

Language, Politics, and Taboo Memory:
Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming* as Post-Holocaust Dramas

Yutaka OKUHATA

Abstract

本稿では、英国の劇作家ハロルド・ピンター（1930-2008）の『管理人』（*The Caretaker*, 1960）及び『帰郷』（*The Homecoming*, 1965）を採り上げ、そこに見られる「語りえない」禁忌（タブー）としての記憶について、主に「アウシュヴィッツ後」の世界におけるホロコーストを巡る記憶の政治学と結びつけて検討する。ピンターはユダヤ人でありながら絶滅収容所の恐怖を直接的に表象しようとはしなかったが、彼の幾つかのテキストには登場人物の曖昧な言説の背後に、しばしば彼らが語りえない真実——或いは、彼らが他者へ語ることを拒否している記憶——が存在することが暗示されている。例えば『温室』（*The Hothouse*, 1958/1980）にはそうした語りえない記憶を「語ろう」とする試みが言語そのものの自壊により挫かれてしまう様子が描かれているが、本論文では一見ホロコーストとは無関係に思える『管理人』と『帰郷』において、この種の「語りえない」禁忌としての記憶が、まさに「語られない」ことによって——もしくは逆に「語られて」しまうことによって——もたらされる作用を中心に分析し、共同体の団結を維持する装置として機能する“unspeakable”な記憶それ自体の孕む政治性について論じる。

Key Words: Harold Pinter, politics, memory, taboo, the Holocaust, the unspeakable

1. Introduction: “Unspeakable” Reality and the Holocaust

In most of the plays written by Harold Pinter (1930-2008),¹ especially in his so-called “memory plays”² after the 1960s, the relativity and ambiguity of man’s memory are skillfully expressed as the inherent elements that cause serious conflict or distortion of communication with others.³ In a word, the opaqueness of memory is inseparably connected to the opaqueness of language which often misrepresents what actually happened or what is now happening. Hence, we can say that this kind of political function of language even has the violent potential to distort and erase reality. Although it is almost impossible for the audience to find the absolute reality or its traces in fragmented narratives of his characters because — to use Ronald Hayman’s words — “[t]he only facts that he’s [Pinter’s] concerned with are the facts of what is said and done on

stage,”⁴ we can at least assume that there might be some “unspeakable” realities — or the hidden facts that they intentionally refuse to talk about — in their obscure lines with volumes of contradictions. Actually, Pinter himself once said, “So often, below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken.” He also claimed that his job as an author was not to force a character to “speak of what he could never speak.”⁵

As is apparent, for most of the European Jews who experienced the Second World War as Pinter did, “the unspeakable reality” undoubtedly means the Holocaust — the worst atrocity in human history. However, as George Steiner’s famous expression in *Language and Silence* clearly indicates, “[t]he world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason.” He also argues, “To speak of the *unspeakable* is to risk the survivance of language as creator and bearer of humane, rational truth.”⁶ According to Lea Wernick Fridman, a researcher who studies the Holocaust fictions, the unspeakable experiences of horror such as in Auschwitz generally have “fuzzy outlines.” Fridman describes the features of this type of experience:

Let us imagine a very different kind of experience. This experience has fuzzy outlines. It seems to lose the temporal structure — beginning, middle, and end — that allows us to make sense of the experience, to put it into words, to communicate it to others. It is an experience that has, as it were, fallen out of time, spills over and across time, and no longer exists within time or, even, one might say, within the experiencing subject. Having fallen out of time, it also has fallen out of language. The experience is neither tragic, comic, nor epic. It is not narrative, dramatic, poetic, discursive, allegorical, symbolic, or ironic. It is none of these because it has no words and cannot be framed into words.⁷

In addition to this, the unspeakable experiences of survivors, as Robert Eaglestone notes, are not ethically allowed to be “identified” with other experiences. In his expression, “it is both that identification *cannot* happen in any meaningful way [...] and that it *should not* happen.”⁸

In an interview, Pinter himself admitted that the Holocaust was probably the worst thing that had ever happened. That is because, in his view, “it was so calculated, deliberate and precise, and so fully documented by the people who actually did it.” He continues as below:

Their view of it is important. They counted how many people they were murdering every day, and they looked upon it, I take it, like a car delivery service. How many cars can you make in one day, how many people can you kill in one day? And there’s the whole question of how many people knew what.⁹

In spite of his strong awareness of this historical event, however, Pinter as a writer never attempted to “represent” the voiceless victims of extermination camps in his own works, because he himself was neither a Holocaust survivor nor a witness. Nevertheless, as Martin Esslin remarks in his essay, “The label of ‘comedies of menace’ that has been applied to Pinter’s plays is correct as far as it goes, yet behind the menace there stands the consciousness of an anxiety about the cruelty of the post-Holocaust, post-nuclear world itself.”¹⁰ Besides, Harold Bloom also remarks, “A horror of violence, with an obsessive sense of the open wound, is Pinter’s unspoken first principle.”¹¹ Pinter’s own statement indeed supports these ideas; in the interview that he talked about *Ashes to Ashes* (1996) — the play that ambiguously expressed “the image” of the Holocaust — he actually said:

I was brought up in the Second World War. I was about fifteen when the war ended; I could listen and hear and add two and two, so these images of horror and man’s inhumanity to man were very strong in my mind as a young man. They’ve been with me all my life, really. You can’t avoid them, because they’re around you simply all the time.¹²

As Jean-François Lyotard notes, after Auschwitz, “the facts, the testimonies which bore the traces of *here’s* and *now’s*, the documents which indicated the sense or senses of the facts, and the names, finally the possibility of various kinds of phrases whose conjunction makes reality, all this has been destroyed as much as possible.”¹³ In this situation after the Holocaust, Pinter, as a Jew born in London in the century of warfare, considered that language can act as the innocent-looking weapon which distorts the realities through modifying or erasing what really happened and what is really happening during the acts of cruelty. Nevertheless, since he was neither a direct witness nor an accuser, Pinter never visually depicted the unidentifiable or unimaginable reality of the Holocaust and its cruelty even in his most political plays like *Ashes to Ashes*. Instead of representing the voices of “voiceless” victims as a kind of outsider, what he does in many of his works is to symbolically suggest, from a more universal point of view, that there are some kind of “unspeakable” memories of the past, hidden behind the silence and fragmented language.

2. The Taboo Memory and the Disintegration of Language

In Pinter’s early plays, there are some important characters that seem to have unspeakable memory of their horrible or traumatic past. In fact, one of the most interesting examples can be seen in his famous political drama, *The Hothouse* (1958/1980).¹⁴ In the middle of the plot, Roote, the director of the medical institution, says to his subordinate called Lush: “You know who you remind me of? You remind me of Whipper Wallace, back in the good old days.” Not noticing that

Gibbs, another employee, enters his room, he continues to speak:

He used to hang about with a chap called House Peters. Boghouse-Peters we used to call him. I remember one day the Whipper and Boghouse – he had a scar on his left cheek, Boghouse – caught in some boghouse brawl, I suppose. (*He laughs.*) Well, anyway, there they were, the Whipper and Boghouse, rolling down the banks of the Euphrates this night, when up came a policeman . . . (*I 303*)

Here, Roote talks about his old fellows called Whipper Wallace and Boghouse-Peters whom he met during the trip in his youth. However, in the middle of the line, he begins to laugh spasmodically, and then suddenly “*dissolves in laughter*” as though he went crazy when he intends to speak about the policeman who came closer to question them. As he talks by snatches, his language becomes more and more fragmented and repetitive:

up came this policeman . . . up came a policeman . . . this policeman . . . approached . . . Boghouse . . . and the Whipper . . . were questioned . . . this night . . . the Euphrates . . . a policeman . . . (*I 303*)

In this scene, Pinter emphasizes not only the ambiguity that language and memory themselves inherently contain; rather, his main focus is to suggest that there exists some kind of “unspeakable” fact that Roote may have experienced in the past. Besides, it can also be said that the self-destruction or the disintegration of language expressed in the speaker’s line might be caused by the very existence of such a horrible but hidden reality itself. Due to his frantic laughter and the disintegration of language, what should be told remains untold, and only the words such as “. . . this night . . . the Euphrates . . . a policeman . . .” are leaked as if they were the wreckage of the sentence that should have been recited. Although we cannot know much about the content of his memory, what is interesting is that the self-destruction of language, which is triggered by Roote’s attempt to speak about the “unspeakable,” can unintentionally demolish the possibility of proper communication with other people.

As is typically expressed in *The Hothouse*, the speech acts in Pinter’s plays are not always being perfectly controlled by their subjects. Though some philosophers like J. L. Austin claim that every speech act is performative, indeed it seems much more complicated; if the speakers attempt to talk about something “unspeakable,” their memories themselves obstruct utterance and automatically destroy the normal communication. Then, language begins to disintegrate of itself, and the presence of absolute reality remains ambiguous.

In contrast to *The Hothouse* and other major works, however, in Pinter's early masterpieces *The Caretaker* (1960) and *The Homecoming* (1965), the characters unintentionally succeed in speaking about the past that should be "untold." Although these dramas do not directly express the fear of the Holocaust like most of his works, we can categorize them as Holocaust fictions — or to be more precisely — the post-Holocaust fictions which reflect the political functions of language and memory in his contemporary world situation after Auschwitz. According to Eaglestone, "there are the huge number of texts where the events are implicit, and make up an 'absent content.'" Generally, what he calls "Holocaust fictions" refer explicitly or implicitly to the Holocaust. Yet "[i]n fact very many works which might at first seem to have nothing to do with the Holocaust, do, in fact, reflect on it."¹⁵

In *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*, on the other hand, Pinter's main focus is probably to project the politics of taboo memory in the post-Auschwitz world rather than the direct image of the tragedy itself. Because "Pinter is a true representative of his century, the century of the Holocaust, genocide, [and] the nuclear bomb,"¹⁶ as Martin Esslin notes, it is not too much to say that these two plays implicitly reflect the problems of traumatic memories of extermination camps. Besides, according to Efraim Sicker, the latter in particular can be understood as the drama that depicts "the ambiguity of the social position of Hackney Jews."¹⁷ Although Pinter himself seldom referred to this inhuman atrocity in public, he overtly stressed his "Jewish identity" in an interview in 1996 and said that he had always been haunted by the horrible images of the Holocaust for many years.¹⁸ Therefore, it seems appropriate to consider these early texts that ambiguously deal with the issues of "unspeakable" memories as the reflections of his strong awareness of this cruelest event in human history.

Considering memory both as personal and common property, the characters in *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming* share the unspeakable recollections with their blood relatives as a kind of "taboo" in order to maintain their senses of community solidarity. In other words, such taboo memories have political functions to protect their unity and break down communications to the outer world. Therefore, if someone attempts to criticize or disclose the recollection that should have been kept secret and untold, as will be explained later, he will be expelled from the small community, labeled as a betrayer.

3. *The Caretaker*: Aston, Mick, and Davies

Firstly, let's start with *The Caretaker*, which "has been performed more often than any other Pinter play."¹⁹ The characters in this drama — Aston, Mick, and Davies — are all males, and among them, Aston and Mick are siblings. Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson explain their relationship: "Mick and Aston, the two brothers, reinforce and complement each other's status in

the play by being, on the surface, two opposite types: extravagant versus introvert, active versus passive, work-hungry versus work-shy, aggressive versus gentle, strong versus weak, and so on.”²⁰ As they argue, the brothers who have opposite personalities form a complementary relation with each other. But the elder brother Aston, who is defenseless in contrast to his younger brother Mick, reveals a secret that might have been shared as taboo among them, to the outsider Davies, an old homeless man whom he accidentally brings into their room. The fact that should be untold to others is that Aston has had a mental disorder since he underwent an operation on his brain. Though Aston’s long talk is extremely vague and unclear, according to him, he was sent to a hospital in the suburbs of London, and a doctor declared to him:

He said . . . he just said that, you see. You’ve got . . . this thing. That’s your complaint. And we’ve decided, he said, that in your interests there’s only one course we can take. He said . . . but I can’t . . . exactly remember . . . how he put it . . . he said, we’re going to do something to your brain. He said . . . if we don’t you’ll be here for the rest of the life, but if you do, you stand a chance. (*II 53*)

Then, Aston talks to Davies about the “treatment” — or lobotomy — that the patients in front of him received:

One night. I was one of the last. And I could see quite clearly what they [doctors] did to the others. They used to come round with these . . . I don’t know what they were . . . they looked like big pincers, with wires on, the wires were attached to a little machine. It was electric. They used to hold the man down, and this chief . . . the chief doctor, used to fit the pincers, something like earphones, he used to fit them on either side of the man’s skull. There was a man holding the machine, you see, and he’d . . . turn it on, and the chief would just press these pincers on either side of the skull and keep them there. Then he’d take them off. They’d cover the man up . . . and they wouldn’t touch him again until later on. Some used to put up a fight, but most of them didn’t. They just lay there. (*II 54*)

The doctors gave an electric shock to the brains of some patients including Aston. Eventually, as Aston himself admits, his brain lost some of its functions after the operation: “The trouble was . . . my thoughts . . . had become very slow . . . I couldn’t think at all . . . I couldn’t . . . get . . . my thoughts . . . together . . . uuuhh . . . I could . . . never quite get it . . . together” (*II 55*). Furthermore, his body still has after-effects of the treatment: “The trouble was, I couldn’t hear what people were saying. I couldn’t look to the right or the left, I had to look straight in front of me, because if I

turned my head round . . . I couldn't keep . . . upright. And I had these headaches" (II 55). Though Aston's line is repeatedly punctuated by a lot of dots, we cannot see a complete disintegration of language — unlike the narrative of Roote in *The Hothouse*. Nevertheless, from his pauses and hesitations, it can be considered that this horrible memory of the past is at least the difficult thing for him to remember.

As is clear from the plot, the superficial cause of unsuccessful communication between Aston and Davies is Aston's brain disorder, because Davies cannot trust thoroughly what Aston says due to his series of symptoms. In fact, Aston, whose brain has lost half its normal functions after the operation, remarks that it is not easy for him to collect his thoughts together. Hence, the protagonist Davies does not understand what he thinks, and "can't get the hang of him." Davies discontentedly claims: "[H]e wasn't looking at me, he wasn't talking to me, he don't care about me. [sic] He was talking to himself!" (II 57) But more importantly, this cause of miscommunication also works as an element that strengthens the complementary relationship between the two brothers. In fact, Mick cares deeply about his brother's painful memory and its after-effects; he says: "If you got an older brother you want to push him on, you want to see him make his way. Can't have him idle, he's only doing himself harm. That's what I say" (II 47). By sharing the traumatic memory of Aston, they have kept their family unity and communication without verbal interactions. However, Aston, whose thoughts became very slow, talks to Davies and carelessly reveals the secret memory that has been concealed among the brothers.

Instead of criticizing his elder brother,²¹ Mick decides to remove Davies from the position of "a caretaker" and banishes him from their interdependent relationship. That is because Davies speaks ill of Aston's mental disorder in front of him. Though we cannot find the scene where Davies introduces himself as "an interior decorator," Mick asserts, "You say you're an interior decorator, you'd better be a good one." Davies denies it, but Mick finally questions him, "Now come on, why did you tell me this dirt about you being an interior decorator?" (II 69-71) Since he was angry with Davies who made fun of his brother's traumatic memory of the past, Mick forcibly falsifies Davies's statement and expels him on the grounds that he violated the taboo. Though the brothers keep their bond and mutual understanding by sharing the shocking past of Aston, once this "unspeakable" memory is spoken to others, it demolishes the relationship between their brotherhood and the outer world; on the one hand, in *The Caretaker*, memory as taboo has a function to sustain the communication inside their fraternal relationship, but on the other hand, it also has a potential to destroy proper communication between them and the people from the outside.

4. *The Homecoming*: Ruth/Jessie

However, in his later drama *The Homecoming*, Pinter focuses more on miscommunication inside the small community. In fact, the lack of interactions between Teddy, who became a university professor in the US, and his poor family still living in North London — Max, Sam, Lenny, and Joey — can be understood as the communication gap between the intellectuals and the working classes.²² Moreover, there can be found a different level of unsuccessful communication among the family members under the violent control of Max — a tyrannical patriarch who adheres to the romanticized memories of the old days. L. A. C. Dobrez explains this complicated play as follows:

The Homecoming, focusing on Teddy and Ruth who have, in different ways, come “home”, poses the question of identity and does so in terms of place and relationships. “The point is, who are you?” may be rephrased as: “Where is your home, your family?” Ironically, Ruth, who has a dubious background, very like that of Teddy’s family, belongs with them in a way in which Teddy himself does not.²³

As Dobrez claims, the “homecoming” does not just mean Teddy’s revisiting his family; this also implies that Ruth, who was a nude model or whore,²⁴ returns to her own world. In the latter part of the play, Teddy, who is already a member of the educated elite in American society, indicates that his home in London is “dirty,” and asks his wife Ruth to go back to the US:

TEDDY. Yes, they’re about six hours behind us . . . I mean now . . . behind the time here. The boys’ll be at the pool . . . now . . . swimming. Think of it. Morning over there. Sun. We’ll go anyway, mmmn? It’s so clean there.

RUTH. Clean.

TEDDY. Yes.

RUTH. Is it dirty here?

TEDDY. No, of course not. But it’s cleaner there. (*III* 62-3)

Then, he also says:

You can help me with my lectures. When we get back. I’d love that. I’d be so grateful for it, really. We can bathe till October. You know that. Here, there’s nowhere to bathe, except the swimming bath down the road. You know what it’s like? It’s like a urinal. A filthy urinal! (*III* 63)

In contrast to Teddy's attitude, Ruth, who feels affinity with this "dirty place," decides to stay in the house in London by herself, and by making full use of her sexual allure, she starts to threaten Max's paternity and dominate the male family members who intend to make her work as a prostitute.

The most significant point here is that Max's late wife Jessie, whom every member of the family frequently mentions, overlaps the very figure of Ruth. In this motherless home, Max, as a father, has violently brought his brother and sons under control, and by taking charge of cooking, he has also worked as an acting mother. But the memory of Jessie who has been dead for years still has a big influence on this small male community, and the image of Jessie appearing in Max's statements is extremely romanticized and idealized as a perfect mother/wife:

Mind you, she taught those boys everything they know. She taught them all the morality they know. I'm telling you. Every single bit of the moral code they live by — was taught to them by their mother. And she had a heart to go with it. What a heart. Eh., Sam? Listen, what's the use of beating round the bush? That woman was the backbone to this family. 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. (*III* 53-4)

In the latter part of this drama, Lenny, Max's son, implies that he is a pimp. And he recites the story of his experience of trying to rape a woman with his younger brother Joey. From these allusions, it can be ironically said that what Max calls "morality" or "moral codes" that Jessie once taught to her children are, in fact, nothing but a way to live a "dirty" and corrupt life. Though even Max himself subtly suggests a few times that Jessie was a whore-like woman,²⁵ mostly he and his families admire her as an idealized mother/wife.

At last, however, the romanticized memory of Jessie is completely destroyed by Sam, who used to be a part of the community. In the final scene, he suddenly discloses the unspeakable fact that Jessie had an illicit love affair with Max's close friend MacGregor in the old days. He shouts, "MacGregor had Jessie in the back of my cab as I drove them along," and then falls on the floor (*III* 86). Although Max criticizes his remark as "diseased imagination," what is certain is that Jessie has the image of both mother and prostitute. Sam, the only character with a conscience who is uncorrupted and misogynistic, notices Ruth's two-sidedness like Jessie, and attempts to break the unspoken taboo in order to protest against the current situation where Ruth's sexuality brings the family under her control. But as a result, Sam, who has to risk his life to disclose the truth, is excluded from the communication, and his body is left and exposed on the floor like a corpse.

Ruth wins what Kristin Morrison calls “the power struggles” between men and women,²⁶ and finally controls the male characters who live in the “dirty” world as she does. To use the expression of Mark Taylor-Batty, “[i]t is the homecoming of the wife and mother figure, the home-maker and provider of sexual simulation.”²⁷ In the symbolical last scene where “*the three men stand*” while she “*sits relaxed on her chair*,” Ruth, who gains the former position of Jessie, attempts to exclude “sexless” old Max from the community (*III* 88). Losing both the dignity as a father and the role of the deputy mother, Max miserably begs to her: “I’m not an old man. [...] Kiss me” (*III* 89-90). But she never responds, and the communication between them is totally severed. The community is now reorganized under the influence of Ruth who owns sexual power, and the new order is constructed at the end. In *The Homecoming*, as well as the distorted communication between people in the community and people from the outer world, Pinter shows that even the characters in the community are excluded from communication and their memories of the past are also expelled as a result of the power struggle.

5. Conclusion: The Political Functions of Taboo Memory

In his essay “Writing for the Theatre,” Pinter once wrote: “There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of a language locked beneath.” And he added, “One way of looking at speech is to say that it is a constant stratagem to cover the nakedness.”²⁸ Thus, for Pinter’s characters, there exists unspeakable past experiences or their memories even behind the spoken words. And as is seen in *The Hothouse*, the attempts to speak about these often result in a failure. In the background of this statement and his attitudes, there are probably his concerns about political struggle for memories of the Holocaust in the post-war period. Confronted with the rise of Holocaust deniers, as Paul Ricœur points out in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, speaking about what is unspeakable — or “the limit case of certain fundamentally oral testimonies” — causes “a veritable crisis concerning testimony.” He remarks as below:

Why does this genre of testimony seem to be an exception to the historiographical process? Because it poses a problem of reception that being placed in an archive does not answer and for which it even seems inappropriate, even provisionally incongruous. This has to do with such literally extraordinary limit experiences — which make for a difficult pathway in encountering the ordinary, limited capacities for reception of auditors educated on the basis of a shared comprehension. This comprehension is built on the basis of a sense of human resemblance at the level of situations, feelings, thoughts, and actions. But the experience to be transmitted is that of an inhumanity with no common measure with the experience of the

average person.²⁹

As is explained by Ricœur, once the unspeakable realities are told, they give an immeasurable shock to people, since these unimaginable experiences are extremely far from our normal experiences. This, needless to say, makes the survivors hesitate or refuse to speak about, and it eventually causes absolute silence.

Of course, some people might say that it is not proper to regard the less serious taboos like Jessie's past and Aston's experience in the same light as the unspeakable memory of the Holocaust. However, we can at least claim that Pinter's main purpose in these dramas is not to identify what is unidentifiable in human history with these taboos in the small fictitious communities, but to reveal and elucidate the mechanism of collective memory that sometimes acts violently even in the micro-political relations. Although *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming* seem to have nothing to do with the memory of the Holocaust in their themes, these texts express both the community solidarity created when the unspeakable memory is kept untold and the destructive impact when such memories are told to the outsiders; actually, in *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*, this type of memory works as a device to maintain the communication and unity among people, unless they are recited. Nevertheless, though Pinter himself does not clarify its reason, what should be untold (or what cannot be told) is eventually disclosed by the characters and thereby the communities themselves are threatened.

It is certain that, in Pinter's dramas, verbal communication is frequently severed or distorted, and in many cases, most of the characters can share neither their internal feelings nor personal memories of the past with others. As we have already seen in *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*, however, his characters are not always in complete isolation with each other, because Pinter as a playwright intentionally stresses their strong unity and the existence of nonverbal interactions in their interdependent relationships. Therefore, the audience can intuitively realize that there must be some kind of collective memory or unspeakable past experience hidden behind the seemingly unsuccessful communication in his remarkable dramas that explore the mechanism of shared memories by ambiguously depicting the micro-political struggles for them.

As Raul Hilberg writes in the last chapter of his prestigious work, "The destruction of the Jews ended in 1945, but while the perpetuation was over the phenomenon remained."³⁰ Although some European philosophers — including Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Jürgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Lévinas, Jacques Derrida, Paul Ricœur, Jean-François Lyotard, and Giorgio Agamben — have responded to the tragedy in Auschwitz in various ways, Pinter, as a Jewish artist in the post-Holocaust period, did not actively talk about the atrocities

themselves. Instead of stating political or philosophical opinions in public, Pinter mainly focuses on the micro-politics among individuals caused by the exclusiveness of taboo memory in his outstanding dramas like *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*. In a word, such memories themselves have political factors not only in triggering conflicts and distorted communication but also in reinforcing communication. Actually, surveying the real world situation, the similarity to Pinter's dramatic world might also be found in the aggressive and exclusive attitude of Israel — the nation that was “recovered” by Jews and has been banded together by their shared memory of the Holocaust. From this perspective, it can be argued that, as a Jewish playwright in the post-Auschwitz world, Pinter not just deals with the distortion or the vagueness of “unspeakable” memory; besides, he symbolically implies that the collective memories, which themselves have political roles, can arbitrarily be used by the individuals or the community during the struggles to achieve their political purposes of enhancing the sense of unity and removing outsiders who threaten the established order.

Notes

- ¹ Quotes of his original plays are from *Harold Pinter: Plays* (4 vols. London: Faber and Faber, 1991-2011). Volumes and page numbers are enclosed within parentheses and embedded in the text.
- ² The following works are generally categorized as Pinter's memory plays: *Landscape* (1968), *Silence* (1969), *Old Times* (1971), *No Man's land* (1975), *Family Voices* (1981), *A Kind of Alaska* (1982), *Victoria Station* (1982), and a short sketch *Night* (1969)
- ³ cf. Keith Peacock, *Harold Pinter and the New British Theatre* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997) 46.
- ⁴ Ronald Hayman, *Harold Pinter* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1968) 15.
- ⁵ Harold Pinter, *Complete Works One* (New York: Grove, 1976) 13-4.
- ⁶ Italic in original; George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1976) 123.
- ⁷ Lea Wernick Fridman, *Words and Witness: Narrative and Aesthetic Strategies in the Representation of the Holocaust* (Albany: State University of New York Press, c2000) 130.
- ⁸ Italics in original; Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004) 22.
- ⁹ Harold Pinter, *Various Voices: Sixty Years of Prose, Poetry, Politics 1948-2008* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998) 246-47.
- ¹⁰ Katharine H. Burkman & John L. Kundert-Gibbs, Eds, *Pinter at Sixty* (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993) 29.
- ¹¹ Harold H. Bloom, ed, *Harold Pinter* (New York: Chelsea House, 1987) 1.
- ¹² Pinter, *Various Voices*, 246.
- ¹³ Italics in original; Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Translated by Georges Van

- Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988) 57.
- ¹⁴ Pinter's stage drama *The Hothouse* was written in 1958, but remained unperformed and unpublished until 1980.
- ¹⁵ Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern*, 105-06.
- ¹⁶ Katharine H. Burkman & John L. Kundert-Gibbs, Eds, *Pinter at Sixty* (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993) 28.
- ¹⁷ Efraim Sicker, *Beyond Marginality: Anglo-Jewish Literature after the Holocaust* (New York: State U of New York P, 1985) 104.
- ¹⁸ Pinter, *Various Voices*, 246, 252.
- ¹⁹ William Baker, *Harold Pinter*, (London: Continuum, 2008) 52.
- ²⁰ Guido Almansi & Simon Henderson *Harold Pinter* (London: Methuen, 1983) 55.
- ²¹ However, after this scene, Mick indirectly expresses his anger to his elder brother by hurling the statue of Buddha, which is Aston's favorite, against the gas stove (*II* 72).
- ²² Teddy, who is a Doctor of Philosophy, seems to look down on his own family. He says: "You [his family] wouldn't understand my works. You wouldn't have the faintest idea of what they were about. You wouldn't appreciate the points of reference. You're way behind. All of you. There's no point in my sending you my works. You'd lost. It's nothing to do with the question of intelligence. It's way of being able to look at the world. It's a question of how far you can operate on things and not in things. I mean 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" (*III* 69-70).
- ²³ L. A. C. Dobrez, *The Existential and Its Exits: Literary and Philosophical Perspectives on the Work of Beckett, Ionesco, Genet and Pinter* (London: The Athlone Press, 1986) 349.
- ²⁴ In the scene where Ruth talks about her shadowy experience as a nude model (or as a prostitute) to Lenny, we can also see the self-destruction or the disintegration of language; her fragmented and ambiguous lines are as follows: "Once or twice we went to a place in the country, by train. Oh, six or seven times. We used to pass . . . a large white water tower. This place . . . this house . . . was very big . . . the trees . . . there was a lake, you see . . . we used to change and walk down towards the lake . . . we went down a path . . . on stones . . . there were . . . on this path. Oh, just . . . wait . . . yes . . . when we changed in the house we had a drink. There was a cold buffet" (*III* 65).
- ²⁵ In the plot, Max actually says: "Even though it made me sick just to look at her [Jessie's] rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bitch" (*III* 17); "I've never had a whore under this roof before. Ever since your mother died" (*III* 50). Additionally, he also calls Jessie "a slutbitch of a wife" (*III* 55).
- ²⁶ Kristin Morrison, *Centers and Chronicles: The Use of Narrative in the Plays of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983) 185.
- ²⁷ Mark Taylor-Batty, *About Pinter: The Playwright & the Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005) 40.
- ²⁸ Pinter, *Complete Works One*, 14-5.

²⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Translated by Kathleen Blamey & David Pellauer. Chicago: U of Chicago P, c2004) 175.

³⁰ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* Vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003) 1289.