ABSTRACT

PATTERNS OF STRUGGLE AND THE SILENT VICTIMISATION OF SELF: A STUDY OF THE PLAYS OF HAROLD PINTER

Much critical attention has been devoted to several aspects and themes of the plays of Harold Pinter but little attention has been given to the several patterns of the struggle found in his plays. Struggle is the essential part of any drama and generally a play ends with a resolution to that struggle in drama. Many playwrights have projected different patterns of struggle and also, they have presented several resolutions to it according to contemporary historical and cultural context. But struggle in Pinter’s plays is different and he has projected several patterns of struggle the treatment of which is vastly different from other playwrights. Moreover unlike other playwrights he has not given any resolution to that struggle and he leaves it open-ended for the interpretation and realization of the audience. Having first hand experiences of World War II, and growing up in the most turbulent period of the twentieth century, Pinter realizes the insignificance of life in the cruel and hostile world where human beings struggle with an unknown enemy every moment of their lives. This struggle becomes crucial for survival in the hostile world where everyone tries to victimize the other but eventually becomes a victim in the struggle for survival. Pinter’s plays project this silent victimization of the characters’ self and identity by putting them in an existential dilemma in the hostile world.

The first chapter deals with the concept of the Theatre of the Absurd and how Pinter’s experiences of his childhood and youth have contributed in the writing of his plays. Further, drawing a comparison with Antonin Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty, it also deals with the notion of victim and victimizer in the struggle and the need of a new form of theatre to express this
struggle. The second chapter deals with the concept of territorial struggle in his plays *The Room* and *The Caretaker*. In these plays the characters are involved in a physical and psychological struggle to keep the territory in their own possession and in their struggle they become obsessed with the territory and consequently they victimize themselves. The third chapter deals with the struggle between gender in his play *The Homecoming*. This chapter shows the struggle in two ways; first the struggle between male characters themselves as everyone tries to take control of power to rule the family and also to take the control of the only female character, Ruth, in the play. Secondly, this chapter also shows the struggle of sexuality between male characters and the one female character in which male characters try to dominate and overpower the female character but eventually they are overpowered by her.

The fourth chapter deals with Pinter’s political views and his treatment of political struggle by presenting the struggle between individual and the State. This chapter shows, through *One for the Road* and *Mountain Language* how the State tries to victimize the individual who resists the oppression by the State and functioning of the State apparatus. This chapter also shows how the agents of the State who are working as the victimizer in the oppression of the individual are also victimized in the process. The fifth chapter deals with the struggle with the traumatized memory of human beings, projected through the reminiscence of a character, called Rebecca, in the play *Ashes to Ashes*. Through this struggle with the traumatized memory, this chapter also questions the collective memory of human beings who evade the responsibility of preventing torture, victimization and oppression of other human beings and become mute spectators. Further this chapter also projects the struggle between husband and wife in their relationship and how the characters deal with the marital conflict in their own way.