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Postdramatic Performativity and the Aesthetics of Power in Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*

Radoje V. Šoškić 

University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica, Kosovska Mitrovica, Republic of Serbia

✉ radoje.soskic@pr.ac.rs

Abstract. This study examines the dramaturgical innovations and philosophical provocations embedded in Harold Pinter's early and mid-career work, particularly in *The Homecoming* (1965) as a paradigmatic articulation of his theatrical aesthetics. The paper explores how Pinter departs from conventions of psychological realism and Aristotelian structure, crafting instead a dramatic mode rooted in opacity, linguistic subversion, and performative silence. Through detailed textual analysis, informed by theories of the absurd (Esslin), performativity (Butler), and postdramatic theatre (Lehmann), the research aims to elucidate how Pinter's plays resist interpretive closure and dramatize the failure – not merely the absence – of meaning. Particular emphasis is placed on the way *The Homecoming* constructs gendered power through ritualized dialogue, domestic space, and erotic economy, positioning Ruth not as a passive object of male desire, but as a sovereign agent who reconfigures the symbolic order through strategic ambiguity. Employing a qualitative methodology grounded in close reading and supported by interdisciplinary frameworks, including gender theory, poststructuralist philosophy, and performance studies, the study shows how Pinter's plays generate phenomenological intensity and epistemological instability. The results highlight a consistent dramaturgical logic wherein characters operate as performative surfaces enacting ideological scripts rather than coherent psychological entities. In *The Homecoming*, the absence of moral or narrative resolution foregrounds the raw mechanics of power, silence, and ritualized presence. Ultimately, this study concludes that Pinter's contribution to modern drama lies in his transformation of theatre into a site of ontological disturbance, where the failure to communicate becomes the primary event, and the unknown – rather than its resolution – is staged as the play's enduring truth.

Keywords: Harold Pinter, *The Homecoming*, theatre of the absurd, performativity, ambiguity, power dynamics, postdramatic theatre, gender, existential menace

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Постдраматическая перформативность и эстетика власти в «Возвращении домой» Гарольда Пинтера

Р.В. Шошкич 

Приштинский университет в г. Косовска-Митровица, Косовска-Митровица, Республика Сербия

✉ radoje.soskic@pr.ac.rs

Аннотация. Рассматриваются драматургические новаторства и философские вызовы, заложенные в раннем и зрелом творчестве Гарольда Пинтера, особенно в пьесе «Возвращение домой» (1965), которая представляет собой парадигмальное выражение его театральной эстетики. Автор анализирует, каким образом Пинтер отходит от традиций психологического реализма и аристотелевской структуры, создавая драматический язык, основанный на непрозрачности, лингвистической субверсии и перформативной тишине. На основе детального текстуального анализа, опирающегося на теорию абсурда (Эсслин), перформативность (Батлер) и постдраматический театр (Леман), исследование демонстрирует, как пьесы Пинтера сопротивляются интерпретативной завершенности и инсценируют не просто отсутствие, а крах смысла как такового. Особое внимание уделено тому, как в «Возвращении домой» формируются гендерные отношения власти через ритуализованный диалог, домашнее пространство и эротическую экономику. Персонаж Рут представлен не как пассивный объект мужского желания, а как суверенный субъект, стратегически переопределяющий символический порядок. Используя качественную методологию, основанную на внимательном прочтении текста и междисциплинарных теоретических подходах, включая гендерные исследования, постструктуралистскую философию и теорию перформанса, автор показывает, как пьесы Пинтера создают феноменологическое напряжение и эпистемологическую нестабильность. Полученные результаты выявляют последовательную драматургическую логику, в рамках которой персонажи функционируют как перформативные поверхности, воплощающие идеологические сценарии, а не как целостные психологические индивиды. В «Возвращении домой» отсутствие моралистической или повествовательной развязки акцентирует внимание на механизмах власти, тишины и ритуального присутствия. В итоге исследование приходит к выводу, что вклад Пинтера в современную драму заключается в преобразовании театра в пространство онтологического потрясения, где неудача коммуникации становится центральным событием, а неизвестность, но не ее разрешение, утверждается как подлинная драматическая истина.

Ключевые слова: Гарольд Пинтер, «Возвращение домой», театр абсурда, перформативность, неоднозначность, властные отношения, постдраматический театр, гендер, экзистенциальная угроза

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Introduction

In the nascent stages of Harold Pinter's literary acclaim, a journalist once asked him the now-iconic question, "What are your plays about, Mr. Pinter?" To which he facetiously responded, "The weasel under the cocktail cabinet"¹. This cryptic and deliberately evasive remark has come to encapsulate not only the bewilderment that his early dramaturgy inspired, but also the core of Pinter's aesthetic philosophy – his resistance to explanation, to interpretive finality, and above all, to the reductive didacticism that traditional dramatic structures often impose. As Martin Esslin has argued in his seminal work *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1960), such replies reflect a deeper metaphysical stance in postwar drama – "a refusal to explain because the very nature of reality has become inexplicable" (Esslin, 1961, p. 23). In this light, Pinter's "weasel" is not a joke at the expense of the interviewer, but a metaphor for the elusive, subterranean tensions that animate his theatrical world.

The question posed to Pinter was, indeed, a legitimate one. His early work – especially his one-act plays and his first full-length drama, *The Birthday Party* (1958) – bewildered audiences and critics alike with its enigmatic characters, circular dialogue, and absence of narrative resolution. The play's London premiere was an unqualified failure, with the critic Harold Hobson standing almost alone in its defense. Pinter would later reflect on this moment with characteristic irony: "I wrote *The Birthday Party* in 1957. It was slaughtered by all the critics except one. Now it's called a classic. So much for orthodoxy" (Pinter, qtd. in Billington, 1996, p. 72). This trajectory – from incomprehension to canonization – mirrors the evolution of modernist reception itself, wherein radical departures from form and meaning are initially rejected before being embraced as paradigmatic.

It was only after subsequent successes, notably *The Caretaker* (1960) and a series of highly distilled one-acts, that audiences and critics began to acclimate to Pinter's distinctive stylistic idiom. By the mid-1960s, his plays had become fixtures on the stages of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre, while simultaneously circulating in fringe venues, on television, and across radio airwaves. This dual presence – both mainstream and marginal – underscored the versatility and depth of his work. As Michael Billington (1996, p. 118) observes in his comprehensive biography, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter*, by the 1970s, Pinter

¹ Pinter is reported to have made this remark in an interview during the early stages of his career. While he later dismissed it as a flippant comment, the phrase has endured as a metaphor for the elusive and ambiguous nature of his work. See: Billington, M. (1996). *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (p. 72). Faber & Faber. Also discussed in Flynn, N. (2008, April 1). Afterword to the play: Alice Invents a Little Game and Alice Always Wins. *Bomb Magazine*. <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/2008/04/01/afterword-to-the-play-alice-invents-a-little-game-and-alice-always-wins/>

had become “a cultural institution in himself, rivaled only by Samuel Beckett in critical scrutiny and academic attention”.

Much of the initial opacity that characterized Pinter’s dramaturgy can be traced to his profound artistic debt to Beckett. The influence is not merely stylistic but ontological. Like Beckett, Pinter challenges the premise that language can serve as a reliable vehicle for communication or that character can be psychologized in realist terms. However, Pinter’s approach diverges in significant ways. Beckett’s theatrical spaces are overtly metaphysical – sparse wastelands, symbolic mounds, and voids animated by abstract suffering. Pinter, by contrast, situates his characters in what appears to be the fully furnished, familiar domesticity of postwar Britain. The kitchen in *The Room*, the boarding house in *The Birthday Party*, or the dingy basement in *The Dumb Waiter* – these are recognizably mundane spaces. Yet, within these realistic settings, Pinter installs a metaphysical disquiet, a Beckettian silence behind the walls. As Stanley Cavell insightfully notes, “Pinter replaces Beckett’s existential desolation with something perhaps more disturbing – the uncanny proximity of the absurd to the familiar” (1981, p. 217).

This friction – between surface realism and subterranean uncertainty – generates a uniquely Pinteresque tension. His plays resist hermeneutic closure not by abandoning structure, but by rigorously withholding contextual information. Characters appear without backstory, motivations remain occluded, and narrative logic is destabilized. In *The Room*, for instance, we observe a banal domestic routine – tea being made, idle conversation, habitual silences – but these are gradually encroached upon by inexplicable and increasingly menacing intrusions. The final tableau – a blind woman, a murdered visitor, a household imploded – is never resolved. It simply stops, like an unresolved cadence.

Similarly, in *The Dumb Waiter*, two assassins idle in a basement while receiving absurd food orders from an unseen source. The dumbwaiter, an emblem of bureaucratic absurdity, becomes the mouthpiece of a system whose logic is impenetrable. What begins as Beckettian inertia slowly sharpens into Kafkaesque anxiety, where hierarchical command is both omnipresent and incomprehensible. The literary theorist Peter Brook (1968, p. 34) famously remarked that Pinter’s theatre operates “on the cusp of the known and the unknowable,” a dramaturgy where “the audience must navigate a terrain with no map”.

The Birthday Party provides a longer, more structurally complex articulation of these principles. A seaside boarding house, a seemingly timid pianist named Stanley, a landlady, her husband, and two sinister visitors – Goldberg and McCann – who arrive to “collect” Stanley. Their interrogation is simultaneously grotesque and absurd: a torrent of surreal accusations, linguistic distortions, and physical intimidation ensues. But nothing is explained. Who are these men? Why do they target Stanley? Is this an allegory of totalitarian control? A psychological breakdown? Pinter leaves it unresolved. As the critic Luc Gilleman (2008, p. 401) argues, Pinter’s genius lies in his “radical undecidability” – not the refusal to provide meaning, but the dramatization of that refusal itself.

This withholding of explanation constitutes a radical intervention in the history of dramatic form. Traditional realist and classical drama, from Aristotle to Ibsen, rests on the principles of exposition, motivation, and resolution. Characters act from knowable desires; situations unfold according to psychological or causal logic; conflicts are eventually resolved or clarified. Pinter systematically undoes these conventions. His drama does not seek to explain human behavior – it stages its inexplicability. In this sense, Pinter is not merely a dramatist of the absurd, but a dramatist of epistemological instability. As J.L. Austin (1962) might say, Pinter’s plays are less concerned with what is said than with what is *done* through saying – or, in his case, through *not* saying². In this sense, language in Pinter functions as a performative act, one whose effects often eclipse its semantic content³.

This epistemological destabilization has two primary aesthetic consequences. First, it intensifies the phenomenological engagement of the spectator. In the absence of exposition, the viewer becomes attuned to the smallest nuances – tone, gesture, pause, facial expression. Silence, famously marked in Pinter’s stage directions as either “pause” or “silence,” becomes a site of density rather than emptiness. By transforming the pause into an event of lived intensity, the process embodies the psychodramatic principle of “interaction in the here and now,” through which, as Semenov and Kuzovchikova observe, real experience in the act of performance “can reveal unconscious problems, repressed emotions, and conflicts” (2025, p. 390), enabling meaning to arise within the temporality of co-presence rather than being conveyed as dramatic information. As John Lahr⁴ eloquently puts it, “A Pinter pause is not a hole in the dialogue; it is the dialogue”. Second, the realist settings – uncluttered, familiar, mundane – are gradually revealed as unstable terrains, infected by an immanent sense of menace⁵.

Ultimately, Pinter’s theatrical world is one in which language, far from clarifying reality, is deployed to obscure, to manipulate, and to dominate. His characters speak not to communicate, but to maneuver – to assert, to evade, to defend. Dialogue becomes a battleground, and silence a strategic weapon. This linguistic tactility

² The event-like nature of theatrical signification corresponds to Marvin Carlson’s (2015) observation that postdramatic theatre shifts emphasis from representation to presentation, staging not a fictional world but the performance itself, apprehended in its immediacy and inherent instability (cf. Carlson, 2015, pp. 577–595).

³ J.L. Austin’s speech act theory – particularly his emphasis on illocutionary and perlocutionary force – offers a useful lens through which to understand Pinter’s dramaturgy as performative rather than merely communicative. See: Austin, J.L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words* (J.O. Urmson, & M. Sbisà, Eds.). Oxford: Clarendon Press. However, Jacques Derrida, in his seminal critique “Signature Event Context,” challenges Austin’s assumptions about the stability of context, the transparency of intention, and the immediacy of presence that underlie the performative. Derrida argues that every utterance carries within it the possibility of citational rupture and semantic drift – that language cannot be fully grounded in the speaker’s intention or the situation of its production. This deconstruction of performativity opens a deeper space for reading Pinter’s silences and elliptical dialogues as resistant not only to interpretation, but to *situated meaning* itself. See: Derrida, J. (1982). Signature Event Context. In *Margins of Philosophy* (S. Weber, & J. Mehlman, Trans., pp. 307–330). University of Chicago Press.

⁴ Lahr, J. (2005, November 28). Demolition Man. *The New Yorker*.

⁵ This pervasive dread, what Irving Wardle first termed “the comedy of menace” in 1958, is not rooted in any one event or revelation, but in the structural condition of not-knowing.

mirrors the broader existential condition his plays inhabit: a world where nothing can be known with certainty, where identity is performative, and where presence is always shadowed by threat. In this regard, Pinter's plays are not simply narratives but ontological events – distillations of what it means to inhabit a world without assurances.

The Homecoming: Ritual, Power, and the Politics of Presence

The Homecoming (1965) is arguably the most structurally rigorous and thematically resonant of Harold Pinter's canonical works. While later plays such as *Moonlight* (1993) reveal a more lyrical and elegiac mode – what Michael Billington describes as Pinter's "late style, inflected by mortality and memory" (1996, p. 312) – *The Homecoming* remains the summit of his mid-career dramaturgical method: stark, elliptical, psychologically taut, and formally immaculate. First staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company under Peter Hall's direction, the play quickly secured its place in the modern dramatic canon. Hall's original staging, later revived to critical acclaim in 1991 and beyond, established the austere theatrical idiom through which Pinter's distinctive voice would find expression – one rooted not in narrative development but in charged pauses, ritualistic exchanges, and meticulously choreographed stillness.

Peter Hall's scenographic grammar was instrumental in forging what has since become the Pinter aesthetic. His directorial minimalism – marked by sparse but naturalistic sets, subdued lighting, and an almost choreographic attention to gesture and silence – gave visual and kinetic form to Pinter's dramaturgical ethos. Drawing on Artaud's notion of "cruelty," though devoid of Artaud's mystical fervor, Hall harnessed a latent violence beneath quotidian realism. Every prop, gesture, and silence is semantically loaded, every pause a rupture in the communicative surface, gesturing toward the unspeakable. This radical intensification of theatrical presence – an early embodiment of what Hans-Thies Lehmann would later theorize as the *postdramatic* – compels the spectator into a hyper-attuned phenomenological mode, in which the dissolution of conventional narrative hierarchies gives primacy to sensory perception, spatial arrangement, and performative rhythm. In this context, form does not merely frame content but *becomes* content; silence, in turn, is transfigured into an event – a dense, affectively saturated site of tension, expectation, or resistance. As Lehmann (2006, p. 85) asserts, "In postdramatic theatre, the signifiers of theatre – gesture, movement, spatial constellation, rhythm, atmosphere – begin to function autonomously, no longer subordinated to the demands of plot or psychological motivation". In Pinter's work, especially in *The Homecoming*, such moments of silence and stillness serve not as absences but as semiotic intensities, displacing dialogue as the principal bearer of meaning.

The Homecoming is structured around a claustrophobic domestic constellation: a dilapidated North London household inhabited exclusively by men. Max, a retired butcher, reigns over his sons – Lenny, a cynical and articulate pimp; Joey, an inarticulate boxer-in-training; and his brother Sam, a chauffeur and a relic of

a softer masculinity. The entrance of Teddy, the expatriate philosophy professor, with his wife Ruth, marks the dramatic hinge of the play. Ruth is the intruder, the catalyst, and ultimately, the sovereign. Her entry destabilizes the masculine equilibrium, and by the end, she has recentered the play's economy of power around her own bodily and linguistic sovereignty⁶.

The gender dynamics of *The Homecoming* are neither redemptive nor redolent of liberal humanism. Rather, Pinter constructs a closed system of dominance and submission, in which characters enact stylized rituals of territorial assertion and psychological coercion. The opening scene – Max's mixture of abusive tirades and nostalgic reminiscences – immediately disorients any conventional sense of family structure. As feminist critics such as Catherine Belsey (1985) and Elin Diamond (1997) have shown, the bourgeois domestic space is never ideologically neutral; it is a crucible in which gendered power is performed, naturalized, and contested. In this domestic realm, Max's grotesque threats – "I'll chop your spine off" – operate less as realistic dialogue and more as symbolic acts: linguistic attempts to maintain patriarchal sovereignty through verbal mutilation⁷. Following Judith Butler's (1993) notion that power acts on the body in ways that produce it as an intelligible body, the violent language of the male characters operates performatively – it does not merely describe aggression, it constitutes a masculine identity enacted through ritual and speech.

The return of Teddy and Ruth introduces an element of disruption – not merely because they are outsiders, but because their arrival reconfigures the space into a site of ritualized negotiation. Ruth's first encounter with Lenny is particularly emblematic of this dynamic. Lenny's initial attempts to intimidate her through veiled aggression and sexual anecdote are undermined by Ruth's strategic reticence. She meets violence not with resistance, but with inscrutable calm – an affective tactic that repositions the threat back onto her interlocutor. Her line, "If you take the glass, I'll take you," operates as both seduction and threat, erotically charged yet semantically opaque⁸. This line exemplifies Butler's idea that gendered power does not precede its performance but is constituted through it. Ruth's speech is not transparently seductive or resistant – it is ambivalent, strategically undecidable, and thus functions as a subversive repetition of the very codes designed to define her.

Act II culminates in the play's most disturbing transvaluation: Ruth's integration into the household not as wife or daughter-in-law, but as a sexualized economic agent. Lenny and Max propose that she remain in London as a high-class escort, and Ruth – far from protesting – negotiates the terms of her role with the precision of a business transaction. Her conditions – a wardrobe, a three-room flat, a maid – are not requests but contractual stipulations. As Butler suggests, gendered subjects do not merely inhabit power structures – they can rearticulate them through

⁶ Pinter, H. (1991). *The Homecoming* (pp. 19–21). Faber and Faber.

⁷ Ibid. P. 25.

⁸ Pinter, H. (1991). *The Homecoming* (p. 34). Faber and Faber. As Judith Butler (1997, p. 3) argues in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, such utterances function performatively; they do not merely describe reality—they constitute acts of power, identification, and resistance.

performative citation. Ruth's negotiation is not liberation from objectification but a strategic reinscription of it, subverting the ideology of passive femininity by inhabiting the very role meant to contain her. Here, Pinter stages what Slavoj Žižek (1989) might call a perverse reversal of ideology: Ruth accepts and manipulates the very structures designed to commodify her. She is not the victim of objectification but its co-author. Through her strategic inhabitation of the commodified position, Ruth enacts what Meenakshi Dey describes as a simultaneous performance of "submission and dominance," a tension that ultimately "blur[s] the boundaries between victim and victimizer" and thus dislocates the binary logic through which patriarchal power normally maintains its authority (2025, p. 548). Her erotic agency is asserted not through defiance, but through strategic acquiescence, unsettling the dichotomy between autonomy and subjection.

Teddy's silent acquiescence is equally revealing. The philosopher-husband, ostensibly the play's intellectual and ethical center, simply gathers his belongings and returns to America. His departure signals more than domestic abdication – it is the evacuation of rational discourse, of philosophy's presumed authority, in the face of raw power and desire. As Stanley Fish (1980) notes in his critique of interpretive communities, rationality is always already embedded in performative contexts. In Pinter, these contexts dissolve the very possibility of philosophical detachment.

The final tableau – Ruth seated like a queen, flanked by Joey and Lenny, with Max crawling toward her – is not a moment of catharsis but of dark apotheosis. It marks the completion of a ritual whereby sexual power becomes institutionalized, the domestic space transformed into a theater of sovereignty. That Pinter offers no moral commentary, no interior monologue, no explanatory gesture, underscores his fundamental commitment to dramatizing behavior without recourse to cause. As Peter Szondi argued in *Theory of the Modern Drama* (1987, p. 14), modern drama shifts from *destiny* to *decision*, and then – crucially in Pinter's case – from *decision* to *gesture*. Ruth's ascendancy is not explained; it is enacted.

The infamous audience reaction – "They're all animals!" – gestures toward an instinctive understanding of the play's primitivism. Some critics have read the family as governed by archaic impulses, akin to Lorenzian *ethology* or Freudian *family romance*. But Pinter's dramaturgy is not reducible to evolutionary psychology or psychoanalytic allegory. His characters are not archetypes but surfaces – palpable, reactive, impenetrable. Ruth's parting line to Teddy, "Don't become a stranger," encapsulates this opacity. What might sound like a cliché of emotional continuity becomes, in context, a foreclosure of intimacy. Language in Pinter is never transparent – it is always contaminated by irony, threat, or evasive tact⁹.

Each character's professional identity refracts his mode of power. Max the butcher evokes the economy of violence, his vocabulary shot through with cleavers and carcasses. Lenny commodifies desire through his work as a pimp. Joey's aspirational boxing and demolition work literalize his blunt-force identity. Teddy, a philosopher, is out of place in this economy of bodily and transactional dominance.

⁹ Pinter, H. (1991). *The Homecoming* (p. 80). Faber and Faber.

His sole moment of assertion – eating Lenny’s cheese roll – is emblematic of Pinter’s symbolic minimalism: nourishment as power, food as ideological territory. In Pinter’s universe, even a cheese roll can become a vector of assertion, resistance, or humiliation.

Ruth’s refusal to be defined by a profession is itself a profession – a strategic deployment of presence, of enigmatic allure, of sexual and discursive mastery. Her triumph is not moral, but aesthetic. She does not subvert the system of exploitation; she reinscribes herself into it as sovereign. As feminist theorist Laura Mulvey (1975) might note, Ruth destabilizes the male gaze not by disappearing from it, but by returning it with unsettling calm, reappropriating objecthood as power.

Amid the squalor, Pinter allows brief flickers of bourgeois domesticity: Max praises Ruth’s coffee, family memories are conjured, moral platitudes invoked. These banalities – “She taught them all the morality they know” – collapse into irony when juxtaposed with the family’s ethical nihilism. Pinter’s use of what Beckett termed the “Irish bull” – statements whose self-contradiction reveals deeper absurdity – marks this space where sentiment and savagery collide. Max’s call for filial respect, followed by self-abasement (“I’m a lousy, filthy father”), enacts the impossibility of authority in a world unmoored from meaning¹⁰.

The brief discussion of metaphysics – “Do tables really exist?” – serves as a meta-theatrical moment. It is not a philosophical query but a parody of philosophy’s impotence¹¹. Ruth’s physical interruption – exposing her leg, invoking the corporeal – annihilates abstraction with the immediacy of flesh¹².

Conclusion

In its most distilled form, Harold Pinter’s *The Homecoming* enacts a profound destabilization of theatrical conventions, dissolving the explanatory scaffolding of character, motivation, and resolution in favor of performance, gesture, and silence. It is not a drama of essence, but of event – of bad manners rather than good intentions, of strategic silence rather than transparent meaning. The play neither explains nor moralizes; instead, it stages an opaque social ritual governed by desire, domination, and symbolic exchange. Ruth’s ascendancy, far from representing liberal autonomy, constitutes a transvaluation of gendered roles through strategic opacity – her silence speaks, her presence overwhelms, her stillness governs. This radical economy of theatrical presence aligns with Hans-Thies Lehmann’s conception of the postdramatic, in which the materiality of performance overtakes narrative logic, compelling the audience not to interpret but to witness. Pinter reanimates the comedy of manners not in the polished tradition of Wilde or Coward, but as a comedy of menace – an arena where language, gesture, and absence function as instruments of social warfare. His characters are not psychological unities, but

¹⁰ Pinter, H. (1991). *The Homecoming* (p. 24). Faber and Faber.

¹¹ Ibid. P. 61.

¹² This moment evokes Merleau-Ponty’s notion of embodied subjectivity: knowledge does not emerge from cognition alone, but from presence, from the body’s gesture and proximity (Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

performative surfaces: masks, voices, and bodies engaged in ritualized conflict, exemplifying what Theodor Adorno termed the non-identical – irreducible, opaque, and resistant to conceptual capture. Teddy, the philosopher-husband, exemplifies the collapse of intellectual abstraction in the face of embodied power. His rational detachment falters before Ruth's corporeal assertion, revealing, as Butler suggests, the instability of identity under the pressure of social performance. The stage becomes a crucible of iterated behaviors where no utterance is innocent and no gesture escapes inscription. Meaning is not uncovered but constructed in real time – always contingent, always vulnerable to reversal.

Ultimately, the Pinterian stage is not a mirror of depth, nor a platform for redemption or catharsis. It is a closed system of behavioral codes, ideological repetitions, and performative ambiguity. Its power lies not in offering answers but in dramatizing the irreducible tensions of human presence. As Adorno argued, art's truth resides not in its message, but in its resistance to instrumental reason, its refusal to be reduced to use, to function, to message. In this sense, *The Homecoming* is not about revelation, but confrontation – with the unknown, the undecidable, and the real.

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Bio note:

Radoje V. Šoškić, PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica, Filipa Višnjića St, Kosovska Mitrovica, 38220, Republic of Serbia. ORCID: 0000-0002-7690-2145. E-mail: radoje.soskic@pr.ac.rs

Сведения об авторе:

Радое В. Шошкич, доктор филологических наук, доцент, Приштинский университет в Косовской Митровице, Республика Сербия, 38220, Косовска Митровица, ул. Филиппа Вишничича. ORCID: 0000-0002-7690-2145. E-mail: radoje.soskic@pr.ac.rs