

A Postmodernist Reading of Harold Pinter's "The Homecoming"

UNE LECTURE POSTMODERNE DE "LE RETOUR" D'HAROLD PINTER

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Abstract: As a dramatist, Pinter, more than anyone else in the 20th century, has changed our expectations of the stage language, and has made more tradition treatments of stage, action and language seem ridiculous. He is an enigma to critics. Some consider him an absurdist, others an existentialist and some place him in the group of anti-humanists and the amoral. In this case, Pinter's drama does not seem irrelevant to postmodern theatre. The power of most of Pinter's plays originate from the truth of a speaker's feeling that always lies in the unspoken words or in what has come to be known as "Pinter's pauses". His works illustrate the power of language and also its unreliability, what is labeled in postmodernism as "indeterminacy" or "against interpretation". His uniqueness originates from his ability to create tension between the absurdist tradition with its baffling, purposeless activities and naturalistic use of language which is rendered through believable details. As an example of a postmodern drama *The Homecoming* seems to display the persistence of the past in the present, indeterminacy, irony, anarchy, happening and silence which are known as the main elements of postmodernism. It is, then, attempted to show that in his depiction of certain aspects of family life and relationships that are common to all families in greater or lesser degree, Pinter's *The Homecoming* seems to bring into account a consideration of postmodernity according to Derrida's concept of "deconstruction", however, Lyotard's "Fall of Metanarratives" and "Language Game" are of certain significance within the postmodernist approach towards the play. Finally, it is concluded that all these features together have been the real key to the sense of "fragmentation" and "inconsistency" felt among the play's family members and have completed the postmodernist environment which is evident within the postmodern plays.

Key words: Postmodernist Literature; Postmodernist Feminism; Metanarrative; Language Game; Parody; Difference; Delogocentrism; Indeterminacy

Resum é En tant qu'un dramatisse, Pinter, plus que tous les autres dramatisse dans le 20^{ème} siècle, a changé nos attentes concernant le langage de la scène, et a fait des réformes sur la scène, l'action et le langage qui semblent ridicules. Il est une énigme pour les critiques. Certains le considèrent comme un absurde, d'autres un existentialiste et certains le placent dans le groupe des anti-humanistes et des amoraux. Dans ce cas, le drame de Pinter semble avoir des rapport avec le théâtre post-moderne. La puissance de la plupart des pièces de Pinter vient de la vérité du sentiment d'un orateur qui se trouve toujours dans les non-dits ou dans ce qui est connu sous le nom des "pauses de Pinter". Ses oeuvres illustrent la puissance du langage et son manque de fiabilité ce qui est marqué dans le postmodernisme comme "indétermination" ou "contre l'interprétation". Son caractère unique

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† Received March 29, 2011; accepted April 20, 2011.

provient de sa capacité à créer des tensions entre la tradition absurde et ses chicanes, des activités sans but et l'utilisation naturaliste du langage à travers des détails crédibles. En tant qu'un exemple du drame postmoderne, *Le retour* semble afficher la persistance du passé dans le présent, l'indétermination, l'ironie, l'anarchie, happening et le silence qui sont connus comme les principaux éléments du postmodernisme. Il est, ensuite, tenté de montrer que dans sa description de certains aspects de la vie familiale et les relations qui sont communes à toutes les familles plus ou moins, *Le retour* de Pinter semble prendre en considération un élément de la postmodernité selon le concept de Derrida de la "déconstruction", cependant, "la chute des marchés" et "langue du jeu" de Lyotard sont d'une certaine importance dans l'approche postmoderne vis-à-vis de la pièce. Enfin, il est conclu que toutes ces caractéristiques ont été la véritable clé pour le sentiment de la "fragmentation" et de "l'incohérence" ressenties par les membres de la famille dans la pièce et qui ont complété l'environnement postmoderniste qui se manifeste au sein des pièces postmodernes.

Mots-clés: Littérature Postmoderne ; Féminisme Postmoderne ; Marché ; Jeu De Langage ; Parodie ; Différence ; Délogocentrisme ; Indétermination

DOI: 10.3968/j.ccc.1923670020110702.005

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to render a postmodernist reading of Harold Pinter's family play: *The Homecoming*. After an introduction to postmodernism, in general, and postmodernist literature, in particular, as well as Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*, the play will be analyzed within a postmodernist frame in which the theories of the French philosophers Jean-François Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida, regarding postmodernism, are taken into account.

1. POSTMODERNISM AND LITERATURE

Postmodernism – so, postmodern, postmodernist and postmodernity and whatever else one might come across in the way of derivation – is an exasperating term. In the case of the term's evolution according to Nicol:

Postmodernism was originally coined in the 1940s to identify a reaction against the Modern movement in architecture. However, it first began to be widely used in the 1960s by American cultural critics and commentators such as Susan Sontag and Leslie Fiedler who sought to describe a 'new sensibility' in literature which either rejected modernist attitudes and techniques or adapted or extended them. In the following decades the term began to figure in academic disciplines besides literary criticism and architecture – such as social theory, cultural and media studies, visual arts, philosophy, and history. (2009, p. 1)

In very general terms, however,

Postmodernism is connected with a cognitive change that stressed the termination of philosophical foundationalism and consequently epistemological uncertainty with the pluralization of "legitimate" knowledge from both within and outside of the predominant cultures of advanced industrial societies, originating from a crisis of legitimation; with hybridization, namely, the subversion or moderation of traditional boundaries between high culture, mass culture and vernacular culture, and with the increase in cultural oppositions between the first and the third world. (Hooti and Shooshtarian, 2010, p. 14)

Such wide-ranging usage means that the term becomes overloaded with meaning, chiefly because it was being used to describe characteristics of the social and political landscape as well as a whole range of different examples of cultural production. Among these, however, three various uses of the term may widely be identified:

First, postmodernism represents a number of developments in the arts and culture in the latter half of the twentieth century. The reference point and point of departure for this type of postmodernism are the different forms of modernism that developed in the arts and culture in Europe in the first half of the century.

Second, it designates the rise of new frameworks of social and economic organization, again approximately since the end of the 1939-45 war. As such, its reference point and point of departure is the tendency of modernization which specified the early years of the century, with the development of industry, the growth of the mass market, and the speed in automation, travel and mass communication.

Third, it indicates a peculiar type of theoretical writing and reflection, usually though not completely, writing and reflection which chooses the first or second area as its goal.(ibid)

Postmodernism, then, means and has meant different things to different people at different conceptual levels, rising from humble literary-critical origins in the late 1950s to a level of global conceptualization in the 1980s. The result was – and still is – a massive but also exhilarating confusion that has given important new impulses to and opened new territories for intellectual exploration. One of the key questions behind all these postmodernisms, however, is how their conditions differ from or have arisen from those of modernity. According to Nicol:

Theorists have tended to portray modernity (i.e. from early to mid-twentieth century) as increasingly industrialized, mechanized, urban, and bureaucratic, while postmodernity is the era of the ‘space age’, of consumerism, late capitalism, and, most recently, the dominance of the virtual and the digital. Such generalized portraits of modern and postmodern society have been paralleled by similar comparisons of the specific aesthetic styles which have dominated in these periods. Where modernist art forms privilege formalism, rationality, authenticity, depth, originality, etc., postmodernism, the argument goes, favours bricolage or pastiche to original production, the mixing of styles and genres, and the juxtaposition of ‘low’ with high culture. Where modernism is sincere or earnest, postmodernism is playful and ironic. (2009, p. 2)

The term postmodernism (in relation to literary studies and its difference to modernism) was first popularized and employed by the American literary critic Ihab Hassan, whose interventions in the postmodern debate was crucial and, who made use of it in order to specify emerging tendencies in literature in 1960s. With distinguishing, convincingly, between modernism and postmodernism, Hassan keeps wrestling with problems of ‘periodization’. In *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (1982), he claims that “the postmodern spirit ... is not really a matter of chronology” (p. 139). However, his “POSTmoderISM: A Paracritical Bibliography” (1971) elaborates on a definitive break: postmodern artists and writers “are closer to ‘zero in the bone’ than the modernists” (p. 23).

In the case of postmodernism and its relation to literary criticism, Hassan adds another important element to his idea of the postmodern. According to Bertens (1995), for Hassan;

The postmodern is not simply a major cultural shift; it also involves a new relationship between humankind and their environment. In the visionary ‘The new gnosticism: speculations on an aspect of the postmodern mind’ of 1973, Hassan suggests that ‘we are witnessing a transformation of man more radical than anything Copernicus, Darwin, Marx, or Freud ever envisaged’ (1973, p. 567). In this age of the new gnosticism, ‘Mind’ is becoming ‘its own reality. Consciousness becomes all’ (p. 548). This notion that consciousness has absorbed the world plays a central role in what Hassan begins to see as the new postmodern episteme, a term which he first uses in ‘Culture, indeterminacy, and immanence: margins of the (postmodern) age’. (p. 41)

The idea of immanence and writings on the literature of silence in which “the postmodern endeavor in literature acknowledges that words have severed themselves from things that language can now only refer to language” (1975, p. 90), Hassan represents another tendency that characterizes the postmodern age: that of indeterminacy 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. (1983, p. 9)

There are, however, a few characteristics that are seen frequently in postmodernist literary works to be added to this list, such as: ambiguity, complexity, and fragmentation in dialogue, extreme use of black humor, parody, allegory and disintegration. According to Lewis:

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. (2001, p. 123)

Uncertainty, or what is known in one of the French philosopher’s realm “delogocentrism”, is the essence of postmodernism introduced by, Jacques Derrida, one of the most influential thinkers of the latter part of the twentieth century. Derrida’s deconstruction theory, basically, refers to the re-reading or breaking down of a text to show the multiple meanings at work which tries to subvert the logic of opposition within language. As Norris suggests:

If meaning could only attain to a state of self-sufficient intelligibility, language would no longer present any problem but serve as an obedient vehicle of thought. To pose the question of writing in its radical, Derridean form is thus to transgress- or violently oppose- the conventional relation of language and thought (1990, p. 30).

Derrida's delogocentrism denies the possibility of finding transparency in language and affirms that "the central signified, the originality, or transcendental signified is revealed to be never absolutely present outside a system of differences, and this absence of an ultimate signified extends the domain and play of signification to infinity". (Derrida, qtd. in Lodge and Wood, 2000, p. 246). Furthermore, from a poststructuralist view, reality is the world perceived in a human sign system which determines and interprets events and objects. As Derrida in "Structure, Sign, and Play in The Discourse of the Human Sciences" maintains, "In the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse..." (1993, p. 225) Thus, there is no direct reference between words or concepts of language and objects in the real world; in other words, language actuates reality. If between a signifier and a signified no identity or representation exists, meaning falls into a net of possibilities of interpretation, which makes it rather perplexing and misleading than transparent.

Therefore, the postmodernist approach to literary creation, which effectively invests in the production of what could be called a series of meta-realities, aims at leading the reader to the general conclusion that truth, reality and experience are in essence purely subjective and personal. In the condition expressed, in which representation becomes more important than the events being represented; as Lyotard defines it, 'the postmodern condition' is the state of disillusionment with metanarratives: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives" (1984, p. xxiv).

Those metanarratives or 'grand' narratives are, broadly speaking, the supposedly transcendent and universal truths that underpin western civilization and that function to give that civilization objective legitimation, a term that Lyotard borrows from Habermas and that will turn out to be *The Postmodern Condition's* key concept. According to Lyotard:

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. (1984, p. 37)

Turning to the 'heterogeneity of language games' within *The Postmodern Condition* (xxv) that constitutes the field of the social under postmodernity, these language games, according to Lyotard, are engaged in constant struggle, if not against each other, then against themselves:

To speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics. This does not necessarily mean that one plays in order to win. A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of invention. ... Great joy is had in the endless invention of turns of phrases, of words and meanings, the process behind the evolution of language on the level of parole. But undoubtedly even this pleasure depends on a feeling of success won at the expense of an adversary—at least one adversary, and a formidable one: the accepted language or connotation. (p. 10)

In relation to literature, in general, and drama, in particular, postmodernism calls into question theatre and drama, quite remarkably, in many different ways and, traces of them can be followed in some commentaries on the term, famous among them are Jean Fran çoise Lyotard's "postmodern condition" and Jacques Derrida's "delogocentrism".

Hassan represents a long list of names, which signifies postmodernism for him in some ways. "There are very few playwrights on his list: Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, Handke, Bernhard, Shepard and Wilson" (Schmidt, 2005, p. 9). For Hassan, postmodernism in drama:

... veers toward open, playful, optative, disjunctive, displaced, or indeterminate forms, a discourse of fragments, an ideology of fracture, a will to unmaking, an invention of silence-veers toward all those and yet implies their very opposites, their antithetical realities. (qtd. in Schmidt, 2005, p. 16)

The following represents a short introduction to Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1964) and the idea of the postmodern throughout the play as an example of a postmodern drama.

2. THE HOMECOMING

Harold Pinter, an English playwright, screenwriter, actor, director and poet began his theatrical career in the mid 1950's as an actor using the stage name David Baron. However, his dramatic achievements involve very vast chronological domain over 50 years. As a playwright, he began his activities in 1957 with *The Room* and his process of writing was going on until 2007 with his screenplay adaptations of other people's such as *Trial* (1993) and *Sleuth* (2007). Critics have discussed

Pinter's dramatic work from different viewpoints: from Realist and Existentialist points of view to the outlook of the Theatre of the Absurd and the attitude of The Angry Young Englishmen.

The Homecoming (1964) has stimulated more speculation and criticism than any other play in Pinter's dramatic achievements. It was not universally admired when it was first produced in England in 1965. Many critics believe that the play is very perplexing and baffling. Harold Hobson, the critic for the *Sunday Times* and Pinter's proponent, predicted that the play would "suffer in the estimation of audiences who will perceive an aesthetic defect that does not exist in the place of a moral vacuum that does" (qtd. in Merritt, 1995, p. 221).

The main problem with *The Homecoming* is that it is very enigmatic and ambiguous. Systematically, it is not a cohesive play. Lacking a clear point, it seems that it is not written to expound a particular idea or point of view. Its plot is impelled by logical cause and effective progression, but it is seen to be riddled with inconsistencies.

Both inconsequentiality and recognizability are initial impressions, only, as Pinter's situations and characters within the play resist rationalization. Kennedy notes "Not only is the dialogue 'idiomatic', it is saturated with idioms 'played' to show up their idiocy" (1975, p. 185). Hence, verbal gestures of ostensible accessibility become, in dramatic usage, ironic indications and reiterations of the persistent separateness of individual perspectives and interests. The resulting atmosphere, here succinctly characterized within *The Homecoming* by Cohn in terms of a condition of incertitude regarding society and self, is thus particularly resonant (often initially comic, then troublingly immediate) for an English middle class audience in particular:

Pinter's characters live in perpetual suspicion, regarding both familiar figures and strangers with trepidation. His characters are also protective of what they see as their own, objects and territory over which they can assert sovereignty. . . . Such holdings are the most defined entities in Pinter's dramatic universe and a source of stability for men and women baffled by so much else. As a result of this state of mind, his characters are forever on guard against invasion, both physical and psychological. They are always nervous that whatever few rights and possessions they claim may be snatched away, leaving them even more alienated. (2001, p. 2)

The Homecoming (1965) is perhaps Pinter's finest technical example of this. Kennedy notes how the central event, a black family ritual for the ambivalent initiation of a new female member, is principally invoked by ritualized language "arranged in broadly juxtaposed patterns of ceremony and its violation", best exemplified by the patriarch Max and his "schizoid-seeming shifts from the language of celebration to verbal defecation (and the other way around)" (1975, p. 158).

The play has a simple plot: Teddy brings home his wife, Ruth, for the first time from the United States to the working class environment of North London where he grew up and Ruth finds the new place more pleasant and familiar than her arid academic world in America. The following actions of the play involve the tension that occurs among Ruth and Teddy's family including his father and brothers. Ruth's final decision is to stay with them as a prostitute rather than going back to America to her three boys. Despite its simple plot, *The Homecoming* has been looked from various angles.

As in earlier Pinter work, the location of a family home "calls attention to the dual nature of a family home as both physical and psychological common ground and physical and psychological battleground" (Quigley, 1975, p. 176), and the battle centers on Teddy's introduction of his new wife Ruth to his savage London underworld family. As the wife of an American-based academic, one might expect Ruth to be flummoxed by the family's extreme yet co-existent tendencies to sentimentalize and to debase physicality, however, according to Rabey:

... she finds it a surprisingly conducive environment (she divulges the possibility – or fantasy – of her previous professional life as a nude model) which she decides to preside over as a matriarch combining totemic aspects of mother and whore, discarding her more traditional husband and children. (2003, p. 55)

Lenny, the most cocksure and independent son (and professional pimp), parodies social and dramatic decorum by offering Ruth a drink of water as if it were alcohol: "I bet you could do with this" (Pinter, 1968: 74), then outlines his violent treatment of upper-class women whom he decides to be 'diseased'; however, Ruth denies that she has taken 'quite enough' water to drink and moreover insists on her ability to 'take' Lenny in a ritual of erotic subordination. The father Max initially vilifies Ruth as a 'stinking pox-ridden slut', then accepts her on learning that she is a mother; accordingly, he can describe his own late wife Jessie as 'the backbone to this family' with a 'will of iron, a heart of gold' then condemn her as a 'slutbitch'. As a former butcher (and perhaps petty gangster), Max is a trader in flesh like Lenny, and even more extreme in his alternating veneration and vilification of its properties.

Ruth permits a powerfully limited sexual acquiescence to the youngest son, whilst Teddy looks on, maintaining his own "intellectual equilibrium" (Pinter, 1968, p. 62), which permits him to write academic criticism, regard his family as "objects" and not "get lost" in physicality himself. She agrees to and pragmatically negotiates terms to bring in income as a prostitute, and displaces Max from the centre of the family, to his mingled resentment and admiration. Quigley notes that:

... the certain kind of freedom Ruth has won is also a certain kind of captivity, with a final irony in the repeated suggestion of cycles in this play, for if the London family is confronted once more by the power of a Jessie-figure, so, too, is that Jessie-figure confronted once more by the power of the London family. (1975, p. 225)

However, the play suggests that all freedoms might be alternately viewed as captivities, and vice versa, and charges the tension with particular erotic dynamism, suggesting that the avoidance of such tensions constitutes a comparatively arid abstraction.

The Homecoming is unusual in being too fiercely visceral and sexually volatile to support senses of consistency, inevitability or contraction such as Teddy represents:

... his expulsion represents not an acceleration of entropy, but an intensified delimitation, paving the way for active excavations of physical, and psychic depths conventionally designated as taboo, and testifying to their strange compulsions. (Rabey, 2003, p. 56)

Thus, whilst *The Homecoming* is an identifiable development of Pinter's own style, it is also his own least anxious and most Artaudian play.

The following part will present the play in the framework of postmodernist interpretation.

3. ARGUMENT

One of the new approaches to Pinter's dramatic works is from the stand point of postmodernism. Kimball King (2001) believes that "Pinter has brought a form of natural speech to the stage that has surpassed the most ambitious attempts of his predecessors" (p. 244).

Pinter's *The Homecoming* seems to represent the quality of a postmodern play. Perhaps, the play's postmodernity represents itself better in the representation of puns reminding us the ridiculous side of life as he juxtaposes "approbation", "blasphemy", "gluttony", "buggery", and many other irrelevant elements like what is observable in postmodernism. The characters suffer from a lack of sustained unity to keep them together. Unlike the unified and coherent figures of modern dramas, Pinter seems to portray his characters as voids, perhaps to show both the emptiness of their lives and the void of their contemporary culture.

The words and the power of language have always been Pinter's subject, as he claims: "I am pretty well obsessed with the words when they get going" (Kennedy, 1975, p. 165). He defines language the "stratagem that covers nakedness" (Esslin, 2001, p. 38), though his plays have always been stratagem that uncovers nakedness.

As Patterson describes Pinter's finest play:

The *Homecoming* shows him at the height of his ability to manipulate language and pauses, giving the impression of everyday speech but actually marshalling clichés, slang, repetitions, and ellipses with the skill of a musical composer. The play is shocking, mainly because of the lack of environment displayed by Teddy rather than the conventional dramatic experience of extreme emotion. Ruth is attracted to the rough, grubby, amoral atmosphere of the family home rather than their 'clean' home in America. In the event, it proves to be Ruth's 'homecoming'. (2007, p. 194)

Pinter's *The Homecoming*, then, embodies ambiguity, discontinuity, pluralism, perversion, deformation, disintegration, deconstruction and difference that Ihab Hassan has identified as essential to postmodern works. Moreover, it has been marked by specific kinds of puns, verbal duels, repetition of words and phrases and even units of silence indicated through periods, commas, three dots and pauses which result in lack of understanding and lead to the so-called "Language Game" in postmodern philosophy.

4. THE FALL OF GRAND NARRATIVES

The contemporary culture, or the postmodern condition, Metanarratives – total philosophies of history setting out the rules of narratives and language games, which establish ethical and political rules for the society – lose their power. According to Lyotard:

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. (1984, p. 37)

These metanarratives that traditionally used to give cultural paradigms, some forms of legitimation or authority, as Lyotard remarks, have lost their credibility since the Second World War and notes the idea that “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives” (1984, p. xxiv) and, “postmodern Knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable”. (Newman, 1985, p. 266)

In postmodernist theatre, then, there is not any exact meaning for religion and morality. Pinter in *The Homecoming* directly challenges the fall of religion and the place of “Morales” in family life and puts their social values “under erasure” in Derridian terms.

5. THE FALL OF CHRISTIANITY

The Homecoming provoked more outrage than the plays Pinter wrote during the mid-sixties. Reviewers were troubled by the complete absence from play of any moral comment. Although none of the characters in the play seems to have any moral scruples at all, it is the offensive actions of the single female character ‘Ruth’, which disgust spectator’s reactions. Her seduction of both of her husband’s brothers while talking over the role of their mother, her decision to abandon her three boys left in America and to stay in London in order to serve Teddy’s family as a prostitute, not only astonish the viewers but also challenge his/her ethical criteria. Equally shocking, however, is teddy’s acceptance of her wife’s decision.

Whatever the characters’ actions and decisions are, Pinter expresses no hint of his personal feeling toward them. He does not condemn or reproach any one of his characters. However, the attitude of these characters towards life reflects the postmodern condition in which old grand narrative of Christianity and morality has no longer any place.

6. THE FALL OF ENLIGHTENMENT

In the case of the Enlightenment, however, postmodern existence “is a continual process of trying to find meaning in the face of the knowledge that meaning is always relative and contingent” (Nicol, 2009, p. 40).

The Homecoming reiterates Lyotard’s (1984) claim that one traditional function of narrative is to legitimate knowledge and that all narratives, even if they were received only yesterday must be suspected. In this condition the ‘nostalgia for presence’ intensifies the significance of the local rises as totalizing narratives lose their power and authority and the conditions of truth are recognized to be imminent in the rules of the game of inquiry.

Thus in *The Homecoming* Ruth interprets Lenny and Teddy’s colloquy on “being and not being” (Pinter, 1968, p. 52), urging them to confine their speculations to the observable present:

Look at me ... 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 observation to that? (ibid)

In Ruth’s example, all phenomena, visible and conceal, outer and inner, move and therefore one must restrict one’s speculation, not venture too far into totalizing explanations or place too much faith in the importation of explanatory model.

The family members of the play allegorize the postmodern condition when it is a time for the end of Enlightenment project. In this postmodern culture there are no longer any myths or rituals to give one any guideline; instead, as Lyotard mentions, they have given their place to “little or local narratives” (1984, p. xxiv).

7. LANGUAGE GAMES

In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard discredits the totalizing stories in the society that seems to legitimizing the cultural practices and different forms of knowledge within that society. These totalizing stories, known as metanarratives or master-discourses, as the overall basis of judgment, are just arbitrary legitimations. As a result, in Lyotard’s account, modern metanarratives, have been replaced by a postmodern “heterogeneity of language games” (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxv), with no aim at prescribing universal remedies. When there are not any sub-narratives, everyone applies his own language game according to his age, profession, and status in the society. So, the self and identity become nothing more than the layers that society has imposed on one’s personality. For Lyotard;

Language games are indeed the social bond which holds society together, and he 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. (qtd. in Sarup, 1988, p. 151)

This kind of imposing and the practice of "play in language" (Wittgenstein's concept of language games) (Selden & Widdowson, 1993, p. 183) or the so-called "Language game" is one of the postmodernist features which is completely reviewed by Harold Pinter in *The Homecoming*. He is able to do everything with language and, having his unique ability, he invents alternative reality in his plays. In this regard, his works are "monstrous prophecy of our post modernity" (Hassan, 1987, p. 147). He produces a secret language which results in secret meaning. Every one of his characters applies his own language game according to his granted situation. Therefore, language which is seemingly a very accurate reproduction of normal speech becomes now carefully selected while simultaneously seems realistic.

Discussing this element in *The Homecoming*, one would say that the characters use language to evade confrontation and to attain tactical advantages. Thus, they think and speak in metaphor which leads to misunderstanding one another, while they do not want to understand or to be understood. The language game of the family members in the course of the play is completely different from one another. Here is a conversation between Max and Sam in Act I Scene iii:

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? (Pinter, 1968, p. 32)

Regarding the fact that Sam is Max's brother, recognition of motivations behind his witty answer suggests his resistance to conversation.

8. RESISTING INTERPRETATION

The postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher, the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules and cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done. (Lyotard, 1984, p. 81)

Resistance is not only possible, but also actualized in *The Homecoming*; however, it is reflected in the play under the veil of other strategies which are as follows:

9. AMBIGUITY

"Language in art remains a highly ambiguous transaction, a quicksand, a trampoline, a frozen pool which might give way under you, the author, at any time". (Pinter, 2005, p. 18)

Since every text that is written by a postmodern writer, or the work produced by a postmodern artist, as a means of verbalizing the chaotic nature of modern life, "is not governed by Pre-established rules" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 81), it is filled with ambiguities and thus, it is not usually possible to apply familiar categories to these works.

As a dramatist whose works can be analyzed within the postmodern framework, Pinter's plays are very ambiguous and their meanings usually seem obscure. They are realistic plays and the characters behave in a believable manner, but they are always mysterious to such an extent that we are never precisely sure who they are, why they are there or what they have come to do. Though, constantly, there are backgrounds and motivations, they are vague with unknown details. In *The Room*, for instance, it is never completely explained why a blind Negro named Riley comes to visit Rose Hudd, what his message to her means, or even why Bert Hudd, Rose's husband Kills him. In *The Birthday Party*, also, we never really know why the strange visitors, Goldberg and McCann, intimidate Stanley or why they take him away with them. The same case happens in *The Caretaker*, in which we do not know the precise relationship of the brothers or even the reasons for the younger brother's changing attitudes toward their visitor, Davies. In *The Dumb Waiter*, again, the reasons why Gus and Ben have been hired to do their job are not known. It seems that Pinter tries to imply the meaning of life itself which is often ambiguous and it should be administered without any proper guidance.

In *The Homecoming* the ambiguous situation reaches to the maximum level. Since Pinter does not disclose the things clearly, the spectators have to construct the play out of small hints that may or may not be true. Ambiguous cases within the play, then, are numerous. It is not clear that Lenny's story about beating up women is true or not; it is not revealed where in America Teddy teaches or if he truly has a teaching job; and, we did not inform what Ruth means when she tells us that she has been a model for the body. The whole past experiences of Max and his dead wife, Jessie, is clouded mysteriously; all of his recollections of his wife are vague and ambiguous. In short, there are many doubts about the characters and their interactions throughout the play.

10. COMPLEXITY

“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”. (Pinter, 2005, p. 21)

Complexity, a familiar feature of postmodern theatre, proves true in the case of *The Homecoming*. Roland Barthes distinguishes between:

Readerly text and writerly text. Readerly text, or *lisible* (French term), is considered as a modern text that is written with the intention of communicating a specific, precise message. It assumes a passive reader that merely takes in the message (1979, p. 77).

The writer's role in such a text is one of representation, which is, representing reality. Writerly text, or “*scriptible*” (French term), is a postmodern text that is written to be rewritten by the reader with every reading. This open text invites interpretation and re-interpretation (*ibid*). The reader's role in writerly text is that of production, construction.

The Homecoming is a writerly text that is favored by postmodernists. The reader in every reading of this play can renew his interpretation. Postmodern theatre prefers complexity over simplicity; hence, the play has a complex theme interwoven in the complex plot.

Every sentence of *The Homecoming* has multiple meanings, all of which make sense depending on the angle from which the case is considered. It is true even about the title of the work which refers at least to two meanings. So,

... 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, 2004, p. 42)

Therefore, the number of interpretations relies on the varieties of conclusions that the audience/reader makes.

11. DIFFERENCE

Reading... is always this: there is a thing that is there, a thing made of writing, a solid, material object, which cannot be changed, and through this thing we measure ourselves against something else that is not present, something else that belongs to the immaterial, invisible world, because it can only be thought, imagined, or because it was once and is no longer, past, lost, unattainable, in the land of the dead. (Calvino, qtd.in McHale, 1987, p. 177)

Derrida, who has often claimed by friends and foes as “prototypical postmodernist”, introduced the concept of “*differance*” which lies at the center of “*Deconstruction*” and suggests multiplicity, heterogeneity and plurality of meaning. Consequently, unlike modernist epistemological poetics which focus on the repetition and uniformity and thus “rewards interpretation, *differance*, or substitution is congenous with ontological poetics of postmodernism and therefore, frustrates interpretation” (Nicol, 2009, p. 60).

In his theatrical achievements, and especially in *The Homecoming*, Pinter never provides his reader or spectator with a definite, logocentric text with a decidable meaning. By applying *differance* rather than repetition in his work, he constantly challenges his reader to become actively involved in the text. Through the use of this technique Pinter Succeeded in showing the “inadequacy of meaningful narrative” which is the outcome of what Lyotard calls “*deligitimation*”, the process in which the grand narratives lose their power to legitimize discourse.

This lack of determinate meaning creates the ontological instability which is dominant in postmodern works. Pinter is very radical “in breaking with the Western tradition of linearity, narrativity, logic and meaning” (Burkman & Kurdert-Gibbs, 1993, p. 118). Therefore, very often, the construction of the meaning in his plays is totally up to the reader or audience.

12. TOWARDS DELOGOCENTRISM

Derrida, as one of those twenty-century philosophers who investigated the relationship between language and reality, in his texts, *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology*, denied the stability of signification system and the pre-supposed stability between them and in this way, he argued the validity of logocentrism. According to Derrida (1993), there is no pre-existent truth, transcendental signifier or logos to which one can appeal to find meaning. His “deconstruction as Ulmann maintains, “affirms the importance of ambivalence, of the relation between terms rather than the choice of one term over another” (1999, p. 23).

Derrida’s delogocentrism denies the possibility of finding transparency in language and affirms that “the central signified, the originality, or transcendental signified is revealed to be never absolutely present outside a system of differences, and this absence of an ultimate signified extends the domain and play of signification to infinity. (qtd. in Lodge & Wood, 2000, p. 246). As Norris suggests:

If meaning could only attain to a state of self-sufficient intelligibility, language would no longer present any problem but serve as an obedient vehicle of thought. To pose the question of writing in its radical, Derridean form is thus to transgress- or violently oppose- the conventional relation of language and thought (1990, p. 30).

Pinter, like most modern and postmodern authors, unlike metaphysical philosophers whose entire effort is to not to face this multiplicity of meaning or ambiguity of a written text, makes advantage of this potentiality to release himself from the boundaries of language and text.

13. BLACK HUMOR

The Homecoming is one of those theatrical works that can make the reader/audience laugh aloud on nearly every sentence. Since Pinter has always the ability to draw laughter out of what commonly regard as serious events or situations, his humor is often categorized as Black Humor in which, potentially tragic or unpleasant situations are treated with a cynical amusement. In *The Homecoming* the brutish behaviors of characters makes us laugh. As Clurman in his review of the play puts it “the mask is one of horrors subdued in glacial irony” (1974, p. 146).

In *The Homecoming*, we are constantly surprised by the incongruity between what we expect in this family relationships and what is actually expressed. The brutality of feeling intermittently shocked us. Not only all verbal tensions seem ridiculous but also all physical violence seems like slapstick comedy. When Max strikes Joey, the boxer, with one punch, then knocks Sam and finally falls himself, it is humorous in the surface level, though not funny in the bottom of the case or, the reaction of Max in the final scene towards Sam’s collapse on the floor is funny, when he says: “What’s he done? Dropped dead? ... A corpse on my floor? Get him out of here” (Pinter, 1968, p. 78), Max’s statement is truly laughing but, it is a bitter laugh which comes out from observing the situation of a miserable man who is reduced to the place of an animal in a postmodern culture.

14. THE FAILURE OF LANGUAGE

“Language...constructs immense edifices of symbolic representations that appear to tower over the reality of everyday life like gigantic presences from another world”. (Berger & Luckmann, qtd. in McHale, 1987, p. 131)

Language is the most crucial means of human communication through which human beings have found voice and identity and built social bands. Moreover, emotions and thoughts are totally transferred by language. Therefore, language is a mediator of ideas and feelings and the meaningful counterpart of action. Thus, failure of language leads to the failure of communication. However, what is noticeable in postmodern theatre is this quality of language; namely its failure.

Although mass communication is one of the outstanding features of the postmodern era, language, as one of the main means of communication, has lost its traditional significance. So, it is no longer a transparent means to transfer meaning and understanding and it is what *The Homecoming* clearly represents.

As Kennedy (1975) consents, Pinter has created his dialogue out of these failures of language which may occur by frightened or evasive characters. In spite of this failure of language, Pinter’s theatrical world seems completely reasonable and in accordance with the criteria of realistic drama and this reality originates from the fact that Pinter is able to reproduce human speech more faithfully than a tape recorder. He has created a drama of “human relations at the level of

language itself" (168), in which the character's language is literary exposed upon the stage and thus the outcome is what Jean Vannier calls "the theatre of language" (qtd. in Kennedy, 1975, p. 169). However, it seems more relevant to identify Pinter's world as a theatre of failed language in which the conversations changed to a kind of verbal game in order to evade true meaning. *The Homecoming* is filled with these situations:

Lenny: Good evening.

Ruth: Morning, I think.

Lenny: You're right there. (Pinter, 1968, p. 27)

This conversation between Lenny and Ruth in their first confrontation represents an instance where Ruth expresses the exact time in order to distract Lenny's concentration and to evade from answering more questions.

15. IRONY

Despite the break of postmodernism with modernism in certain aspects like its stand toward grand narratives, there are some aspects in which postmodernism benefits from modernism. The use of some modern literary devices such as irony, parody and pastiche in postmodernist works is one of those aspects. However, postmodernism employs these techniques in a slightly different way.

Harold Pinter makes the best use of irony in his plays which, in the company of other elements like intermitted pauses and silence, enables him to construct an atmosphere that is as uncertain as possible. The irony and its radically self critical doubts about capturing adequately the truth of things in language manifest itself completely in Pinter's *The Homecoming*.

The first irony comes with the title of the work which is the literal description of the dramatic situation and takes on a very different meaning by the end of the action. The opening sets up an almost typical 'homecoming' which "echoes the prodigal son pattern in the unannounced return of an expatriate" (Innes, 1992, p. 292), namely Teddy's homecoming. However, through the end of the play it is proved that it is on a variety of level 'Ruth's homecoming' too. In Act II, Scene i, Max praises 'Ruth' and says that 'Jessie' was the backbone of the family; that she taught the boys "all the morality they knew ... every single bit of the moral code they live by" (Pinter, 1968, p. 62), while what is observable in the play is the lack of any moral code among the family members' relationship. However, the major irony of the play is that Max's first apparent mistaken assumption about Ruth's prostitution comes to appear accurate as they and the audience gets to know her better.

16. THE SENSE OF NON-ENDING

The ending of all of the Victorian works are "closed" while, the ending of modernist works are open. The endings of postmodernist works are a hybrid of these two. In postmodern plays endings are "both open and closed" because they are "either multiple or circular". (Hooti and Shooshtarian, 2010, p. 22)

As McHale claims:

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. (1987, p. 109)

In *The Homecoming*, since the action of the play goes nowhere, the reader/audience comes to a dead end or "aporia" in Derridian terms. There are indefinite contradictory meanings or significations in the play and the reader cannot decide which one to choose or refer to as the final signified. Consequently, it can be concluded that in *The Homecoming*, there is not a sufficient ground for the reader to choose among the numerous signifier or signified. Thus, attaining an accurate and exact meaning is, approximately, impossible.

17. INDETERMINACY AND RELATIVITY

"Of course it happened. Of course it did not happen". (Pynchon, 1974, p. 271)

Everything in the stratum of postmodernism is indeterminate. As a movement which rejects the idea of the autonomy of the text, postmodernism believes in indeterminacy and relativity rather than exactness and absolutism. Therefore, there

are many issues in postmodernism which can be “permanently or radically indeterminate between two or more status” (McHale, 1987, p. 98). Even, from the structural point of view, “the pauses are clearly indeterminate, since there is no objective meaning which can be grasped when we contemplate them” (Selden, 1989, p. 123).

In the case of *The Homecoming*, for instance, the audience may not be sure that Ruth and Teddy are actually married for “why have rumors of the union never reached his brothers and father before” (Gordon, 2001, p. 250). The audience/ reader is also unsure about their children because parents rarely travel without photos of their offspring and they usually refer to their children by individual names while it is not the case in *The Homecoming*. Moreover, it is not determinate that children are Teddy’s, since there is a possibility that like his father, Max, the true paternity of his three sons be in question. Even, from the structural point of view “the pauses are clearly indeterminate, since there is no objective meaning which can be grasped when we contemplate them” (Selden, 1989, p. 123). These are just a few indeterminate cases in *The Homecoming*, while it is not determine that such a “homecoming” has taken place at all.

Excluding the main principle of the New Criticism, namely, the autonomy of the text, a postmodernist text creates an indeterminate atmosphere through which the audience has the required freedom to explore multiple possibilities in interpreting the text, as is the case in Pinter’s *The Homecoming*.

18. PARODY

A parody is a work that through mimicry (either stable or grotesque) of another’s style demonstrates the latter’s absurdity. For Fredric Jameson, parody is a modernist style, whereas for Linda Hutcheon it is part of postmodernism. (Malpas, 2005, p. 135)

The Homecoming is in many ways Pinter’s funniest play which displays a parody of the standard meet-the-family type of drama. Here, Pinter ruins all the sentiments like “home, Sweet home” and reproduces satirically clichés such as “woman’s place is in the home” (Innes, 1992, p. 291).

The beginning of the play reminds us of a typical ‘homecoming’, when a son brings his bride to his family for the first time. However, Pinter parodies all the previous norms by creating an incongruity between our expectations and what actually happens. Through the play we inform that what is said is not what is meant. For instance, Max idealizes memory of his dead wife:

Max (to Ruth): she taught those boys everything they knew ... and she had a heart to go with. What a heart ... That woman was the backbone to this family. I mean, I was busy working twenty-four hours a day in the shop ... but I left a woman at home with a will of iron, a heart of gold and ... (Pinter, 1968, p. 52)

It is in contrast with everything we have heard before. His true feelings have already been shown by the time he says: “it made me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face”. In fact, the play disorients. A butcher (Max) cooks what one of his son calls dog food. Joey as a younger fighter is knocked down by his older father. A philosopher (Teddy) refuses to philosophize. Sam is a chauffeur but he is unable to drive. A pimp takes order from his whore and the whore does not go all the way with a man.

19. POSTMODERN FEMINISM

“Despite an understandable attraction to the logical orderly world of Enlightenment, feminist theory more properly belongs in the terrain of postmodern philosophy”. (Jane Flax, qtd.in Thornham, 2001, p. 41)

Feminism is a name which has given to a political movement that raised a call for “liberation of women from certain forms of gender-based discriminations that derived women of the opportunities for self-promotion and equality with men simply because they were women” (Rajimwale, 2005, p. 54). Modern feminism begins with Mary Wolstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) and continues gradually to the present time.

Feminism in modern era differs from feminism in the postmodern age. Modernist feminists are concerned about subjects like “not being allowed to have control over their lives” (Zalewski, 2000, p. 77). They concentrates on woman as a subject however, postmodernist feminists reject the idea that the primary subject to analyze is woman. They are “more interested in looking on how subjects are constructed or positioned” (106). “Woman’s emancipation is the only concern of modernist feminists” (129), while postmodern feminists do not make “a choice” between keeping the woman or man as subject. So they are not interested in “woman’s oppression” because they do not make woman or anybody else into subjects; rather, they revisit and destabilize modernist understandings of what the subject is. They do so because to them concepts, actions and subjects do not have essential meanings but “are given meanings” (123).

The implication would be that a great deal of power is to be found in the way stories are told about things, or the way in which they are presented. Despite the culture of modernism which puts a strong emphasis on masculine creativity even at the expense of ignoring the female sex, postmodernism achieves its purpose by offering authentic expression to women beside men.

20. RUTH AS A POSTMODERN FEMINIST

The urban world of *The Homecoming* is, initially, overpoweringly and, unnaturally, masculine. Jessie is the unseen presence within the play whose shifting ambivalent role is given shape for us, partly through the actions of Max and Sam, until she and Ruth, who is also a mother of three sons, are fused in the play's final scene. However, the main character of the play is a female (Ruth) who enters this male household. She seeks her freedom as a woman and her retreat from Teddy's patriarchal family is developing them through a play.

Selecting a woman as a central character, Pinter, subverts the traditional attributes of patriarchal authority and attacks the dominant male order through his play. Ruth is the feminine author who utters the play. Enjoying specific strategies, she controls all male roles until she dominates them. The play can be interpreted as a feminist challenge to male despotism in which Ruth becomes the agent of change in this male household which is filled from the start with a strange ambivalence toward women.

Ruth escapes cunningly from an arid marriage and a sterile academic environment into one she exercises social, sexual and economic freedom. She says: "if you want to play this game, I can play it as well as you"(Pinter, 1968, p. 35).

Pinter's description of Ruth seems interesting to be mentioned here:

She does not become a harlot at the end of the play; she is in a possession of a certain kind of freedom. She can do what she wants, and it is not at all certain she will go off to Greek Street. But even if she did, she would not be a harlot in her own mind (Billington, 2007, p. 169).

What makes *The Homecoming* a radical play is that the two women at its center – the dead Jessie and the living Ruth – transcend male definitions. They are both mothers and sexual icons. Other female characters of Pinter – Flora in *A Slight Ache*, Stella in *The Collection* and Sara in *The Lover* – all in different ways, represents sexual freedom and power, but all are childless. Both Jessie and Ruth, however, are given birth to three children, all boys.

One of the first reactions to *The Homecoming* is almost inevitably one of the shocks. How can Ruth be persuaded into abandoning home and family? How can the husband, Teddy, stand and simply let it happen? But the more one read the play, the clearer it becomes that Ruth is not a Vehicle in the hand of her husband's male household, rather a shrewd manipulator who ultimately succeed to accomplish her aims.

CONCLUSION

Pinter belongs to the postwar decades when the avant-grade theatre had already flourished and found voice all around the world. It was the time when the absurdist drama was crystallized in the mentality of the current generation and the absurdist movement had already been established as a unique intellectual movement in the world of dramatic art.

The advent of such a movement as 'The Theatre of Absurd' was based on different social factors that controlled the spirit of the age: the strong need for subjectivity, on the one hand, and the developing social changes resulted from technological advances and the religious uncertainties, on the other hand. These factors were, in fact, signs of entrance in to a new age which then was known as postmodernity. Therefore, the cognitive questions asked by most artists of the twentieth century, till around 1958, such as 'How can I interpret the world which I am a part and what am I in?' were changed to questions like 'which world is this and what is to be done in it?' which were asked by most writers since then.

Until the late 1980, the worldview espoused by modernity was firm and stable; therefore, objective reality was detectable by intellectual person. Yet, with the inception of deconstruction in Jacques Derrida's post-structural view of the world, in the mid-1960s, modernity's understanding of reality was challenged by postmodernism. For Derrida and other postmodernists, there is no such a thing as objective reality and all definitions and depictions of truth are subjective, a mere creation of human mind. Hence, in a postmodernist view, truth itself is relative and depends on the nature and variety of culture and social influences in one's life. Consequently, there exist many truths.

Beginning in the 1960 and continuing to the present, the voices of the philosopher Derrida, the aesthetician Lyotard, as well as Hassan, the postmodernist figure in the field of literature, declare the death of objective truth. According to them, one must stop trying to discover the undiscoverable, which is the absolute truth and openly affirm that what may be right for one person may not be right for another.

When such principles are applied to literary interpretation, the postmodernist realizes that no such a thing as the meaning of an aesthetic text exists. Therefore, since each reader's view of truth is different from that of other readers, for each text, then, there exists an almost infinite number of interpretations or at least, as many interpretations as there are readers.

Regarding Pinter's drama, one would face the same situation that postmodernists declare about the text. Almost at the end of each play by Pinter, readers become confused and perplexed. Since the text does not indicate its meaning and it is up to the reader to interpret the play, the number of interpretations will not be limited.

The Homecoming (1964) –Pinter's foremost famous play which is discussed in this study – offers so many considerable postmodern elements, while the relativity of its meaning contribute to the complexity of the play to such an extent that gradually the play becomes disorienting.

In *The Homecoming*, Pinter paints a picture of a real postmodern family. In this family, all the values relevant to old grand narratives have gone; instead one observes the rise of local or little narratives, as Lyotard claims. The disintegration of family as one of the main characteristics of postmodernism is the text's another element. Here, there is no longer any center for members of the family to stick to. There is no final meaning, no real authority and no transcendental signified. Everything is unreliable and ambiguous. The lack of final meaning leads to the lack of closure, another characteristic of postmodernism, which is completely evident in the course of the play. The action in *The Homecoming* is not developed and the reader comes to no resolution. Since there are numerous contradictory meanings or significations in the play, the responsibility of interpretation and getting the meaning depends on the reader, not on the writer, who has, in fact, no authority over the text.

The Homecoming embodies many other elements of the postmodern play, such as difference, parody, irony ... which is elaborated on within the study. Within *The Homecoming*, regarding a postmodernist approach, Pinter's characters represent the postmodern men and women who are confused and perplexed and entangled in a 'postmodern condition' where they have no identity, no aim, even no dignity. To this kind of puzzled situation, Pinter suggests no kind of resolution. Throughout *The Homecoming*, he takes the audience/reader into the midst of this condition and says 'look, here is the postmodern family'.

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