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哈罗德·品特 戏剧创作的内在动力

陈红薇 / 著

The Creative Dynamics of the
Duality in Harold Pinter's
Dramatic Writings



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序

认识红薇是 1990 年的秋天，我们一起在北京外国语学院读研究生。北外独特的两届研究生一起上课的方式使我们有缘相识。最初的印象是她特别好学、思维敏捷、热情大方、精力充沛。如今，她已是北京科技大学外国语学院副院长、教授、博导，不过依然快人快语，学问上也更加出色。

我和红薇都是何其莘先生培养的博士，对英国戏剧都情有独钟，从莎士比亚到当代戏剧家，谈起来都会眉飞色舞、兴趣盎然。共同的学术追求使我有幸每每成为红薇作品的第一位读者。读红薇的文章是我的一大乐事。她始终紧跟学术前沿，敏锐的洞察力使她对作品的分析经常有出人意料的解读，令人有耳目一新、酣畅淋漓之感。

红薇对哈罗德·品特（1930—2008）的集中关注始于她的博士论文撰写阶段。2003 年至 2004 年，她在英国利兹大学访学期间，不仅收集了品特研究的大量第一手资料，而且经常当面向著名戏剧评论家菲利普·罗伯兹（Phillip Roberts）请教，为她完成这部英文专著打下了坚实的基础。目前国内学者对品特的研究偏重于他早期带有荒诞色彩的“威胁喜剧”，对他 1970 年后的记忆戏剧、1980 年后的政治剧等偶有论及，而对他 1990 年之后的作品则鲜有独立的专论。红薇对品特的研究注重整体上的把握，非常全面，对其各个时期的作品都有深入的研究。

本书为红薇的第二部关于品特的专著。第一部是 2007 年出版的《战后英国戏剧中的哈罗德·品特》，该书以战后英国戏剧的发展为背景，着重论述品特的戏剧在当时社会现实主义作品占主导地位的英国戏剧大环境中如何独树一帜，写得比较宏观。现在出版的这本英文专著与前者有所不同，切入点选得比较小，但挖掘很深。它从品特早年

经历所形成的双重视角入手，探讨其戏剧创作的内在驱动力，揭示了“品特式”戏剧的核心特质，即从主题到艺术风格上无所不在的双重性。品特独具个人魅力的、诗一般的风格以及他对记忆和意识的深度探索，表面上看有点远离社会，其实不然。通过对品特作品中双重视角的分析，红薇使我们更深地理解了为什么品特的戏剧能表现其他剧作家很难触及的社会深层现实。

红薇的这本英文专著对西方品特研究的前沿性成果和代表性观点做了非常翔实的综述，在写作过程中引用了大量西方品特研究的主流观点和第一手资料，语言地道流畅，对于国内研究品特的研究生和学者具有很好的参考价值，对于品特爱好者则是又一次颇具启发意义的精神交流。

是为序。

王 岚

于洛阳

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Introduction

As the winner of the Nobel Prize of Literature in 2005, Harold Pinter stands out as one of the most distinguished figures on the post-war British stage both because of his unique voice against the background of the socially committed dramatic mood and his representative position in the mainstream English drama. Beginning his writing career in the late 1950s, Pinter is one of the few who survived the rise and the fall of the first generation of British dramatists in the second half of the 20th century and still kept his creative strength to the 1990s. Actually, he has been, in many cases, regarded by critics as the best British dramatist. In Peter Hall's words, Pinter's poetic nature in his dramatic writing makes him finally tower "above everybody else, whatever their merits."^[1] Kimball King's assessment suggests a similar view about Pinter's leading position on the English stage:

Harold Pinter's guiding role in virtually all important aspects of modern drama cannot be overlooked. It could be said that Beckett's poetic minimalism, dense with meaning, and John Osborne's creative use of the stage to express his feelings of outrage and

[1] Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p.391.

injustice, began a spirited uncovering of theatrical possibility. It remained for Pinter to alter expectations of drama permanently, however, and the language, action, and meaning of all performance art is inevitably measured against his achievements.^[1]

Pinter's style, commonly known as "Pinteresque,"^[2] has been presented as "a signifier of the new dramatic norms" and "a dramatic paradigm, which serves the reviewers to enhance the acceptance of new playwrights."^[3] According to Dominic Shellard, "Harold Pinter is arguably the most significant British playwright to have emerged from the fifties. With *Ashes to Ashes*, premiered in the West End in 1996, he is certainly the most enduring."^[4]

Ever since the staging of his first play, *The Room* (1957), innumerable critics have written on Pinter, negatively as well as favorably. Surveying the critical voices about him over the six decades, we may find that the main approaches of interpretations can be roughly classified into the following groups.

First of all, as Pinter achieved his success in the late 1950s, his works were unavoidably examined at the very beginning against the two contrasting theatrical forms of the period—social realism and the Theatre of the Absurd. The fact is that Pinter's early plays from *The Room* to *The*

[1] Kimball King, "Harold Pinter's Achievement and Modern Drama," in *Pinter at 70: A Casebook*, ed. Lois Gordon (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), p.243.

[2] Concerning "Pinteresque," it referred initially to the features of Pinter's comedies of menace in his first stage of writing—the room, the menacing intruder, the subsequent disintegration of characters, which can be found in such plays as *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, and *The Homecoming*. But as time went on, it came to cover all the major features in Pinter's works, such as the ambiguity of meaning, poetic style of discourse, and unique treatment of memory and time.

[3] Yael Zarhy-Levo, "Pinter and the Critics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, ed. Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.218.

[4] Dominic Shellard, *British Theatre since the War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.89.

Birthday Party received almost widespread rejection. Reviewers' criticism of Pinter then was mainly about the obscurity of his works and the lack of serious meanings and social commitment. This accusation became a critical disaster when his first masterpiece, *The Birthday Party*, was staged in 1958, with Harold Hobson as the only exception. After watching the premier of the play, W. A. Darlington declared: "The author never got down to earth enough to explain what his play was about, so I can't tell you."^[1] Darlington concluded that all the characters in the play are mad except Meg's husband. Even the next play by Pinter, the widely-celebrated *The Caretaker* did not escape similar attacks. While admitting Pinter's talent reflected in *The Caretaker*, for example, Bernard Levin comments, "Nothing emerges. There is no sense of a view, however oblique, of these characters, no disclosure of a general truth based on particular conclusions, no comment, wise or otherwise, on anything."^[2]

This accusation of "nothingness" in Pinter's plays results essentially from his seeming vacuum of the social commitment, which can be prevailingly found in such dramatists as John Osborne and Arnold Wesker. As Tom McGrath writes,

After all the surface layers have been removed, the various puzzles untied, it is clear that Pinter is saying, precisely, nothing. His play is his style The kind of cold, fishy gaze he turns on the characters in his plays is the gaze he wishes he could turn on real life. What looks in his work like an almost Zennish detachment is, in fact, a disaffiliation, a refusal to be involved. And behind this refusal there is the fear of involvement and its *angst*-causing consequences.^[3]

So, it is mainly because of a lack of social commentary and realism

[1] W. A. Darlington, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 May 1958, in *File on Pinter*, comp. Malcolm Page (London: Methuen Drama, 1993), p.14.

[2] *Sunday Times*, 30 Oct. 1977: 38, in *File on Pinter*, p.24.

[3] Tom McGrath, *Peace News*, 16 July 1965: 7, in *File on Pinter*, p.34.

that the critics attacked Pinter. In the words of an article in *The Stage*, "Pinter can convey the unease of modern society, the hidden antagonisms, the anguish and gnawing worry of his characters, but he can never resolve—or let the characters work out some kind of solution to—the menacing problems."^[1] It is not until the 1980s that a strong defending voice began to be heard. For example, Elizabeth Sakellaridou writes:

The lack of a political or a social or a religious message does not prove moral indifference or a vacuum of values. What appears on the surface as stern, arid amorality is in fact Pinter's exclusive attention to the workings of the human mind and psyche, which are often automatic, instinctual and pre-conscious and have little relevance to political ideology, social structure or moral codes.^[2]

As time went on, the initial blaming voice was replaced by the general recognition of the essential seriousness of Pinter's works.

Connected with the accusation of Pinter's lack of social involvement is the perception of his artistic aloofness from the prevailing mood of the socially committed theatre. As Ronald Knowles states,

In comparison with the realists Pinter did not speak from a recognizable political platform. In contrast, he deconstructs social realism by divorcing the identification of character and environment, defamiliarising the pedestrian and destabilising the audience with ultimately self-recriminating laughter.^[3]

The two categories Kenneth Tynan defines in his assessment of the post-war British dramatists reflect effectively the critical views about Pinter at that time: while Tynan labels John Osborne, John Arden and

[1] *The Stage*, 12 Oct. 1961: 15, in *File on Pinter*, p.60.

[2] Elizabeth Sakellaridou, *Pinter's Female Portrait* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), p.4.

[3] Ronald Knowles, "Pinter and Twentieth-Century Drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, p.73.

Arnold Weaker as “the hairy men—heated, embattled, socially committed playwrights,” he describes dramatists like Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard as “the smooth men—cool, apolitical stylists.”^[1] Moreover, Susan Rusinko also believes that, compared with Osborne whose importance remains historical in laying the socially committed tradition, Pinter’s contribution rests mainly on breaking new stylistic ground.^[2] Following the different views of seeing theatre as “an engaged social phenomenon or as a politically indifferent aesthetic artifact,”^[3] John Fleming and Christopher Innes share the similar opinion in regarding Pinter as an antithesis to such writers as Wesker, who believe in the social effect of drama.^[4]

Singling out Pinter as an apolitical stylist, quite a few of critics naturally attach a label of Absurdism to Pinter’s plays. Reviewers repeatedly compare Pinter to Samuel Beckett and E. Ionesco, regarding him as a British representative of the European avant-garde. As Yael Zarhy-Levo comments, “the inexplicable quality of Pinter’s style, used by the critics to justify their initial rejection, serves subsequently as their means for selling him to the public, and eventually becomes his trademark.”^[5] In the opinion of Martin Esslin, Pinter’s *A Slight Ache* has clear echoes of Beckett’s novel, *Molloy*, while *The Caretaker* can be seen as derivative of *Waiting for Godot*.^[6] According to Esslin, Pinter’s affinity to Beckett lies in his creative process:

It is the confluence of the obsessive image that springs from the very

[1] Kenneth Tynan, “Tom Stoppard,” in *Show People: Profiles in Entertainment* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989), p.296.

[2] Susan Rusinko, *British Drama, 1950 to the Present: A Critical History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), p.47.

[3] Susan Hollis Merritt, “Pinter and Politics,” in *Pinter at 70*, p.129.

[4] Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama 1890-1990* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.279.

[5] Yael Zarhy-Levo, “Pinter and the Critics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, p.215.

[6] Martin Esslin, *Pinter the Playwright* (Methuen and London: A Methuen Paperback, 1984), p.274.

depths of the writer's subconscious with the technical skills that have become second nature to him that creates the curious quality of Pinter's plays. By taste and inclination, Pinter is a poet deeply influenced by Joyce, Beckett, and Kafka.^[1]

Susan Rusinko also believes that it is under the influence of Beckett that Pinter challenges the existing stage with his stylistic and linguistic innovations.^[2] But in Tim Brassell's views, what connects Pinter with the Theatre of the Absurd is his refusal to minimize the audience's awareness that what they are watching is a performance, a gathering and collusion of author, actor and audience, in which the audience's role extends beyond a simple passive voyeurism.^[3] Brassell also points out that it is because of this association with the Absurdist that Pinter becomes initially an antithesis to the general mood of the realism:

The "mainstream" is held, with an undiminished grip, by the regrouped forces of realism. But there are a number of important British writers, mostly working in relative isolation from one another, who have taken the imaginative boldness of the Absurdist and something, perhaps, of their philosophy to heart in pursuing their own paths of formal experimentation along non-naturalistic lines.^[4]

Here, one of the boldest experimental Absurdist mentioned by Brassell is Pinter. Pinter's relationship to Beckett has still been a critical subject even in the past decade. As Lois Gordon states, "Pinter may indeed have revered Beckett in the same way Beckett revered Joyce. Matters of personal, political, and literary styles aside, Beckett and Pinter clearly share one trait:

[1] Martin Esslin, "Creative Process and Meaning," in *Pinter at 70*, p.7.

[2] Susan Rusinko, *British Drama, 1950 to the Present: A Critical History*, p.32.

[3] Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p.25.

[4] *Ibid.*, p.32.

an absolute commitment to the purity of the word.”^[1]

But different opinions are also heard of the influence of Absurdism on Pinter. For example, Christopher Innes argues that Beckett’s influence on Pinter has been over-emphasized. Ronald Knowles also points out, “Beckett and Pinter use theatricality to quite opposite ends: *Godot* dismantles religion and philosophy to reveal the emptiness of teleological truth, whereas *The Caretaker* ultimately transcends theatricality by realizing arguably the only truth we have, existence itself.”^[2]

Besides Pinter’s aloofness from social realism and the influence of Absurdism on him, another early popular angle of Pinter study is the psychoanalytic approach initiated by Martin Esslin. Analyzing Pinter’s three early major plays, *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*, Esslin points out the existence of symmetrical Oedipal relations and analogies in them. Following this direction of psychoanalysis, many other critics have tried to examine the pre-societal and pre-conscious world in Pinter’s plays, which alienates the dramatist’s characters from the immediate contemporary reality. While Lucina P. Gabbard emphasizes the dream structure in Pinter’s plays, Katherine H. Burkman reads Pinter’s works through myth and ritual, Thomas Adler discusses his work with reference to Jungian psychological concepts, and Marc Silverstein approaches Pinter’s plays with Lacan’s theory.^[3] Among these voices, Gabbard’s reading of Pinter’s plays as dream texts might be the most traditional one. According to him, Pinter’s characters are but unconsciously

[1] Lois Gordon, “Introduction to the First Edition,” in *Pinter at 70*, p.xxv.

[2] Ronald Knowles, “Pinter and Twentieth-Century Drama,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, p.76.

[3] Marc Silverstein, “*One for the Road*, *Mountain Language* and the Impasse of Politics,” *Modern Drama* 34. 3 (Sep. 1991): 423. As Marc Silverstein comments on *The Room*, “As a Negro who bears an Irish name, Riley embodies two levels of otherness and cultural marginality. At the same time, however, arriving at Rose’s flat to call her home, speaking quite literally in the name-of-the-Father, he occupies the subject position of what Lacan terms the (symbolical) father, the privileged site of the Word-as-Law within the cultural order.”

motivated, and they are grouped around Oedipal wishes, involving punishment and anxiety dreams.^[1] In *Kafka and Pinter Shadow-Boxing*, Raymond Armstrong's research takes the form of comparative study of Pinter and Kafka in their themes of the patri-filial struggle as archetypal conflict. The study results in the discovery that the revolt of all the young men in Pinter's family plays ends in a return of the sons to the fathers.^[2]

The fourth angle of Pinter criticism is a discussion on the artistic features of his works, such as the facet of ambiguity, the use of memory, the linguistic approach to language and the artistic form of comedy. Here, the quality of ambiguity in Pinter's works is one reason that attracted early reviewers' attacks. Charles Marowitz, a contemporary playwright of Pinter's, makes such a comment on *The Caretaker*,

An elaborate network of ambiguity stretched tight over a simple little story. Although it is searingly accurate in its diction and characterization, it is too organized and surreal in effect to be called naturalistic. If Pinter uses tape-records to achieve such verisimilitude, he also edits his tapes poetically to avoid stale reproductions of life.^[3]

The question of ambiguity became even sharper with Pinter's prevalent use of memory in his plays in the 1970s, as Frank Marcus discusses Pinter's *No Man's Land*:

Needless to say, the author is throwing sand in our eyes. By the end, we are not sure whether he [the tramp in the play] writes poems or clears away glasses in a pub The crucial bond between them is shared memories—but memories are notoriously unreliable

[1] Lucina P. Gabbard, *The Dream Structure of Pinter's Plays: A Psychoanalytic Approach* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1976), p.196.

[2] Raymond Armstrong, *Kafka and Pinter Shadow-Boxing* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), p.170.

[3] Charles Marowitz, *Confessions of a Counterfeit Critic* (London: Myre Methuen, 1977), p.49.

Pinter's refusal to answer this question, except by indicating a multiplicity of identities, is the core of his art.^[1]

The artistic facet of Pinter's ambiguity puzzles people so much that critics like George E. Wellwarth declares, "Pinter is the only critic who has made any sense of Pinter."^[2]

Like the psychoanalytic reading of Pinter's works, the linguistic approach to Pinter study also begins with Martin Esslin, who gives some original analysis of Pinter's linguistic and stylistic devices of employing silence and pause in *Pinter the Playwright*. Esslin takes Pinter's dramatic dialogue as a double charge and believes that a second string of meaning belies the factual meaning of his dramatic words. Since then, more reviewers have taken the linguistic approach. For instance, Austin E. Quigley states that there is a pervasive discontinuity in the action of Pinter's plays, which is the major source of the atmosphere of abstraction that surrounds the character interaction. But, after a close reading of *No Man's Land*, he concludes that a structure actually lies beneath the play's careful manipulations of the discontinuity and fragmentation.^[3] To critics like Michael Billington, language in Pinter's plays operates on many levels,^[4] which is believed to be the dramatist's most significant contribution to British drama. But according to Guido Almansi, "Pinter has systematically forced his characters to use a perverse, deviant language to conceal or

[1] Frank Marcus, "Writ Small," *Sunday Telegraph* 27 Apr. 1975: 14.

[2] George E. Wellwarth, "A Revisionist Approach," in *Pinter at 70*, pp.96-107. Wellwarth explains: "Pinter's role is that of dispassionate observer, and much of his plays stems from the fact that he writes them as if he were eavesdropping on his characters and recording their often pointless stream of consciousness." As a result, though Pinter's plays are set within the context of contemporary reality, nevertheless, "they exist *in vacuo* as exemplary slices of reality but without the stresses and far-reaching interconnected motives of everyday reality as we know it." So, Wellwarth states that a play like *The Homecoming* is "a play that does not mean anything: it simply is."

[3] Austin E. Quigley, "Time for Change in *No Man's Land*," in *Pinter at 70*, pp.34-6.

[4] Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter*, p.391.

ignore the truth Pinter's idiom is essentially human because it is an idiom of lies."^[1] He also declares that Pinter's language is one of escapist maneuverings, which studiously avoids the commitment of a conflict or confrontation.^[2] But in the view of Linda Ben-Zvi, Pinter is like a minimalist sculptor or painter, who has always taken great pleasure in making much of little, and "Only Samuel Beckett among contemporary dramatists has set more stringent restrictions on the variables in his works and his words."^[3]

In the aspect of artistic features, critics also show their interest in Pinter's dramatic form of comedy. Since Irving Wardle published his essay, "Comedy of Menace," in 1958, critics have used this term conveniently to refer to the mixed mood of comedy and menace in Pinter's early works. According to Francesca Coppa, Pinter's comedy of menace has inspired a generation of black comedies written by playwrights who are willing to provide the explanations that Pinter omits.^[4] To John Orr, however, many of Pinter's plays are a kind of tragicomedy, which find menace in the ordinary.^[5] Differing from all these, Guido Almansi reads Pinter's works as plays of games: either hiding games, critical games or memory games.^[6]

Since the 1980s, more and more critics' attention has been drawn to Pinter's dramatic writings for other media such as screen and radio. For example, Jennifer L. Randisi, Francis Gillen and Linda Renton write from the angle of screen plays; Albert Wertheim conducts research

[1] Guido Almansi, "Harold Pinter's Idiom of Lies," in *Contemporary English Drama*, ed. C. W. E. Bigsby (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), p.79.

[2] Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson, *Harold Pinter* (London and New York: Methuen, 1983), p.19.

[3] Linda Ben-Zvi, "Monologue: The Play of Words," in *Pinter at 70*, p.81.

[4] Francesca Coppa, "The Sacred Joke: Comedy and Politics in Pinter's Early Plays," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, p.52.

[5] John Orr, *Tragicomedy and Contemporary Culture Play and Performance from Beckett to Shepard* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), p.32.

[6] Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson, *Harold Pinter*, p.25.

on Pinter's radio plays; Stanley Eveling and Ronald Knowles make a comparative study of Pinter in the aspects of radio/stage and performance/text. Significantly, Steven H. Gale, after a careful analysis of Pinter's screenwriting, concludes, "for Pinter, the filming allowed him not only to capture certain elements that had been present in the play but to magnify them."^[1]

Nevertheless, among all the perspectives of Pinter study, the most prevalent topic of research is the themes of his plays, such as menace, territory, power, politics, betrayal and gender. Among early critical views about Pinter, critics like Katherine H. Burkman, Benedict Nightingale, Lucina P. Gabbard, and Steven H. Gale all read Pinter's plays as a fight for territory or comedies of menace. Referring to Pinter's depiction of the palpable and imperceptible threat, Dominic Shellard states that "Mr. Pinter has got hold of a primary fact of existence. We live on the verge of disaster."^[2] To Shellard, Pinter's threat is not that sort of exploding hydron bombs, but a subtler sort.^[3] By contrast, Steven E. Gale's suggests that "Having established that menace is pervasive in the modern world, he [Pinter] turned his attention to the source of that menace ... menace does not derive from an external, physical source. It comes from within the individual and is psychological in nature."^[4]

Another motif that has received considerable critical attention is Pinter's portrayal of women. Victor Cahn, Elizabeth Sakellariou, and

[1] Steven H. Gale, "Harold Pinter, Screenwriter: An Overview," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, p.93.

[2] Dominic Shellard, *British Theatre since the War*, p.93.

[3] Ibid., Shellard writes, "It cannot be seen, but it enters the room every time the door is opened. There is something in our past—it does not matter what—which will catch up with you. Though you go to the uttermost parts for the earth, and hide yourself in the most obscure lodgings in the least popular of towns, one day there is the possibility that two men will appear. They will be looking for you, and you cannot get away."

[4] Steven E. Gale, "Harold Pinter," in *British Playwrights, 1956-1995*, ed. William W. Demastes (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), p.316.