Silence as a Means of Communication in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*

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Abstract

Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*(1959) clearly portrays a lack of communication among the characters of the play which refers to the condition of modern man. This failure of communication led Harold Pinter to use a lot of pauses and silences in all the plays he wrote instead of words. Samuel Beckett preceded Pinter in doing so in his plays and one way to express the bewilderment of modern man during the 20th century is through the use of no language in the dramatic works. Language is no more important to modern man; instead, he uses silence to express his feelings. Silence is more powerful than the words themselves. That's why long and short pauses can be seen throughout all Pinter's plays.

In this play, the characters choose not to communicate; instead, they keep silent because they fail to interact with each other or even with themselves. That is the condition of modern man in which there is no place for such things like understanding or even sharing and this could be one reason behind the physical absence of female figures in this play. Pauses are used to portray the concept that language is a vague and meaningless tool people use to hide their own discomfort. The pauses indicate that to fill the silent gap a person must think about what they are going to say to fill it. More can be said during the pauses and silences than in the actual dialogue.

This paper deals with Pinter's *The Caretaker* and how he uses silences and pauses in it. It consists of an abstract, analysis of the play, and a conclusion.

الصمت كوسيلة تواصل في مسرحية "مُدَبِّر شؤون المنزل" لهارولد بنتر

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الخـــلاصـــة

مسرحية "مُدَبِّر شؤون المنزل" (1959) لهارولد بنتر تصور بوضوح النقص الحاصل في التواصل بين شخصيات المسرحية والذي يشير الى حالة الأنسان في العصر الحديث. وهذا النقص في التواصل هو الذي قاد الكاتب الى استعمال الكثير من الوقفات في كل مسرحياته التي كتبها بدلا عن الكلمات. وقد سبق الكاتب صاموئيل بكت هارولد بنتر في استعمال هذا الأسلوب في مسرحياته لأن كليهما يعود الى مسرح العبث. وكان أفضل إسلوب للتعبير عن حيرة إنسان العصر الحديث هو عدم استعمال اللغة في الأعمال المسرحية. فاللغة لم تعد مهمة بالنسبة لأنسان العصر الحديث ولذلك نراه يسكت ليعبر عن مشاعره. فالتوقف عن الكلام اقوى تأثيراً من الكلمات ذاتها. لذلك نرى الوقفات الطويلة والقصيرة في كل مسرحيات هارولد بنتر.

في هذه المسرحية، يختار الشخوص عدم التواصل، وبدلا عنه يختارون الصمت لأنهم فشلوا في التفاعل مع بعضهم البعض بل وحتى مع أنفسهم. وهذه حالة إنسان العصر الحديث، هذا العصر الذي ليس فيه مجال للتفاهم أو حتى المشاركة بين الناس، وهذا قد يكون سبباً في غياب العنصر الأنثوي في هذه المسرحية. لذلك فقد أُستعملت الوقفات لتصوير حالة اللغة التي أصبحت وسيلة غامضة وغير ذات معنى ويستعملها الناس لأخفاء عدم إرتياحهم. وتشير الوقفات الى حقيقة ان الشخص لكي يملأ فجوة الصمت، عليه أن يفكر فيما سيقوله لكي يملأ تلك الفجوة. والكثير ممكن أن يقال من خلال الوقفات والصمت أكثر مما يقال من خلال الحوار الفعلي.يتناول هذا البحث مسرحية "مدبِّر شؤون المنزل" وكيف استعمل بنتر فيها الوقفات والصمت . ويتكون من خلاصة ، وتحليل للمسرحية، واستنتاج.

I. *The Caretaker* (1959) , a Reflection of the Life of Modern Man

Pinter wrote *The Caretaker* in 1959; it is a three-act play and it was Pinter's first commercial stage success. It remains one of his best-loved works; it is Pinter's second full-length stage play. It was first performed at the Arts Theatre Club, on April 27, 1960. [1]The play takes place in the upstairs room of a rundown house in West London. The room is full of what appears to be junk, including, a lawnmower, gas stove, and a statue of Buddha. It has three characters: brothers Mick and Aston and a homeless man, Davies. Aston, who has undergone involuntary electric shock treatment, invites Davies into his house after rescuing him from a fight in the café where he was working as an odd job man. Aston is looking after the house for his brother, but lives in one crowded room. He is planning to clear the garden and build a shed. Throughout the play he tries but fails to mend a plug. Aston makes Davies welcome, offering him tobacco, a pair of shoes, a bed for the night and some money. Davies announces that he is waiting for the weather to change before he goes down to Sidcup to collect his "papers,"[2] which will confirm who he is. As Aston leaves the flat to buy a saw, Davies tries to follow him. Aston invites him to stay and gives him a key. Left behind, Davies starts to examine the objects that Aston has collected. Mick enters the room, attacks Davies, swiftly throwing him to the ground and asking "What's the game?" (Act I, p. 29) Mick continues to interrogate Davies as he lies on the floor. He tells Davies that he owns the house offering to let Davies the flat for a reasonable rent. Aston returns. He has brought Davies a bag to replace the one he has lost. Mick grabs the bag off him, leaving the room when he realizes that Aston wants Davies to have the bag. Aston tells Davies he is decorating the landing and making a flat for Mick. He offers Davies the job of caretaker. Next morning Aston wakes Davies so he can go to Sidcup. Davies makes an excuse to avoid going out. Aston tells him of his experience of undergoing electric treatment. Two weeks later Davies complains to Mick that Aston has started to ignore him. Mick is more interested in his dream of creating a penthouse for himself and Aston. Davies tells Mick he can help him with the decorating. Mick leaves on Aston's return. Davies reluctantly accepts a pair of shoes Aston has brought him. That night Davies is groaning loudly in his sleep, Aston wakes him as he cannot sleep for the noise. Davies reacts by threatening to return Aston to the hospital where he received his treatment. Aston asks him to leave the house. Davies leaves, returning with Mick and argues that Aston should be evicted, not him. Mick pretends to agree if Aston is the professional decorator he said he was. Davies admits he is not. Mick pretends to be surprised. Losing his temper, he smashes the statue of Buddha. Aston enters the room, faces Mick, they are both smiling. Mick leaves and Davies tries to convince Aston to let him stay. Aston dismisses him saying, "You make too much noise." (Act III, p. 77)

Pinter wrote *The Caretaker* while living in a first floor flat in Cheswick High Road at number 373. The events that happen in the play are a fairly close transcription of real events. Pinter and his wife Vivien and their very young son Daniel were living in this very modest room and there was a kind man who looked after the flat for his brother, his name was Austen. One day Austen brought a tramp he had met in a café back to the house and the tramp stayed for two or three weeks. *The Caretaker* is not an absolute record of reality but it is based on real events and very closely on that particular part of West London.[3]Artistically, *The Caretaker* is clearly influenced in both style and subject matter by Samuel Beckett's 1955 classic *Waiting for Godot*, in which two tramps wait endlessly for someone they know only as Godot to come and give meaning and purpose to their lives.[4]The three characters: Mick, Aston, and Davies "come to portray the human condition."Aston is strangely laconic and withdrawn, and he was in a mental home

two years before and received an electrical shock treatment which left him as he is. His brother is trying to get through to him, to arouse his interest in something, and Aston has been collecting materials for some time with the invention of building a shed, but shows little sign of getting down to it. Davies is the first thing in which Aston has shown positive interest since the mental home; he likes Davies and likes his company. Mick's jealousy is instantly aroused, and his one thought is to get the old man out, but he can do this satisfactorily from his own point of view only if Aston voluntarily rejects Davies. That is whyhe hides his dislike behind a mask of flippancy Davies takes for good humor, Mick confides his plans to Davies and leads him on to suppose that he is quite amiably disposed and will hire him as caretaker for the house when it is fitted up. Davies falls into the trap by trying to play one brother against the other, rejecting Aston, his real friend, and throwing in his lot with Mick. He even goes so far as to curry favor with Mick by saying that Aston is mad, and then Mick has him where he wants him:

> Mick: What a strange man you are. Aren't you? You're really strange. Ever since you come into this house there's been nothing but trouble. Honest. I can take nothing you say at face value. Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies. You're violent, you're erratic, you're just completely unpredictable. You're nothing else but a wild animal, when you come down to it. You're a barbarian. And to put the old tin lid on it, you stink from arse-hole to breakfast time. Look at it. You come here recommending yourself as an interior decorator, whereupon I take you on, and what happens? You make a long speech about all the references you've got down at Sidcup to obtain them. It's all most regrettable but it looks as though I'm compelled to pay you off for your caretaking work. Here's half a dollar. (Act III, pp. 73, 74)

Rejected by Mick, Davies tries desperately to make it up with Aston, but it is too late, for he has gone too far: Aston has determined to start work on his shed "If I don't get it up now it'll never go up. Until it's up I can't get started." (Act IIII, p. 76), and there is no place in his life for Davies, who has no alternative before him at the curtain's fall but to leave.[5]The above-quoted speech suggests the style of *The Caretaker* which is more direct than that of Pinter's earlier plays. Everything that Aston says is perfectly clear and unequivocal. Only Davies is subject in conversation to the characteristic of Pinter's ambiguity, and this is here symptomatic not of the general unknowability of things, but of a specific intention on the character's part to cover his tracks and keep people guessing about himself.[6] The balance of the two brothers' relationship is thrown off when Aston invites Davies, a decrepit and deceitful derelict, to share his living quarts. The play inspired endless guessing games among intellectuals, who tried to guess at the play's meaning and symbolism, a popular theory having the three men represent Christ, the devil, and everyman.[7]

The tramp Davies is an everyman figure, looking for food and shelter at the least cost to himself, finding himself in a world where two brothers, strangely different, equally strange, claim possession. One brother is good to him, the other makes half-promises, mingled with threats; yet both reject him. The spectators are invited to identify themselves with Davies; he is their representative as the central character in a morality play is. Aston and Mick are individualizations of forces, warring principles, dark angel and bright angel.[8]Davies has lost not only his place in the world, as he is homeless, but also his identity. He soon confesses that while his real name is Davies, he has been using the name Jenkins for years. To prove his identity, he would have to get his papers. But he left them with a man, years ago, down in

Sidcup. The trouble is that he cannot get down to Sidcup because he has no suitable shoes, and because the weather is never good enough. In the missing papers that would provide the authentication Davies so desperately craves: "They prove who I am! I can't move without them papers. They tell you who I am. You see! I'm stuck without them." (Act I, p. 20) The importance of authentication through "papers." (Act I, p.19) [9]

Esslin saw Aston as a typical modern man, seeking security in his puttering with gadgetry. In a world that is increasingly deprived of meaning, Aston is seeking to get a foothold in reality. What distinguishes Aston from most modern putterers about the house, however, is not only his lack of success but also his broader dream. His most prized possession is a Buddha statue. "What do you think of these Buddhas?" (Act I, p. 17), asks Davies almost as if he would inquire what the tramp thinks of him.[10]Aston, Ian Mackean believes, wins a measure of victory over both Davies and Mick, and he achieves this by seeming not to actively participate in the battle of dominance. Davies repeatedly tries to get Aston to respond to his view of the situation, and Aston repeatedly denies Davies the comfort of a relevant response. Mick attempts to dominate Aston, but he fails. His frustration with his inability to dominate his brother is mostly deflected into Davies, but his climatic outburst represents his defeat by Aston. His ambition to turn the house into "a palace" (Act III, p. 61) is undermined by Aston's refusal to accept the subservient role Mick has tried to impose upon him.[11]After smashing the Buddha against the gas stove, "Mick: (passionately) … he can do what he likes with it … I'm going to chuck it in." (Act III, p. 74)

It seems that Davies not only insists on doing only jobs appropriate to his situation in life, but also filled with race hatred: "All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Poles, the lot of them, that's what, doing me out of a seat, tearing me like dirt." (Act I, p. 8) So the old tramp emerges in the last minutes of the play as an epitome of some of the worst traits of the British workman. Moreover, he is lazy, ill-tempered, bitter, weak and constantly deceiving others as well as himself.[12] Had Davies been able to show true kindness, genuine sympathy towards Aston after he had been made aware of his past history, he could have established a genuine relationship with him, could have benefited from the offer of friendship implied in that generous gesture of confidence. But poor Davies, whose inferiority finds an outlet in his hatred of Negroes, Indians and Greeks, is simply not capable of even realizing the meaning of such a gesture. This makes Davies a highly significant and symptomatic character in an age in which an inability by large numbers of human beings to transcend such primitive emotions of racial hatred has become one of the most dangerous threats to peace.[13] Pinter's realism reflects the dilemma of the modern man whose self-integrity has been threatened by external pressures. Modern man no more feels that he holds a stable position in the scheme of things. To shed light on man's dilemma, Pinter presented characters that withdraw from nature and live in confined places. Even when he described gardens, they are full of lifeless and alien objects such as the one described in this play.[14]"Davies: looks a bit thick." and "Davies: You'd need a tractor, man." (Act I, p. 17) Davies's feeling of hatred to others shows that this man has been changed by society into a lifeless machine. He is unable to express some human emotions such as love to others, and at the same time he is unable to respond to such human emotions. He isolates himself emotionally from others. This comes as a result of his fear that showing human feelings make him vulnerable to others' attacks. Ruby Cohn suggests that

> The two brothers jointly seem to symbolize the family compatibility between a religious heritage and contemporary values. Thus, it is Aston who is a carpenter and it is the leather-jacketed Mick who is in the building trade and owns a motorized van.[15]

Harold Clurman suggests that "each of the three characters seem to dwell in a world apart from the others and from anything else. They repeat themselves endlessly but never make

themselves understood. Each on his own is cruel to others."[16]

The three characters are symbols or reflections of common problems in modern age, such as the loss of security in such void, the immortal struggle for survival and identity assertion, the shadow of unfulfilled illusions, and the aimlessness of life and the difficulty of communication. Burkman says: "the central conflict in the play actually occurs between the brothers, between whom Davies moves as a catalyst; inadvertently collecting their dreams."[17]

In this play, Davies's inability to place any order on his past is comic and significant like other comic situations in the play. When Aston asks Davies where he was born, the reply is not simply evasive, it is absurd. "Davies: I was … uh … oh, it's a bit hard, like, to set your mind back … see what I mean … going back … a good way … lose a bit of track, like … you know …." (Act I, p. 25) True, Davies does not want to be pinned down. He may have been born in Wales (both Jenkins and Davies are Welsh names), but does not want to admit it. Though he later implies that he is an Englishman, and has already voiced his hatred for the "Scotch git" (Act III, p. 43) who lost him his job, he tells Aston that his first name is Mac which is typically Scottish. Yet, it is he who offers the information that he has taken an assumed name, risking the disclosure that he may have stolen someone else's insurance cards.[18]

II. Absurdity in *The Caretaker*

The modern world is in a state of absurdity and mess, and man as a part of his world becomes as a real reflection of this absurdity and mess in all its kinds. Modern man loses his belief and certainty in such things as love, charity, and understanding as Pinter argues that everyman encounters violence in some way or another. Values are emptied of their original meaning and all this is clearly represented by the three characters, especially Davies. Lois G. Gorden says: "The Caretaker traces a scurrilous old man's futile efforts to pit two brothers against each other."[19] Here, Davies clearly becomes a real reflection of the decay of morality in such a mess. First, he enters the room as an old tramp who needs Aston's help. But, with the first chance of betrayal he is ready to betray Aston for no clear reason except the lack of moral goodness. "Mick: You're my brother's friend, aren't you?"(Act II, p. 47) In other words, Davies begins to bite the hand that feeds him. So, Davies is a symbol of the idea of villainy. That is why the characters become more symbols of moral decay in the modern age.[20]

Pinter portrayed the absurdity of life through the image of Aston who is trying to fix a broken toaster at the very beginning of the play. "Aston goes back to his bed and starts to fix the plug on the toaster." (Act I, p. 10) Similarly, at the very end, he is still fixing the same toaster plug. "He then goes to his bed, takes off his overcoat, sits, takes the screwdriver and plug and pokes the plug." (Act III, p. 75) This image displays the concept that life is meaningless and absurd. It starts from nothingness and ends with nothingness, for nothing really is accomplished during the play. Each character starts and ends in the same position. Davies returns to the streets he came from and Aston turns his back again to the world and remains silent.[21]

Pinter used the motif of the room as a way of projecting in dramatic manner the theme of inaction and withdrawal.[22]Each one of the three characters represents a symbol of an unfulfilled dream, an illusion to keep the continuity of his life. Man finds in dreams and illusions a good refuge from the harsh reality of his life. But, sometimes dreams and illusions prove to be useless, and thus lead to man's destruction. This is clear in the case of Davies. His dream of attaining power leads him to neglect many values which are essential constituents of the human self. He denies his friendship with Aston in an attempt to satisfy Mick. He even tells Mick that Aston is mentally unbalanced. Actually, "dreams can and will be destroyed by

reality."[23] The three characters are overwhelmed by an everlasting sense of isolation. They are emotionally shut away in their fantasies. As Gordon puts it, "Pinter's three men are lonely. They fear the slightest intrusion into their precariously established room, and, in a sense, each is always a potential menace to the other."[24]Aston is a visionary whose hallucinations led to his downfall later in the play. His dream is not even centred primarily on fixing up the house he has charge of; he dreams rather of building a new shed in the garden. At the end of the second act, the spectators discover that Aston's dreams have been shattered before. Like Aston, Mick is a dreamer; but his dreams for the house differ from his brother's dreams. He is a man on the move, an owner of a van, a member of the building trade. While Aston dreams of his simple and clean shed, Mick dreams of a penthouse palace. [25] "I could turn this place into a penthouse … be a palace." (Act III, p. 60) Pinter, in his plays, portrayed human beings as animals driven by their instincts, struggling for survival in a threatening jungle of humanity. Such a portrayal "was to reach its apogee in his next full-length play, The Homecoming."[26]

The caretaker in this play suggests a sort of substitute for the mother figure regardless of the very idea of sex which is absent. The mother figure is another symbol of villainy. Aston is betrayed twice. First, he is betrayed by his mother in the past when she has refused to help him. Actually, she is the source of all his suffering now and in the past when she gave permission to the doctors to subject Aston to shock treatment. Of course, this affected his behavior and his brain. He can no longer think clearly or talk to people as he used to. All this resulted in his withdrawal from people into a world of his own. Thus, Aston used to live without any source of love even such natural love as the maternal love.[27] "Aston: … I wrote to her and told her what they were trying to do. But she signed their form, you see, giving them permission." (Act II, p. 56) The mother, from whom Aston expected sympathy and protection, signs the document giving the doctors permission to subject her son to electric shock treatment. Aston is frightened of women like Stanley in *The Birthday Party*. But Meg in *The Birthday Party*, the mother figure, is unable to see what the sinister men who want to brainwash Stanley are after.[28] Aston is fond of collecting junk like the personal items of Winnie's handbag in Beckett's *Happy Days*. Perhaps, Aston's compulsive behavior of collecting useless objects makes him pick up useless people like Davies. Yet Aston himself seems part of the junk, a useless person. Moreover, the useless objects suggestively indicate the unharmonious and detached relationship of Aston with his society. Aston, too, was part of society, but he has been severely exhausted by its system and institution and thrown away now like this junk.[29] The final scene, with one of the characters is about to leave, yet not seen to be leaving is strongly like the concluding image in Beckett's *Endgame*. There, Clove's leaving would mean the end of the room's owner; here it is the one who is driven away whose life is thereby lost. Yet, *The Caretaker* is, at least on the surface, far more naturalistic than *Endgame*. Originally Pinter was thinking of a violent and perhaps the killing of the old man by the two brothers, but he realized in time that this was quite unnecessary; that Davies's expulsion from paradise would be far more tragic, precisely through Aston's apathy.[30] Towards the end of the play, Mick destroys the figure of the Buddha against the gas stove, which has implicitly become associated with Davies. Aston does not defend his protégé, but excludes him by directing a faint smile at his brother confirming their unity "The look at each other. Both are smiling faintly" (Act III, p.75). In spite of Davies's attempts to provoke disloyalty from one or other of his brothers, their relationship remains intact and it is he who is ejected.[31] Buddha is a symbol of calm and serenity. When it is broken, the organization and order is also broken which represents a symbol of man's everlasting struggle with the universe where human beings wish to order and structure everything, while the universe is constantly moving towards chaos. This idea is

reflected in the play's outcome, the household was reasonably calm and ordered, the Buddha is broken and Davies is asked to leave, a disturbance to the harmony.[32]

The central irony of the play lies in the character of Davies. Unable to accept refuge from the generous and sympathetic Aston, Davies instead plays the role of usurper, tries to dominate the situation, trusts the wrong brother, and ends up exactly where he began, out in the cold. Thus, *The Caretaker* is a portrayal of man's self-destructive nature.[33] Pinter introduced here a number of themes developed in his later work: power, isolation, communication, personal identity, and the unreliability of memory and knowledge. The theme of intrusion is rendered all the more tenuously teasing by the fact that all the three characters operate mentally at levels of subnormality at which communication can be neither meaningful nor sustained.[34] The desire for verification is understandable, but cannot always be satisfied. That is why Pinter said, "There is no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. The thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false."[35] The play shows man's struggle to gain dominance and power in life. Davies is an example of this case. He tries to reinforce his relationship with Mick and to exclude Aston. Mick, however, realizes his main goal and tries to fight back against his threats. Both of them use language as a weapon to achieve their goals. Davies tells Mick that he wants to be a caretaker and take the task of the supervision of the redecoration. He talks about his dream of seeing the neglected house very well-arranged. "You and me, we could get this place going." (Act III, p. 60) Failure of communication is another theme that is highlighted by the language of the play. All three characters want to communicate but are afraid. Loneliness and betrayal is another theme. Davies and Aston are both lonely. Davies trusts no one and although Aston shows him kindness, he betrays him because he is mistrustful. [36]Violence and menace are mostly below the surface of the play. Mick moves swiftly and silently and is an unpredictable character. Davies threatens Mick's relationship with his brother, and responds to his fear of authority by threatening violence. Aston is more of a victim of violence, his description of his treatment in hospital shows that the world beyond the room is now a threatening place.[37]

III. *The Caretaker* as a Comedy of Menace

The Caretaker is another play of Pinter's comedies of menace as Mick terrifies the tramp with a vacuum cleaner in the dark, and Davies threatens each brother with a knife.[38] Esslin believes that

> On one level *The Caretaker* is a realistic play, almost a slice of life, but on another, deeper level it is a poetic image of the human condition itself: man fighting for a place, for security, but at the same time deprived of it by the weakness of his own fallible, selfish nature.[39]

In this play Pinter employed many of his new theatrical characteristics and dramatic techniques, i. e., the use of words as weapons. Words become weapons in Mick's parody of the legal jargon of apartment rental and purchase, which he employs to assault Davies: "twenty percent interest, fifty percent deposit; down payments, back payments, family allowances, bonus schemes, remission of term for good behaviour, six months lease …" (Act II, p. 36)[40]Davies's use of language is very skilful. For him it is a weapon to outmanuver others. He knows when to attack and when to retreat in his use of language. Always seeking to further his own needs, he denies any particular friendship with Aston, affirms Aston's dislike of work and is eventually led into adding his own sharp comment that Aston is mad. Mick asks Davies to take the job of a caretaker, but "his proposal, unlike Aston's, is motivated by personal revenge, although clothed in business terms."[41] Davies, at every turn, is defeated by language. Language is either too much for him or not enough for him; it either

bewilders him or tells him the obvious. Either way he does not communicate with others nor understand fully what they are saying to him. Because of the confusion about his own identity, about his standing in the world, Davies does not trust language at all. He cannot bring himself to say what he wants to say and so stammers around the subject. When Aston offers Davies a job as a caretaker for the house, Davies needs to feel out the implications of such a responsibility, but he is unsure how he should proceed.[42]The vehicle through which the values of the play are made manifest is language. Robert Burstein charges in Seasons of Discontent that Pinter refuses to communicate in *The Caretaker*, that the

> language, while authentic colloquial speech, is stripped bare of reflective or conceptual thought, so that the play could be just as effectively performed in Finno-Ugric. You might say that *The Caretaker* approaches the condition of music - if you could conceive of music without much development, lyric quality, or thematic content.[43]

Language in Pinter is always part of the mechanism of power that gives a political edge to almost everything he has ever written. Pinter used language in this play as a means of gaining power and dominance over others in *The Caretaker*. It is used by the characters to gain a position of dominance, to secure that position and to undermine the dominance of others. Language is always has hidden intention or meaning which the other characters are trying to second guess. The use of language highlights one of the play's themes, the lack of communication. The characters rarely seem to be of one mind when it comes to dialogue, each having their own motives. Pinter's language defines the characters and their inability to relate. The final stage direction, long silence and curtain, emphasizes the fact that there is nothing left to be said between them. [44]

IV. The Dramatic Value of "Pauses and Silences" in *The Caretaker*

The Caretaker is a play of non-communication because the characters of the play at certain points in the action do not choose to, or cannot, communicate with each other. Man loses the ability to understand or to communicate even with himself. That is the condition of modern man in which there is no place for such things like understanding or even sharing and this could be one reason behind the physical absence of female figures in these plays.[45] Davies's speech illustrates Pinter's ability to convey the illogical nature and repetitions of everyday language. His roundabout use of language shows his mind works by prejudice rather than logic. Pinter used hesitant and ungrammatical language to add drama and vibrancy to Davies's speech. Mick either uses few words or is crazily inventive. He uses language to suggest social superiority.[46]Davies, talking about his ex-wife's slovenliness, mentions the saucepan in which he found some of her undergarments, repeats himself, "The pan for vegetables, it was. The vegetable pan. That's when I left her and I haven't seen her since." (Act I, p. 9) The repetition here shows man's struggle to articulate thoughts, to articulate clumsy, painful thoughts, a struggle for the correct word. At times the thought is so complex, one does not find the words at all. Even language fails to express that thought. That is exactly what Pinter did: the persons are seen troubled-minded in the very act of struggling for communication, sometimes succeeding, often failing. And when they have hold of a formulation, they hold on to it, savour it and repeat it to enjoy their achievement.[47]The play is said to be about the breakdown in communication. The characters often speak in broken sentences, repeat themselves, pause from time to time, and do not listen to what is said to them or appear to understand it.[48] Silences and pauses are critical to the play and the ideas underlying the play. Pauses are used to portray the concept that language is a vague and meaningless tool people use to hide their own discomfort. The pauses indicate that to fill the silent gap a person must think about what they are going to say to fill it. More

can be said during the pauses and silences than in the actual dialogue. "What's the game?" (Act I, p. 29) "Silence" (Act II, p. 30) "Well?" (Act II, p. 30) Here the silence is used as passive aggression. Davies does not answer, resisting Mick, as an act of defiance and aggression. It is an act of hidden violence. The metatext operating in these silences and pauses creates the feeling of unease and tension. These tense pauses and silences are devices used throughout the play to display the notion of the constant menace that exists in the world. The pauses also show that while in tense thought it is still occurring inside the characters; nothing is being said out loud. This adds to the sense of isolation; nobody can know what another is thinking during these pauses, so people are essentially isolated. Through the application of techniques like: sight, sound, stillness, motion, noise, and silence, much of the play is constructed.[49] When Aston asks Davies if he is Welsh and he replies after a pause, "Well, I been around, you know …" (Act I, p. 25) it is not necessarily because his antecedents and place of birth are unknown, let alone unknowable, but simply that he is by nature untruthful and evasive. His pause indicates a refusal to verify which is an ordinary psychological term perfectly believable.[50]

Silences play a large and essential part in Pinter's dialogue, especially in this play. For example, there is silence when Mick is alone in the room at the beginning of the play before there are "muffed voices" (Act I, p. 7) of Aston and Davies. There is silence, again as Davies enters the dark room and tries to light a match while Mick is already there "spring cleaning" (Act II, p. 45) the room with the Electrolux and, finally, there is "Long Silence." (Act III, p. 78) as Davies pleads with Aston at the end of the play: "Listen … if I … got down … If I was to … get my papers … would you let … would you … if I got down … and got my …" (Act III, p. 78) Pinter was accused of an excessive use of silences and long pauses. But the silences and pauses in his work are simply a part of his creed as a craftsman. They are the highly personal way of experiencing, and reacting to the world around him. If somebody tries to listen attentively and closely to the real speech of people, they will find that there are more silences and longer pauses, than those generally allowed in the traditional dramas. Moreover, there is a definite purpose behind the silences and pauses in Pinter's plays. When Pinter indicates a 'pause', he wants his audience as well as his readers to understand that intense thought processes are continuing and that unspoken tensions are mounting; and when he indicates a 'silence', it is a sign at the end of a movement and the beginning of another, as between the movements of a symphony.[51]Hollis highly appreciates the musicality of the language that Pinter employed in The Caretaker; the language in this play, by its pauses and rhythm, "does approach the condition of music. Pinter gives voice to the silences, something poets tried to do since Orpheus, and he is told that there is no lyricism in the proletarian paeans of Davies, Mick and Aston."[52]Pauses and silences in this play are not only very effective but also more important than the actual dialogue. They are suggestive auditory effects that expose the characters' hidden violence and their passive aggression. Moreover, they display the characters as essentially isolated. Silences are not the absence of speech but the true, raw and frequently brutal or vulnerable self. True silence leads to the truth by avoiding both wordiness and wordlessness because silence is truth.[53]

Through the use of thirty seconds of silence, Pinter showed his audience the physical movements of the actor playing Mick to take possession of the stage and dominate the audience's attention. It is through the body language and silences that the characters display their intentions that the audiences are able to make conclusions, and therefore get answers to the questions that the play raises. Pinter chose to open the play with a physical statement rather than a verbal one.[54]"Mick is alone in the room, sitting on the bed. He wears a leather jacket. Silence." (Act I, p. 7)The play is framed by a long silence at the beginning and at the end. In The Caretaker, more than any other of Pinter's plays, 'emblems in silence' transfigure the action and tell their own story. In the longest silence to open a Pinter play, Mick works his

way through an elaborate mime. Then the audiences hear voices, and Mick moves silently to the door, goes out and closes it quietly, leaving them to anticipate a meeting that will not actually take place until the end of Act I. John Russell Brown suggests that whatever motivation Mick has for looking at each of the objects in the room in turn, then remaining silent and expressionless, something other than dialogue is holding over attention.[55]

Speech may be evasive, but gesture and silence can just as easily undercut as exaggerate that evasiveness. Aston, Davies, and Mick are known not only from what they say, but also from how they stand, move, or remain silent. This is an essential part of Pinter's method. From the moment Davies enters, he is physically as well as mentally tense. Angry at losing his job, and blaming "all them aliens." (Act I, p. 8) for his misfortunes, he is fully aware that he must calm down, but he finds it exceptionally difficult to do so. His physical movements betray the anger he is trying to contain. His actions give him away and place him in stark contrast to Mick, a silent image of perfect control. The relationship between the two characters has almost been defined before they meet. Davies is nervous, defensive, and easily frightened. Like Stanley, he is capable of defiance, but also like Stanley his defiance is short-lived. Mick, on the other hand, is sure of himself, moves silently, and then pounces with agility and speed. At the end of Act I, after forcing Davies to the floor, he sits down and looks at him, again silent and expressionless, just as when he observed the objects around him in the opening scene. Though borrowed from the circus, the bag-passing scene defines the relationship between the two brothers and Davies. After Aston sympathetically makes several attempts to hand the bag back to Davies, only to have Mick snatch it away again, he finally takes the bag from Mick, pauses, and hand it back to him. Mick is presumably satisfied that the game has gone on long enough and that his brother has succumbed to his will, graciously hands the bag to Davies. This final silent image shows the audience the bond between the two brothers and prepares the audience for outcome where both reject Davies.[56]

The three types of pause, as described by Hall, can be seen in *The Caretaker*. Firstly the three dots pause as a "sign of pressure point, a search for a word, a momentary incoherence"[55] in Aston's speech at the end of Act I where he is describing to Davies his experience in the hospital.

> Aston: They weren't hallucinations, they … I used to get the feeling I could see things … very clearly … everything … was so clear … everything used … everything used to get very quiet … everything got very quiet … all this … quiet … and … this clear sight … it was … but may be I was wrong. (Act II, p.55)

Aston is talking of a subject that is both painful and difficult; the use of the three dots between his words increases as he finds it harder to express himself, the pressure and tension growing as the presence of the three dots interrupt Aston's speech more and more. The speech finally ends in Aston being unable to express what his "hallucinations" (Act II, p. 54) were and weakly ending with the words "but maybe I was wrong." (Act II, p. 55) In the words of Pinter, communication had become too alarming to continue; the second type of pause described by Hall is the pause, "when lack of speech becomes the speech itself."[58]In the extract below, the pause is used to dominate the uncertainty surrounding this section of dialogue. Mick has suddenly changed tactics on Davies and Davies is trying to work out which is the best way to respond. "Davies: I was saying, he's … he's a bit of a funny bloke, your brother." (Act II, p. 49) Pinter's use of the pause creates tension in the scene. The awkward pauses, created by Davies (unintentionally) and Mick (intentionally) demonstrate Mick's control and manipulation of the situation, and the audience is left, like Davies, uncertain of how the situation is going to develop; The third type of pause, Hall described, is the silence. The silence is "an extreme crisis point. Often the character emerges from the

silence with his attitude completely changed. The change within him is often unexpected and highly dramatic."[59]

In *The Caretaker*, the silence is employed to greatest effect at the end of Act III. The silence is used to indicate the extreme crisis felt by Davies when he realizes that he has been rejected by both of the brothers: firstly by Mick, "Mick: … I'm going to chuck it in." (Act III, p. 74), they were "both smiling faintly," (Act III, p. 75) and secondly by Aston in the final tragic speech, "Davies: But … but … look … listen here … I mean …." (Act III, p. 77) "Long silence. Curtain" (Act III, p. 78) In Davies's final speech, he realizes that he has been rejected by both of the brothers and is to return to the street. Pinter used each of the three types of pauses to reach the crescendo of crisis at the final moment, when speech has become inadequate and only silence is left to express Davies's despair.[60]

At the end of the play, Aston's response to the stream of words from Davies does not include any words at all. He looks out of the window and the audiences know that this is towards the garden where he wishes to build with his own hands a wooden hut. Then the final confrontation of the two characters is silence from both of them, and stillness.[61]With five pauses in his last speech, Davies recognizes the total futility of verbal communication against Aston's resolve. He is left without any means of expressing himself, or rather; he is compelled to recognize that he has no self to express, that words masked his personal meaninglessness, now laid cruelly here. Pinter presents here an image of victims who have achieved some kind of meaning as approximated by Pinter through their acceptance of silence as a mode of communication.[62]The play closes with Davies desperately pleading to stay in the room, the home he has now lost, while Aston stands silently by the window with his back turned to him. Davies's words stick in his throat. He stands silently by the door as the curtain falls. The audience know that he will have to go, that he has lost his last chance in life. In the silences of his speech, one may fathom the labored breathing of a destroyed man.[63] "Where am I going to go? (Pause) … and got my … (Long silence) Curtain" (Act III, p. 78) The final scene, again there is a character who speaks and another who does not respond: Aston who remains still "with his back to Davies" (Act III, p. 77) But this time the spectators know why Aston does not answer "Listen … (Long Silence)" (Act III, p. 78) the long silence which closes The Caretaker and which is both wholly real and , at the same time, a powerful poetic metaphor, is anything but arbitrary. The whole course of the play has led up to it organically, logically, and inevitably. The use of silence and pauses in this play is most characteristic of Pinter's artistic personality. That is why he acquired mastery of one of the strongest instruments in his armory as a craftsman.[64]

Mick and Aston meet for the second and last time in silence and then speak only one and a half words. Mick has just smashed a small statue of the Buddha, which represented for the two brothers their scheme for Aston's rehabilitation for furnishing an empty house as both home and business proposition. At this point, Aston makes his final entry, under the scrutiny of Davies, the tramp whom he has introduced to the room as a potential companion, victim, or caretaker. After a "silence"(Act III, p.74), a "door bangs" (Act III, p. 74) and once more there is a silence in which Mick and Davies "do not move." (Act III, p. 75)

> *Aston comes in. He closes the door, moves into the room and faces Mick. They look at each other. Both are smiling faintly.*
> Mick: (*beginning to speak to Aston*). Look … uh …
> He stops, goes to the door and exits. Aston leaves the door open, crosses behind Davies, sees the broken Buddha, and looks at the pieces for a moment. He then goes to his bed, takes off his overcoat, sits, takes the screwdriver and plug and pokes the plug.
> Davies: I just come back for my pipe.

Aston: Oh yes. (Act III, p. 75)

This last encounter, unlike those of Estragon and Vladimir in Waiting for Godot or of Willie and Winnie in Happy Days, shows two independent courses as one silence follows another, and silent business provides all the drama.[65]

At the end of the last scene, the two brothers smile at each other silently. Perhaps, this smile is a sign of the understanding that they have of Davies's position as an outsider. It also implies the tramp's failure to belong to them. Moreover, it means that they recognize his potential threat to their security after their bitter confrontations with that menacing figure. Although Davies tries to make a feeble attempt at the end of the play to regain Aston's favour, he fails. His clumsy attempt to play one brother off against the other has resulted in his losing everything.[66]

To conclude, the pauses fall between the characters as markers of interpersonal and social relations. The Pinter actor has an implied story or biography to call upon in handling these silences with content because there seems to be information not stated.[67]

Conclusions

Pinter is distinguished by using an economic style in all his plays. He did that through the use of a lot of pauses in his works more than any other writer. The pauses in Pinter's plays are as prominent and suggestive as words. For example, in his play *The Caretaker* he uses a lot of pauses in order to reflect the inner conflict inside each character of the play.

In Pinter's plays when the characters feel menaced by another source of threat, they retreat. They say nothing. Their response is seen as an attempt to mask their fear, insecurities, and anxieties. They seem to escape from the harsh reality they live in.

Pauses and silences indicate the fact that language for the absurdists is no more significant. It is useless and is not able to convey any meaning. These pauses and silences reveal the difficulty in communication, the distance between self and self, as well as self and others. People lose the ability to understand or to communicate even with themselves. Pauses and silences, in Pinter's plays, indicate a break in the dialogue. All the characters in his plays seem to reach their ends sooner or later. That is why they seem to be silent at the end of the plays. In *The Caretaker*, Davies stands silently by the door as the curtain falls. The audience know that he will have to go, that he has lost his last chance in life. In the silences of his speech, one can understand the labored breathing of a destroyed man.

To conclude, the play reflects in a very clear way the state of modern man who has lost communication with the people around him. This is also reflected in the life of modern man in the 21st century although there are a lot of communication means, but in reality they are not really connected to each other. They are living in a virtual world instead of interacting with each other.

Notes

[1] Ruby Cohn, "The World of Harold Pinter." in *Pinter:A Collection of critical Essays*, ed. Arthur Ganz (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p.79.

[2] Harold Pinter, *The Caretaker* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1960), p. 19. All subsequent quotations from this play are taken from this edition and cited parenthetically within the text by act and page number.

[3]Billington, "Pinter at the BBC."URL:http://www.bbc.co.uk/pinter. Retrieved Feb. 13, 2017.

[4] Shakti Batra, *Harold Pinter: The Caretaker: A Critical Study* (New Delhi: Rama Brothers India PVT. LTD, 2005), p.42.

[5]John Russell Taylor, *Anger and After*, p. 337.

[6] Ibid, p. 338.

[7] Robert Simonson "Playwright Harold Pinter, Dramatic Master of Pause, Enigmas and Menace Is Dead at 78." Dec. 25, 2008 (URL:http:///www.playball.com/index.php), retrieved Jan. 20, 2017.

[8] Clifford Leech, "Two Romantics: Arnold Wesker and Harold Pinter." In *Contemporary Theatre*, eds. John Russell Brown & Bernard Harris (London: Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1962), p.29.

[9]Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p. 217.

[10]Burkman, *The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter: Its Basis in Ritual*, p.79.

[11] Ian Mackean, "Winners and Losers Psychological Warfare in the Plays of Harold Pinter." (URL:http://www.literature_study_online.com/essays/pinter.html), retrieved Feb. 2, 2017.

[12]Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright*, p.104.

[13] Ibid, p. 110.

[14] John Lahr, "Pinter and Chekhov: The Bond of Naturalism." in Ganz, p. 62.

[15] Cohn, 91.

[16] Harold Clurman, "Theatre," in Nation CLXIII (October 1961), p. 276.

[17]Burkman, p. 3.

[18]Martin S. Regal, *Harold Pinter: A Question of Timing*. New York: ST. Martin's Press, INC., 1995., p.33.

[19]Lois G. Gordon, *Stratagems to Uncover Nakedness: The Drama of Harold Pinter*. (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1969),p. 40.

[20]Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p. 216.

[21]James R. Hollis, *Harold Pinter: The Poetics of Silence*(Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), p. 92.

[22] Taylor, *Anger and After*, p.336.

[23] John Kershow, *The Present Stage: New Directions in the Theatre Today* (London: Fontana Books, 1966), p. 77.

[24] Gordon, p. 43.

[25]Burkman, p. 79.

[26]D. KeithPeacock. *Harold Pinter and The New British Theatre* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 78.

[27]Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p. 216.

[28]Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright*, p.111.

[29] Roland Hayman, *Harold Pinter* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 36.

[30]Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright*, p.109.

[31] Peacock, p. 78.

[32] "*The Caretaker* (Non-Verbal Techniques)" (URL:http://www.free-essays.com/dbase/8c/toi147shtml), retrieved Jan. 24, 2017.

[33]Burkman, p. 77.

[34] Harry Blamires, *A Short History of English Literature* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 348.

[35] Cited in Penelope Prentice,*The Pinter Ethic: the Erotic Aesthetic* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), p. 248.

[36] Austen Quigley, *The Pinter Problem* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 134.

[37] Sarah Clough, "*The Caretaker*: Language" (URL:http://www.sheffieldtheatres.co.uk/creativedevelopment/programme/productions/thecaretaker setting and structure.shtm.), retrieved Jan. 1, 2009.

[38]Burkman, p. 87.

[39]Esslin, "Godot and His Children: The Theatre of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter.", pp. 67, 68.

[40] Peacock, p. 77.

[41] Gordon, p. 22.

[42] Hollis, p. 84.

[43] Ibid, p.92.

[44] Clough.

[45]Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p. 216.

[46] Clough.

[47]Darl, "Speech and Silence: Understanding the Plays of Harold Pinter".URL:http://www.everything2.com/e2node/speech%2520and%2520silence%253A%2520understanding%2520the%2520plays%2520of%2520Harold Pinter. Retrieved Jan. 24, 2017.

[48] Ken Newton, "The Caretaker." (URL:http://www.litencuc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&VID=1345), retrieved Jan. 1, 2009.

[49] "*The Caretaker* (Non-Verbal Techniques)."

[50] Taylor, *Harold Pinter*, p.17.

[51]Batra, p. 126.

[52] Hollis, p. 93.

[53]Darl.

[54] Clough.

[55] Regal, p. 33.

[56] Ibid, pp. 34, 35.

[57] Clough.

[58] Ibid.

[59]Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Brown, "Dialogue in Pinter and Others", p.156.

[62]Darl.

[63]Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright*, p.109.

[64] Ibid, p. 117.

[65]John Russell Brown, "Beckett and the Art of the Nonplus" in *Beckett at 80/ Beckett in Context*, Enoch Brater, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.27.

[66] Cohn, 91.

[67] Benston, p. 117.

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