. İstanbul. 2013.

Pinter's plays have always caught the attention of the critics with its pauses, silences, ambiguities, and intruders that create paranoid and alarming atmosphere in his plays. His plays are often regarded as blurred, incomplete, chaotic, and obscure by many of the audiences/readers as well as by critics. As a matter of fact, all these adjectives that are attributed to Pinter's plays are characteristics of postmodernism. As Pinter's plays are the work of the postmodern era, they are unique samples to see the effects of this period on literature, especially in drama. These effects are the underlying reasons that make Pinter's plays unclear and ambiguous. The aim of this study is to explore the reflection of postmodern literature in Pinter's two plays. To achieve this, the characteristics of postmodern literature, the ones which are especially emphasized by many authors and critics, will be explained one by one. Then, Pinter's *The Homecoming* and *The Hothouse* will be examined in the light of these features. In many of Pinter's plays, intruders, power struggles, pauses and silences have been the leading topics to study on separately. However, while analyzing the two plays within the light of the postmodern literature, situations that support the topics mentioned above will be used as an example for the sake of presenting different perspectives in the study. For this reason, the plays will be analyzed within the light of the generally accepted features of postmodern literature which are language games, the fall of metanarratives, parody, irony, writerly text.

Key Words: language games, parody, irony, writerly text, the fall of metanarratives

1. INTRODUCTION

Pinter: An Idiosyncratic Man

There are 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.

I believe that these assertions still make sense and do still apply to the exploration of reality through art. So as a writer I stand by them but as a citizen I cannot. As a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false? (Pinter)

Harold Pinter wrote the above excerpt in “Art, Truth & Politics” and then read it at his Nobel Lecture. This excerpt reflects both Pinter’s way of thinking and his way of writing: not creating definite or directive situations, not saying “this’s what is meant” (Smith 55). Pinter clarifies this situation by saying that “. . . there are at least twenty-four possible aspects of any single statement, depending on where you’re standing at the time or on what the weather’s like” (P1 vii). The excerpt challenges the dominant tendency of mankind which is the struggle to get the absolute truth, and to label something ‘true’ or ‘false’, i.e. not being able to accept that it can be true and false at the same time. That is the reason why, at first, and perhaps still, Pinter’s plays are regarded as obscure and unclear. Put simply, in his plays, he shapes his events in an obscure and indecisive way, and puts his characters in the middle of gloomy and stressful situations. The audience/reader is then faced with a play that runs through situations in which events do not come to a conclusion, and characters do not stay in peace. As life is not as it used to be, plays are not always written by playwrights to entertain or relax their audience/reader. Pinter’s way of perceiving the events and reflecting them in his plays mark the era he wrote his plays, which is the postmodern period. The atmosphere in his plays bears a resemblance to postmodernism, which will be analyzed in chapter II in detail. In the introduction, the factors (environmental, political, etc.) that underlie Pinter’s way of writing, which is called Pinteresque, will be analyzed.

Both Pinter's style of writing and the shaping of the events in his plays have been a matter of much debate. Initially, the audience/reader gets irritated by Pinter's plays because they are chaotic, unclear, open-ended, and do not resemble those which aim to entertain and relax the audience/reader. Generally, in such plays, the ideology of the playwright, his condemnations and appraisals are presented in at least one part of the play. After this, the audience/reader is relaxed and stays peacefully on his chair after being given the content and ideologies in the play so clearly and openly. However, this cannot be said for Pinter's plays. The following example will show how, at first, the audience/reader's reaction was aggressive to both Pinter's plays and style. The incident, which took place in Germany, demonstrates how the reaction of the audience was terrifying when they did not get satisfaction after seeing *The Caretaker*. In Düsseldorf, the audience booed the end of the play on the first night. It became so verbally violent, Pinter mentions that "I thought they were using megaphones, but it was pure mouth" (P1 viii). That night, Pinter was booed because his play did not satisfy the audience, that is to say the play did not present certain and definite dialogues, and a conclusive ending to the audience. As Pinter continued writing, his plays were labelled incomprehensible; however, he did not aim to write plays which were intentionally hard to understand. What made the plays incomprehensible was that they were products of new era – postmodern life - and Pinter's plays had the characteristics of it. However, any obscurity in a play is not accepted by the audience/reader because s/he has the tendency to desire the exact information be presented to them. To give an example, s/he would like to know whether Max's deceased wife was a prostitute or not, whether she had a love affair with Max's best friend or not, why Teddy accepted his wife to stay with his father and brothers as a kind of prostitute, why Ruth accepted the offer to become a prostitute without showing emotion in *The Homecoming*. The audience/reader would like to learn who the father of the child is in *The Hothouse*, what the source of the noise is that comes from upstairs, who killed the staff and what the reason for the massacre was. However, Pinter is not a playwright who satisfies his audience/reader by giving the answers to such questions. On the contrary, he wants his audience/reader to perceive and interpret his plays independently of what has been shown on the stage or has been written on the page. So, what affected Pinter to write in that way, and what was the prevailing situation in the world of drama when Pinter started to write his plays?

After acting in several plays, Pinter started his playwriting career in 1957, at a time when British theatre was “going through what has historically been identified as a crucial period of regeneration” (Batty 11). The aim of this generation was to “redefine the very nature of British drama and rewrite the established rules of what constituted appropriate modes and subjects of enquiry” (Batty 11). As Guido Almansi mentioned in *Pinter’s Idiom of Lies*:

Pinter has systematically forced his characters to use a perverse, deviant language to conceal or ignore the truth. In twenty years of playwriting he has never stooped to use the degraded language of honesty, sincerity, or innocence which has contaminated the theatre for so long. (71)

Generally characters use dialogue to display their underhanded strategies, but reveal their true selves in monologues. However, this is not true of Pinter’s plays, where both dialogue and monologue follow a “fool-proof technique of deviance” (Scott 72). If the audience wants to draw meaning from Pinter’s plays, s/he should not search for it in a character’s dialogue or monologue. Pinter does not aim to give a message, or impose an ideology on the audience. In his plays, any meaning concluded from the play is acceptable, and these meanings are relative which are shaped by each of the audience/reader’s own way of viewing the life. Pinter is a playwright who abstains from saying “[t]his’s what’s meant” (Smith 55). This relativity, which forces the participation of the audience/reader, creates the ambiguity which is the characteristic of Pinter’s plays. In one part of the speech he made in Hamburg, on being awarded the 1970 German Shakespeare Prize, he says “someone asked me what my works was ‘about’. I replied with no thought at all and merely to frustrate this line of enquiry: “the weasel under the cocktail cabinet” (P3 i). Towards the end of that speech he states that he is not writing about the weasel under the cocktail cabinet: “I am not concerned with making general statements. I am not interested in theatre used simply as a means of self-expression on the part of the people engaged in it” (P3 v) because Pinter himself views his own plays in the eyes of a single audience/reader. He never regards himself as the omniscient or omnipotent authority of his plays. On the other hand, he is aware of an audience who wants “clear and sensible engagement to be evidently disclosed in contemporary plays” (P1 x). But, Pinter has no tendency to satisfy or please them. He

labels this audience as one who would like the playwright “to be a prophet” (P1 x). He further states that if the audience wants a “moral precept” (P1 xi) from him, they should:

Beware of the writer who puts forward his concern for you to embrace, who leaves you in no doubt of his worthiness, his usefulness, his altruism, who declares that his heart is in the right place, and ensures that it can be seen in full view, a pulsating mass where his characters ought to be. (P1 xi)

Pinter regards this kind of writing as full of “empty definition and cliché” (P1 xi), and believes that when these ideas are restated throughout the work, they “become platitudinous, trite, meaningless” (P1 xi-xii). In addition to his opposition to those who behave in a prophetic manner, he isolates himself from his own plays, claiming no authority to provide meaning. Again in his speech in Hamburg, he mentions this, by saying “I remain bewildered by praise and really quite indifferent to insult. Praise and insult refer to someone called Pinter. I don’t know the man they’re talking about. I know the plays, but in a totally different way, in a quite private way” (P3 ii). As a playwright, instead of explaining and highlighting what he means in his plays, or what the purpose of a certain character’s behaviour means, he reinforces the impossibility of a single decisive meaning of any statement. In a speech made at the National Student Drama Festival in Bristol in 1962, he says:

.....there are at least twenty-four possible aspects of any single statement, depending on where you’re standing at the time or on what the weather’s like. A categorical statement, I find, will never stay where it is and be finite. It will immediately be subject to modification by the other twenty-three possibilities of it. No statement I make, therefore, should be interpreted as final and definitive. One or two of them may sound final and definitive, they may even be *almost* final and definitive, but I won’t regard them as such tomorrow, and I wouldn’t like you to do so today. (P1 vii)

In *About Pinter: The Playwright and The Work*, Mark Batty makes mention of the days Pinter started to write and produce his plays. It was a time when playhouses were being converted to cinemas, and theatre became a system shaped by commercial principles and supervised by commercial management groups. Contemporary plays were based on the lives of upper-middle class - on their safe and comfort environment and generally taking place in their luxuriously furnished living rooms. It was a time

when the audience wanted to see their own world reflected. Servants should have known their place, and obeyed their master without question, even in a play. It was a time when a play's success was at the mercy of a specific theatre-goer. In 1953 Mervyn Rattigan personified this type of theatre-goer as a fictional character in one of his plays named Aunt Edna. She is described as a woman "without knowledge or discernment" (Batty 15). Pinter illustrates the problems of the period referring to his potential audience:

They didn't want anything else, they were perfectly happy to put their feet up. That was what the theatre was normally about, going and putting your feet up and just receive something, received ideas of what Drama was, going through various procedures which were known to the audience. I think it was becoming a dead area. (Smith, "Harold Pinter's Recollections of his Career in the 1950s" 75)

In 1956, John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* was regarded by English Stage Company as "arguably the biggest shock to the system of British theatre since the advent of Shaw" (Taylor 37), while it was criticized by one reader, saying that, the "ESC could never put such a thing on in the theatre. One could not insult an audience in this kind of way" (Batty 18). Pinter and other playwrights of his generation were regarded as representing "the voice of the post-war discontent of their generation" (Batty 18). This discontent was so great that in a letter to Peter Wood, the director of *The Birthday Party*, Pinter mentions that his characters Goldberg and McCann are "the hierarchy, the Establishment, the arbiters, the socio-religious monsters who represent the shitstained strictures of centuries of tradition" (Batty 21). For the first time on British stage, the playwrights, were the voice of the discontent, presenting the lives of the working class, the way they lived and earned, the way they used language and behaved. That is the reason why these playwrights have been dubbed "kitchen sink dramatists" (Batty 18). Opposing the claims that he creates opaqueness and open-endedness deliberately in his plays, in his Bristol speech he laid emphasis on starting his plays "in quite a simple manner ... [t]he context has always been, for me, concrete and particular, and the characters concrete also" (P1 ix). As stated above, Pinter does not write his plays with the desire to create unclear situations and dialogue that does not come to a conclusion. That unclearness arises in communication itself, because rather than the failure of

communication he believes in the “danger of communication” (Almansi 73). About the danger of communication, Pinter states that:

I think we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else’s life is too frightening, to disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility. (Almansi 73)

The danger of communication is the reason for Pinter’s use of pauses and silences in his plays, which later becomes characteristic of his style. That is the reason why Pinter favours characters “who can present no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his motives” (P1 ix). He believes that “the more acute the experience the less articulate its expression” (P1 ix).

Pinter’s idiosyncratic style is affected by notions of paranoia, fear, disappointment, hostility that the world was impacted on humans all over the world, and further ongoing political incidents are also present in his playwriting. Because of the chaos and conflicts in the world, no one feels safe any more, and this situation is reflected in Pinter’s characters. Even when a person situated in their own home in a quiet, relaxing atmosphere, that feeling of paranoid is there torturing them bit by bit. Peace, tranquility, serenity are all gone. It was a period full of wars and rebellions: in 1936 (when Pinter was 6) the revolt in Palestine against British rule occurred and over 1,000 Palestinians were killed, also in the same year the Spanish Civil War began; in 1939 World War II began; in 1942 the ‘Quit India’ movement was launched - Gandhi and a majority of the Indian National Congress leadership were imprisoned; Japan captured Singapore and Burma; in 1945 the war ended in Europe; US dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Japan surrendered. In short, it was a period of conflict and chaos. This conflict could be also seen in daily lives of any ordinary citizen as well. As a Jewish boy who experienced the bombing of his London suburb in the Second World War resulting in the death of thousands of people, and who felt the agony of the Holocaust as a member of Jewish family, in the late 1950s Pinter assaulted a man upon hearing him say that “Hitler had not gone far enough in dealing with the Jews”

(Batty 21). Because of being evacuated from London to the country during the war when he was a child, of seeing a flying bomb explode in the street at the age of fourteen, of witnessing the flames in their garden and being forced to evacuate many times due to the bombs, feelings of paranoia and fear are dominant in Pinter's plays. To give an example, *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, and *The Dumb Waiter* all revolve around the assumption which suggests that the characters are safe in a room; however, they are panicked because of the fear of being disturbed or tortured by a threat coming from outside. The succeeding plays, such as *A Slight Ache*, *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*, all focus on the threat that comes from inside the characters. The fear of being betrayed or being disappointed can be seen clearly in the characters' dialogue and behaviour. Whether it stems from external or internal reasons, the effects of fear and paranoia are strongly felt in Pinter's plays, and this feeling gets stronger with the intrusion of outside figures, such as a blind black man in *The Room*, two government men in *The Birthday Party*, a wide box held by pulley in *The Dumb Waiter*, a matchseller in *A Slight Ache*, a friend from the past in *Old Times*. Pinter makes reason for this fear clear in an interview:

... an intruder comes to upset the balance of everything. . . I don't consider this an unnatural happening. I don't think it is all that surrealistic and curious because surely this thing, of people arriving at the door, has been happening in Europe in the last twenty years. Not only the last twenty years, the last two to three hundred. (Esslin, *Pinter the Playwright* 28).

What about Pinter's contemporaries? What do they think about Pinter's play? Steven Gale called Pinter's plays "complex collections of interrelated themes" (17), and Storch says that "the menace, terror, and loneliness . . . are generally applauded as Pinter's chief dramatic effects" (136). Paranoia, fear, disappointment, disintegration, evasiveness, hostility, power struggle, loneliness, menace, communication, memory are predominantly used themes in Pinter's plays. All these themes are inter-connected by pessimism, insecurity, introversion, loss of motivation, and this complexity of themes is a reflection of the postmodern era itself. Martin Esslin explains that this kind of writing is "a new language, new ideas, new approaches, and a new, vitalized philosophy to transform the modes of thought and feeling of the public" (*The Theatre of the Absurd* 15). Pinter does not use many characters in his plays, moreover, his plays are, in the

general sense, short and consist of pauses, silences and short dialogues. As John Pesta emphasizes:

In Pinter, as in life, it is extremely difficult to know the vital, secret facts of a character's past that determine present actions. Pinter's characters often give contradictory information about themselves, making it hard to know anything for certain about them. (135)

Austin Quigley explains that when discussing Pinter's plays it is "very difficult to argue that the plays as a group exemplify the large general truths of any existing theory about the nature of society, personality, culture, spirituality, anthropology, history or anything else of similar scope" (7). This characteristic of his plays makes it difficult for the audience/reader comprehend the work, because they are accustomed to seeing the substance of a play explicitly, and that Pinter's plays are challenging to analyze for a critic who feels more confident by setting his criticism on anything other than theoretical ground. Some critics state that Pinter is a naturalistic dramatist, some believe that he favours existentialism, and some claim that he is surrealist. However, he "remains on the firm ground of everyday reality" (Esslin, *Pinter the Playwright* 28). Even though some of his earlier plays like *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *A Slight Ache* are said to have had symbolic or supernatural elements, Pinter himself rejects the use of symbolism in his plays: ". . . I've . . . never envisaged my own characters as messengers of death, doom, heaven or the milky way, in other words, as allegorical representations of any particular force" (PI ix). Some critics have accused Pinter of withholding information from the audience/reader deliberately to create mystification. However, Pinter denies this accusation, and makes this situation clear in one of his interviews:

The world is full of surprises. A door can open at any moment and someone will come in. We'd love to know who it is, we'd love to know exactly what he has on his mind and why he comes in, but how often do we know what someone has on his mind or who this somebody is. (Esslin, *Pinter the Playwright* 30)

Martin Esslin supports Pinter's self defense in his book, *Pinter the Playwright* by saying "[h]ow, in the present state of our knowledge of psychology and the complexity and hidden layers of the human mind can anyone claim to know what motivates himself, let

alone another human being?” (31). As Storch underlines, the plays of Pinter “take their life from the very heart of reality” (146). Part of Pinter’s speech made in Hamburg reveals how Pinter remains distant to his plays for the sake of not being called the authority and decision-maker of his own plays: “I can sum up none of my plays. I can describe none of them, except to say: That is what happened. That is what they said. That is what they did” (P3 v).

He is his own man. He’s gone his own way from the word go. He follows his nose. It’s a pretty sharp one. Nobody pushes him around. He writes what he likes – not what others might like him to write. But in doing so he has succeeded in writing serious plays which are also immensely popular. You can count on the fingers of one hand those who have brought that off. (Smith, *Pinter in the Theatre* 9)

The excerpt above is from Pinter writing to his friend Tom Stoppard on Tom’s birthday. However, it looks as if Pinter is describing himself in that statement because each accolade in the excerpt defines Pinter himself exactly.

Pinter’s plays are regarded as hard to understand, being blurred and open-ended, and he is accused of writing delusively. As a matter of fact, these assertions are true because the plays are the embodiment of the period in which they were written. In order to explore the impact of postmodernism on the plays, Pinter’s two plays will be examined in this study. The study is comprised of five chapters. In the first chapter, which is introduction, the factors that underlie Pinter’s way of writing were examined. In the second chapter, the theory of post-modernism and the characteristics of postmodern literature will be examined. In compliance with these features *The Homecoming*, and *The Hothouse* will be analyzed in the third and the fourth chapter respectively. In the last chapter, which is the conclusion, the analysis of the two plays will be summed up.

2. POSTMODERNISM

2.1. Introduction to postmodernism

The term, let alone the concept, may thus belong to what philosophers call an essentially contested category. That is, in plainer language, if you put in a room the main discussants of the concept--say Leslie Fiedler, Charles Jencks, Jean-François Lyotard, Bernard Smith, Rosalind Krauss, Fredric Jameson, Marjorie Perloff, Linda Hutcheon, and, just to add to the confusion, myself--locked the room and threw away the key, no consensus would emerge between the discussants after a week, but a thin trickle of blood might appear beneath the sill. (Hassan 1)

It would not be a proper approach to deal with postmodernism as an independent notion that emerged within its own dynamic. Although postmodern theorists have different definitions for the term such as the continuation of modernism, the reaction to modernism, or the end of modernism, all of which are contradict each other, the common point is that it is associated with modernism in one form or another. To begin with the word itself, the prefix ‘-post’ underlines the point that postmodernism emerges out of modernism, and goes beyond it by questioning and problematizing it. Besides, if it is called postmodern era, it should be kept in mind that this notion references its predecessor. As all new notions, ideas, or terms contain the old ones within itself, it can be said that postmodernism is not a disengagement from modernism. To give an example, with psychoanalysis, Freud’s contribution to modernism is unique; however, his statements that reveal the connection between the subconscious and the conscious underlie postmodern thought. That is to say, Freud’s theories are the part of the foundation of both modern and postmodern thought. As postmodernism emerges out of modernism, it would be better to briefly examine modernism first. To be able to comprehend the term of postmodernism and analyze it properly, it is necessary to realize its connection with its predecessor.

Jürgen Habermas claims in his essay “Modernity versus Postmodernity” that “the word modern was first used in the late 5th century to differentiate the present, which had become officially Christian, from the Roman and pagan past” (3). Habermas keeps defining the term of modern by noting that it “appeared and reappeared . . . when

the consciousness of a new epoch formed itself through a renewed relationship to the ancients” (3). The term is generally used to distinguish the new one from the old one. In a nutshell, a sort of going further, development and betterment are underlined within the scope of the term modern. The change and conversion in the communities, in other words modernization process, is the domination of science and reason, and glorifying human existence in modernism. Every kind of philosophical and scientific analysis that comes into existence within the scope of reason starts to shape modern approaches. Scientific, concrete and reason based evaluations get to take the place of sacred, abstract and God based explanations of religion. The loss of belief in religion, the rise of dependence on science, the commodification brought about by capitalism are all associated with the emergence of the modern period. When the world is started to be evaluated in that way, other things, like spiritual aspects, are degraded and ignored. Hence, there is a movement away from the magical and mystical into the factual and into things that can be proved in modernism.

Modernism can also be seen as a belief in progress through science, through research, through discovery, and thus defining a better way of living through progress. Rationality, sovereignty of reason, logic, scientific and universal facts and systematic thinking are regarded as the basic concepts of modernism. All these projects aim to liberalize humankind and create an egalitarian society. The absolute reliance on human and the mentality of humankind are the main determiners of modernism. This reliance on reason renders the continual development and sublimity of mankind a possibility. As it is seen obviously, modernization frames an era that is characterized as a ceaseless progression, and the notion of enlightenment and emancipation are two key principles of modernism, both of which imply that knowing something makes the person free. The optimism and the confidence of dealing with any kind of problem in the light of reason and science are the dominant characteristics of modernization. That is to say, handling and shaping each issue within the frame of reason is the key factor in modernism. Directing life within the frame of reason causes to refuse anything that is regarded as irrational. However, in the process of time, it has been realized that this manner of approach leads to many contradictions and trouble. Because of Auschwitz, because of bombs, and nuclear weapons people started to lose their faith in rationality and science. While many philosophers, at the beginning of the Enlightenment, attached great

importance to the human's ability to reason as a means of emancipation and progression, many twentieth century philosophers, upon living the Holocaust, have come to reconsider the ongoing perception of reason. They question the Enlightenment when authorities took nations into two world wars, many generations died, and for that very reason society started to question their trust and belief in the authority. Christopher Butler describes that period as: "... the most advanced philosophical thought had moved away from the strongly ethical and individualist existentialism that was typical of the immediately post-war period . . . towards far more sceptical and anti-humanist attitudes" (Butler, *Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 6). Adolf Hitler's speech at the opening of the 'Great German Art' exhibition in Munich, 1937, is such as to be the breaking point of modernism:

The new age of today is at work on a new human type. Men and women are to be more healthy, stronger: there is a new feeling of life, a new joy in life. Never was humanity in its external appearance and in its frame of mind nearer to the ancient world than it is today. (Butler, *Modernism A Very Short Introduction* 80)

As a result, the philosophical standpoints that form modernism lose their validity due to the changes in world conditions. Accordingly, any modernist approach that aims to comprehend and explain the meaning of worldly issues create adverse effect. Let alone offering a solution, modernist approaches become the problem itself: "the Enlightenment project is seen as having produced a range of social and political disasters: from modern warfare, Auschwitz and the Gulag to nuclear threat and severe ecological crisis" (Selden 205). The views that may name the new world conditions, and have the makings of presenting new approaches toward the problems of the new world system are the heralds of the postmodern period in which alternative thinking is created to counter the adverse effects of modernism that remain incapable of offering a remedy. In the end, what has developed is in opposition to the ideals and expectations of the Enlightenment.

Postmodernism asserts that the idea behind modernism, that rational thought method, all those ideas are only false ideas, hence they are started to be rejected by society. People start to question the credibility of the ideas that have been imposed on them particularly by the authority. As modernism is partly based on science and rational

thought, people start to reconsider the reliance of science consequently. As Butler highlights in his book “[t]here is . . . a deep irrationalism at the heart of postmodernism – a kind of despair about the Enlightenment” (Butler, *Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 11). Science is supposed to make things better – people wouldn’t get ill, people would start to live on Mars instead of having a nuclear bomb, which can kill all the advantages of science and rational thought. When those systems are rejected, there is left a society that does not know what to believe in. There emerges a culture that is not fixed, that is scattered. Modern culture was giving people instructions about what to do and how to do that, whereas postmodern culture now pushes people to do what they would like to. Nothing is fixed anymore, and there is now no fixed codes. Now there is no progress, people do not believe in going anywhere. The aim of postmodernism is not focusing on the failure of modern projects such as rationality, universality, enlightenment and liberty but trying to understand the defects of these phenomena and to overcome them. Its aim is not to take the place of modernist notions by presenting a brand new emancipation either. Indeed, “instead of lamenting the loss of the past, the fragmentation of existence and the collapse of selfhood, postmodernism embraces these characteristics as a new form of social existence and behaviour” (Woods 9). For the very reason, postmodernism is regarded to complete the fields that are underevaluated or ignored by reason.

When its definition is taken into account, it is seen that theorists have different description and perspectives for the theory. To give an example, Llyod Spencer accentuates that “nihilistic, subjectivist, amoral, fragmentary, arbitrary, defeatist, wilful . . . constitute some of the core vocabulary used in the criticism of postmodernism” (218). Ihab Hassan adds more terms to the words about postmodernism: “indeterminacy, immanence, textualism, networks, high-tech, consumer, media-driven societies, and all the sub-vocabularies they imply” (“From postmodernism to postmodernity: The local/global context 4). In *Desire and Dissent in the Postmodern Age*, Hassan characterizes the postmodern age as:

. . . compounded of subtendencies that the following words evoke: heterodoxy, pluralism, eclecticism, randomness, revolt, deformation. The latter alone subsumes a dozen current terms of unmaking: decreation, disintegration, deconstruction,

decenterment, displacement, difference, discontinuity, disjunction, disappearance, decomposition, de-definition, demystification, detotalization, delegitimation. (9)

Christopher Butler mentions in his book that “[t]his was not ‘theory’ as it might be understood in the philosophy of science . . . It was a far more self-involved, sceptical type of discourse” (*Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 7). Butler describes postmodernism as “the maintenance of a sceptical attitude” (*Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 13) on all truth claims. At this point, the word of truth becomes the main point because it is a matter in question in postmodernism. In postmodernism, there is a reaction against truth claims, which are created by the authority to control its citizens. So, from this point, postmodernism can be regarded as the collapse of the truth claims, or the collapse of big stories with the loss of faith in the authority. Some critics define postmodernism in an affirmative manner as calling it the altered and differentiated version of modernism in the fields of knowledge, existence and ethics, and they reshape these fields in an attempt to supply the adaptation to changing conditions. On the other hand, some deal with postmodernism with a negative attitude by defining it as the destruction of the values as a result of the changes in society and in the world. Butler clarifies the reason of the controversy by stating that “[b]y the mid-1970s it becomes difficult to know what matters most to postmodernist” (*Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 6). Besides, some critics regard postmodernism as a new philosophical concept, a new way of thinking and style. Tim Woods lays stress on the fact that “there are many theorists who argue that postmodernism is not a chronological period, but more of a way of thinking and doing” (8). As some of its leading figures, like Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard, are generally known as to be post-structuralists, the concept of postmodernism is getting more and more ambiguous and not widely understood. The novelist and critic Gilbert Adair explains this confusion quite well by noting that “few ‘isms’ have provoked as much perplexity and suspicion as postmodernism” (12). In some sources, a novelist or a playwright is analyzed as being a modernist; however, some others describe the same writer under the scope of postmodernism. Tim Woods defines postmodernism in his book *Beginning Postmodernism* as “the term gets everywhere, but no one can quite explain what it is” (1). For the sake of making an attempt for its description, it can be easily said that postmodernism does not accept any definition otherwise it would be to violate its premise that no definite terms, or absolute truths exist.

Let alone its definition, its period is also debated and controversial among theorists. The confusion of determining its origin and periods may be result of the fact that “postmodernism denies the idea of knowable origins” (Woods 3). As the postmodern period does not have an ending point in terms of historical time, it makes the term difficult to analyze as well. When the historical development process of postmodernism is researched, many sources underline that the term was first used in architecture. It was when “architects moved away from unadorned, impersonal boxes of concrete, glass, and steel to complex shapes and forms, drawing motifs from the past without regard to their original purpose or function” (Sire 316). However, the chronological order reveals the fact that, at first, it was used in a different field from architecture. It was first used around the 1870s by an English painter John Watkins Chapman. He declares a postmodern style of painting as a way to escape from French Impressionism. In 1930s, Spanish writer Federico de Onis used the term in his works, especially in his poems. To him, postmodernism defines the regression in modernism itself, and he uses the term “to suggest a reaction against the difficulty and experimentalism of modernist poetry” (Hassan, "From postmodernism to postmodernity: The local/global context 6). In 1939, the term was used as a theory of a historical movement by Arnold Joseph Toynbee. He used the term postmodern by stating that modern era ended with the First World War, and the forthcoming period is postmodern era: “Our own Post-Modern Age has been inaugurated by the general war of 1914-1918” (Toynbee 43). In 1950s, postmodernism emerged as a reaction to all kind of modern phenomena in different areas such as architecture, education, art, politics and so on. To give an example, in 1972, the book of *Learning from Las Vegas* by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour was published in which the evolution of modern architecture is emphasized and the term postmodernism is used to describe the new kind of building in architecture. Charles Jenks’s *The Language of Post-modern Architecture* made tremendous impact when it was published, and widely read in architectural circle. Due to its impact, it is generally thought that the term was first described in architecture. In this book Jenks describes postmodern space as “ambiguous, fragmented and eternally changing” (214). In 1960s, the notion prolonged its unfavourable connotation. In the 1970s it became a commonly used term. Ihab Hassan was the first to expand its scope in the manner of covering the whole work of art, and to

direct the attentions to the distinctions within the term that are now accepted commonly. Henceforward, by not being limited to literature, art or architecture, the term of postmodernism has widened its field. The times and the field of its usage may differ, but the aim was to “signal that they were doing something different, something more risky, than what their modernist moms and dads were doing” (Hart 7). It was started to be used in philosophical discourses as well. When Jean François Lyotad published his work *La Condition Postmoderne (The Postmodern Condition)* in Paris, 1979, it was regarded to be the first work that constructed the foundation of postmodern philosophy. The suspicious and unreliable attitude toward modernism in Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* is the result of the epoch which was not shaped within the scope of notions that modernism supported. The condition of reason, science, information is differentiated with postmodern discourses such as change, instability, language game.

When other fields are analyzed within the scope of postmodernism briefly, it can be said that in the field of science, quantum physics and Einstein’s theory of relativity are contrary to the view put forward by modern science, which supports immutableness. With quantum physics, which states that two possibilities may exist at the same time, and with theory of relativity, which underlines the changing perspectives, absolute, unchanging and undisputed information of modern science is damaged. The ongoing dominant notions of the time cannot be dissociated from art as well. From painting to writing, works of art are affected and accordingly shaped by the intellectual change of the community. In postmodern art, it is seen as the futile act of an artist to make any criticism or evaluation by focusing on the living conditions, the events, and the community of his time, or looking for a way out by adding his own comments and advice. That is to say, offering any kind of solution for the future is a useless effort in postmodern art. In art, there has always been established rules of beautiful. Rules select certain kinds of work and call it art, and at the same time these rules call some works as trash. So there is this aesthetic judgment of looking at things and calling them beautiful or not. And at the same time there is cognitive judgment of how rules are conceived for judging criteria. Postmodernism rejects all judging criterias which are shaped in the hands of authority. Lyotard calls for artists and writers to break with the rules and the pre-established forms. He emphasizes that art should not be made for social unity, and this becomes a kind of challenge for the authority. It is believed

that “[a]rt which participates in this postmodern awareness of difference and heterogeneity will therefore critique and destabilize the closures of modernity. It will explore unsayable and invisible” (Selden 204). Postmodern art is against undertaking a mission because it is believed that, in a community in which what to wear, what to eat, how to behave are all shaped by the limitations of the authority, there is nothing at all to take as a mission. In postmodern art, every single assumption is open-ended, and instead of presenting a truth, uncertainty and instability are dominant. Under these circumstances the viewer or the reader has the right to create his own reality.

With all these explanations above, it has been aimed to describe postmodernism with its outline. Its effect on literature and the characteristics of postmodern literature will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.2. Postmodern Literature

In the fiction of [postmodernist writers] ... virtually everything and everyone exists in such a radical state of distortion and aberration that there is no way of determining from which conditions in the real world they have been derived or from what standard of sanity they may be said to depart. The conventions of verisimilitude and sanity have been nullified. Characters inhabit a dimension of structureless being in which their behaviour becomes inexplicably arbitrary and unjudgeable because the fiction itself stands as a metaphor of a derangement that is seemingly without provocation and beyond measurement. (Aldridge 140)

Barry Lewis argues that, between the years 1960 and 1990, postmodernist writing was the prevailing mode in literature (he glosses to give or take a year or so either way). To clarify the ongoing situation in the period, he gives the assassination of John F. Kennedy (1963), the death threat against Salman Rushdie for writing *The Satanic Verses* (1989), and the demolition of Berlin Wall as examples in his *Postmodernism and Literature*. The assassination of the President of a powerful and dominant country in the world, and the death threat against a writer just because of his book bring the terrorism and insecurity of the time to light. Larry McCaffrey lays stress on the importance of the assassination in the period by arguing that “that was the day that symbolically signaled the end of a certain kind of optimism and naivete in our

collective unconsciousness, the end of certain verities and assurances that had helped shape our notion of what fiction should be” (xii). The erection and demolition of the Berlin Wall, the symbol of the Cold War, displays the uneasiness of the world with the high speed of technological changes and “ideological uncertainties” (Lewis 121) in the postmodern period. On the one hand there is the term of postmodern writing coined by some critics, on the other hand it is necessary to keep in mind that novelists or playwrights should be associated with postmodernism by not focusing on the period they lived in, or the time they wrote the work, but by focusing on the work itself, analyzing whether it has any postmodernist features or not. As Tim Woods says “postmodernism is not a chronological period, but more of a way of thinking and doing” (8). Though written in different periods, many writings have the common point of containing some postmodern features. To give an example, as being a parody of Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* (1742) features irony and parody; Virginia Woolfs’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) is an outstanding novel with its temporal distortion; John Fowles not only abstains from defining the protagonist, Sarah, clearly and decisively but also presents his reader three alternative endings in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969), which can be regarded as an attempt both to attack the notion of the omniscient author, and to resist the trust and completion of a story. That is to say, rather than limiting postmodern features in literature within the supposed periods of postmodernism mentioned in chapter 1.1, they should be handled as timeless and without boundaries, as a state of mind. The Italian novelist and cultural theorist Umberto Eco asserts that postmodernism is not a style but an attitude that lies behind the cultural movement in any period: “[w]e could say that every period has its own postmodernism” (“Postmodernism, Irony and the Enjoyable” 110). Bran Nicol interprets Eco’s assertion by saying that “the postmodern . . . emerges at the point when whatever is ‘modern’ in a particular era . . . recognizes that it cannot go any further without lapsing into silence. They reach this point because in the pursuit of the new they have to ‘destroy’ the past” (14).

According to postmodernists, the tie between the writer and the work disappears when the work is finished. Now the work is open to any kind of interpretation and connotation which even the writer himself cannot imagine. This approach connotes Roland Barthes’s short essay named *The Death of the Author*.

Although Barthes did not use the word of postmodernism in his writings, and his name is not listed among the postmodern thinkers, his approach to read fiction in a creative way carries the spirit of postmodern reading. In *The Death of the Author*, Barthes claims that the text is disconnected from its author “as soon as a fact is narrated” (1466) and “the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins” (1466). He bases his claim on the ground of language by stating in his essay that “it is language which speaks, not the author, to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality . . . , to reach that point where only language acts, ‘performs’, and not ‘me’ ” (1467). By that time, Barthes claims that the text was read and evaluated by centering it on the author, on “his person, his life, his tastes, his passions” (1466) and was criticized by saying that “Baudelaire’s work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh’s his madness, Tchaikovsky’s his vice” (1466). However, in postmodern literature, each reader gets his own meaning from the words or statements depending on his own cultural and intellectual background, on his gender, nationality, age and so forth. The reader is free to connect the text with connotations and references by his own will. With the postmodern literature, the text and the characters are at the mercy of the reader. That is to say, in postmodern literature, the reader is encouraged to produce meanings basing on the pleasure he has gotten from the text. The writer uses enigmatic descriptions for his characters, and for the relationship among the characters, which make the reader get confused because of not getting a clear definition. By this way, the reader is engaged in the writing to create his own story out of the text. The outcome, as the last line of Barthes’s essay puts emphasis on, is “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (1470). In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes develops the creation process of the reader by defining the texts as being either ‘readerly’ or ‘writerly’. To him, readerly text is a classical text, a scientific, an ideological text, or a religious text which does not give any chance to his reader to produce personal meanings. As it has a limited meaning, no space is left for the reader to practice his own evaluation, or interpretation. For Barthes, that kind of texts turn the reader into a consumer, whereas the aim of a literary text should be to “make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text” (*S/Z* 4). Barthes defines the texts that provide the reader to produce as writerly text:

This text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning, it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can

be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable. (*S/Z* 5)

Barthes describes writerly texts as “the essay without the dissertation, writing without style’, whereas the readerly ones are ‘products’ ” (*S/Z* 5). According to Barthes, through interpretation, these mass products can be differentiated. However, with interpretation Barthes does not mean giving a meaning to the text, but means “to appreciate what plural constitutes it” (*S/Z* 5). If a reader looks for a centre in a text, then s/he cannot be the producer of the text. Barthes supports the idea that the reader should not let himself be guided by the author, instead s/he should find out alternative readings, and interpretations. Most probably the hidden meanings in a text have not been created by the author intentionally, and maybe, as Freud claims, those are the parts written unconsciously; however, it is the contribution of the reader to reveal that concealed meanings. In this sense, Bran Nicol agrees with Barthes by stating that “postmodern writing challenges us because it requires its reader to be an active co-creator of meaning rather than a passive consumer” (xiv). In his book, Nicol emphasizes on the tendency of postmodern writing to take the reader’s attention to her/his own process of interpretation while reading the text. Nicol defines readerly text as “a text which tries to confine the reader to a role as reader, one who is guided to interpretation by the narrative itself” (44). And he makes his contribution to the definition of the writerly text by describing it as the one “which does not have a single ‘closed’ meaning” (44). Besides, he argues that with writerly text, the readers “are obliged to produce their own meanings from fragmentary or contradictory clues, thus effectively writing the text themselves (or at least co-producing its meanings)” (44). In a nutshell, “the readerly text is finite, whereas the writerly text ‘exists nowhere’, as what it ‘is’ depends upon how it is read at any one time” (Nicol 44).

In addition to the notion of ‘writerly text’, it is necessary to mention about ‘paranoid reading’ and ‘rhizomatic reading’, which are relevant to postmodern fiction. The former one has been termed by critics Mark Siegel and Brian McHale. Siegel defines paranoia as:

. . . the condition under which most of modern literature comes to life: the author relies on the reader to find correspondences between names, colours, or the physical attributes of characters and other invisible qualities of those characters, places and actions, while to do so in 'real life' would clearly be an indication of paranoid behaviour. (50)

McHale, in his book *Constructing Postmodernism*, argues that paranoid reading is the close reading of a text through which deciphering what is deep down, or what is not demonstrated explicitly is aimed to accomplish. The second reading style, 'rhizomatic reading', supports the open-ended interpretation of a text. Bran Nicol clarifies the notion by stating "postmodern narrative involves us in a process of conjecture" (47). To support his argument, Nicol bases his notion on the ground of Umberto Eco's model; labyrinth. For Eco, some models are straightforward which does not allow the reader to get lost; the reader enters, passes the center, and then reaches the exit. On the other hand there is 'the mannerist maze' which is "a kind of tree, a structure with roots, with many blind alleys. There is only one exit, but you can get it wrong" (Nicol 47). However, Nicol claims that Eco is most interested in the labyrinth "what he calls the rhizomatic maze" (Nicol 47). Eco explains rhizomatic maze as "[t]he rhizome is so constructed that every path can be connected with every other one. It has no centre, no periphery, no exit, because it is potentially infinite" (*Reflections on The Name of the Rose* 57). Bran Nicol's statement will be the brief summary of the rhizomatic reading: travelling "in space, ready to encounter different, co-existent, worlds" (49).

The decline of metanarratives in postmodern literature, which is another characteristic of it, has taken the attention of many writers. Lyotard, "for whom postmodernism is an attack on reason" (Woods 9) defines postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv), that is to say it is a kind of sceptical attitude towards all claims of absolute truth. For Lyotard, this incredulity is "a product of progress in the sciences" (xxiv). Metanarrative or grand narrative, which is defined by Lyotard as being a feature of modernity, is essentially a large worldwide theory of philosophy such as the progress of history, or the possibility of absolute freedom. Metanarratives aim to satisfy human beings and create fulfillment by legitimizing scientific and rationalist statements. In order to reach that satisfaction and fulfillment, metanarratives assert that science and rationality unify all aspects of life in a spirit

through which individual emancipation and social unification can be attained universally. This unification ties art, religion, philosophy together to express the absolute regards. Metanarratives are transcendent and universal truths that aim to strengthen western civilization, and thus to provide objective legitimation to the civilization. Metanarrative is an approach that aims to make the people believe that human reason is capable of knowing everything, or that modern medicine is capable of curing all kinds of illnesses. Butler defines grand narratives in his book as: “[t]hese narratives are contained in or implied by major philosophies, such as Kantianism, Hegelianism, and Marxism, which argue that history is progressive, that knowledge can liberate us, and that all knowledge has a secret unity” (*Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 13). Postmodernism is the disbelief toward “grand narratives of progress and human perfectability” (Barry 87), thus it brings the end of grand narratives. By referring to Lyotard’s grand narratives, Peter Barry states in his book *Beginning Theory* that “. . . the best we can hope for is a series of ‘mininarratives’, which are provisional, contingent, temporary, and relative” (87). In addition to Barry’s argument, Lyotard emphasizes in *The Postmodern Condition* that the grand narratives such as religions, ideologies and the enlightenment project should be substituted by the small and local narratives. He argues that people now live in an era in which “the older master narratives of legitimation no longer function” (xi). Lyotard believes that grand narratives are not trustworthy because science uses this totalizing format as a way to legitimize the narratives, and he calls them “information-processing machines” (4). Lyotard is the voice of the plurality and relativity, not of one totalizing or unifying grand narratives. That is the reason why he prefers little narratives, and believes that postmodernism is the disbelief in the totalizing grand narratives. A kind of supportive statement to Lyotard’s “incredulity toward metanarratives” comes from James W. Sire in his book *The Universe Next Door*:

No longer is there a single story, a metanarrative . . . that holds Western culture together. . . The naturalists have their story, the pantheists theirs, the Christians theirs, ad infinitum. With postmodernism no story can have any more credibility than any other. All stories are equally valid, being so validated by the community that lives by them. (Sire 316)

The notion of relativity, which leads to the impossibility of verification, is one of the other characteristics of postmodern literature that has led to many discussions. The sense of unique, universal, absolute truth of modernism turns into plural, local, relative truth in postmodernism. Butler's statement, "[p]ostmodernist ideas, . . . , were never intended to fit into anything like this kind of consensual and cooperative framework" (*Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 10), has the essence of underlining the notion of relativism in postmodernism. The truth is regarded as unstable and flexible due to the fact that interpretations are variable. For the very reason, Baudrillard highlights in his book *Impossible Exchange* that "[t]here is no equivalent of the world. . . No equivalent, no double, no representation, no mirror. . . So there can be no verifying of the world. This is, indeed, why 'reality' is an imposture" (3). That is to say, truths are fictional and artificial. The reason for not having an absolute truth is that it is variable, and that variability bases on societal and political assertiveness. Modernism claims that mankind has the superiority to determine his will thanks to his knowledge, whereas the destiny of mankind is determined at the hands of the power holders from a postmodern perspective. At this point, it would be beneficial to take Michel Foucault's view of "the interdependence of power and knowledge" into account (Sarup 73). In Foucault's view, "[a]ll knowledge is an expression of the 'Will to Power'" (Selden 178). That is to say, it is not possible to make a mention of any objective knowledge or absolute truth. To give an example, at schools, students are educated according to the doctrines of the ruling power, and these doctrines are changed and reshaped when another government takes over. Human beings regard a theory or information true "only if it fits the descriptions of truth laid down by the intellectual or political authorities of the day, by the members of the ruling elite, or by the prevailing ideologues of knowledge" (Selden 178). In other words, the consciousness of a citizen is created by power holders, by the dominant class, and that powerful social class determines citizens' essence and the way of life. In the end, people internalize the doctrines and social norms assigned by the power holders. Lyotard makes an emphasis on this situation by stating that "the decision makers . . . allocate our lives for the growth of power" (xxiv). Thus, any kind of discourse loses its objectivity and credibility. Though with the progressions in technology the epoch is believed to be information society, as Butler highlights in his book, "paradoxically enough, most information is apparently to be disturbed, as being more of a contribution to the

manipulative image-making of those in power than to the advancement of knowledge” (*Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 3). Along with the sense of relativity and the impossibility of verification, it is necessary to take deconstruction into account. Deconstruction bases its foundation on relativism, which supports the view that truth is relative and variable depending on where you stand. Defining deconstruction is also slippery due to its characteristic of defying any kind of utmost or true definition. For the sake of explaining the slippery condition, deconstructors focus on language systems – which, they believe, is “unreliable cultural constructs” (Butler, *Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 17). Jacques Derrida, the leading figure of deconstruction, and his contribution to postmodern literature will be clarified in the next paragraph.

Jacques Derrida’s contribution to postmodern literature constitutes one of its characteristics: deconstruction. However, it must be kept in mind that to deconstruct does not mean to destroy. The first strategy of deconstruction is to reverse existing oppositions. To be able to get to know deconstruction properly, it is necessary to mention about ‘logocentrism’ and ‘phonocentrism’. In his work *Of Grammatology*, Derrida argues about the desire for a centre. To him, people need a centre to guarantee their presence. That need is so strong that it turns into a desire, and that desire for a centre is defined as ‘logocentrism’. In *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, the term is explained as: “ ‘Logos’ (Greek for ‘word’) is a term which in the New Testament carries the greatest possible concentration of presence: ‘In the beginning was the Word’ ” (164). Derrida argues western philosophers’ assumption of the superiority of speech over writing, and calls it ‘phonocentrism’. As human beings desire a presence, i.e. a center, and writing does not need the presence of the writer at the time of reading, whereas the speech needs the speaker – which is the centre in this context - then the speech becomes superior than the writing. To Derrida, Western philosophers support this ranking for the sake of preserving presence, In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida states that phonocentrism is a feature of logocentrism, and he objects the hierarchical position between writing and speech. The struggle of Western philosophers to create a hierarchical order for the sake of presence results in valuing one term while devaluing its binary opposition: body/soul, good/bad, mind/body, male/female and so forth. As saying that one thing is more important than the other one is a way of creating a center, instead, Derrida supports the idea that one exists because

of the other. In other words, he does not attribute any central position neither to the author nor to any word. In a literary text, deconstruction “begins by noting the hierarchy, proceeds to reverse it, and finally resists the assertion of a new hierarchy by displacing the second term from a position of superiority too” (Selden 167). As the notion of deconstruction in literary text is hard to comprehend and apply, another attempt to clarify the term is:

To deconstruct is to take a text apart along the structural “fault lines” created by the ambiguities inherent in one or more of its key concepts or themes in order to reveal the equivocations or contradictions that make the text possible. To deconstruct is to take a text apart along the structural “fault lines” created by the ambiguities inherent in one or more of its key concepts or themes in order to reveal the equivocations or contradictions that make the text possible. (Holland, “Deconstruction”)

Derrida’s act of delogocentrism connotes another characteristic of postmodern literature, which is ‘the unreliability of language’. Derrida focuses on the instability of language, and asserts a claim that founds the basis of his assumption: “the signifier is not directly related to the signified” (Sarup 33). To give an example, when the various meanings of a single word in a dictionary is looked through, one sign’s leading to another one is seen obviously. In this respect, Derrida disagrees with Saussure, who regards a sign as a unity according to which “the signifier and the signified relate as if they were two sides of the same sheet of paper” (Sarup 33). Contrary to this, Derrida regards the sign as “a structure of difference: half of it is always ‘not there’ and the other half is always ‘not that’ ” (Sarup 33). Lyotard casts doubt on the reliability of language as well, and emphasizes on the plurality and diversity of language games. ‘Language games’ is a term coined by Ludwig Wittgenstein. What Wittgenstein means by language games is that each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their own properties and the uses to which they can be put – in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined by a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words the proper way to move them. Every utterance should be thought of as a ‘move’ in a game. In *Le Differende*, Lyotard develops Wittgenstein’s language games, and he asserts that the rule of each language game should be established within its scope; for the very reason the plurality and diversity of the rules should be accepted. There cannot be a fixed, a stable rule that can be applied to all language games, and the rules are incomparable and incompatible.

Peter Barry supports Lyotard's idea by describing the notion of language "as a self-contained system" (92). Barry states that these are internal rules in a language and "operate only within that designated sphere and have no 'transcendent' status beyond that" (92). Barry clarifies his argument by stating that "*Knight to King's Rook Four* might be a winning move in a chess game, but would carry no weight at all in a game of football, say, or an argument about who should do the washing-up" (92).

Harold Bloom contributes a new notion to postmodernist literature with the term of 'belatedness'. He claims that since Milton's *Paradise Lost*, "poets have suffered an awareness of their 'belatedness' " (Selden 174). With this argument, he discusses that poets have read all the previous poems and influenced by them, and they start to feel that every kinds of topic have already been used up. Due to that reason, they feel powerless and the lack of getting any unique materials. They feel like they are late to use topics, materials, approaches or styles of writing. Barry Lewis supports the notion of belatedness by quoting Fredric Jameson's statement: "the writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and worlds . . . only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already" (125). In the end, postmodern writers find themselves in a kind of struggle to challenge their paternity. With the aim of this challenge, they start to misread the previous writings. From now on, art will not be imitating the nature, but will be imitating another work of art; it will be based on the grounds of the citations from another work, through misreading, and then through rewriting it. From now on, art does not mirror the life, but the reader or the audience himself. In postmodern literature irony, parody, and pastiche are mostly applied elements for the sake of imitating the previous works. These terms will be clarified while examining the plays within the scope of these elements.

The names of major representatives of postmodernist fiction can be listed in here, but it cannot be said that they have reached a common list of the characteristics of postmodern literature to form a clear and unified attempt to formulate the theory. Nonetheless, they have certain dominant characteristics in common: "temporal disorder; the erosion of the sense of time; a pervasive and pointless use of pastiche; a foregrounding of words as fragmenting material signs; the loose association of ideas;

paranoia; and vicious circles, or a loss of distinction between logically separate levels of discourse” (Lewis 123). Pinter’s plays will be analyzed within the characteristics of postmodern literature mentioned in this chapter. The notion of the fall of grand narratives, language games, writerly text, parody and irony will be the headings while analyzing the plays.

3. THE HOMECOMING

When *The Homecoming* was put on in London on June 3, 1965, it was Pinter's third full-length play (*The Birthday Party*, May 19, 1958; *A Night Out* March 1, 1960). The play, which is set in an old house in North London during summer, has five male characters; Max, Lenny, Joey, Sam, Teddy, and one female character, Ruth. The family consists of Max, the father, who lives with his two sons, Lenny and Joey, and his brother, Sam. Max, the father, is retired butcher at the age of seventy; Sam, the brother, is a hire-car driver at the age of sixty-three; Lenny, in his early thirties, is a pimp although his job is not revealed till the end of the play; Joey, the youngest son in his middle twenties, is an amateur boxer and also works for a demolition company. The entire play takes place in the same room of the working-class family which is large and filled with little furniture: tables, chairs, two large armchairs, a large sofa, a mirror. The external action of *The Homecoming* is quite simple: A father lives with two of his three sons and one brother together in a house that was inherited from their family. The members of the household don't get on well together, most of their interactions with each other cause the characters great stress. Max talks a great deal about his boys' deceased mother, Jessie, and his life-long friend MacGregor, who is also dead. One day his oldest son Teddy, a philosophy professor at an American university in his middle thirties, comes home after a six-year absence to visit his family. On this visit, he is not alone; he brings his wife whom the family hasn't heard of. Ruth, Teddy's wife, is in her early thirties and her visit has such an impact on the household that it affects the play's outcome. The plot of the play is quite simple. The things that shock and disturb the audience/reader and especially critics, are the actions and attitudes of the characters, and the language they use. As the critic John Lahr wrote in *The New Yorker*:

The Homecoming changed my life. Before the play, I thought words were just vessels of meaning; after it, I saw them as weapons of defense. Before, I thought theatre was about the spoken; after, I understood the eloquence of the unspoken. The position of a chair, the length of a pause, the choice of a gesture, I realized, could convey volumes. ("Demolition Man")

On the one hand the simple external action of the play, and on the other hand the shocking actions of the characters that trigger the disturbing utterances of other characters prepare the ground for an analysis that leads various interpretations. While analysing the play, no specific event or attitude of a character can be regarded as more crucial than the others or as the peak point of the play since each one has a remarkable significance within its own context. Bran Nicol states in his book that “there is a case to be made for a text’s identity as ‘postmodern’ being determined by the act of reading rather than writing” (45). That is to say, the analysis of a play is shaped by how the play is read. *The Homecoming* will be examined under the headings mentioned in chapter 1.2.

3.1. The Fall of Family

Grand narratives – the totalizing philosophies of history setting out the rules of narratives and language games, which establish ethical and political rules for the society – lose their power in the postmodern condition. As Lyotard explains:

In contemporary society and culture — postindustrial society, postmodern culture — the question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation. (37)

The fall of the family is one of the subjects that Pinter uses to shock his audience/reader in *The Homecoming*. The importance of family in a community is emphasized in many religious and social texts. Being a family carries great importance because its aim is to impose some form of legitimation or authority on through the limitations of the family unit. There are many idioms and proverbs that point to the necessity of healthy family ties in society. In *The Homecoming*, Pinter challenges the foundations of the concept of family. Reviewers of the play were shocked by the absence of moral comment, and by the behaviour of the family members themselves throughout the play. To begin with, Lenny’s questioning of his father about his birth – especially the way he asked the questions - reveals the impudent attitude of a son toward his father:

Lenny: I want to know the real facts about my background. I mean, for instance, is it a fact that you had me in mind all the time, or is it a fact that I was the last thing you had in mind?

Pause. (44)

In family life, it is considered impudent to ask questions about the reason of your birth. With his question, Lenny goes further than just questioning the reasons behind his birth. There are some sexual implications within his question as well. Lenny's question brings to mind sons' doubt about their father that is implied many times throughout the play. This doubt is deepened by the use of slang such as 'bitch' or 'whore' which are uttered by Max when discussing his deceased wife. And at the end of the play, Sam's confession about the intercourse between MacGregor, Max's close friend, and Jessie is an important moment in illustrating the destruction of the family as a cohesive unit, if it ever was:

Sam (in one breath). MacGregor had Jessie in the back of my cab as I drove them along. (86)

This intercourse not only damages the unity of family life but also violates the marriage bond between wife and husband. The sexual intimacy between Ruth and her husband's brothers are another example that reveals the fall of family. The implication of intercourse between Ruth and her brothers-in-law is revealed in Act II when Max says: "Where's the whore? Still in bed? She'll make us all animals" (76). While the audience/reader expects Teddy to become crazy because of his father implying that intercourse has occurred between his wife and brothers, he shocks the audience/reader by saying: "He had her up there for two hours and he didn't go the whole hog" (76). He blames his brother for not being man enough to have sex with his wife. As the play progresses, Lenny proposes that he dance with Ruth before she and Teddy go back to the USA. They start out dancing slowly, then suddenly Lenny starts to kiss Ruth in front of his brothers and father. Joey calls her "tart" (66), going toward Ruth and taking her arm:

He smiles at Lenny. He sits with Ruth on the sofa, embraces and kisses her.

...

He leans her back until she lies beneath him. He kisses her.

...

Lenny sits on the arm of the sofa. He caresses Ruth's hair as Joey embraces her. (67)

Max's indifferent statement right after seeing this foreshadows the upcoming proposal they will all make to Ruth. Max does not condemn Jessie or Lenny because of their sexual intimacy with Teddy's wife. The audience/reader is challenged one more time by Max's indifferent question to Teddy:

Max. You going. Teddy? Already? (67)

The closing scene of the play is also its climax point revealing the complete fall of the family. Max, Lenny and Joey propose that Ruth leave her three sons and husband behind in America, staying with them as a kind of prostitute which is accepted by Ruth on the condition of "mutual satisfaction" (85). She offers a contract, and a bargain takes place between the two sides. On the condition of having a personal flat which must have at least three rooms and a bathroom, a personal maid, a wardrobe which is supplied with everything she needs, she accepts their proposal which means that Teddy will be going back to the USA alone, and the sons won't be living with their mother any more. After seeing Teddy off:

Teddy goes, shuts the front door.

Silence.

The three men stand

Ruth sits relaxed on her chair.

Sam lies still.

Joey walks slowly across the room.

He kneels at her chair.

She touches his head, lightly.

He puts his head in her lap. (88)

Meanwhile, Max moves backwards and forwards to find himself a proper place in this picture, and to join them. After several unsuccessful attempts, he groans, kneeling by the side of her chair and saying:

I'm not an old man.
 Pause.
 Do you hear me?
 He raises his face to her.
 Kiss me. (89-90)

Whatever the characters say or do, it is important to keep in mind that Pinter does not show any personal feelings toward them. He neither condemns nor praises them. The attitude of the characters reflects the postmodern condition in which the old grand narratives of family life no longer have any place. As Hugh Nelson asserts in his *"The Homecoming: Kith and Kin"*:

Beneath the stated values of the play, there is a total absence of values, a void which is filled by the human family's animal struggle to survive and perpetuate itself. [...] The Homecoming makes us aware that Pinter is again showing us nothing more surprising or mystifying than man's primitive nature reasserting itself, naked and demanding from beneath the layers of intellectual and ethical sophistication with which it has been so carefully covered. (163)

3.2. Language Games

Language game is a kind of social bond which holds society together, and according to Lyotard grand narratives have been replaced by "heterogeneity of language games" (xxv). In his book, Madan Sarup argues that:

Lyotard characterizes social interaction primarily in terms of making a move in a game, playing a role and taking a part in various discrete language games. In these terms, he characterizes the self as the interaction of all the language games in which it participates. Lyotard's model of a postmodern society is thus one in which one struggles

within various language games in an agonistic environment characterized by diversity and conflict. (151)

This kind of play in language, or the so-called 'language game' is one of the characteristics of postmodern literature used by Pinter in *The Homecoming*. Through language games, Pinter creates an alternative reality in the play. Each of the characters in the play uses language games to create a tactical advantage for themselves. Guido Almansi emphasize this linguistic struggle in the play:

The Homecoming is essentially a play about language – about articulating a language and being articulated by a language. In Pinter's world, social control is ultimately in the power to impose one's language on another. (61)

The language game is used as a tool to attack and hurt the opposite side. It is used as a tool to enslave the opposite side through verbal attacks. As an example, here is a conversation between Max and Sam in Act I:

Max: When Dad died he said to me, Max look after your brothers. That's exactly what he said to me

Sam: How could he say that when he was dead?

Max: What?

Sam: How could he speak if he was dead?

Pause. (47)

As Sam is Max's brother, the tactic behind his witty answer suggests his resistance to the conversation. Either through mocking or insulting, every character tries to dominate the other through language games.

The longest language game is played between the most challenging characters in the play: Ruth and Lenny. Both use these tactics to suppress the other with his/her power of language. At the moment of their first meeting, Lenny is not surprised by seeing a strange woman entering their house. They greet each other in as if they have met before. Right after Ruth says that she is his brother's wife, Lenny just says: "Eh listen, I wonder if you can advise me. I've been having a bit of a rough time with this

clock” (36). This irrelevant response to Ruth’s explanation of who she is marks the beginning of the game between them. Lenny goes on his game:

Ruth: We’re on a visit to Europe.

Lenny: What, both of you?

Ruth: Yes.

Lenny: What, you sort of live with him over there, do you?

Ruth: We’re married.

Lenny: On a visit to Europe, eh? Seen much of it? (37)

Lenny neither pays attention to Ruth’s answer nor shows any astonishment. In doing so, he rejects her identity as a sister-in-law, and tries to annoy her. Again, he ignores her answer and starts to talk about his own visit to Europe. Suddenly, Lenny quits his tactic of ignoring her and attacks Ruth with the unexpected sensual suggestion that they hold hands: “Do you mind if I hold your hand?” (38). However, Ruth refuses him in a calm manner asking “[w]hy?” (38). Ruth’s calm assurance defeats Lenny, in return he changes his tactics again, starting to tell two stories about his violence and cruelty to women. In doing so, he tries to menace Ruth, aiming to oppress her. His first story is about a woman who made a certain proposal to Lenny. He says that “[t]he only trouble was she was falling apart with the pox. So I turned it down.” (38). He explains that he could have killed the woman, but instead hit her several times: “I clumped her one . . . I just gave her another belt in the nose and a couple of turns of the boot and sort of left it at that” (39). However, Ruth is not afraid of his bullying attitude, questioning him in return:

Ruth: How did you know she was diseased?

Lenny: How did I know?

Pause.

I decided she was.

Silence. (39)

Nevertheless, Lenny does not give up easily. This time, by trying to take the ashtray and her glass, he aims to challenge her. The dialogue between them reveals the aim of attacking the other one through language game.

Lenny: [...] Excuse me, shall I take this ashtray out of your way?

Ruth: It's not in my way.

Lenny: It seems to be in the way of your glass. The glass was about to fall. Or the ashtray. I'm rather worried about the carpet. It's not me, it's my father. He's obsessed with order and clarity. He doesn't like mess. So, as I don't believe you're smoking at the moment, I'm sure you won't object if I move the ashtray.

He does so.

And now perhaps I'll relieve you of your glass.

Ruth: I haven't quite finished.

Lenny: You've consumed quite enough, in my opinion.

Ruth: No I haven't.

Lenny: Quite sufficient, in my own opinion.

Ruth: Not in mine, Leonard.

Pause.

Lenny: Don't call me that, please.

Ruth: Why not?

Lenny: That's the name my mother gave me.

Pause. (41)

The tension between Lenny and Ruth is unceasing throughout the play. In the language game, Ruth attacks with her constant serenity, whereas Lenny reacts in an aggressive manner. The last attack of this game comes from Ruth upon understanding Lenny's fears and weaknesses about women, which is seen clearly in the two stories he tells. She attacks him with the name his mother was calling him. In the new game, Ruth changes her tactics approaching Lenny not in her previously calm manner, but in a seductive way:

Lenny: [...] Just give me the glass.

Ruth: No.

Pause.

Lenny: I'll take it, then.

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

Pause.

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

Ruth: Why don't I just take you?

Pause.

Lenny: You're joking.

Pause.

You're in love, anyway, with another man. You've had a secret liaison with another man. His family didn't even know. Then you come here without a word of warning and start to make trouble. (42)

Ruth does not let Lenny touch her hand, she does not believe his stories, and she does not give her glass to him. She plays the game differently than Lenny does: “[s]he first establishes herself as an authority figure by treating Lenny as a wayward child and then confronts him with the power of the female sexuality that his stories have been designed to diminish” (Quigley 196).

Ruth continues her game in a much more tempting way, and does her deathblow:

Ruth: Have a sip. Go on. Have a sip from my glass.

She pats her lap. Pause.

She stands, moves to him with the glass.

Put your head back and open your mouth.

Lenny: Take that glass away from me.

Ruth: Lie on the floor. Go on. I’ll pour it down your throat.

Lenny: What are you doing, making me some kind of proposal?

She laughs shortly, drains the glass.

Ruth: Oh, I was thirsty.

She smiles at him, puts the glass down, goes into the hall and up the stairs. (42-43)

Ruth leaves the room with the victory of defeating Lenny verbally. Cahn asserts that: “Ruth’s femaleness, her identity as woman, wife, mother, and, most likely whore, leaves Lenny helpless. As her advances become more blatant, his blusters make his fears both more desperate and more comic” (Cahn 62). As Almansi claims about the play “[t]he real threat is not physical but linguistic. Instead of gagging people, you ungag them, trying to insinuate a way into the private stronghold of their language” (63).

3.3. Writerly Text

The audience/reader is used to getting the dialogues and the end of the play to be presented clearly. S/he can get pleasure from a writing if there is not ambiguity or uncertainty left at the end of the writing. However, in the postmodern literature the reader is expected to be active by interpreting the dialogues and the events rather than reading passively and accepting any information given to her/him. This process is achieved through focusing on the reader himself, on his knowledge, and on his intellectual background. Some playwrights use the technic of intertextuality to activate the memory and the intellectual background of the reader. That is to say, the pleasure

taken from a work of postmodern writing mostly depends on the reader himself. In the writing of postmodern literature, the reader does exercise complete control over the meaning of the text. As Martin Esslin illustrates in his book:

[like] most of Pinter's plays, *The Homecoming* also exists on another level: its real, its realistic, action is a metaphor of human desires and aspirations, a myth, a dream image, a projection of archetypal fears and wishes. Just as the events in the *Oedipus* of Sophocles, or in *King Lear*, are both valid on a level of real, particular human beings, but can also be seen as dreams, nightmares of guilt and human suffering, *The Homecoming* also transcends the realistic level to become just such an archetypal image. And indeed it deals with themes both of *Oedipus* and *Lear*: the desolation of old age and the sons' desire for the sexual conquest of the mother. (*Pinter the Playwright* 141)

In that sense, *The Homecoming* is a writerly text – that is to say a postmodern text – which is written and rewritten by the reader with each subsequent reading. It is a text open to different interpretations with each reading due to the ambiguities, multiplicity, plurality, relativity, and complexities in the play. In *The Homecoming*, by presenting indefinite and ambiguous meanings rather than repetitions, Pinter forces his audience/reader to be actively involved in the play:

... the meaning of the play does not depend upon some display of thought or intellect voiced by character. It depends upon the conclusions which the audience draw from the process which they observe acted before them on the stage. (Alexander 42)

Many of Pinter's statements in the play have double or even multiple meanings which carry meaning dependent on how it is conceived by Pinter and received by the reader. That is to say, the construction of meaning depends on the audience/reader himself.

To make this idea as clear as possible I will analyse the interactions of Lenny and Ruth in the play. The two stories about women narrated by Lenny are not clear; neither Ruth nor the audience/reader can be sure about their truthfulness. Lenny's stories, related to the worlds of prostitutes and gangsters, deepen the mystery of the family. The reason for Lenny's anger at Ruth when she calls him by the name given to him by his mother is also unclear. On the one hand his reaction can be interpreted as the

hatred he feels for his mother. If it is indeed out of hatred, then it can be assumed that this hatred comes from the work his mother was doing. It could also be interpreted as the jealousy he feels for his mother, a form of Oedipal complex. The scene in which Lenny implies having a moment of sexual intimacy with Ruth upstairs, who is his sister-in-law and the mother of three sons like his mother, can be interpreted as a reenactment of the repressed sexual desire he felt for his mother. Further, if his anger an expression of the love he feels for his mother, then it can be interpreted as the endless love of a son for his deceased mother. However, whether it is out of hatred, jealousy or love is uncertain and a reading of the play does not provide a concrete answer. These different interpretations are all shaped within the frame of the perception of the audience/reader.

In *Pinter the Playwright*, Martin Esslin reads the interactions between Lenny and Ruth as part of a larger Oedipal Complex in the play, propositioning the final scene of the play as a dream of wish-fulfilment on the part of the sons. Lenny's first encounter with Ruth, in which Ruth comes in outside in the middle of the night by herself without knocking the door, is a stereotypical male fantasy: suddenly a woman comes into his room while a man is alone. His stories about beating women are nothing more than an attempt to show strength to Ruth and prove his masculinity. Esslin interprets this scene as "a child's attempt to convince himself that he is strong enough and big enough to impress and conquer a grown woman like his mother" (*Pinter the Playwright* 144).

Ruth is placed in a parallel position in the eyes of both father and sons to wife and Mother Jessie, by having three sons whose ages probably range from five to three, and by having the same implied occupation, which is working as a prostitute. In that sense, Ruth is perfectly suited for the sons' dream of wish-fulfilment, because "the mother whom the son desires in his infancy at the moment of the first awakening of his sexuality, is not an old woman but a young one" (Esslin, *Pinter the Playwright* 143). By making this young mother available to them as a sexual partner, the sons achieve their aim at the end of the play; however, this achievement is at the cost of the defeat of the fathers in the play: Max and Teddy. Teddy leaves London defeated, leaving his wife to his brothers and father: Ruth's sons, like Jessie's, will not be brought up by their

mother. On the other hand, Max's efforts to be a part of the touchings and caressings shared by sons and new mother are useless; he is excluded completely:

He begins to groan, clutches his stick, falls on to his knees by the side of her chair. His body sags. The groaning stops. His body straightens. He looks at her, still kneeling.

I'm not an old man.

Pause.

Do you hear me?

He raises his face to her.

Kiss me.

She continues to touch Joey's head, lightly. Lenny stands, watching. (89, 90)

Martin Esslin interpretes this scene as:

From the son's point of view therefore, *The Homecoming* is a dream image of the fulfilment of all Oedipal wishes, the sexual conquest of the mother, the utter humiliation of the father. From the father's point of view the play is the terrifying nightmare of the sons' revenge. (*Pinter the Playwright* 142)

Max's statement about the morality of his sons is one of the situations that lead to a plurality of interpretations in the play. When Max sees Ruth for the first time, he says: "I've never had a whore under this roof before. Ever since yor mother died. My word of honour" (50). Martin Esslin refers to Max's statement and claims that it is 'ironically double-edged': "certainly Lenny and Joey have the morality of pimps and rapists which they may well have been taught by a prostitute" (*Pinter the Playwright* 139). Esslin reinforces this position claiming that Max's outburst upon seeing Ruth and calling her as a "tart" (66) has double meaning as well. This strengthens the suspicion of audience that both Ruth and Jessie had worked as prostitutes. This may explain Max's ambivalence to the mother of his children, whom he sometimes praises, but mostly degrades with slang. Towards the end of the play, the proposition made to Ruth by the males of the family shocks the audience/reader:

Max: Maybe we'll ask her if she wants to stay.

Pause.

Teddy: I'm afraid not, Dad. She's not well, and we've got to get home to the children.

...

Teddy (smiling): The best thing for her is to come home with me, Dad. Really. We're married, you know. (77, 78)

It is shocking not just because they have propositioned Teddy's wife but that the proposition is received easily by Teddy. Further, he is the one that brings his family's proposition to his wife. Depending on the cultural and intellectual background of the audience/reader, this scene may be regarded as the peak point of the corruption of the family. However, Esslin reads the situation differently, stating that "in a family which had been living from prostitution for decades, Max's and Lenny's final proposition to Ruth would therefore be the most natural thing in the world" (*Pinter the Playwright* 140). Thus, when the scene is interpreted within the frame of a long history of prostitution and pimping, there is nothing shocking about what has occurred. Both situation and proposal are "made quite casually, and received quite casually also by Teddy" (*Pinter the Playwright* 140).

Once the proposition is agreed upon the moral code of the family plummets, Lenny and Max ask Teddy to turn his wife into a full time prostitute:

Lenny: Listen, Teddy, you could help us, actually. If I were to send you some cards, over to America . . . you know, very nice ones, with a name on, and a telephone number, very discreet, well, you could distribute them . . . to various parties, who might be making a trip over here. Of course, you'd get a little percentage out of it.

Max: I mean, you needn't tell them she's your wife. (81-82)

They suggest Teddy pimp his wife while sharing the profits with his family. Teddy responds matter of fact that "[s]he'd get old . . . very quickly" (82). Depending on where the audience/reader stands, Teddy's reactions to the proposition can be regarded as quite unusual for some, or as quite normal for the others. These initial interpretations are drawn from the proposition itself, but further complicated by Ruth's reaction:

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

Ruth: How very nice of them (83)

She not only welcomes the offer but also bargains with the family, wanting a contract to protect herself. When this bargain is interpreted within the cliché of ‘a woman’s place is in the home’, it would be seen as immoral because Ruth is leaving her family behind to accept such a proposition. On the other hand, when it is interpreted within the environment of a woman who worked as a nude photographic model before her marriage, and who lovingly recalls the scene of her nude posing by the lake, then welcoming the proposition would not be seen as such a shocking incident.

Duality in the play reveals itself again at the end of the play. The end is both open and closed because, as in most postmodern plays, the ending of the play is “either multiple or circular” (Hooti and Shooshtarian 22). Further, McHale suggests that:

Endings constitute a special case of self-erasing sequences, since they occupy one of the most salient positions in any text’s structure. Conventionally, one distinguishes between endings that are closed, as in Victorian novels with their compulsory tying-up of loose ends in death and marriage, and those that are open, as in many modernist novels. But what are we to say about texts that seem both open and closed, somehow poised between the two, because they are either multiple or circular. (109)

With Teddy’s departure and Ruth’s decision to stay with the family, the first emotional and touching sense of homecoming ends. Ruth “returns home” as the representation of her deceased mother-in-law. As Esslin says:

Ruth is a mother figure, she is a reincarnation of Jessie. [...] It is not Teddy who has come back home – after all he left after one day- but the mother who has returned. (*Pinter the Playwright* 154)

That is why in the end Teddy leaves home by only shaking his hands with his brothers in a stranger manner. He is cold to his family that upon seeing his uncle lying on the floor he just says “I was going to ask him to drive me to London Airport” (87). Ruth’s last words to him implies that Teddy has already become a distant relative:

Ruth: Eddie.
TEDDY *turns*.

Pause.

Don't become a stranger.” (88)

However, with Ruth's staying and Teddy's leaving, it is not appropriate to say that this is Ruth's victory over Teddy. What Ruth has done by staying with his family is become wife-mother and whore all at the same time. She has abandoned her three sons and husband, to accept this double identity. Depending on where the audience/reader stands, the decision to stay can be either interpreted as either a homecoming or a return to her old line of work.

The sense of relativity reveals itself due to the indeterminacy of the play. The audience/reader can never be sure of the state of the marriage between Ruth and Teddy because “rumors of the union never reached his brothers or father before” (Gordon 250) though they say that they have been married for six years. The audience/reader is also not sure about the existence of their children because Ruth and Teddy neither utter their names nor show photos of the children to their uncles and grandfather. Let alone a photo, Teddy and Ruth do not show any headshots of their children – which are generally kept in the purse or wallet of the parents. In addition, when the proposition made to Ruth by the male members of the family, and Ruth's previous line of work are taken into account, it becomes ambiguous whether Teddy is even the father of the children. The true paternity of Max's three sons is also called into question by Sam's confession at the end of the play: “MacGregor had Jessie in the back of my cab as I drove them along” (86). The possible pool of fathers is not just Max or MacGregor but also Sam, because, his ambiguous utterances about Jessie, in Act I, makes the audience/reader suspect a possible relationship between Sam and Jessie as well, but Pinter does not explicitly state what it is Sam might be implying. The sense of relativity and uncertainty also reveals itself in the title of the play as well. It is not certain whether it is Ruth's true homecoming because the male characters are determined to use Ruth as both a prostitute and a maid, rather than have her be a part of their family. In the play, the possible relationships between the characters are not clarified because the point is to increase suspense through uncertainty, making the audience/ reader complete the uncertainties in their own mind. Therefore, the number of interpretations relies on the varieties of conclusions that the audience/reader comes to.

3.4. Parody

Pinter parodies familial clichés such as “home, Sweet home” and “woman’s place is in the home” (Innes 291) in *The Homecoming*. The title of the play, is supposed to remind the audience/reader of a typical homecoming, when a son presents his bride to his family for the first time. However, Pinter parodies previous norms by creating an incongruity between the expectations of the audience/reader and what actually happens. Though Teddy and Lenny haven’t heard or seen each other for six years, their first meeting is cold for two brothers who have been apart for so long. Lenny does not react to seeing Teddy in the room in the middle of the night. They just say hello to each other, and make small talk. Neither Lenny asks anything about Teddy’s unexpected visit, nor does Teddy explain his sudden arrival. He does not even explain things to Ruth choosing to go upstairs and sleep rather than wake everyone. On the morning after their arrival, when Max sees Teddy and Ruth coming down stairs, he turns to Sam and asks: “Did you know he was here?” (48). At this moment his dismissal of Ruth begins: “Who asked you to bring tarts in here?” (49). The aggressive statements of a father to his son after a six year absence challenges the standard welcoming for a son to his ‘sweet home’.

Austin Quigley defines family life “as a source of benefits for the individual predominates over family life as a context of shared responsibilities and reciprocal duties” (199). However in *The Homecoming*, “the whole family structure seems based less on mutual sharing than on mutual exploitation” (185). At the very beginning of the play, when Max asks Lenny about the scissors, he shouts at his father: “Why don’t you shut up, you daft prat?” (15) At every opportunity Lenny teases his father, and in Act I, when Max grips his stick, Lenny makes fun of him by imitating the voice of a little boy begging his father not to be beaten. To ease the sting of being teased by his son, Max turns on his brother making fun of him for not being able to find a wife. Once provoked, Sam takes revenge on his brother by casting suspicion on Jessie’s, Max’s wife, fidelity.

Sam: Never get a bride like you had, anyway. Nothing like your bride . . . going about these days. Like Jessie.

Pause.

After all, I escorted her once or twice, didn't I? Drove her round once or twice in my cab. She was a charming woman.

Pause.

All the same, she was your wife. But still . . . they were some of the most delightful evenings I've ever had. Used to just drive he about. It was my pleasure. (24)

The tone of the speech, two units of pause, his physical position – looking out of the window as if remembering a specific moment – increase the doubt about the possibility of a relationship between Jessie and Sam in the past. The last statement in the dialogue, which is followed by silence, comes from Sam and strengthens the possibility of the hinted at relationship between him and Jessie: “[s]he was a very nice companion to be with” (24). Right after the silence passes between Sam and Max, the youngest son, Joey, enters the stage for the first time. After taking off his jacket and throwing it on a chair, the first thing he says is “[f]eel a bit hungry” (24) without any greetings. In return, Max complains and says: “Who do you think I am, your mother? Eh? Honest. They walk in here every time of the day and night like bloody animals. Go and find yourself a mother.” (24) Though Max is the father of the family, nobody respects as a father, exploding when reminded that he is the supposed head of this family: “Stop calling me Dad. Just stop all that calling me Dad, do you understand?” (25)

In *The Homecoming*, Pinter parodies cultural cliches by illustrating the artificialness of caring by the characters for each other. As a typical father figure would, Max tries to give advice to Joey about boxing:

Max: [...] I'll tell you what you've got to do. What you've got to do is you've got to learn how to defend yourself, and you've got to learn how to attack. That's your trouble as a boxer. You don't know how to defend yourself, and you don't know how to attack. (25)

However, as a person who has no experience coaching boxing, watching Max advise Joey how to attack and defend is ridiculous. What Max is trying to do is to be seen as a

knowledgeable father in the family to hold the family ties; however the sons do not provide any evidence of their need for their father's knowledge or experience:

All of the men are adult and well beyond the age when dependence upon parents is necessary, and it is evident that Max fosters their dependence to suit his own needs. [...] Max's leadership is neither necessary, nor successful, nor greatly desired. (Quigley 187)

The only thing that ties the members of this family together is that they stay under the same roof. They are together not because of the sweetness of home but because of financial insufficiency. Like Teddy, if any one of them were get sufficient money to support himself fully, he would leave home as soon as possible, perhaps never to return. Even the most passive and calm member of the family, Teddy, loses control of his emotions towards the end of the play because of the constant verbal attacks by his brothers and wife:

Teddy: You wouldn't understand my works. You wouldn't have the faintest idea of what they were about. [...] You're way behind. [...] You'd be lost. [...] It's a question of how far you can operate on things and not in things. I mean it's a question of your capacity to ally the two, to relate the two, to balance the two. To see, to be able to *see*! I'm the one who can see. That's why I can write my critical works . . . [...] Intellectual equilibrium. You're just objects. You just . . . move about. I can observe it. I can see what you do. It's the same as I do. But you're lost in it. You won't get me being . . . I won't be lost in it.
BLACKOUT. (69-70)

The family is neither surprised nor happy with Teddy's return after six years. His homecoming does not change in the dynamics of the family. The family tie is corrupted, and the mild atmosphere of home is already destroyed – or has never existed. Living with that family under the same roof has nothing sweet in it. Despite this negative portrayal, Pinter neither reveals his personal feelings about being a family nor does he lament this one. He parodies the cliché, and makes the audience/reader create his own comment.

The lack of a woman in this family is a stress point for its members. They are reminded of this absence and the damage it has done throughout the play. Max is the one who suffers most from the lack of a woman. Max's problematic behaviour is due to the absence of a mother/wife resulting either from the need of a caring and domestic figure in the family, or from the need of being appreciated by the other, that is to say a woman, to feel himself an influential figure in the family. As none of his sons appreciate him, his frequent reminiscence about Jessie strengthens Max's need to be appreciated by the members of the family. However, the audience/ reader cannot find any evidence that Jessie's was either caring or domestic. The sons do remember their mother in a complimentary way. On the contrary, Sam's implication of a possible relationship between himself and Jessie, and his final utterance which reveals the relationship between Jessie and Max's friend prevent the audience/reader from seeing Jessie as a caring mother or a domestic wife. Pinter uses such situations and events in *The Homecoming* to parody another cliché a "woman's place is in the home".

Max's constant profaning of his wife as a whore or a "slutbitch of a wife" (55), not only displays the relationship between the father and the mother of the family, but also reveals the place of the woman in the home. Worse, we know nothing of Jessie or how she is related to Max and her sons, she is simply not there to defend herself. Marc Silverstein explains that this antagonism between the sons and the father is a direct result of their dead's mother way of treatment of their father:

If the mother recognizes the father's word as law, if she associates the phallus with the father, then the child will displace its desire for the mother's desire onto the father, become liberated from the Desire-of-the-Mother and subject to the Name-of-the-Father, and enter the signifying network, the symbolic order of language that constitutes subjectivity. [...] Max's fear of the defiling woman, and his narrative representations of Jessie as a 'whore' and 'slutbitch of a wife,' indicates that Jessie refused to recognize his word as Law, a refusal that poses a threat to the hegemony of the phallus. (89-90)

As it is implied throughout the play, Jessie was not a domestic woman. The insults that Max uses for her, "a bad bitch" (17), "a slutbitch of a wife" (55), and Sam's implications and the confession made at the end of the play render it probable that Jessie was a prostitute. Those insults, implications, and Sam's confession about the affair

between Jessie and McGregor strengthen the doubts about who the real father of the sons is. All these situations challenge the cliché of ‘woman’s place is in the home’. At the end of Act I, when Max learns that Ruth is a mother, he “reflects his own insecurities” (Cahn 64) about the loyalty of a woman by asking Teddy “[a]ll yours, Ted?” (51). Through both her behaviour and the words she chooses when she speaks, Ruth rejects the traditional notion of the domestic woman that is expected of her. Ruth shows that she is more than a submissive woman by joining the discussion that is taking place between Lenny and Teddy about Teddy’s intellectual competence as a lecturer. She aims to show her intellectual competence to the males however, it is through seduction rather than intellect.

Ruth: Don't be too sure though. You've forgotten something. Look at me. I . . . move my leg. That's all it is. But I wear . . . underwear . . . which moves with me. . . it . . . captures your attention. Perhaps you misinterpret. The action is simple. It's a leg . . . moving. My lips move. Why don't you restrict . . . your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant . . . than the words which come through them. You must bear that . . . possibility . . . in mind.
Silence. (60, 61)

When Ruth accepts the offer to stay with Max and his sons in London instead of going back to the USA with her husband, the cliché of ‘woman’s place is in the home’ is challenged one more time.

3.5. Irony

Irony in the play shows itself with the title. At first glance, the name of the play connotes something emotional and dramatic, which “echoes the prodigal son pattern in the unannounced return of an expatriate” (Innes 292), that is Teddy’s homecoming. However, as the play progresses, it is understood that this is Ruth’s homecoming as a prostitute, not Teddy’s as a son. Ruth’s calm and ease entry when compared to Teddy’s nervous and panicked attitude upon entering the house strengthen the interpretations that regard this homecoming as Ruth’s:

She seems at ease entering a strange house, while Teddy, who ostensibly should be relaxed as he comes home, is tense. He talks incessantly, posing questions and seeking reassurance, while Ruth speaks and acts with confidence. (Cahn, 59)

The emotional perception of homecoming is also challenged in the play. Max's first mistaken impression of Ruth appears more and more accurate as the audience/reader gets to know her better. On the other hand, the praise for Jessie is clearly understood to be an illusion. Pinter uses irony in *The Homecoming* mostly through making his characters talk about marriage. In Act II, Max praises his marriage, himself and Jessie as caring and providing parents, to Ruth:

Max: [...] What would Jessie say if she was alive? Sitting here with her three sons. [...] And a lovely daughter-in-law. [...] She'd have petted them and cooed over them, wouldn't she, Sam? [...] (*To RUTH.*) Mind you, she taught those boys everything they know. She taught them all the morality they know. [...] I mean, I was busy working twenty-four hours a day in the shop, I was going all over the country to find meat, I was making my way in the world, but I left a woman at home with a will of iron, a heart of gold and a mind. Right, Sam? (53, 54)

Silverstein states that "Max's comment possesses a good deal of irony" (81). He mentions that Jessie was a domestic wife; however, it is also implied that she was a prostitute. Max continues, describing himself as a caring and gentle father:

Max: [...] Mind you, I was generous man to her. I never left her short of a few bob I remember one year I entered into negotiations with a top-class group of butchers with continental connections. I was going into association with them. I remember the night I came home, I kept quiet. First of all I gave Lenny a bath, then Teddy a bath, then Joey a bath. What fun we used to have in bath, eh, boys? Then I came downstairs and I made Jessie put her feet up on a pouffe [...] Then I gave her a drop of cherry brandy. I remember the boys came down, in their pyjamas, all their hair shining, their faces pink. (54)

Max tries to paint a happy family picture to counteract the reality of the situation. Max's attempt to put Jessie in the position of submissive wife is also a useless struggle. Ruth interrupts his description of this supposedly happy family picture by asking: "[w]hat

happened to the group of butchers?" (55). At this point Max begins to complain about his family, turning the supposedly happy family into "a crippled family", the three golden hair boys become his "three bastard sons" and the submissive wife becomes "a slutbitch of a wife" (55). Like his father, Teddy begins by praising his marriage and his wife as well:

Teddy: She's a great help to me over there. She's a wonderful wife and mother. She's a very popular woman. She's got lots of friends. It's a great life, at the University . . . you know . . . it's a very good life. We've got a lovely house . . . we've got all . . . we've got everything we want. It's a very stimulating environment.

Pause.

My department . . . is highly successful.

Pause.

We've got three boys, you know. (58)

As the play progresses, it becomes clear that Teddy's description of his family and wife does not reflect reality. His attempt at subterfuge is just to prevent Ruth from revealing her past profession as a nude model. Again Pinter uses irony to show the audience/reader that what is said is often the opposite of reality. Ruth destroys Teddy's illusion of a happy family life by describing her life in the USA, in negative terms: "It's all rock. And sand. It stretches . . . so far . . . everywhere you look. And there's lots of insects there" (61).

The most obviously ironic statement in the play comes from Max towards the end of the play in Act II. While Joey and Ruth are lying on the sofa and Lenny is touching her with his foot, Max praises her with these words:

Max: [...] Mind you, she's a lovely girl. A beautiful woman. And a mother too. A mother of three. You've made a happy woman out of her. It's something to be proud of. I mean we're talking about a woman of quality. We're talking about a woman of feeling. (67, 68)

Hugh Nelson interprets this scene as follows: "[w]hat is perhaps most important is the recognition that Ruth is a 'fractionized' image forced into completely contradictory roles: mother and whore, wife and sister, matriarch and handmaiden, guardian and

hostage" (160). That is to say, that contrary to Max's and Teddy's description of wife and mother, Jessie and Ruth challenge these perceptions by insisting on revealing their true identity.

The first face-to-face talk between the two brothers, Teddy and Lenny, is also in a sense, ironic. Teddy deliberately takes Lenny's cheese, Lenny demands Teddy apologize. Instead of apologizing, Teddy challenges his brother: "But I took it deliberately, Lenny" (71). After shouting at Teddy, Lenny begins a long speech about how they miss Teddy in the family: "When we all sit round the backyard having a quiet gander at the night sky, there's always an empty chair standing in the circle, which is in fact yours" (73). This speech is obviously ironic because such a family meeting has never happened in this family, even if it did happen, they neither miss Teddy nor mourn his absence. Otherwise, they would not propose Ruth to stay with them as a prostitute and make Teddy go home to the USA without his wife.

3.6. Conclusion

At first glance, *The Homecoming* may seem like a play that is about the life of a family in which the intimacy and love among the family members has disappeared, and the family ties are broken. It is not only the indecent proposal of the brothers-in-law to their brother's wife that is condemned but also the bride's calm approach and acceptance of the proposal is also disapproved of. Jessie's implied intercourse with MacGregor and Sam is another incident that forces reaction from the audience/reader. Max's indifferent attitudes to his sons and his brother, and the sons' impudent statements to their father may be interpreted as the horrible attitudes of the family members to each other. However, a postmodern reading reminds the audience/ reader of the importance of his own intellectual and social background in interpreting an event. All these condemnations and disapprovals are created by the audience/reader depending on where he stands and how he prefers to perceive and interpret the event. Pinter draws attention to this point in one of his interviews:

There's no question that the family does behave very calculatedly and pretty horribly to each other and to the returning son. But they do it out of the texture of their lives and for other reasons which are not evil but slightly desperate (*Pinter the Playwright* 30).

The appropriate approach in a community, being respectful, showing love to the environment, and last but not least, the definition of truth are all relative things defined by each individual differently. Each person creates his own definition, and as a result multiple definitions emerge and conflict with each other. A postmodern reading of the play reminds the audience/reader that relativity, duality, ambiguity occur constantly in life; but remain hidden like the portion of an iceberg under the sea. In other words, the first impression of *The Homecoming* continues its existence; however, this impression cannot be the final interpretation. Thanks to the postmodern reading, the play gains different perspectives, and all these interpretations are shaped depending on the audience/reader himself. The playwright allows his play to be shaped within the hands of the audience/reader. The accepted literary position is not to consider what the playwright has written but how the audience/reader perceive it.

4. THE HOTHOUSE

The Hothouse is a play that Pinter decided to keep unpublished and unperformed for more than twenty years. Pinter explains this situation by saying that:

I wrote *The Hothouse* in the winter of 1958. I put it aside for further deliberation and made no attempt to have it produced at the time. I then went on to write *The Caretaker*. In 1979 I reread *The Hothouse* and decided it was worth presenting on the stage. I made a few changes during rehearsal, mainly cuts. (Esslin, *Pinter the Playwright* 84)

The Hothouse is the name of a government 'rest house'. The patients are called by their patient file numbers rather than their names. The head of the institution is an retired colonel called Roote. Other characters are Gibbs, Miss Cutts, Lush, Lamb, Tubb and Lobb, who is a member of the government and is only seen at the end of the play. Miss Cutts, has an affair with Roote and Gibbs, is the only woman in the cast. The play starts with Gibbs's informing Roote of the death of patient 6457 and of the birth of patient 6459's child. Roote, the head of the institution, does not have the faintest idea about these two incidents, and most striking, does not remember having signed the death certificate of patient 6457. Throughout the play, Roote attempts to impose his authority on his staff, while Gibbs tries to undermine Roote, revealing his ignorance about ongoing events at the institution. Further, Lush constantly tests the limits of Roote's authority by speaking sarcastically to him. Almost all of Miss Cutts' time on stage is spent seducing her two lovers. mostly seen in an effort to seduce her two lovers. On the surface, the plot focuses on identifying the father of the patient's illegitimate child. Reading deeper, the dialogue of the characters reveals the true focus of the play: the struggle to get and maintain power in the face of the fear of its loss. Minor power struggles are everywhere in daily life: at home, in the office, on the street, at school, etc. However, the major power struggles are the ones that inevitably affect every person in the world. When the time the play was written, 1958, is taken into account, this emphasis on power struggles and broadening social fear is justifiable. Thirteen years after the end of the second world war, the social, economic, and physical effects of the war could still be seen and felt, while at the same time smaller wars continued and the

threat of a final atomic conflict loomed. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan with atomic weapons by the USA during the final stages of the war in 1945, served as a constant reminder of what a fullscale atomic conflict would entail. Minor and major power struggles are interrelated events, as minor struggles may lead to major ones or vice versa, because anxiety in the world seeps into people's daily lives. The act of bombing, calls into question society's belief in men of science, because atomic weapons are the product of science in the service of the military. However, the field of science has always been respected as being the life saver of humankind. But, as the time passes by, following the science blindly comes under question. Are men of science doing their work for the benefit of humanity, or for the sake of gaining power and being the authority? And these questions remind Woods's statement in his book: "reason is misplaced, since the exercise of human reason and logic can just as probably lead to an Auschwitz or Belsen as it can to liberty, equality and fraternity"(Woods 9). In that sense, *The Hothouse* may be seen as the reflection of the tension in the world on the field of science. In the play, this tension results in the power struggle of the staff in the mental institution. The tension, struggles, and fears in the play will be analyzed depending on the elements of postmodern literature that has been explained in chapter 1.2.

4.1. The Fall of Science

Madan Sarup mentions in his book that "the arts and sciences would promote not only the control of natural forces but also understanding of the world and of the self, moral progress, the justice of institutions and even the happiness of human beings" (143). *The Hothouse* is shaped around the world of men of science working in a 'rest home'. In this establishment, contrary to Sarup's statement, not being able to find a doctor working for the happiness of the patients is remarkable. To begin with, being unaware of the fact that patient 6457 has died, Roote asks Gibbs how 6457 is getting on. Upon hearing that the patient died on Thursday, he opens his desk diary to check the date he last saw the patient. He mistakes the dates, and claims that the death of the patient cannot be true because he saw him on Friday. Gibbs then sheds light on the situation, showing the dates written in the desk diary:

Gibbs. In your diary, sir. (*He moves to the desk.*) I must point out that you are in fact referring to Friday, the 17th. (*He indicates a date on the page.*) There, sir. Yesterday was Friday the 24th. (*He turns the pages forward and indicates a date.*) Here, sir. You had a conversation with 6457 on the 17th. He died on the 23rd. (*Indicates a date.*) Here. (191)

As it is written in the desk diary, Roote saw patient 6457 on Friday the 17th, not on Friday the 24th. In a mental institution in which patients need constant care and control, checking dates is of vital importance. Let alone not knowing that patient 6457 has died, as the head of the institution, Roote does not even remember that he has signed the death certificate of the patient. Another crucial incident that has occurred without his knowledge is that one of the patients has given birth. There are many implications which show that it is probably Roote himself who is the father of the child. (These implications will be examined in detail in the section on the writerly text) Patients, especially the ones who have mental problems, are at the mercy of the doctors. Abusing a patient – in this case the rape of a patient – is nothing but the fall of the man of science. Though Roote is the head of the establishment, he does not know that one of the patients has died, or that another has given birth.

Another incident that reveals the fall of science in the play is the way Gibbs and Miss Cutts behave toward a staff member called Lamb, who is responsible for testing the locks on the patients' door. At the end of the play, it is understood that, with the help of Miss Cutts, Gibbs takes Lamb to interview room number one and locked the door, keeping him there for his own interest. Gibbs is looking for a victim to put his plan of massacre in the establishment into action. When Lobb asks Gibbs how the patients get out while the staff are being killed in the hothouse, he says:

Gibbs. One possibility though is that one of their doors may not have been properly locked, that the patient got out, filched the keys from the Office, and let the others out.

Lobb. Good Lord.

Gibbs. You see, the locktester who should have been on duty – we always had a lock tester on duty –

Lobb. Of course, of course.

Gibb. Was absent from duty.

Lobb. Absent? I say, well . . . taht's rather . . . significant, isn't it?

Gibb. Yes, sir.

Lobb. What happened to him?

Gibb. He's . . . not to be found, sir. (325)

Though the clues imply that it is Gibbs who has killed the staff, it is not possible to say that definitely in a postmodern play. However, it is for sure that it was him who kept the locktester in the interview room, which prevented Lamb from doing his duty, and resulted in patients' getting out. In addition to this incident, it is again Gibb who claims that Lamb is the father of the illegitimate son. It is revealed that Gibbs is lying because of a further revelation at the cross-questioning of Lamb by Gibbs and Miss Cutts in the interviewing room: Lamb has never had intercourse:

Cutts. Are you virgo intacta?

Lamb. What?

Cutts. Are you virgo intacta?

Lamb. Oh, I say, that's rather embarrassing. I mean, in front of a lady –

Cutts. Are you virgo intacta?

Lamb. Yes, I am, actually. I'll make no secret of it.

Cutts. Have you always been virgo intacta?

Lamb. Oh yes, always. Always.

Cutts. From the word go?

Lamb. Go? Oh yes. From the word go. (249-250)

This time not only has a member of the staff been abused but it is also likely that other members of the staff have been killed by a doctor. In the first incident, a patient is abused and another dies, both have connections to the irresponsible head of the institution. The second incident, when a staff member is abused and the rest of the staff are murdered, are connected to another doctor at this institution. Instead of fulfilling their duty of protection and care, the representatives of science are trouble makers in *The Hothouse*. As Lyotard insists in his book, *The Postmodern Condition*, that both the ideals of the "triumph of science" and the "progressive emancipation of humanity" have "lost their credibility" since the Second World War. (Butler, *Postmodernism A Very Short Introduction* 13)

4.2. Language Games

In *The Hothouse*, language games are used through repetition: mostly through repeated questions, and repeated accusations. In *The Homecoming*, language games

were used to suppress the other, drawing on power through the use of language. Repetition is also important in the play because it covers up weakness. In his speech, *Writing for the Theatre*, Pinter clarifies this point by saying: “One way of looking at speech is to say that it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness” (8). In the play, Roote asks odd questions, and speaks in an aggressive manner due to his fear of losing power, and as a reflection of his confusion. The repetition of odd questions has the function of fulfilling the moments of not knowing what to say. Roote uses these questions to conceal his deficits:

Gibbs: For the sake of accuracy, sir, I’d like, if I may, to point out to you what is apparently another discrepancy.

Roote: Another one?

Gibbs: Yes, sir. ROOTE. You’re very keen this morning, aren’t you, Gibbs?

Gibbs: I do try to keep my powers of observation well exercised, sir.

Roote: Don’t stand so close to me. You’re right on top of me. What’s the matter with you?

Gibbs: I’m so sorry, sir. (*He steps away from the desk.*)

Roote: There’s plenty of room here, isn’t there? What are you breathing down my neck for?

Gibbs: I do apologise, sir.

Roote: Nothing’s more irritating.

Gibbs: It was thoughtless of me, sir.

Pause.

Roote: Well... what was this *other* discrepancy, anyway?

Gibbs (*flatly*). It was not 6457, sir, whom you interviewed on the 17th.

Roote: Gibbs.

Gibbs: Sir?

Roote: One question.

Gibbs: Sir.

Roote: Are you taking the piss out of me?

Gibbs: Most decidedly not, sir.

Slight pause. (192-194)

While Gibbs tries to inform him that there is a misunderstanding, Roote struggles to conceal his ignorance about the ongoing situation in the institution. At first, he accuses Gibbs of standing too close to him, and being very keen. Then he starts to ask irrelevant questions to avoid the real subject. These questions are asked as a defense mechanism: “What’s the matter with you?” (290), “Who do you think you are?” (265). Roote tries to show his hierarchal superiority by browbeating Gibbs. Roote chooses this tactic throughout the play whenever he tries to suppress the other in a situation. To give an

example, suddenly he says, “[w]hat are you looking at?” (291) to Gibb when Roote gets stressed over being expected to make a Christmas speech; “Who do you think you are?” (265) again to Gibb when Gibb asks Lush to leave the room; “You’re damned clever, aren’t you?” (279) to Lush when Roote figures out that Lush knows more about patient 6457 than he does. In this language game, Roote chooses accusations and questions as a tactic to beat the other side, whereas Gibbs stays calm, preferring to attack by using the word ‘sir’ exaggeratedly: “Heart failure, sir” (191), “I do apologise, sir”(193), “It was thoughtless of me, sir”(193) , “It was not 6457, sir”(194) etc. Gibbs plays his game in a sly way with an exaggeratedly polite manner. Responding in such a sly way is his tactic to keep the other side calm and passive. When the dialogue about the appearances of the patients 6457 and 6459 are read closely, it is seen that Gibb agrees with Roote’s description in a subtle way instead of just saying “Yes” or “No”:

Roote: A death? You say this man has died? GIBBS. 6457, sir? Yes, sir.

[...]

Roote: Well, which one was he, for God’s sake?

Gibbs: You knew him well, sir.

Roote: You keep saying that! But I can’t remember a damn thing about him. What did he look like?

Pause

Gibbs: Thinnish

Roote: Fairheaded?

Gibbs (*sitting*). Not darkheaded, sir.

Pause

Roote: Tall?

Gibbs: Certainly not small.

Pause

Roote: Quite sharp sort of face?

Gibbs: Quite sharp, yes, sir.

Roote: Yes.

Pause

Yes, he had a sharp sort of face, didn’t he?

Gibbs: I should say it was sharp, sir, yes.

Roote: Limped a bit?

Gibbs: Oh, possibly a trifle, sir.

Roote: Yes, he limped. He limped on his left leg.

Gibbs: His left, sir?

Roote: Well, one of them. I’m sure of it.

Gibbs: Yes, he had a slight limp, sir.

Roote: Yes, of course he had.

Pause

He had a slight limp. Whenever he walked anywhere... he limped. Prematurely grey, he was. Prematurely grey.

Pause

Yes, I remember him very well.

Pause

He's dead, you say?

Gibbs: Yes, sir. (199-201)

In this language game, Gibbs knows how to answer each question. Thanks to his tactics in this game, he becomes the only survivor among the staff at the end of the play. As Martin Esslin clarifies in his book:

In Pinter's dialogue we can watch the desperate struggles of his characters to find the correct expression; we are thus enabled to observe them in the – very dramatic – act of struggling for communication, sometimes succeeding, often failing. And when they have got hold of a formulation, they hold on to it, savour it, and repeat it to enjoy their achievement [...] (“Language and Silence” 40)

It is Gibbs's cunningness in manipulating the dialogue between Roote and himself that he exposes Roote's descriptions of the patients as irrelevant. Roote tries to remind Gibbs of his power as the head of the institution, and define the characteristics of the patients basing only his will; describing their existence as the way he sees them regardless of reality. However, he exposes his shortcomings as leader in turn by claiming that he remembers 6457, who is dead now, quite well, and that he doesn't know the patient who has given birth. He remembers 6457 quite well, because he is dead and bears no threat to him; however, 6459 is alive and there is a baby whose father is most probably among the staff which threatens his job as director. By saying he does not know her, he aims to limit accusations that he could be the father.

Repeated questions to deflect the truth used again when Lamb is questioned by Miss Cutts and Gibbs in Room A1. They do not give any information to Lamb either about the reason or the aim of questioning, and Room A1 is “sound proof” (235), chosen for the purpose of both hiding Lamb and his screams while being shocked by electrodes. Now Pinter starts a new language game starts in the play:

Cutts: Are you often puzzled by women?

Lamb: Women?

Gibbs: Men.

Lamb: Men? Well, I was just going to answer the question about women –

Gibbs: Do you often feel puzzled?

Lamb: Puzzled?

Gibbs: By women.

Lamb: Women?

Cutts: Men.

Lamb: Uh – now just a minute, I... do you want separate answers or a joint answer?

Cutts: After your day's work, do you ever feel tired, edgy?

Gibbs: Fretty?

Cutts: Irritable?

Gibbs: At a loose end?

Cutts: Morose?

Gibbs: Frustrated?

Cutts: Morbid? (245, 246, 247)

During questioning, because of the electrocodes on his wrist, Lamb “jolts rigid, his hands go to his earphones, he is propelled from the chair, falls to his knees, twisting from side to side, emitting high-pitched cries” (244). The contradicting questions are not expected to be answered by Lamb. This emphasis is on the importance of language as an action, which constitutes verbal violence in this part of the play. It is like a psychological experiment, testing how a person reacts when faced with a stressful incident. The only question which Miss Cutts and Gibbs want answered is, “[a]re you virgo intacta?” (249) This is answered affirmatively by Lamb. This is a question is so personal that Lamb is embarrassed while answering it. Miss Cutts's questions “[h]ave you always been virgo intacta?” (249), and “[f]rom the word go?” (249) are again a tactic which aims to defeat the other side with repeated questions. Lamb is left defensive, but it is not because of the questions themselves, but because of their repetitiveness, which in itself which creates an unbearable situation. A single question may hurt; however, when the same embarrassing question is repeated, it becomes a torture for the other side. Put simply, the repeated questions and accusations in this language game aim to torture the other side, which is accomplished. It is not certain whether it is because of electrocodes on Lamb's wrist or the language game, or maybe both, at the end, Lamb is seen sitting in the chair “still, staring, as in a catatonic trance” (328).

Like the other staff in the play, Lush also aims superiority in the game, defeating the other side through language. He does not follow Gibbs's strategy, neither using repetition nor accusation as his device, but instead, the sound of the words as a

device to create confusion. He constructs his sentences through the power of language as a confusion device, which indicates that the character is lying by the sound of the words (Esslin, "Language and Silence" 45). During his long speech to patient 6457's mother, Lush intends to confuse the other side and discourage her from seeking further answers. This is evident in his long speech explaining why her son has been taken to a convalescent home:

Lush. ... So, I continued, you can rest assured that if your son was moved from here to another place it was in his best interests, and only after the most extensive research into his case, the wealth and weight of all the expert opinion in this establishment, where some of the leading brains in this country are concentrated; after a world of time, care, gathering and accumulating of mass upon mass upon mass of relevant evidence, documents, affidavit, tape recordings, played both backwards and forwards, deep into the depth of the night; hours of time, attention to the most minute detail, unstinting labour, unflagging effort, scrupulous attachment to the matter in hand and meticulous examination of all aspects of the question had determined the surest and most beneficial course your son's case might take. The conclusion, after this supreme example of applied dedication, was to send your son to a convalescent home, where we are sure he will be content. (233)

Lush is not a sly character of the play or a cunning one. He is the braggart of the play, labelled such thanks to his long but meaningless speeches that are an effort to intimidate the other side. As Esslin describes:

The braggart is a stock figure of comedy and has been from time to time immemorial, and so, of course, have been the braggart's stories and lies. Here Pinter is therefore moving along very traditional lines; where his special talent shines through is in his ability to make the often very pathetic thought-process behind the tall stories utterly transparent to the audience: these liars are carried along, almost passively, by the limited range of their imaginations, the paucity of possible associations that can lead then on from one word to the next. ("Language and Silence" 45)

4.3. Writerly Text

Unanswered questions, pauses, and silences, all push the audience/reader to see or read between the lines in *The Hothouse*. The dialogues in the play are rife with ambiguities and uncertainties that lead to the audience/reader to many different interpretations. Like in his other plays, Pinter leaves many parts open-ended in *The Hothouse*, to be completed by the audience/reader. This approach prompts the

audience's/reader's imagination; the uncertainties and the ambiguities are shaped depending on each audience's/reader's perception of the events. As Wolfgang Iser mentions in his article:

[...] the written text imposes certain limits on its unwritten implications in order to prevent these from becoming too blurred and hazy, but at the same time these implications, worked out by the reader's imagination, set the given situation against a background which endows it with far greater significance than it might have seemed to possess on its own. [...] it is the end product of the interaction between text and reader. (296)

To begin with, in the first scene of the play, there is a conversation going on between Gibbs and Roote about one of the patients' bearing a baby whose father is unknown. It is implied by Gibbs that Roote is the father of this illegitimate child. Towards the end of the play, after the massacre of the staff, Gibbs's accusing Roote of being the father of the child in the office of the ministry, Roote's recognising the night gown worn by Miss Cutts in Act II, which belongs to the mother of the baby, and while talking to Miss Cutts about the mother of the baby Roote's saying that "[s]he's always been feminine" by "staring into space" (225), puts suspicion on Roote, strengthening Gibbs accusations from the first scene of the play. In Act II, Lush also implies that Roote has had intercourse with patient 6459. Lush asks Roote why he had given up visiting patients, and in response Roote says he had given up, that's all. However, Lush does not drop the subject forcing him to answer his accusations:

Lush. But I thought you were getting results?

Roote. (*staring at him*) Cheers.

Lush. Weren't you getting results?

Roote. (*staring at him*) Drink your whisky.

Lush. But surely you achieved results with one patient very recently. What was the number? 6459, I think.

Roote *throws his whisky in Lush's face*. Lush *wipes his face*. (263)

Roote's reaction to Lush's implications, not by defending himself verbally, but instead throwing whisky on Lush's face, is quite meaningful. This conversation and Roote's reaction strengthens suspicion; however, within the frame of a postmodern reading, this suspicion can never be clarified. To clear up the situation, strong clues and proof is necessary. It can be either raping or having a relationship with one of the patients; but it

is dependent on the interpretation of the audience/reader. S/he is the one who will condemn Roote for the rape, or react to his inappropriate behavior, or will interpret it as an ordinary relationship (two consenting adults) between the patient and the doctor. As the audience/reader does not have the chance to read or hear anything from patient 6459's point of view, Pinter leaves the audience/reader alone with their own bias to evaluate the incident.

The recurrence of the sigh, keen, and laughter are not clarified in *The Hothouse*: these verbal utterances occur three times in the play:

Suddenly a long sigh is heard, amplified

...

A long keen is heard, amplified.

...

A laugh is heard, amplified, dying away. (227, 291, 309)

The first utterance occurs in Act I when Roote and Miss Cutts go into the bedroom. This spoken clue places the idea in the audience's/reader's mind implying that the source of the sigh, keen, and laughter is Roote and Miss Cutts. The second occurs when Miss Cutts is seen in the sitting room; Gibbs at the stairs; Roote, Lush, and Tubb in the office - most probably they are in the office because the recurrence of the voices occurs right after the scene in Roote's office, and when they are seen again, Roote and Lush are depicted as "*still drinking*" (299). So, if Miss Cutts is seen tossing the ball and stopping upon hearing the voice, then who is the woman? (if it is between a man and a woman; it may not be though) The third happens while Gibbs, Lush and Roote pull knives on each other in Roote's office. This time, the audience/reader is assured that these three men are not the source of the third occurrence of the unclear voices. After the third occurrence, Miss Cutts is seen in a nightdress saying that the mother of the illegitimate baby has given the nightdress to her as a gift. Seeing Miss Cutts in a nightdress after the long sigh, keen and laughter is quite meaningful. However, meaningful incidences and open-ended situations are a common feature of Pinter's plays. The long sigh, keen, and laugh can be the intercourse of the same two people, or of different people at each time. When a woman patient having being raped is taken into account, revealed in Act I, it might be the same staff member raping a patient again. On the other hand, it may not be

intercourse. The ongoing events in the play make the audience/reader assume that it is an intercourse; however, it might be something completely different since they cannot judge the connotation. It might be coming from a scene in a movie shown on TV, from a moment shared between the staff, or even from a patient making these voices on purpose to get attention (keep in mind that the play takes place in a mental institution).

Silences have great importance in the play in terms of understanding what might have happened in the past or in the unmentioned part of the speech. Roote and Gibbs, whose characters are the most ambiguous in the play, use silences in their statements. Roote's statement about his predecessor, "[w]hen my predecessor . . . retired . . . I was invited to take over his position" (196), creates many questions: Did his predecessor really retire voluntarily, or was he forced in to it? – maybe he was killed like Roote - did Roote really receive an invitation or, like Gibbs, has he stopped at nothing to get the position? Does he know what has happened to his predecessor after he retired? One interpretation might be that Roote's predecessor was killed by one of the staff – maybe by Roote himself, which reoccurs at the end of the play. This may be seen like a vicious circle happening in the mental hospital. So, most probably, Gibbs will live through the same stages. Towards the end of the play, Gibbs's way of informing others of the massacre in the institution, and Lobb's questions about what has happened to the lock tester shows that it is silence that is used to hide a lie:

Lobb. What happened to him?

Gibbs. He's . . . not to be found, sir. (325)

Gibbs's explanation is a lie because Lamb is seen sitting in the sound-proof room at the end of the play, which is the place he has been taken by Miss Cutts and Gibbs. From this point of view, the audience/reader may start to think that the silences in speech acts have the purpose of covering up the truth. These assumptions are shaped not on Pinter's intention, but depend instead on the audience's/reader's way of thinking and interpreting the events.

The dialogue that takes place in number one interviewing room between Lamb, Gibbs and Miss Cutts, and the things that happen to Lamb in the play bear out the assumption that predecessors disappear in this institution:

Gibbs: By the way, your predecessor used to give us a helping hand occasionally, too, you know. Before you came, of course.

Lamb: My predecessor?

Cutts: Could you just keep still a second, Mr Lamb, while I plug in the earphones?

Lamb *is still*. *She plugs*. Thank you.

Gibbs: Comfortable?

Lamb: Yes, thank you. My predecessor, did you say?

Gibbs: Yes, the chap you took over from.

Lamb: Oh! Did he really? Oh, good. I've often wondered what he... did, exactly. Oh, good, I'm... glad I'm following in a tradition.

They all chuckle.

Have you any idea where he is now?

Gibbs: No, I don't think I do know where he is now. Do you know where he is, Miss Cutts?

Cutts: No, I'm afraid we don't really know. He's not here, anyway. That's certain. [...]. (242-243)

These assumptions are shaped by the audience/reader depending on their social and cultural background; depending on the number of the plays he has read/seen before; depending on his skill of interpretation. As stated above, there is not one interpretation that is accepted equally by all. Now the audience/reader himself is positioned as the writer of the missing, open-ended, and obscure parts of the play.

4.4. Parody

Pinter uses parody in his works, and as analyzed in the previous part of the study, in *The Homecoming*, he parodied lower class cliches. Now in *The Hothouse*, he parodies exaggerated politeness and cliches used in speeches by speechmakers. To begin with, Gibbs's politeness throughout his conversation with Roote becomes a parody of the norms of polite conversation. Gibbs's way of speaking and repeatedly using the word 'sir' in his speech may feature the norms of polite conversation in a hierarchical order; however, it is far from sincerity. When his conversation with Roote at the very beginning of the play is reviewed, which is also analyzed in the irony part of

the study, it will be seen that the play starts with Gibbs's exaggeratedly polite behaviour. For the sake of avoiding repetition, the following section of dialogue is presented here as representative:

Roote. Don't stand so close to me. You're right on top of me. What's the matter with you?

Gibbs. I'm so sorry, sir. (*He steps away from the desk.*)

Roote. There's plenty of room in here, isn't there? What are you breathing down my neck for?

Gibbs. I do apologise, sir.

Roote. Nothing's more irritating.

Gibbs. It was thoughtless of me, sir. (193)

Again Gibbs uses the word 'sir' at the end of each sentence for the sake of being polite; however, his effort to fling Roote's ignorance in his face should not be underestimated:

Gibbs. I'm afraid there seems to be a slight discrepancy, sir.

Roote. Discrepancy, I'm damn sure there's a discrepancy! You come and tell me that a man has died and I've got it down here that I had a conversation with him yesterday morning. According to you he was in his grave. There does seem to be a slight discrepancy, I agree with you.

Gibbs. I meant . . . about the dates, sir.

Roote. Dates? What dates?

Gibbs. In your diary, sir. (*He moves to the desk.*) I must point out that you are in fact referring to Friday, the 17th. (*he indicates a date on the page.*) There, sir. Yesterday was Friday, the 24th. (*He turns the pages forward and indicates a date.*) Here, sir. You had a conversation with 6457 on the 17th. He died on the 23rd. (*Indicates a date.*) Here.

Roote. What! (*He turns the pages back.*) Good Lord, you're right. You're quite right. How extraordinary. I haven't written a single thing down in this diary for a whole week.

Gibbs. You've held no interviews with any of the patients, sir, during the last week.

Roote. No, I haven't, have I, Why not?

Gibbs. You decided on the . . . 18th, sir, that you would cancel all interviews until further notice.

Roote (*slowly*). Oh yes. So I did.

Gibbs moves round the desk.

Gibbs. For the sake of accuracy, sir, I'd like, if I may, to point out to you what is apparently another discrepancy. (191-192)

As it is seen, by hiding behind the norms of politeness in a conversation, Gibbs implicitly makes fun of Roote's authority, which demand Roote be omniscient of the institution's going on.

This time his other conversation with Roote will be given as an example to show that this approach is used habitually by Gibbs. In Act II, while Roote and Lush are talking, Gibbs enters wanting to talk to Roote privately but is rejected by Roote in an aggressive manner:

Roote. Good God, what an impertinence! The man's my guest, do you understand that? Which is more than you bloodywell are! I've never heard of such a thing in all my life. He barges in here and tells me to chuck my own guest out of the room. Who do you think you are?

Pause

(To Lush.) He gets on my wick sometimes – doesn't he you?

Gibbs. I . . . apologise, sir, if I have been presumptuous. (265)

Despite Roote's aggressive manner, Gibbs does not give up, informing Roote that the father of the child is Lamb, a member of the staff. After giving this report, Gibbs asks his head, Roote, whether he has deserved a little whisky, to which Roote again responds aggressively:

Roote. What do you mean, you deserve it, anyway? You deserve nothing.

Gibbs. I meant for locating the father, sir.

Roote. You deserve nothing. Either of you. You've got a job to do. Do it. You won't get any tulips from me. (271)

Through the examples given above, it is clear that Gibbs never gives up behaving within the frame of the norms of polite conversation no matter how aggressively Roote responds. This is the very thing Pinter parodies in *The Hothouse*. This behaviour is far from the mere sincere politeness of a man – like in many conversations conducted by people everywhere in daily life. At the end of the play, as there is an implication that it might be Gibbs who massacred the staff, including Roote, Pinter illustrates that exaggeratedly polite behaviours are used to cover the real feelings and ideas of the speaker. This norm is parodied through Gibbs's character in *The Hothouse*.

When Roote's Christmas speech is read closely, it will be seen that this speech is chosen by Pinter for inclusion in *The Hothouse* for the sake of parodying the cliché speeches of speakmakers on special days like Christmas, festivals, celebrations etc. Selected parts of Roote's long Christmas speech are given here:

Roote. . . . And today I have received greetings and gifts from many of my cousins who reside in other lands, far off lands, and they tell me that over there things are not really very different to over here. Customs may differ, languages may differ, but men are the same, the whole world over. . . . Yes, I think if I were asked to convey to you a special message this Christmas it would be that: Have faith. . . . Remember that you are not alone, that we here, for example, in this our home, are inextricably related, one to another, the staff to the understaff, the understaff to the patients, the patients to the staff . . . (318-319)

As the audience/reader knows what Roote has done on that day, it is clear that his speech includes many errors. This fact pushes the audience/reader to question the earnestness of speakmakers in daily life. The events that happened before the Christmas speech show how Roote has been reluctant and nervous about making the speech; how he is aggressive to his staff, and how he pushes them to remember his authority; how he has been abusing his patient by implying that he may be the father of the child. By showing these facts beforehand, Pinter displays how this final speech of the play - the next scene starts in the office of the ministry where Gibbs informs them of the massacre – is far from sincere and original. Pinter adds a Christmas speech from a person of authority to the play in order to parody the speeches of all those in authority. Pinter parodies reveal these cliches to be fake and untruthful.

4.5. Irony

Irony in the play starts begins with the title. The word hothouse is defined as “a heated greenhouse in which plants that need protection from cold weather are grown” (Oxford Online Dictionary). This suggests that *The Hothouse* is an institution where patients are regarded as plants who need to be carefully guarded and cared for. When the fact that the patients’ are called by the numbers physically marked on them is taken into account, the hothouse can be seen as the place filled with the herblike people. It also has the definition as “an environment that encourages rapid growth or development, especially in a stifling or intense way” (Oxford Online Dictionary). In both definitions protection, development, and growth are the main focus. The atmosphere of the institution can be both stifling and intense; however, it does not provide for the development, growth, or protection of the patients. On the contrary, patients are abused and ignored by the staff. Patient 6457 has died and his death is not

known by the head of the institution; patient 6459 gives birth and the father is unknown. The most shocking, and at the same time tragic, fact emerges when the patient is asked about the father of her child. Gibbs says that “[s]he said she couldn’t be entirely sure since most of the staff have had relations with her in the last year” (216). As mentioned above, Lamb was taken to a sound-proof room, and exploited by two doctors, tortured verbally through repeated questions and physically through electroshock, and accused of being the father of the illegitimate baby even though he is a virgin. In a second shocking revelation of the heartless nature of the staff, when patient 6457’s mother comes to the institution to ask about her son’s situation, she is lied to: The staff tell her the boy has been moved to a convalescent home. At the end of the play the staff is massacred most probably by Gibbs. All these events show that there is nothing protective, developing or caring in this institution. The meaning of the institution’s name, The Hothouse, is completely ironic.

The importance of hierarchy amongst the staff is underlined many times in the play. This is satirized by Pinter mostly through the character Roote, the head of the institution and of course the person apparently at the top of the hierarchical order. Roote always wants his staff and patients to be aware of his assigned power although it is not certain whether he can manage this power or not. The exaggerated repetition of the word ‘sir’, which is linked to power, is seen from the very beginning of the play. Although this is a mental institution, not a military institution for sure, in the first piece of dialogue in the play the usage of the word ‘sir’ by Gibbs at the end of his each sentence takes the attention of the audience/reader. Gibbs repeats the word ‘sir’ seventy times in the first dialogue, which takes place over seventeen pages. An example from the first page of the play illustrates the consistent use of this word:

Roote: Gibbs.
 Gibbs: Yes, sir?
 Roote: Tell me...
 Gibbs: Yes, sir?
 Roote: How’s 6457 getting on?
 Gibbs: 6457, sir?
 Roote: Yes.
 Gibbs: He’s dead, sir. (189)

It is used so excessively that this term morphs into something different than being respectful; it becomes sarcastic or disparaging. The sense meaning of the word is kept, while its function is distorted by the abundance of its use. As the word is linked to the theme of power, it reminds the audience/reader of the main issue of the play: the desire for power and the fear of losing it. As Gibbs is well aware of Roote's fear, he makes an effort to disturb Roote by making him feel that he has lost respect if not actual power through the excessive usage of the word 'sir'. Gibbs mocks Roote implicitly, because though Roote is the 'sir' of the institution, that is to say he has the top power position in the institution, he has missed involvement in everything he is responsible for in the whole week with disastrous results.

Gibbs is not the only character Pinter chooses to satirize the hierarchy. Another member of the staff, Lush, also challenges Roote's authority and mocks him. To make the people around him be aware of his power, Roote insists on being called 'sir', "[y]ou're neglecting to call me sir, Lush. You're supposed to call me sir when you address me" (264). When Lush calls him Mr Roote, he warns Lush by saying "[d]on't Mr Roote me", "I said don't Mr Roote me!" (258). Pinter's ironic approach to the lack of power in the top position in the hierarchical order continues with Lush's saying to Roote that "...you still possess considerable military bearing" (259); "[a]nd the ability to be always one thought ahead of the next man" (260) which are completely ironical: Roote is not only unaware of the ongoing events at the institution, he is not even sure of what he has done during the week in question: Confusing the days, even failing to remember that it was he who signed the death certificate of patient 6457. That is to say, the institution is beyond his control. He is not a man who is 'one thought ahead of the next man' at all. Lush goes on provoking Roote through both his speech and behaviour:

Lush. You must have been quite a unique kind of man, sir, in your regiment.

Roote. Yes, well I . . . What do you mean?

Lush. The age of the specialist is dead.

Roote. What?

Lush. The age of the specialist is dead.

Roote. Oh. Dead. Yes.

Lush. That's why I say you must have been quite a unique kind of man, sir, in your regiment, being such an all-round man.

Roote. Yes, yes, there's something in that.

He perches on the desk.

Lush. I mean, not only are you a scientist, but you have literary ability, musical ability, knowledge of most schools of philosophy, philology, photography, anthropology, cosmology, theology, phytology, phytonomy, phytotomy – (260, 261)

As it is seen from the dialogue above, Lush's statements confuse Roote himself so much that he asks what he means by saying that he is 'a unique kind of man', and does not know what to say about the death of the age of the specialist. Lush's giving the name of the fields, which are so different from each other, and flattering Roote by saying that he is an expert on all of them is irony itself. The most striking mockery comes from Lush when he says to Roote that he has a Christmas present for him. Before Lush leaves the room, he takes a cigar from his pocket and gives it to Roote. When Roote lights it and puffs, "the cigar explodes" (313). In a nutshell, Roote's authority, which represents the order, and hierarchy in the play, is not only satirized verbally through his staff's flattering speeches to him, but also physically with the explosion of the cigar.

4.6. Conclusion

In *The Hothouse*, the audience/reader is faced with a 'rest home' established by the government and under the control of men of science. In addition to patients' being numbered and not called by their names, in the play the audience/reader cannot hear or read anything uttered by the patients themselves. Whole conversations in the play take place only between the staff. In this way, Pinter brings the matter of being a man of science to the table. Throughout the history of mankind, many burdens have been laid on men of science. They are the healers, protectors, sophisticated, noble, in short, they have always been labelled with positive notions. However, in *The Hothouse* the audience/reader is faced with a group of man of science undermining each other, abusing the patients and the staff, working not for the sake of the health of the public but for the sake of gaining authority over each other. When the play is read within this frame on its surface level, it can be said that the corruption, unworthiness and unreliability of science is the dominant point of the play, so men of science in the play are condemned and reproached. Nevertheless, within the frame of postmodernism, the play presents a new point of view. Man of science is the label that is attached to a humanbeing. Under the skin, they are mortal and fallible. All these positively attributed notions shadow the fact that they are blood and flesh. That is to say, they have desires,

ambitions, and jealousies like all other people. In *The Hothouse*, Pinter presents his men of science in a 'rest home', and shows the audience/reader their relations with each other through their conversations, and the ongoing situation in the establishment. He neither presents personal opinion about any of the characters, nor puts nor is moral judgment found within the dialogues. Like in *The Homecoming*, *The Hothouse* takes meaning depending on each audience's/reader's skill in perceiving and interpreting the events that take place. For example, let us say that the father of the illegitimate child is Roote. On the one hand it can be interpreted as the mentally ill patient's being raped by her doctor, on the other hand this incident can be perceived as an ordinary love affair between a patient and a doctor. It depends where the audience/reader stands while interpreting the events. As said before, it depends on the intellectual and cultural background, age, job and educations of the audience/reader. Finally, the postmodern reading does not deconstruct anything, but presents a new richness to our understanding of Pinter's plays.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, Harold Pinter's two plays have been discussed and analysed within the context of postmodern literature. After analysing the two plays in the light of the larger body of postmodern literature, the study has demonstrated how a play is open to discussion depending on where the audience/ reader stands. The audience/reader has the tendency to accuse the playwright of producing unclear, indecisive dialogues and situations in a play. Because of the confusion the audience/reader experiences, s/he boos at the play's conclusion and critiques the playwright. However, a postmodern reading of a play and Pinter's in particular, has shown that the omnipotent and the omniscient feature of a playwright are no longer dominant. The play is not in the hands of the playwright predominantly but interpretive power has passed to the audience. Thus, the playwright and the play are at the mercy of the audience/reader, when s/he gets the control of the play, interprets the dialogues, the events, and the end depending on her/his intellectual and educational background. In both plays, the importance of the audience/reader's stand point is seen clearly.

First of all, the two plays were reviewed on their surface levels. When *The Homecoming* is taken into account, it is seen that the events in the play take place in an English family, and when the play is read on the basic level, it leaves an impression that Max is an ignorant father who neither knows of his wife's unfaithfulness nor his elder son's marriage, that the sons are impudent to each other and to their father, that Max's wife is a prostitute who betrays her husband with his best friend, and that Ruth is a nude model who leaves her three sons in another country to become a prostitute working for her husband's family. Everything in the play is corrupted from top to bottom. At this point, the audience/reader interprets the play as the demonstration of a corrupted family within the frame of corrupted relationships between the family members. The unconditional love, the sense of brotherhood and respect among the family members no longer exists because this is the postmodern period, and everything is destroyed.

When *The Hothouse* is taken into account, it is seen that the play takes place in a mental institution, and the events occur among the doctors and the staff. The doctors, who are respected members of society, seen as both the healer and the protector, are in fact the abusers in the play. The patients have no identity – they are numbered - and the staff are exploited by the doctors. On the surface level, like *The Homecoming*, the notion of corruption, manipulation, and exploitation are dominant. The audience/reader has the tendency to interpret the events and the actions of the doctors in a manner which condemns them. Roote, the head of the institution, has no concern with the patients, besides, it is implied by the other doctors that he is the rapist; Gibbs strives to oust Roote and become the head of the institution; Miss Cutts struggles to keep the attention of her two lovers; Lush has no aim apart from annoying Roote and Gibbs. The patients, and also the staff, are at the mercy of these doctors. This situation can be interpreted as such: these doctors are the embodiment of the new period, which is the postmodern era. However, after analysing the two plays in the light of the dominant characteristics of postmodern literature, the plays' perspectives move from the surface level to something much deeper and more complex.

Under the heading of the fall of metanarratives, it is seen that the notion of family and the notion of science are emancipated from their position of supremacy in the social hierarchy. A postmodern reading stimulates the audience/reader to realize the fact that both the members of the family and the men of science are just people. Instead of using metanarratives, and interpreting the notion of family or/and the notion of science within the same universal frame, the postmodern reading suggests local narratives as an alternative. Harold Pinter's presentation of a corrupted family in *The Homecoming*, and corrupted men of science in *The Hothouse* does not mean that these corruptions are universal. Postmodern reading reminds the audience/reader that it is not an appropriate approach to regard something as being bad or corrupted universally after seeing a single sample of it. In a nutshell, instead of metanarratives, local narratives gain importance in the postmodern reading.

The analysis of language games in Pinter's work demonstrates how language can be used as a tool to beat the other side verbally. In daily life, people are constantly involved in language games, using different tactics throughout the game to gain control

or power over the other. Pinter's plays also employ language game in them. In *The Homecoming*, the language game between Ruth and Lenny is the most striking one. Lenny tells two stories to Ruth which are about how he has beaten two women. With these stories, Lenny uses the tactic of referencing his physical power in order to intimidate the other side. However, as Ruth feels that the subject of woman, that is to say the subject of sexuality, is Lenny's achilles' heel, she attacks him by talking seducingly. To sum up, in this language game, Ruth aims to beat the other side by seducing him, and Lenny tries to achieve the same by intimidating her. In *The Hothouse*, the language game between Roote and Gibbs is in the opening scene of the play. Roote uses language as a tactic to cover his ignorance about the ongoing events in the institution, on the other hand Gibbs uses it to disturb and mock Roote. Both struggle to beat the other side psychologically. With the examination of language games in the two plays, it is seen that language is not a trivial thing that people use everyday to communicate with each other. Language is a tool, almost a weapon, which is shaped in the hands of the speaker depending on her/his intellectual and educational background. In this game, in order to be the winner, it is required to realize the connotations of the words and tactics of the other side, and to be able to respond in return.

Under the heading of writerly text, the importance of the audience/reader is demonstrated. In postmodern literature, some parts of a the work of art are left missing to be completed by the audience/reader, which makes the audience/reader active while watching/reading instead of staying passive and accepting what has been presented to her/him without question. The audience/reader interprets the events and the characters in the play without the guidance of the playwright. The intellectual and mental development of the audience/reader gains importance, and leads to many different interpretations for a single play. To give an example, in *The Homecoming*, it depends on the audience/reader's standpoint to interpret Ruth's abandoning her three sons and husband as the unacceptable actions of a mother, or as a natural decision that is the outcome of her way of living. In *The Hothouse*, it is at the mercy of the audience/reader to call Roote a rapist or a lover because this part is missing from the play. The patient who gives birth never appears in the play, so whether she has been raped or whether it was a love affair is one of the missing parts of the play. It is audience/reader's duty to fill in these parts and thus shape the play.

After analyzing the plays under the heading of parody, it can be seen how Pinter parodies well worn social and cultural cliches. In *The Homecoming*, he parodies the cliches 'home sweet home' and 'woman's place is in the home', and in *The Hothouse*, he parodies the exaggerated politeness and cliché terms in the speeches of speechmakers. In *The Homecoming*, it is seen how a home may not be a place to relax, and rid oneself of the disturbances of the outside world. The members in the home may be the troublemakers themselves. 'Woman's place is in the home' is another cliché that is created in patriarchal society to restrict the women's public roles. Pinter parodies this cliché by presenting the two women, who are mothers of three sons at the same time, as prostitutes. The audience/reader does not have exact information about how or when Max's wife started working as a prostitute, or how they met; however, it is demonstrated clearly that Ruth accepts the suggestion of working as a prostitute willingly. Analyzing this cliché under the heading of parody reminds the reader of the fact that the place of a person cannot be decided by society; it is in the hands of the person. In *The Hothouse*, Gibbs disturbs Roote through his exaggerated politeness. With this politeness, Gibbs implies Roote's ignorance and mocks his position. That is to say, indeed there is nothing polite in Gibbs's statements. Roote's Christmas speech is also another cliché that is used by speechmakers, and parodied in the play. The examples given in the speech, the wishes, the suggestions are so usual that it is not hard to guess what Roote's next statement in the speech will be. When it is kept in mind how Roote was at first unwilling to make the speech, and how he felt depressed at the thought of the speech he is supposed to make, the speech further loses its sincerity.

Under the heading of irony, which is the last heading, it is demonstrated how Pinter satirizes some notions in both plays. First of all, in *The Homecoming*, Pinter starts satirizing with the title of the play. The word 'homecoming' evokes emotional feelings in the audience/reader, and the audience/reader expects to see/read a story of a family whose members come together again. However, the play has nothing to do with the emotional reunion of a family. On the contrary, Teddy's family is destroyed because of his father and brothers. Another point that Pinter satirizes in *The Homecoming* is the notion of marriage. In contrast to the perception of marriage as sacred and unifying, Pinter presents two marriages in the play which are broken. In *The Hothouse*, Pinter starts his ironic assault on British cultural clichés with the title of the play. On the

contrary to its protective and healer connotation, the place is filled with manipulation and exploitation. Another thing that is satirized in *The Hothouse* is the hierarchical order. Roote, who is the head of the hierarchy in the play, is an ignorant doctor, and his ignorance is mocked many times by his staff throughout the play. To sum up, the ironies in the two plays remind the audience/reader the fact that appearance versus reality. The names and the definitions given to a place, a situation, or a person may not reflect the reality.

While analyzing Harold Pinter's plays in the light of postmodern literature, this study aims to demonstrate different interpretations that can be made about a single event. The study aims to show the pluralities and ambiguities in the play not as a confusing point, but as the richness of the play. For this reason, instead of being a destructive approach, it is an encouraging approach which underlies this study in order to enrich the skill of interpretation of the audience/reader by presenting different perspectives, and to show the richness of Pinter's plays.

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