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DOKTORA TEZİ

DON'T YOU REALLY KNOW?: HANDLING OF VIOLENCE IN THREE MODERN BRITISH PLAYS

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ÖZ

İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası Avrupa ve özellikle Büyük Britanya'da ortaya çıkan siyasi, kültürel ve toplumsal tutum ve durumlar, Britanya tiyatrosunu büyük ölçüde etkileyip yakın geçmiş ve günümüzde yazılan ve oynanan oyunları içerik açısından belirgin ölçülerde şekillendirir. 1945 sonrası televizyonun, üst ve orta sınıf insanların evlerine yavaş yavaş girmeye başlamasıyla tiyatro seyircisinin hem sayısı hem de niteliği azalır ve bu baskın toplumsal hal oyun yazarlarının içindeki ateşi dahi söndürür. Öyle ki, İngiliz sahneleri uzun yıllar toplumun durumunu gerçekçi, güvenli ve tahmin edilebilir bir yapıyla anlatan oyunlarla işgal altında kalır. 1950'lerde yazmaya başlayan Harold Pinter, Arnold Wesker, John Osborne gibi oyun yazarlarının oyunları hariç, 80'lerin başına kadar varolmuş oyunlarda doğruyla yanlış, iyiyle kötü gibi ikili zıtlıklar kesin bir dille anlatılmış; belirsizliğe asla tahammül edemeyen karakterler, yine belirsizliğe ve farklılıklara asla açık olmayan seyircilerin umursamaz alkışlarını almıştır.

Bu çalışma, bahsi geçen toplumsal süreci mercek altına alarak İngiliz toplumunun hem ulusal hem de uluslararası olaylara karşı olan kayıtsızlığının, görmezden gelme alışkanlığının ve genel olarak itaatkâr tutumunun Aleks Sierz'in Suratına Tiyatro (In-Yer-Face Theatre) olarak tanımladığı tiyatro türünün ortaya çıkmasına nasıl sebep olduğunu irdeler. Bu çalışma için seçilmiş oyunlarda -Harold Pinter'ın **The Birthday Party** (1958), Sarah Kane'in **Blasted** (1995), Martin McDonagh'ın **The Pillowman** (2003) oyunları- yakinen incelenen durumlar ise bu çalışmanın ana çerçevesini oluşturan şiddet olgusuna bağlanır. Her bölüm şiddet kavramına farklı bir açıdan yaklaşır ve gizli şiddet, şiddetin yayılması ve şiddetin yaratıcısı gibi konular etrafında fikirler tartışılarak detaylandırılır.

Sonuç olarak bu tezde, İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra yazılan üç oyun aracılığıyla, Britanya'nın sosyal ve kültürel yolculuğundaki şiddet durakları ele alınmıştır. Böylelikle bu tezde, iktidarın, gücüne güç katabilmek için toplumları şiddeti yok etmenin imkânsızlığına inandırması ve böylece bireylerin de şiddetin kendilerinden öte bir eylem olduğunu düşünerek aslında şiddeti nasıl var ettiklerini göstermek amaçlanmıştır.

ABSTRACT

The political, cultural and societal attitudes and situations that emerge in Europe and especially in the Great Britain after the Second World War influence British theatre extensively and shape the content of the plays that are being written and staged in the recent past and today. With the introduction of the television after 1945 into the houses of the upper and the middle classes, both the quality and the quantity of theatregoers start to decrease and this dominant social condition demotivates the playwrights of the period. Namely, British stages have been occupied and governed by the plays that display the state of the nation with a realist, presumable and familiar structure. Except for the plays of the playwrights such as Harold Pinter, Arnold Wesker and John Osborne that write in the 1950s, the plays that exist until the beginning of the 80s exhibit the good and the bad; the right and the wrong, and other such dichotomies with a dogmatic language; and the characters that can barely tolerate uncertainties have been ignorantly applauded by an audience that can similarly never abide the (cultural, personal) differences and ambiguities.

This study, by scrutinizing the mentioned period, examines how British people's complacent and ignorant attitudes towards both the national and international occurrences, together with their generally conformist structure, lead to the emergence of what Aleks Sierz nominates as In-Yer-Face Theatre. The instances that are closely inspected in the plays chosen for this study -Harold Pinter's **The Birthday Party** (1958), Sarah Kane's **Blasted** (1995), Martin McDonagh's **The Pillowman** (2003)- are linked to the theme of social violence, which frames the study. Each chapter approaches the theme of social violence from a different perspective and the ideas about hidden violence, spread of violence, and creation of violence are discussed in detailed elaboration.

In conclusion, in this study, the violence lay-bys on Britain's social and cultural road are handled through the selected three plays that are written after the Second World War. Hence, this study is to present the parallel between how power enables the assumption that violence is something beyond individuals' perception by convincing societies of the impossibility of removing violence and how, therefore,

power brings violence into constant existence in order for it to gain even more strength since violence deprives people of their capacities and make them dependent on power.

FOREWORD

This dissertation aims to examine the sociological process that I argue to have eventually led to the emergence of In-Yer-Face movement in British drama decades after World War II. It employs the concept of social violence as an overarching theme in exploring this process under three distinct titles, each one dealing with a different play and looking at social violence from various perspectives.

The importance of this dissertation derives from its relevancy to our current day. Besides detailed discussions on British culture and drama, particular attention is given in each chapter to the significance of mentioning certain notions and events concomitantly occurring in Turkey as well. Since theatre is a live form of art and is always about 'here and now,' I feel that setting such connections should be a must. Apart from this, not necessarily on Harold Pinter, but on Sarah Kane and especially on Martin McDonagh, the literature is not so comprehensive as to probe the writers and their plays from every possible aspect. Henceforth, this dissertation humbly contributes to the range of literature on the subjects pertinent to (British) drama.

The greatest difficulty that was encountered during the writing process of this dissertation was accessing or finding ways to access the most recent publications of relevant primary and secondary sources. Besides, the content could also include practical interpretations of productions and the intertextual references would be richer may more current plays have been staged concurrently in Turkey.

Surmounting this process has been less burdensome due to the guidance and help of certain academics and other people of great importance to me. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to my thesis supervisor Asst. Prof. Ferah İncesu whose positive attitudes have always kept me motivated all along the way. Also, I shall show my kind appreciation to Prof. Dr. Esra Melikoğlu and Assoc. Prof. Kerem Karaboğa, the chairs of English Language and Literature and Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy departments respectively for having contributed to this dissertation with their beneficial insights. Besides, I am much thankful to Prof. Dr. Yusuf Eradam, with whom I met again years later through a theatre play, **Elpiniki's Diary**, which was directed by my friend and colleague Emek Dedeoğlu, who has also been generous in her comments to push me write better. Finally, the exclusive and

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CONTENTS

Öz i

Abstract ii

Foreword iv

Contents vi

Introduction 1

1. “Don't you ever go out?”: The Hidden Violence and Machinery of Power in Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party 21

1.1 The Idea of Punishment 23

1.2 The Form in Which a Rejected Society Avenges 26

1.3 Creating Illusions to Keep the Wheel Turn 49

1.4 A Tiresome Party 56

1.5 Conclusion 70

2. Crimini di Pace: Sarah Kane’s Blasted and Social Violence 74

2.1 Manipulative and Manipulated Outburst 75

2.2 Is That Today’s Ideological Outlook on Your Face? 80

2.3 A Blasted Britishness 90

2.4 Journalists, Newspapers All Blasted 110

2.5 Conclusion 123

3. Jack-the-Ripper is Telling Stories: McDonagh's The Pillowman and Violence 125

3.1 Imagery, Form and Content 126

3.2 An Interrogation of Stories and the Human Condition 129

3.3 Who to Blame? Children? 141

3.4 Justice? 154

3.5 Book Burning and Conclusion 162

Conclusion 174

Bibliography 180

CV 192

INTRODUCTION

Henry David Thoreau starts his influential work titled **On Civil Government** by asserting that the best government is the one that governs the least; that governs not at all. After a few paragraphs, Thoreau provides an example about a soldier who refuses to participate in an unjust war and who therefore is applauded by those who are ignorantly willing to approve of the unjust government that makes the war, and he detects that "under the name of Order and Civil Government, we are all made at last to pay homage to and support our own meanness."[1] Here, Thoreau implies that the authoritative organisations hold the power of transforming man into a blind body that is *made* both disabled of differentiating between the causes of fierce social occurrences and undisturbed of his own meanness which, consequently, prompts and ushers violence.

Man's relation to power and his obedient service to its system altogether involve man's conformity, out of which is born the silencing down of his voice, that is, his speech and furthermore, his action. These eradicate both his freedom, his sense of individuality and uniqueness. Besides, obedience also brings about a loss of awareness or rather, man's state of not being able to be aware of his situation. In order for man to repossess his independence, individuality and awareness, he has to rebel against the authority. However, rebellion is not an action preferable by the authority, because, even only through the simple word 'no', it unleashes man from the master's whip and carries him to a position of facing or opposing the power. Once man has the opportunity to oppose the power, it means, according to Albert Camus, that he begins to desire and to judge.[2] It is at that moment of saying 'no' that man's awareness of his condition of slavery starts. The power would not want this, since, by disobeying, man "exceeds the bounds that he established for his antagonist, and demands that he should now be treated as an equal."[3] Also, upon the awareness, man recognizes that there is something in him with which he can identify himself and

1 **Civil Disobedience - Part 1 of 3**, (Online)
http://thoreau.eserver.org/civil1.html#notes, 25 December 2012.
2 Albert Camus, **The Rebel**, translated by Anthony Bower, (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 19.
3 Ibid., p. 20.

that 'something' is to respect himself, which he proceeds to place above “everything else and proclaims it preferable to life itself...Having up to now been willing to compromise, [man] suddenly adopts...an attitude of All or Nothing.”[4] Nevertheless, by looking at the circumstances of the three distinct protagonists in the three plays selected to be examined in this dissertation, it can be argued that it is not a child's play to rebel against the authority due its dehumanizing outcomes.

Accordingly, considering the above notions as a conceptual basis, this dissertation probes the idea of violence in Harold Pinter's **The Birthday Party** (1958), Sarah Kane's **Blasted** (1995) and Martin McDonagh's **The Pillowman** (2003) by arguing that violence in societies stems from man's ignorance of social matters and his obedience to power, and builds up a detailed discussion on (social) violence with references to the works of Michel Foucault, Slavoj Žižek and Erich Fromm as well as to many other critics and theorists of sociology, psychology, criminology and drama. Whereas Pinter's play only establishes a ground for it, the latter two plays belong to the movement that Aleks Sierz nominates as In-Yer-Face Theatre, and therefore, the present study also delves into the idea that the emergence of In-Yer-Face plays with outspoken, explicit, and aesthetically violent contents is affiliated with man's increasing dependence on power especially after the Second World War, with the media as a noticeable determiner of social and political manipulation. Before moving on with explanatory information on why these three plays are particularly chosen, what the content of each chapter is and what is meant by the frequently used terms, I shall provide a brief historical, cultural and social account of the affairs in Britain after the Second World War, so that the audience can have a background picture in his mind about the notions discussed in the chapters.

Providing a detailed account of the general picture of the twentieth century, Johan Raskin describes it to be a place of “world wars and revolutions for the control of wealth and power. It is a time of nationalist, socialist, and working-class movements...It is an era of dictatorship, of autocratic democracies...men are acutely conscious of chaos, alienation and loneliness. Racism infests the house of Western

4 Ibid.

thought - divides, corrupts, poisons."[5] This dissertation is located within this depiction, specifically focusing on the aftermath of World War II in Britain. In order to expand the historical background to the ideas discussed throughout the chapters, the dominant social and cultural atmosphere during the pre, while and post-War periods should be examined. In order to explain these, I will take John Osborne's **Look Back in Anger** into consideration not in terms of its dramatic aspects but of its becoming a determining stamp date in the history of modern British stage.

Dan Rebellato, referring to the phase before 8 May 1956 (the debut date of the play in the Royal Court Theatre), remarks that "the old era becomes exclusively characterized by the absence of Anger, and the new era by its presence."[6] However, the absence of Anger does not mean that it is non-existent at all. Through the vocabulary that surrounds the play[7], Robellato claims the fact that the spirit of Anger had always been there in society, yet repressed silence dominated it until Jimmy Porter appeared on stage. This repressed silence, in like manner, has certain undertones related to the idea of social obedience. Like the 'Keep Calm and Carry On' propaganda poster that was produced at the beginning of the War to keep up the pseudo-morale of the British public by signalling that objection is useless and conformity and unity are essential, the public continued "to experience rationing, queues for food and buses, and a more general sense of restriction and drabness, but remained docile and accepting"[8] during the immediate post-war period. The social and cultural reconstruction in Britain was not fulfilled after the War and "the continuity offered by comfortable stagnation was questioned by a generation who felt that conventional life offered little excitement."[9] In addition to the War years that demanded obedience, the Conservatism in the Fifties also required conformity for the sake of a passive goal of 'affluence' "rather than honourable conflict or release of energy."[10] Therefore, the repression of the public at the expense of prosperity finds

5 Jonah Raskin, **The Mythology of Imperialism**, (New York: MR Press, 2009), p. 44.
6 Dan Robellato, **1956 and All That: The Making of Modern British Drama**, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 4.
7 A brief compilation of commentaries is provided by Robellato. The common idea behind all phrases such as "a burb in public" or "something that banks up" is that they imply a 'breakthrough'.
8 David Ian Rabey, **English Drama Since 1940**, (London: Longman, 2003), p. 6.
9 Ibid., p. 30.
10 Ibid.

an angry expression in Osborne's play which can be considered as an “articulation of suffering”[11] and an attack on the “vicariousness of English life”[12] as opposed to the prevailing drama of taming, limiting, and redeeming, as explained by Rabey.

In the political arena, controlling and surveillance become the central issues of maintaining a stable economy and creating a working welfare state. Juxtaposing Michel Foucault's discussion of the birth of the prison and Jeremy Bentham's design of the Panopticon with the social situation in England during the post-War years, Robellato explains that in the Arts Council, some changes involving a close examination of budgets and profitability were made.[13] With the contrasting views of the Labours and the Conservatives – the former emphasizing the principle of universality while the latter insists on selectivity – the governing ethos “was 'vaguely socialist in theory while becoming individualistic and statist in practice', depending on a presumed public morality of control based on the disciplined consumer.”[14] As a result of such focus on the welfare of the nation, “patriotism and responsibility” have become the way of life in England, which is reflected by Ian in Kane's **Blasted**.

As for the theatre of the pre-War period, Peter Brook's description plays a vital role. In his dependable book **The Empty Space**, Brook maintains that the revivals and new plays staged in the late Forties were “a theatre of colour and movement, of fine fabrics, of shadows, of eccentric, cascading words, of leaps of thought and of cunning machines, of lightness and of all forms of mystery and surprise – it was the theatre of a battered Europe that seemed to share one aim – a reaching back towards a memory of lost grace.”[15] Yet, the after-effects of the War to this positive description are not late to arrive. Accompanied by the decreasing attendance to theatres, the theatre has come to be defined by the general public as “something that we went to during the war. We want to forget all about the war.”[16] To lend them a helping hand to forget, the dance halls and cinema become the points of interest as well as the newly produced and purchased TV sets. Especially with the

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., p. 29.
13 Robellato, op. cit., p. 49.
14 Rabey, op. cit., p. 6.
15 Peter Brook, **The Empty Space**, (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2008), p. 48.
16 Charles Landstone, **Off-Stage: A Personal Record of the First Twelve Years of State-Sponsored Drama in Great Britain**, (London: Elek, 1953), p. 60.

introduction of the American cinema and TV broadcasting, the youth of Britain starts to reshape itself into a new form. This is also triggered by both domestic and international events occurring before 1956.

D. Keith Peacock describes those years by discussing that the early Post-War years in Britain are threatened by uncontrollable outer forces: “It appeared that its culture was under threat from American consumerist values, its language was corrupted by the intrusion of American idioms appropriated from the then-dominant American cinema, and its young were provoked to anarchy by rock 'n' roll.”[17] Apparently, the popular media of the time is the most powerful tool of stimulating society, similar to our present day in which the social media is ravaging the majority of the youth with its danger of creating a hyper-reality. In terms of domestic and international politics, Britain goes through significant changes. For instance, pronouncing the independence of India in 1947 is one of the determining incidents in the British empire that discolours her international reputation and strength. Furthermore, as Peacock explains, “Chinese involvement in the Korean War of 1951 and Russia's blockading of Berlin in 1947 and its invasion of Hungary in 1956 inspired fear of Communist expansionism. Finally, most threatening of all was the adoption of the atomic bomb by both East and West. By 1956...Britain was...socially and politically very different from what it had been in 1939.”[18] Perhaps, the most important difference that emerges is on the youth, as emphasized before: “In this shifting moral, social, and political landscape, protest and the rejection of the past were firmly on the agenda”[19], and consequently arrives Jimmy Porter on stage.

As opposed to the new materialistic Britain and changing values, the playwrights such as Osborne, Arnold Wesker, John Arden are from a generation whose “teenage years had been adversely affected by the war...It was a generation whose future was threatened by the Cold War and the possibility of nuclear annihilation. Theirs was a far less optimistic view of the world and of human potential than that of the teenagers of the early 1960s.”[20] Henceforth, while Pinter is

17 D. Keith Peacock, **Harold Pinter and the New British Theatre**, (London: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 7.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., p. 9.

a noteworthy playwright even from his early years of his writing career for he becomes “a public spokesman against the self-congratulatory complacency whereby people allow themselves to become part of a hegemonic structure which is imaginatively limiting”[21], Wesker, Arden and other playwrights such as John Whiting enrich the period with their socio-realistic plays with outstanding content that paves the way towards the emergence of other and more recent plays. To provide an example, Whiting's **Conditions of Agreement** that is written in 1948-9 influences Pinter's **The Birthday Party** from a reverse angle: the former deals with violence inflicted upon an individual from the perspective of the terrorists and contrastingly, the latter from the point of view of the victim. Moreover, Arden's **Serjeant Musgrave's Dance**[22], which is a play about “the nature of pacifism and the correct response to the acts of violence, colonial or otherwise”[23]; or Edward Bond and Howard Barker's plays that involve “savagely socially typified characters” and settings of postwar Europe “erupting into the Cotswolds” not only indicate Sarah Kane's **Blasted** but also anticipates her form in which the Bosnian war erupts into a Leeds hotel room.[24] In a general sense, the common feature of such notable plays of the period is that they “haunt the imagination much longer...by calling controllability and calculation [of the well-made play] into question.”[25] In fact, the word 'imagination' here is significant in that gradually after the Sixties, there start appearing new plays by different playwrights with unique contents that poke the imagination of the audience and lead the way towards the emergence of In-Yer-Face drama in the early Eighties.

During a period in which the Prime Minister Anthony Eden resigns due to The Suez Crisis and the Tory Harold Macmillan takes over, Britain remains in demoralizing confusion. While the power of the empire starts to lose its significance and the idea of it starts to become nostalgic, the policy-makers of the country remain blind to the depth of the decline and they substitute their prestige by setting relations

21 Ibid., p. 60.
22 Stephen Lacy informs that Arden writes the play after he reads a newspaper article about an incident related to the British troops in Cyprus (Lacy, 158).
23 Stephen Lacy, **British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in Its Context 1956-1965**, (London: Routhledge, 1995), p. 159.
24 Peacock, op. cit., p. 23.
25 Ibid.

with the United States, the Commonwealth countries and with non-communist Europe. However, the States treat Britain with brutal contempt and the others split especially with the effect of Khrushchev's process of “educating Russia away from Stalinism, and thus subverting the Western 'Fellow-Traveller' mythology of ideological comradeship.”[26] While Britain's self-indulgence is reinforced with such political events, the public, on the other hand, finds new ways of engaging themselves in entertainment and leisure activities. As well as the introduction of the Bingo game in the Sixties, the British public involves in celebratory unison such as the 1951 Festival of Britain that is organised to help public recover from war, and Bank Holiday excursions to similar seaside towns to watch shows on pier-heads or stay in the manufactured solidarity of the holiday camps. All these can be associated with Stanley of Pinter's **The Birthday Party**, as it is explained in detail in the first chapter.

One performance that stands out content-wise during this period is **Oh! What a Lovely War**'s production in 1963 in Theatre Workshop[27], which is a play that is derived from a radio programme by Charles Hilton. The play, by referring to World War I, desires “to de-mythologise history, to contest some of the main assumptions and beliefs that attach to particular historical events”[28] and thus it attacks “on invocations of 'national spirit' and the exploitative nature of social conformity and notional participation” that reflects “a spirit of transition to a less deferential age.”[29] As the nation keeps its conforming state and as the years are heading towards the Seventies, the plays on the British stage start becoming more thought-provoking and haunting in terms of imagination, such as Edward Bond's **Saved** (1965), in which (and in his other plays as well) Bond desires to falsify the general belief that the idea that “human beings are necessarily violent is a political device, the modern equivalent of the doctrine of original sin.”[30]

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26 Ibid., p. 62.
27 Lacy acknowledges that Theatre Workshop is the best known place for its productions of new plays with contemporary low-life settings. Its reputation before that time rests on the productions of classical plays famous in both England and Europe, and instead of a definite division between the two classifications of the plays, Theatre Workshop's approach is to root the classical drama in contemporary issues.
28 Lacy, op. cit., p. 159.
29 Peacock, op. cit., p. 42.
30 'Author's Note' in Bond, **Plays: One**, (1977), p. 10.

However, the change occurs not until 1975 and in 1968 Peter Brook publishes his compilation of essays under the title **The Empty Space**. Noticing Pinter, Samuel Beckett, Osborne, Arden and Wesker's common feature that they are all directors and actors as well as authors at the same time and excepting them and their work from then-prevailing theatre, Brook, under the subtitle “Deadly Theatre”, explains that by saying 'deadly', “we never mean dead: we mean something depressingly active, but for this very reason capable of change.”[31] He calls for a change by arguing that due to various reasons -economic, directors' lack of perspective and so on-, experimenting with plays is never done and thus, what this brings about is directors trying to describe the meaning and style in plays in an exact way, which is the moment of loss in theatre: “In a living theatre, we would approach the rehearsal putting yesterday's discoveries to the test, ready to believe that the true play has once again escaped us. But the Deadly Theatre approaches the classics from the viewpoint that somewhere, someone has found out and defined how the play should be done...The moment we try to pinpoint this style we are lost.”[32] In 1975, though, perhaps also with the influence of Brook's explanations, things change in quicker pace on stage. According to Rabey, it is Trevor Griffith's play **Comedians** that triggers this advance. A socially realist play, **Comedians** stages six wannabes competing with each other in a local (Manchester) talent contest and it is the protagonist Price that paves the way towards a braver theatre:

> The icy blood-flourish expressed by the chilling young maverick Price, without irony or distancing mitigation by Griffiths, represents the start of a movement in British drama towards admitting more immediate, amoral and threatening perspectives in the late 1970s and early 1980s: not looking back in anger, like the writers of the previous generation, but refusing consent, and looking forward with grim fascination to occasions when 'anarchy is loosed upon the world'.[33]

31 Brook, op. cit., p. 45.
32 Ibid., p. 17.
33 Rabey, op. cit., p. 77.

As well as with such changes in perspective, the exit of Thatcher from the political arena and the fall of the Berlin Wall in the late Nineties prove the young playwrights of the period that creating something new and fresh is possible and thereby arrives In-Yer-Face Theatre on British stage.

In-Yer-Face Theatre is an experiential theatre which challenges both the traditional performer and the audience in that it is “confrontation brought to its physical conclusion.”[34] Through the “images of violated intimacy”[35], it generally shows the reaction our existential beliefs give to the abjection which is animated by “ancient fears about the power of the irrational and the fragility of our sense of the world.”[36] Yet, more importantly for the scope of this study, In-Yer-Face Theatre deliberately destroys the “politically correct 'victim drama' where perpetrators were bad and victims good...By emphasising such troubling notions as the complicity of victims in their victimisation, provocative drama became more complex, less ideological.”[37] This explanation can be associated with the idea of what we see (in daily life, newspapers, TV...) and what the actual reality behind that appearance is. I suggest that this issue, with the dominance of a hyper-reality that infuses in man the notion of 'as if' and thus enables him to become anything and everything that he wants in an imaginary world, well befits In-Yer-Face Theatre, since its core is also 'as if' but with a difference of providing close exposition to those false images of both peace and violence, reflecting man his real self (rather than the hyper-real one) in return.

Now that the background on which I base my arguments is formed, I would like to mention the reasons why these three particular plays are selected for the present study. Two years after John Osborne's **Look Back in Anger** that marks the period of Angry Young Man in theatre -a term coined by George Fearon, the press officer of the Royal Court Theatre–, Pinter releases his **The Birthday Party**. Whereas Osborne's furious protagonist Jimmy Porter warns the public that they will

34 Aleks Sierz, **In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today**, (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 56.
35 Ibid., 233.
36 Ibid., p. 6.
37 Ibid., p. 231.

die if they do not act and excites them to act, Pinter's Stanley pessimistically stages how the will to act in man is suppressed by the authorities. The idea of violence embedded in the suppression of man's action and speech is one significant determiner for me, yet the title of the play is as much important. The word 'birthday' turns out to be an irony employed on Stanley, since, as a result of his dehumanization by some powerful agents, a new Stanley is born; and this is celebrated with a party that puts the element of menace in the play. Finally, instead of writing a well-made realistic play that has dominated the British stage with strong suggestions of the sense of security and predictability (simultaneously reflecting the society's condition as well) through its linear exposition, climax and resolution, Pinter creates a sea of possibilities (an aspect that forms a ground for the appearance of In-Yer-Face) before finalizing his play with an act of subjugation. Without providing any certainties to his audience, Pinter lets the current societal situation cling to and 'breathe in the air', to borrow the drama critic Harold Hobson's words. **The Birthday Party** both reflects and reminds one of Pinter's words uttered in his Nobel Lecture in 2005. Mentioning politicians' political language, he explains that politicians are not interested in truth "but in power and in the maintenance of power. To maintain that power it is essential that people remain in ignorance, that they live in ignorance of the truth, even the truth of their own lives. What surrounds us therefore is a vast tapestry of lies, upon which we feed."[38] Pinter was doubtless one of the angry young men of the period, yet he was better able to manage his anger and save himself from any obvious political stance.

Because both the play and the playwright have similar points of view, McDonagh's **The Pillowman** is also chosen among other McDonagh plays. In fact, after having a look at the content of his other plays, the selection of this particular play is rather easy, since it is McDonagh's only non-Irish play that has an anonymous setting that inevitably universalizes the story. Heath A. Diehl maintains that "Because McDonagh does not articulate visions of hope for an altered future, but instead remarks on the emptiness of older social structures, he shares some thematic

38 Harold Pinter, Nobel Lecture, p. 3.

concerns with the movement known as 'angry young man' drama."[39] In his omnipresent play, McDonagh's "portrayal of anger and passion for social structures which no longer provide a means for organizing everyday life"[40] adopts a distinct method to communicate, or as discussed in the related chapter, to make the audience experience the emptiness of social structures.

As **The Pillowman** is populated with numerous narrations of violent fairy tales and personal stories that are at one point intermingled, one is made to ask what is factual and what is fictional. In other words, the play puts a heavy burden on the audience through the twists of the stories that blur the minds of them. Also, the audience identifies with each and every character in the play so that it can notice the significance of being tolerant in thought and allowing possibilities to govern their lives, since the audience is identified with both a murderer and a tyrant, and feels comfortable with this situation until the point of realization. Besides, the horror stories in the play attract me in particular for two reasons, one of which is related to Pinter's idea of the "vast tapestry of lies" and the other to the connection between children and violence. In the play, those stories function as the lies that the political language keeps telling people. We are made to believe in them without questioning their truth and the play drills this very point: is it possible to find the truth and if so, which particular truth is this? Secondly, basing on the fact that the stories in the play include the abduction and/or the abuse of children, I discuss that the play is McDonagh's exhibition to his audience of what kind of violence awaits us if we stop regarding children as children but as adults, since this reflects the loss of innocence (children) in a given society.

Perhaps, the above idea of the innocence of children and violence is the reason why Sarah Kane in **Blasted** gives a proper Christian burial to the war-torn baby and makes Ian the protagonist experience the worst of pains before his dramatic death. The sharp contrast of innocence versus experience through violence is also largely present in this play and it clearly demonstrates how extreme patriotism, especially when combined with today's great enemy, the media, can turn an individual into a person spreading terror under the subjective pretence of bringing

39 Heath A. Diehl, p. 107.
40 Heath A. Diehl, p. 108.

peace into his own land. Therefore, this becomes my prioritizing reason in choosing **Blasted** to be examined and analysed. It is not the amount or form of violence that locates the play in a permanent position in British New Writing and particularly in In-Yer-Face, but its utmost experiential form with a striking content. Made immediately after its debut, the blind and violent commentaries per se can even tell the public exactly what Kane desires to put on stage: no room for tolerance for the new and the unexpected.

As a matter of fact, the idea of an intolerant society encircles all of the three plays selected to be studied in this dissertation. All protagonists – Stanley in **The Birthday Party**, Ian in **Blasted** and Katurian in **The Pillowman**, are either the victims of the System of extreme surveillance and control or the victimizers that consequently become the victim out of their own deeds. For this reason, both the three plays and the main characters have interrelated themes and features that in total effect display the audience the natural outcome of violence.

The first common suggestive possibility in the plays that befits the condition of modern man is about the psychological conditions of Stanley and Katurian who are striving to fight the repressive society in order to (re)gain their individuality and realize themselves by declaring their freedom of thought and action. Ian, however, emerges within the powerful crowds that dehumanize the individuals, yet finally and consequently, he, like the other characters (Goldberg and McCann in Pinter; Tupolski and Ariel in McDonagh) that are the representatives of anonymous authoritative organisations, loses all his social labels that force him to keep in line and discovers his individuality to have been lost long before he is even aware of. For this reason, each character is under the pressure of the powerful majority that forces one to follow the mainstream way of life. Such pressure and an individual's fear from it can be the originator of psychological problems such as paranoia and hallucination. To exemplify, Stanley's being constantly in extreme alert position and his denials of any relation to Goldberg and McCann reflect his intense sense of fear which puts him in an arguable position that all events taking place in the play are actually happening only in his head and thus, he has turned into a paranoid person. In like manner, it can be claimed that Katurian in **The Pillowman** is also a sufferer of paranoia. Due to his violent stories, some of whose content reveals some autobiographical information

although he detests autobiographic works, it can be traced that the occurrences throughout the play have similarities and sometimes follow the plot of Katurian's stories. Cooperatively, these two features constitute a probable setback in the health of the protagonist's mind and therefore, the whole events taking place can be said to happen inside Katurian's mind as a result of his (sick?) imagination. As for Ian, whose situation is even severer than the other two protagonists, he calls to mind the idea of trauma which can be said to cause some psychological problems in him such as hallucination. The concept of trauma goes beyond the scope of this dissertation, but since it involves violence and is present in Sarah Kane's **Blasted**, it is only briefly mentioned in the related chapter, because Ian, having been engaged in so many brutal, bestial deeds and especially killings, has no alternative but to suffer from his traumatic past, which is reflected through the character of Soldier, who does not have a name in the play and is only seen by Ian. Cate is never concurrently present with him in the same scene; therefore, the Soldier's reality can only be approved through Ian's lenses which are blinded by paranoid and traumatic moments.

The next common motif that recurs in the three plays being investigated in the present study is the idea of vision and the (dis)ability to see. All of the main characters either lose their vision or their visions are restored ironically to suggest that they can correctly see the truth once they are blinded. In Pinter's play, Stanley initially appears with his glasses, which signify his sight impairment. Without his glasses, he is unable to see properly, and the glasses as supportive, temporary objects for his vision symbolise Stanley's refuge into a temporary security which he assumes to have found in the boarding-house, isolated and deprived of danger. He ignores and therefore prefers not to see that the powerful society he once rejects will take its revenge. Thus, the time when his glasses are broken in the play marks a definitive moment in which he is being reshaped according to the codes of conduct of the bureaucratic city life (London). This is a process of installing new sight into Stanley’s eyes and that is why at the end of the play he reappears dressed in a well cut suit, wearing new glasses. His ironically broken sight (glasses) is ironically fixed by the authorities that dehumanize Stanley.

In **Blasted**, the idea of vision and sight is multi-dimensional. Ian is a journalist, which means that his eyes act as mediators between the public and the

events narrated in newspapers. Ian, working under the dominance of an anonymous, manipulative organisation, reflects social incidents in quite a different form by draining some parts of the occurrences and leaving only the ones that are related to domestic affairs. As it is argued in detail in the second chapter, this is one of the main causes of (social) violence and Ian's contribution to it is immensely great. This is why Kane creates the Soldier as a character that sucks out Ian's eyes, therefore blinding him. Momentarily, Ian realizes (starts actually seeing the truth) that he is the source of violence going on both inside and outside the hotel room. Thus, it can be claimed that Ian's visions both as a journalist and a fervent patriot are all blinded by manipulative forces and it is his actual blinding that enables him to wake up to reality.

As for McDonagh's play, there are no glasses or actual blinding of Katurian the protagonist, but these notions related to vision are conveyed through the two same images that appear on stage at the very beginning and at the very end of the play. Initially, the audience sees Katurian with his face hooded. As the plot unfolds and the story develops, it can be perceived that Katurian has not been able to see the fact that what triggered his brother Michal to kill innocent children is his stories. Upon his realisation starts his questioning of the totalitarian System and he has to be silenced down, since no authority would bear questioning for it may destruct its pervasive ruling power. Therefore, Katurian is not allowed to continue his life with his now sighted vision: at the end of the play, the policemen make him wear the hood again and execute him.

Apart from these two common points relating to the three protagonists' psychological and mental health and to their vision, there is one more feature that they share. In one way or another, they are all artist figures. Namely, Stanley, as we understand through his unreliable narration, is a pianist, Ian is a journalist and writes news stories, and Katurian is the writer of literary stories. Their identities and jobs refer to the notion of creation, which turns out to be problematic, for all of these characters are destroyed due to what they create. In other words, their creations ironically sponge them out, indicating that violence as a creation of man will eventually annihilate man himself.

Related to the previous point, there is one last point that combines the three

characters and that is the reign of aggression in their bodies which is triggered by some threats to their individuality and freedom, and is in connection with the idea of violence as explained further on.

All in all, the combination of the four shared features of the protagonists and the reasons behind each play's selection for this study constitute the arguments discussed in each chapter. The following paragraphs disclose the subject-matter and focal points of the three chapters respectively.

The first chapter largely dwells on the ideas on both the social condition of man and his punishment discussed in Foucault's two books titled **Madness and Civilization** and **Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison**. Also, based on Erich Fromm's account of the 'first human act', the chapter analyses Stanley's ordeal which is brought about by his rebellious act towards an anonymous organisation that represents power, crowds and/or society. After his defiance to the authority, he is free from it; nevertheless, he is not independent to realize his individuality, since the society he lives in does and will not allow him. To clarify, this is due to the fact that individuals are only the ideological representations of society, yet they function as fabricated products of power and discipline.[41] Therefore, it is obvious that this fabrication process involves violence, for it deprives man of his action and free speech.

The idea of violence conferred in this chapter is a subtle one, which is to mean that it is not actually visible; it is free from physical damage, yet it is gradually made present in the soul of man: through the tenuous use of power and discipline, hidden violence turns out to be a part of the air which man breathes without realizing its confining smell.[42] Like Stanley, those who have an ability to apprehend and rebel against the violence that penetrates into their soul are carried, again by that very power, to a point of psychological sufferings. Since a rebel propounds an undesirable threat to power, he has either to be excluded from society or be restored through the use of power, as Goldberg and McCann, the representative authorities of the organization in the play, do to Stanley. As an aware person, Stanley excludes himself

41 Michel Foucault, **Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison**, (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 187.
42 Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim, **On Violence: A Reader**, (USA: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 5.

from society and takes refuge in Meg and Petey's boarding house in a sea-side town; yet, he cannot find peace there either, because the notion of exclusion, as Foucault informs us, remains in the past and the new form of it is to be replaced by being offered a job or other forms of social engagement that would benefit power the most.[43] Hence, waiting to be caught sooner or later, Stanley is a character that never leaves the house and always feels alarmed, trying concurrently to act naturally as well. Eventually, his fear peaks and when it meets the two men's methods of brutalisation, he is completely dehumanized as a result of the subtle violence applied on him. These are the reasons that constitute the meaning in the title of this chapter: **“Don't you ever go out?”: The Hidden Violence and Machinery of Power in Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party**.

As expected, the discussions in the chapter also include some information and commentaries on the state of British society in the years following the War, and the findings are connected to the concept of violence. One outstanding feature of the period is that it is shaped by a new race of specialists such as corporate managers and bureaucrats rather than industrialists. The characteristics of people with those labels go hand in hand with their social status. Living and working in the heart of the city, they have to be meticulous about the rules of business in order to achieve success and gain more money and titles, which function as a motivating illusion on such people. Thus, they become the chief elements of a system that grinds individuality and demands unity and obedience, which are the two elements that are enabled through the use of subtle violence. The biggest weapon that power employs to keep people in line is what Jeremy Bentham nominates as Panopticon, which is examined by Foucault under the theme of modern surveillance system as a form of violence. The first chapter is finalised by a brief discussion of this prison system in which the seer is invisible to the eyes outside of his tower, just like Stanley's situation in which he cannot know from where the danger will arrive.

While the first chapter deals with Stanley as a character who excludes himself from society and actually fights for his freedom and individuality, the second chapter focuses on a different character in Kane's **Blasted**, who is not excluded from society,

43 Michel Foucault, **Madness and Civilization**, (Oxon: Routledge, 2001), p. 44.

but is in it, spreading violence even in peace times. Thus, the chapter is titled as **Crimini di Pace: Sarah Kane's Blasted and Social Violence**. It juxtaposes the emergence of In-Yer-Face Theatre with the early reactions such plays received and by mentioning certain ideas on the manipulative role of the media on the way they broadcast terrorists, argues that one of the significant causes of social violence stems from such manipulation. This is due to the fact that Ian in the play is a journalist and he only narrates the violent events happening in his own land and excludes the news of foreigners by explaining that no one cares about them. Therefore, since the public is characterized by what they are made to see and read, the chapter looks at the representations of people of low rank on the media in order to analyse how, through this, the public gradually becomes more ignorant and complacent about the others, and gradually plants the seeds of racism, labelling, discrimination and other forms of social violence, no matter verbal or physical. The relationship between the ignorant creator of violence and what is actually created is examined by basing on Slavoj Žižek's book called **Violence**, in which he explains today's ideological landscape to be one thing being both the reason and result of the other. Lastly, the chapter is finalized with some contemplation about the influence of the violent and pervasive imagery frequently employed in such plays on the audience in relation to a comparative journey British stage has had after the Second World War.

In the third chapter, which deals with **The Pillowman**, the focus on social violence slightly shifts and concentrates on two distinct areas that are consequently connected to the notion of violence in societies. These are the concepts of police interrogation and justice; and storytelling and child loss in fiction. As the bulk setting of the play is inside a police interrogation room, the chapter analyses in what ways an interrogation can be considered coercive and thus violent, and how the application of the written laws changes in practice, an idea that is discussed under the concept of 'legal actors' to mean the interrogating officers. While this process is problematic in that the audience cannot decide whether to blame the police or the laws, the other aspect of the play, which is about storytelling, proves to be enigmatic as well. This is due to the fact that Michal, Katurian's younger brother, commits some murders in the same way the protagonists in Katurian's fictional stories do. Hence, once again, as befitting the plays multi-faceted structure, the question 'who to blame?' is posed,

since it is impossible to say if it is Katurian that writes the stories or Michal that is affected from them. Throughout the play, the audience, within altering circumstances in the play, identifies themselves with all of the characters, namely, with the policemen who are violent and have no tolerance for ambiguity and with the brothers who are murderers of both the innocent and guilty people. Therefore, by paying attention to such vagueness in the play, I choose to name the chapter as **Jack-the-Ripper Tells Violent Stories: Martin McDonagh's The Pillowman**, Jack being a name given to an unidentified person of numerous murders and guilt. Within this frame, McDonagh asks his audience to rethink on the position and perception of children (and innocence) in Western culture and examines how institutions, from family to religion, can 'innocently' shape children into docile and violent bodies.

All in all, with the effect of this new virtual reality that starts in the 90s and peaks in our present day and is generally about a so-called active participation in an event, it is no coincidence that these plays have something to do with intense imagery of violence. Perhaps, the playwrights consider this as the most appropriate method of communicating with their virtual audience and in order to make it even more effective, they increase the dose of violence and tabooed ideas in their plays, since, as Brook asserts, in the theatre "it is meaning that is communicated – and meaning never belongs to the past. It can be checked in each man's own present experience."[44] Thus, as a medium of art, this study chooses theatre which is the only live form of art, and examines violence in three different aspects, as explained in each chapter's brief summary.

In this study, what I mean by 'violence' is that of an ideological one, which is also described by Žižek to be both subjective and objective: the former one being the violence perpetrated by an agent and the latter one being an idea deployed by and inherent in the System of control. On individuals, it works as the suppression of action and speech, and in general, with the direction of the System, it is scattered through the manipulated media that manipulates the public thought.

Apparently, many other philosophers and theoreticians have famously described violence in various ways. Whereas Freud defines it from sexual aspect,

44 Brook, op. cit., 14-15.

Fromm classifies it in two categories, one being 'normal' and the other 'pathological', and in such social studies of violence, words like 'brutality' and 'aggression' (generally male aggression) often prevail and altogether they form an inexplicable situation, since one cannot exist without the other. They are neither the same with nor different from each other, because violence is the result of extreme or uncontrollable aggression and aggression may have many causes, which go beyond the scope of my study. However, one significant point that helps us distinguish these two phenomena is that violence is a culturally constructed concept whereas aggression is proved to be biologically innate and always has a potential for activation when triggered.[45] Although it can be argued that the thesis about all human beings being predatory and murderous by nature is no longer valid due to the increasing cultural evolution that comes with "the masculine notion of honour and in the pacification of human relations"[46], I suggest that the present perception of honour can be connected to the idea of (economic) success within the capitalistic circles and that this is the new bait for man's obedience to the System which involves man's constriction under power, and is therefore related to violence.

This notion parallels the way the French used the word 'violence'. As Robert Muchembled explains, the word 'violence' comes from the Latin *vis*, meaning 'force' or 'vigour', and appears "in French at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and characteriz[es] a quick-tempered and brutal person. It also describe[s] a power relationship aimed at subjecting or constraining another person."[47] Additionally, it also implies that the idea of violence and the way it works have always been repetitive and cyclical throughout the history within different contexts and forms. For example, after the thirteenth century, "Western civilization gave violence a fundamental role. On the one hand, it fiercely denounced the excesses of violence and declared it illegitimate...on the other, it gave violence an elevated, positive role and declared it legitimate, to validate the action of the knight who shed blood in defence of widows and orphans..."[48] As it is also an aspect of this study and is

45 Robert Muchembled, **A History of Violence: From the End of the Middle Ages to the Present**, (Cambridge: Policy Press, 2012), p. 1
46 Ibid., p. 2.
47 Ibid., p. 7.
48 Ibid.

explained in the three chapters, today's 'legitimate' use of violence (the violence between the power-individual relationship) involves subtlety and is disguised by the notions of success, money, patriotism and so on.

As for the frequently used words in this study, that is, the System, power and the authorities, I have both similar and distinct ideas and meanings loaded in them. 'System' refers to both political and institutional control mechanisms that are intentional, organized and synchronized in their plans and actions. The word 'authorities', on the other hand, is ascribed to those people who are either ruling such systems, are in high position and/or representatives of them. As for 'power', it is employed based on Elias Canetti's usage of the word in his book **Crowds and Power** to mean any power that is formed by the force of crowds, either manipulative or political.

“Don't you ever go out?”: The Hidden Violence and Machinery of Power in Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party

“*Somebody must have made a false accusation against Joseph K., for he was arrested one morning without having done anything wrong.*” Franz Kafka

“*Something is taking its course.*” Samuel Beckett

“*I think it is the responsibility of a citizen of any country to say what he thinks.*” Harold Pinter

In a 1994 interview with Mel Gussow, the former art critic of **The New York Times**, Harold Pinter gives a relatively long answer to the following question: “What if you wrote **The Birthday Party** today and said it was inspired by your trip to Turkey and by your knowledge of the Kurds?”[1] He explains that two things inspired him to begin writing the play. Respectively, these were a pianist fellow Pinter met in a seaside boarding-house and an idea of any two people knocking on this fellow's door. He continues his answer revealing that the notion of the knocks comes from his “knowledge of the Gestapo. I'll never forget: it was 1953 or 1954. The war had only been over less than ten years. It was very much on my mind.”[2] This shapes the outline of Pinter's first full-length play written in 1958, **The Birthday Party**, in which Stanley, an assumed pianist living in Petey and Meg's boarding-house in a seaside town, is taken away by Goldberg and McCann, who are the two representatives of an apparently powerful organization that is allegedly cheated by Stanley. According to Pinter, who often remains reluctant to comment on his own plays, **The Birthday Party** portrays “the suppression of language and the loss of freedom of expression.”[3] Of course, there are more to this meticulously woven play, yet Pinter's own labelling acquires much significance when the idea of freedom of

1 Mel Gussow, **Conversations with Pinter**, (New York: Grove Press, 1996), p. 71.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 68.

expression is connected to the line uttered by Petey when the two 'gestapos' Goldberg and McCann take Stanley away for 'treatment'. As the stage directions indicate, Petey brokenly says: “Stan, don't let them tell you what to do.”[4] When taken into consideration in relation to the play, this pervasive line -pervasive, because Pinter almost regretfully remarks that this line is “one of the most important lines I've ever written...I've lived that line all my damn life. Never more than now.”[5]- is so powerful that it becomes more than enough to universalize the theme and subject matter of **The Birthday Party**. When universalized, the play can be said to become a poetic image of violence, power, brutality, (dis)obedience, and/or (un)freedom, as it is further examined in this chapter. The dominance of the pronoun 'them' over 'you' in the pervading line points to “the destruction of an individual, the independent voice of an individual.”[6] Whereas the destructive 'them' possesses power in terms of controlling the individuals (altogether, crowds), the individual 'you' remains as the weaker one helplessly open to manipulation. As Elias Canetti explains, the crowd that is formed of ‘them’ may not grow, “but gains in staying power.”[7] On the other hand, the individual 'you', through being suppressed, paradoxically forms the crowds one by one and “forgets that [being a part of the crowd] is self-inflicted, and longs for liberation. But how, alone, can he free himself? Whatever he does, and however determined he is, he will always find himself among others who thwart his efforts.”[8] Symbolically, such dominance is applicable not only to persons but also to major political power issues such as America's suppression of Nicaragua or her policy towards Iraq that includes such an ironic discourse as 'War on Terror', the Cyprus Peace Operation of 1974, the prolonged Kurdish issue in Turkey, the World Wars, Gestapo, Auschwitz, child abuse, burning and/or banning books, colonialism, capitalism, imperialism and so forth. As well as befitting the theatre's ultimate goal of refreshing one's historical memory[9], Pinter's play also thrusts the audiences to

4 Harold Pinter, **The Birthday Party**, (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 86.
5 Gussow, op. cit., p. 71.
6 Ibid., p. 69.
7 Elias Canetti, **Crowds and Power**, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 18.
8 Ibid., p. 19.
9 Marvin Carlson, **The Haunted Stage: The Theatre As Memory Machine**, (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 2.
Marvin Carlson asserts that “Theatre, as a simulacrum of the cultural and historical process itself, seeking to depict the full range of human actions within their physical context, has always provided

realize and become aware of what they are actually made to do: “If you see child abuse, you recognize it and you're horrified. If you do it yourself, you apparently don't know what you're doing.”[10] This simple idea about raising awareness and (self) realization lies at the heart of the plays that are to be examined in the following chapters of this study. As the playwrights of the past half-century have become more fervent about piercing so much into a given society's way of life as to show its members how they are being manipulated, controlled and turned into the perpetuators themselves through the use of power, the doze of violence in their plays is increasing in the same manner. Therefore, to begin with, **The Birthday Party** serves as a play in which violence in terms of forcing discipline and obedience on individuals is inherent. This is to say that the applied discipline in society is taught to individuals to be natural rather than self-made. It is just there as it is present in a society under certain powers and institutions such as religion, capitalism, ruling politics, education, marriage and so on.

1.1 The Idea of Punishment

In order to introduce and generalize the idea of punishment and modern violence that is suggested by the sound of the motor van that symbolically becomes Stanley’s hearse (it is heard twice: one, when Goldberg and McCann arrive and two, when they leave with the now dehumanized Stanley), an early dialogue between Meg (a fragile and problematic wife to Petey and the owner of the boarding-house) and Stanley functions well, although the following commentary diverges from these two characters:

Meg: Say sorry first.
Stanley: Sorry first.
Meg: No. Just sorry.
Stanley: Just sorry.

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society with the most tangible records of its attempts to understand its own operations. It is the repository of cultural memory, but, like the memory of each individual, it is also subject to continual adjustment and modification as the memory is recalled in new circumstances.” Therefore, as well as all other quality drama, Pinter’s plays function in this direction so as to remind the audience not only how their individual involvement in society is but also to provide a linkage to other global, political incidents that have taken place.

10 Gussow, op. cit., p. 69.

Meg: You deserve the strap.
Stanley: Don't do that![11]

As known, a strap is a narrow piece of leather, used to punish children and is now illegal.[12] While such deeds of applying direct violence towards all human beings are lawfully forbidden now, the new method of violence (in fact, in other words, punishment) is rather subtle and constraining if not ocular or tangible. Michel Foucault discusses in his book **Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison** that

> Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection.[13]

Thus, in general terms, modern violence dwells on the relationship between the powerful and the weak, involving in the weaker one's conscious knowledge of being constantly observed by the powerful. Any rebellious or opposing action of an individual (in this case, the weak) towards any powerful system (most obviously, society) would not be welcomed and, not coincidentally, as the emphasis on the repetition of the word 'sorry' in the above quotation from the play indicates, being sorry would mean nothing after all until the System becomes the "hub of [the individual's] wheel"[14] again. This phrase is used by Goldberg in **The Birthday Party** when he is accompanied by McCann, who is his yes-man, and while he is wooing Stanley "*gently with relish.*" The two men's pleasure during this scene is obvious firstly from the stage directions written in italics and secondly from the fact that they, as the representatives of a powerful organisation, have once more achieved their aims to absorb Stanley as an individual into their organisation's wheel so that it continues working as perfectly as a clockwork.

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11 Pinter, op. cit., pp. 17-18.
12 Bill Naismith, **A Faber Critical Guide: Harold Pinter**, (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p. 76.
13 Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, p. 187.
14 Pinter, op. cit., p. 82.

Since the audience is provided with no particular information about what Stanley's wrong-doing is to which organisation, and further, since the communities in **The Birthday Party** are even considered "paranoid" by some critics such as E. T. Kirby,[15] attributing to it an imaginary quality, the play itself remains a poetic image dealing with the nature of violence as does John Arden's **Serjeant Musgrave's Dance** (1959), which is one of the significant plays of the period. The ordeal of the main characters and their relation to power in such plays befit Foucault's explanation of the situation. He writes somewhat ironically that

> The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'. We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.[16]

While Foucault's description of an individual's condition within a society forms an oxymoron with the adjectives 'fictitious' and 'real', it also suggests that power does not allow society to dissent from its so-called 'positive' effects for it fabricates a reality that verifies the entity of the members of a society, that is, the individual. Therefore, the powerful makes the weak conjoined to it and so, the rejection of the power would mean the destruction of the individual in the form of revenge by the power. If not so, the individual will be the 'outsider' and according to Colin Wilson, an outsider is not "concerned with the distinction between body and spirit, or man and nature...For him, the only important distinction is between being and nothingness."[17] This distinction parallels Foucault's words 'fictitious' and 'real', reinforcing the impossibility of an individual's survival without power's discipline. So, it can be claimed that the revenge taken by power is made natural due to the

15 E. T. Kirby, "The Paranoid Pseudo Community in Pinter's the Birthday Party" (**Educational Theatre Journal**, Vol. 30 No. 2, May, 1978).
16 Foucault, op. cit., p. 194.
17 Colin Wilson, **The Outsider**, (London: Orion Books, 2001), p. 27.

position of man within the wheel of power. Once he rebels, he automatically annihilates himself because this is how the power system is designed, and this is also explained by Erich Fromm in his book titled **Escape from Freedom**. He states that man's coming against the ban and his eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil are together the first "act of freedom, that is, the first *human* act."[18] The interpretation of this act is related to what has been discussed so far: "From the standpoint of the Church which represented authority, this is essentially sin. From the standpoint of man, however, this is the beginning of human freedom...He is alone and free, yet powerless and afraid. The newly won freedom appears as a curse; he is free *from* the sweet bondage of paradise, but he is not free *to* govern himself, to realize his individuality."[19] Consequently, this is the insurmountable condition of man under power and in society. Once he acts, he falls in a paradoxical situation and once there, he has no choice but to be avenged. That is why, as an overall summary of **The Birthday Party**, Tom Milne writes that "Stanley has rejected society, both in the shape of his career and in the persons of Meg and Petey. Society, in the shape of Goldberg and McCann, takes its revenge."[20] The elaboration of the following comments is based on this summary and explains how this is reflected by Pinter.

1.2 The Form in Which a Rejected Society Avenges

Before starting with the detailed analysis of **The Birthday Party** in relation to society, individual and violence, the theatre critic Harold Hobson's following casual explanation about why Pinter has written such a play serves as an introductory ground for the societal condition of the post-war world:

> Mr. Pinter has got hold of a primary fact of existence. We live on the verge of disaster. One sunny afternoon...a hydrogen bomb may explode. That is one sort of threat. But Mr. Pinter's is one of subtler sort. It breathes in the air. It cannot be seen, but it enters the room every time the door is opened. There is something in your past – it does

18 Erich Fromm, **Escape from Freedom**, (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 50.
19 Ibid.
20 Tom Milne, "The Hidden Face of Violence" in **Modern British Dramatists: A Collection of Critical Essays**, ed. John Russel Brown, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 44.

> not matter what – which will catch up with you. Though you go to the uttermost parts of the earth and hide yourself in the most obscure lodgings in the least popular of towns, one day, there is a possibility that two men will appear. They will be looking for you, and you cannot get away. And someone will be looking for *them* too. There is terror everywhere.[21]

Hobson's description wraps up the whole idea of **The Birthday Party**. Petey and Meg's boarding-house, Stanley, Goldberg and McCann, and society are all in it. Stating that someone will also be looking for the two men hints at the vicious circle of terror and of violence, and in the play, this is reflected as an ironic fact: the "two of the most oppressed, even persecuted, communities – the Irish and the Jews – become the tormentors,"[22] that is, McCann and Goldberg, respectively. Reminding one of William Blake's **Songs of Innocence and Experience**, they were born innocent, but have become a part of the System. In such a system, then, it is highly probable that Stanley will also become a tormentor and spread terror later in the future, like Katurian and Michal of Martin McDonagh's **The Pillowman** (2003). However, as a tormented individual who seeks shelter in 'the least popular of towns' just because he is now free *from* that anonymous organisation but not free *to* realize his individuality, Stanley's past constantly haunts him, keeping him alarmed all along the way. Despite being lodged in a boarding-house "*in a seaside town*"[23] that he thinks no one visits,[24] his reaction to Meg's breaking the news that two gentlemen will visit vaguely reveals his constant feeling of insecurity, or in Foucault's terms, his conscious knowledge of being observed. Before Meg goes out shopping, she tells Stanley that he will be lonely, all by himself. On this, Pinter writes the following dialogue:

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21 Harold Hobson, "The Screw Turns Again", **The Sunday Times** 25 May 1958: 11, rpt. in "The Birthday Party - Premiere", *haroldpinter.org*, Harold Pinter, 2000–2003, Web, 15 May 2008.
22 Naismith, op. cit., p. 50.
23 Pinter, op. cit., p. 9.
24 This is an ongoing discussion in the play. On asking why the two gentlemen do not find another place to stay, Stanley is told that "This house is on the list" (Pinter, 34). However, whenever he finds the right time, Stanley utters negative words about the house such as "This is a ridiculous house...Because it's not a boarding house. It never was" (Pinter, 41). Contrary to Meg's praises about the house, Stanley asks the all doubtful question: "Visitors? Do you know how many visitors you've had since I've been here?" (Pinter, 16).

Stanley. Will I?
Meg. Without your old Meg. I've got to get things in for the two gentlemen.
A pause. STANLEY *slowly raises his head. He speaks without turning.*
Stanley. What two gentlemen?
Meg. I'm expecting visitors.
He turns.
Stanley. What?[25]

Although Stanley asks it in a way that he thinks it fools Meg, the question "Will I?" implies that Stanley is always aware of the possibility that even at the moments when he is alone at home, he may not be so. The pause as inaction upon hearing "the two gentlemen" and his raising his head exhibit all his worries that his end is possibly approaching. This is not only necessarily because of the supposition that the two men are actually coming, but rather due to the other possible commentary that Stanley is experiencing a nervous-breakdown and being gradually driven so crazy as to turn paranoid by the thought of getting caught. He knows how his end will be and he also knows that violence, as Hobson says, breathes in the air. Similarly, Bruce B. Lawrence and Aisha Karim define violence as a "routine, part of the air and one learns how to breathe it without being asphyxiated. One no longer seeks to eliminate it, or even to understand it. Episodes of violence may flare up in different places, but each is contained in its local context, where it risks becoming normal."[26] For instance, the newest evidence that proves this situation is the news that after the Rhine River in Germany ebbed, it revealed many explosives and chemical substances belonging to the World War II period.[27] The traces of violence are everywhere and people are used to breathing it without questioning, which leads to the normalization of violence in everyday life.

Harold Pinter shows this in a subtler way and he does not want his society to breathe violence without being asphyxiated. In order to reflect this, Pinter, quite consciously, does not touch on politics, on anger, on youth, on morality or class

25 Pinter, op. cit., pp. 19-20.
26 Lawrence and Karim, **On Violence**, p. 5.
27 "Ren'de Sular Çekildi, Bombalar Ortaya Çıktı" 23 November 2011, (Online) http://www.t24.com.tr/haberdetay/183276.aspx

distinction, as generally opposed to his contemporary playwrights such as John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, John Arden, Shelagh Delaney and Gary Owen. He just shows the situation as it is, so that one can distance himself from his or her idle virginity, as also emotionally asserted by the angry young man Jimmy Porter in Osborne's influential 1956 play **Look Back in Anger**: “Anyone who's never watched somebody die is suffering from a pretty bad case of virginity.”[28] Furthermore, **The Birthday Party** includes no political favouritism or any moral lessons; nor is it a play that teaches people how to go back to their humane feelings. Pinter simply tells the audience that it is them who are involved, say, in child abuse, as he explains in the interview quoted initially. Rather, Pinter’s drama

> savagely indicts a System which sports maudlin physical comforts, vulgar brand names, and vicious vestiges of a religious tradition. Pinter's villains descend from motorized vans to close in on their victims in stuffy, shabby rooms. The System they represent is as stuffy and shabby; one cannot, as in Osborne's realistic drama, marry into it, or sneak into it, or even rave against it in self-expressive anger.[29]

In other words, Pinter's play shows its audience the process of how the members of a society die and how the murderer is, in fact, the collective inaction of the members of that very society. His message is like what Sarah's warning underlies in Arnold Wesker's **Chicken Soup with Barley** (1956): “Ronnie, if you don't care, you will die.”[30] Hence, **The Birthday Party** is written to function like a bridge with one end extremely familiar to the English audience and the other one with the same setting, yet with a completely different situation. One is familiar with the beginning, but feels frozen at the end although it is the same setting. This is reminiscent of the beginning and ending of Herman Melville's short story titled “Bartleby the Scrivener”, which starts with the pronoun “I” and ends with the word “humanity,” and thus shows the relationship of the individual with the society which Bartleby

28 John Osborne, **Look Back in Anger**, (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 58.
29 Ruby Cohn, “The World of Harold Pinter”, (**The Tulane Drama Review**, Vol. 6 No. 3, Mar., 1962), p. 68.
30 Arnold Wesker, **Chicken Soup with Barley**, (London: Methuen Drama, 2011), p.76.

disobeys and is therefore destroyed in the end.[31]

The Birthday Party begins and ends in the same room, yet there is much difference between these two, as well as the initial and final situation of the victim, that is, Stanley. To illustrate, here is the opening scene of **The Birthday Party** in which Petey enters with a paper and while reading it, hears Meg's voice from the kitchen:

> Meg. Is that you, Petey?
> *Pause.*
> Petey, is that you?
> *Pause.*
> Petey?
> Petey. What?
> Meg. Is that you?
> Petey. Yes, it's me.
> Meg. What? (*Her face appears at the hatch.*) Are you back?
> Petey. Yes.[32]

With Peter's final "yes," it seems that he, at least, affirms Meg, which suggests that he is still involved in the dialogue with her. On the other hand, the following is an extract from the last scene to be compared with the former. Here, Petey dissociates himself completely:

> Meg. Wasn't it a lovely party last night?
> Petey. I wasn't there.
> Meg. Weren't you?
> Petey. I came afterwards.
> Meg. Oh.
> *Pause.*[33]

Besides the disability to communicate as a signifier of the societal condition, the other most striking part of these dialogues – definitely, not conversations – is that both of them suggest the idea that one knows but not knows[34] even after all of the

31 The idea derives from Prof. Dr. Yusuf Eradam's Literature classes during my undergraduate years.
32 Pinter, op. cit., p. 9.
33 Ibid., p. 87.
34 This idea has been inspired by Mark Romanek's movie based on Kazuo Ishiguro's novel titled **Never Let Me Go**. The movie is about a group of cloned people who are produced in order to donate organs for people. At Hailsham, the ultimate symbol of shame and the System, while the students are

incidents that have taken place throughout the course of the play. In the first one, Meg does know that it is Petey and she asks the same question even after she sees that he is Petey. In the same way in the second dialogue, Meg also asks questions whose answers are actually known. Both scenes take place in the same room, between the same characters, but everything has changed. In the meantime, Stanley is destroyed and taken away, but Meg and Petey do not even communicate, because "Pinter's characters do not talk explicitly about the situation at all. Meg knows, deep down, that Stanley has gone, but she cannot and will not admit it to herself; and Petey is too inarticulate to offer a speech of consolation..."[35] The reason why she cannot admit is that she is actually aware of the fact that they could have prevented Stanley's abduction. She knows it, but she acts as if she does not know it, as suggested by her asking questions whose answers she knows. Hers is the verification of the English idiom 'ignorance is bliss.' Knowing requires action, but Meg prefers not to act and therefore not to know, just like the members of societies that silently continue living in the vicious circle of violence.

On the other hand, Petey represents the answers and the guilt of humanity, because he passively tries to prevent the abduction and annihilation of Stanley by uttering that famous line, "Stan, don't let them tell you what to do."[36] Yet, his character is also a failure and the carrier of this guilt due to his renunciation of violence. Edward Arnold explains that "It is characteristic of Pinter that such a figure as Petey can only hint at [the guilt], can only for a moment attempt to reach Stanley with an appeal that he should help himself out of the situation. It is also characteristic of Pinter to make us feel that Petey's guilt is our own."[37] None of them employs their potential power to disobey, as Bartleby does by famously saying "I would prefer not to." Discussing the nature of power, P. M. Worsley in his article titled "The Analysis of Power and Politics" asserts that "Power does not exist 'in itself': it flows between

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being shaped into their pre-planned future, Miss Lucy, the rebellious 'guardian', explains them that they are told but not told about their situation and that they will never be like the people in the larger world.

35 Martin Esslin, "Language and Silence," **Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays**, ed. Arthur Ganz, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972), p. 37.

36 Pinter, op. cit., p. 86.

37 Clifford Leech, "Two Romantics: Arnold Wesker and Harold Pinter," **Contemporary Theatre**, eds. John Russel and Harris Bernard, (London: Edward Arnold, 1962), p. 17.

people. And everybody has some of it, some area of choice, of ability to affect things his way." Meg and Petey do not prefer to prevent, show their potential power or even comment on Stanley's situation, because "some people have overwhelming and decisive power. Power is not randomly distributed, but institutionalized."[38] And those people are obviously Goldberg and McCann who possess the ultimate power. While the representative guilt of obedient individuals belongs to Meg and especially to Petey, the victim of the guilt is Stanley.

Ruby Cohn notes that "The essence of the Pinter victim is his final sputtering helplessness."[39] Stanley reflects what happens in a society and what nobody does to rewind it. Within the same setting, Stanley is now dehumanized through discipline that is inflicted upon him through the knowledge of being observed and his abduction. In the play, as Stanley tells Meg about his piano concerts he has given all over the world, Meg asks what he wore, but instead of answering the question, he, almost in a dream-like state, begins narrating his unforgettable experience, that is, 'something in his past':

> STANLEY (*to himself*). I had a unique touch. Absolutely unique. They came up to me. They came up to me and said they were grateful. Champagne we had that night, the lot. (*Pause.*)...Then after that, you know what they did? They carved me up. Carved me up. It was all arranged, it was all worked out. My next concert. Somewhere else it was. In winter. I went down there to play. Then, when I got there, the place was shuttered up, not even a caretaker. They'd locked it up...They pulled a fast one. I'd like to know who was responsible for that.[40]

What Stanley did and what 'they' did in return remain a mystery; however, whatever it is, he objects to them and claims his freedom from 'them'. Consequently and paradoxically, he finds himself as a refugee in Meg and Petey's boarding house. In

38 P. M Worsley, "The Analysis of Power and Politics," **The Sociology of Modern Britain: An Introductory Reader**, eds. Eric Butterworth and David Weir, (London: Collins Sons & Co., 1970), p. 250.
39 Cohn, op. cit., p. 68.
40 Pinter, op. cit., p. 23.

the first act, he is "*unshaven, in his pyjama jacket and wears glasses*."[41] He looks free and under no institutionalized commandment. However, he continues to be both the object and the instrument of power. He is always alarmed that somebody will come and take him, and make him a 'true individual' as it is suggested through his final appearance towards the end of the play: "*dressed in a dark well cut suit and white collar. He holds his broken glasses in his hand. He is clean-shaven*."[42] Therefore, he is 'made' an individual now, since his being moulded is the ultimate result of escaping from the 'freedom' of power. The essence of his victimization, on the other hand, is reflected in the weird gestures and sounds he makes in his final speechlessness, after his long silence beginning from the half of the play: "STANLEY *concentrates, his mouth opens, he attempts to speak, fails and emits sounds from his throat.* Stanley. Uh-gug...uh-gug...eeehh-gag... (*On the breath.*) Caahh...caahh..."[43] His sputtering helplessness, then, is what Pinter wants to convey to his audience so as to disturb and make them realize how, in fact, it is the members of a society that create, confirm, allow and therefore lead to the continuation of violence within it.

Overall, as discussed in the Introduction section, the protest spirit of the British New Writing has been triggered by Jimmy's anger and continued with Pinter's subverting "the structure of the realistic well-made play,"[44] with an increasing graph of the use of violence in the plays, leading to the emergence of In-Yer-Face Theatre, as examined in the following chapters. Considering In-Yer-Face as a new epoch in drama, Pinter's drama is also innovative and fresh when compared to the ones before him:

> We cling to kitchen sinks in the belief that at last we have reached something solid and honest; but Pinter will have none of that. He destroys the predictable place of things, deliberately confuses and contradicts. As soon as a situation looks as if it were attaining a recognisable meaning, he

41 Ibid., p. 14.
42 Ibid., p. 81.
43 Ibid., p. 84.
44 D. Keith Peacock, **Harold Pinter and the New British Theatre**, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 10.

> introduces some nonsense, wild improbability or verbal play, and we fall once more through the trap-door...By dislocating from the common sense view of things he makes us alive to primitive fears, destroys the rational façade of the adult mind, and lays bare regressive fantasies.[45]

Therefore, Pinter's earlier canon including **The Birthday Party** always starts with the scene of a recognisable room with everyday characters doing casual things in it in an idle manner and ends in the same place, but this time with totally subverted circumstances and dislocated views of things as stated in the above quotation. Within such oppositions, the characters of **The Birthday Party** experience intensive incidents that reveal their attitudes, fears and perspectives towards society, power and individuality. Hence, the plot and the setting should be taken into consideration in order to explain all those significant events that reflect the condition of contemporary man.

To begin with, I shall refer back to the question in the main title of this chapter, that is, “Don't you ever go out?” It is asked by Lulu, the bored to death, unsophisticated neighbour to Petey and Meg in the play. The implication of this question is that Stanley hardly ever goes out of the boarding-house, which suggests his imprisonment inside and fear of the outside. The surrounding sentences of this question reinforce this idea and, additionally, Stanley's sense of guilt:

> Lulu. ...You could do with a shave, do you know that?
> (STANLEY *sits, right at the table.*) Don't you ever go out? (*He does not answer.*) I mean, what do you do, just sit around the house like this all day long? (*Pause.*)...
> Stanley. I always stand on the table when she sweeps the floor.
> Lulu. Why don't you have a wash? You look terrible.
> Stanley. A wash wouldn't make any difference.
> Lulu (*rising*). Come out and get a bit of air. You depress me, looking like that.

45 R. F. Storch, “Drama: Harold Pinter's Happy Families,” (**The Massachusetts Review**, Vol. 8 No. 4, Autumn, 1967), p. 704.

Stanley. Air? Oh, I don't know about that.[46]

When Stanley first appears unshaven in baggy clothes on stage being spoilt like a child and referred to in the third person by Meg (“So he's come down at last, has he? He's come down at last for his breakfast. But he doesn't deserve any, does he, Petey?”[47]), he reminds one of a little rascal that possesses every kind of freedom within both social and familial circles. Ironically enough, with Lulu's comments derived from Stanley's beard, what seems to be normal suddenly turns weird, as befitting Storch's above mentioned explanation that Pinter destroys the usual façade of the adult mind. Firstly, the stage direction stating that Stanley does not answer is indicative of his disturbance of being questioned. Next, the image he creates in the mind of the audience in his prevarication upon Lulu's third question can be interpreted, arguably in a far-fetched way, as of a comic cartoon figure that sees a mouse and hops on the table out of fear. This foreshadows Stanley's future situation in the play in which he is ridiculed and trapped by Goldberg and McCann. Ignoring his nonsensical response, Lulu becomes more direct and asks another key question. Stanley's saying that “a wash wouldn't make any difference” is a sheer implication that he feels guilty of what he has done to the anonymous organisation, though he may actually not be guilty. Later in the play, during the interrogation scene, Goldberg asks a similar question to Lulu's:

> Goldberg. You don't know. When did you last have a bath?
> Stanley. I have one every –
> Goldberg. Don't lie.[48]

Symbolically, due to the fact that bathing is a private action, Goldberg’s interference, interrogation and imposition as an external agency can be interpreted as a denial of Stanley’s privacy and body, which also recalls Jonathan Swift’s notion of the human body as an object of assault, torture and humiliation. Therefore, despite not giving a specific answer, Stanley is accused of lying in the above passage, which

46 Pinter, op. cit., p. 26.
47 Ibid., p. 14.
48 Ibid., p. 48.

suggests that the idea of washing is not about literally having a shower, but about Stanley's being the embodiment of the guilt. Hence, it is no coincidence that right after Goldberg's command, McCann interrupts saying "You betrayed the organisation. I know him."[49] Thus, since there is no freedom once free from the System, Stanley's freedom from it has transformed into his imprisonment in his 'dirt', and his not knowing about the air outside suggests that he is, in fact, being internally asphyxiated. He is aware of the potential danger that he can be taken away anytime and that he is being followed. What comes after the above dialogue reinforces the notion of imprisonment and introduces new notions, too:

> Lulu. It's lovely out. And I've got sandwiches.
> ...
> Stanley (*abruptly*). How would you like to go away with me?
> Lulu. Where?
> Stanley. Nowhere. Still, we could go.
> Lulu. But where could we go?
> Stanley. Nowhere. There's nowhere to go. So we could just go. It wouldn't matter.
> Lulu. We might as well stay here.
> Stanley. No. It's no good here.
> Lulu. Well, where else is there?
> Stanley. Nowhere.[50]

Outside is lovely, and also the room that is allocated for Goldberg and McCann is, ironically, lovely, says Meg: "Oh, I have got that lovely room they can have."[51] Clearly, both of those adjectives refer to the outside, for Goldberg and McCann arrive from outside. Of course, like everything and anything in the play, the attribution of "lovely" to Goldberg and McCann is ironic to mean the exact opposite for Stanley. Thus, Stanley constitutes the opposite of both adjectives: he is inside and stained by guilt, as it is also suggested later by Goldberg in the interrogation scene where he says to Stanley that he "stink[s] of sin."[52] In the above Beckettian dialogue that is the reminiscent of Vladimir and Estragon in **Waiting for Godot**, a sense of a

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., p. 26.
51 Ibid., p. 12.
52 Ibid., p. 50.

suffocating place is conveyed. Neither Lulu nor Stanley knows anywhere else. If Lulu's not knowing where to go is due to her ignorant and naive character, Stanley's, as a man who has travelled the world for his piano concerts[53], is because of, first, his inner (and outer) captivity in his room in the boarding-house and in the house itself, and second, of his consciousness of the potential danger. E. T. Kirby claims that "Consciousness occupies and qualifies space. This is the meaning of the metaphor of the room as it is used by Pinter. Stanley will get his 'new room,' but it will be far darker and more confining than that which he occupied. His 'space' is already confining, limited only to the house which has no 'outside,' for there is 'nowhere to go' with Lulu."[54] Therefore, the dialogue between Lulu and Stanley reflects the condition of the room rather than their thoughts on the outside. The room (or the house itself) encircles the microcosm whose inhabitants are the six characters of the play.

Apart from the room representing Stanley's consciousness of imprisonment and danger, there is more to it than what could be perceived initially by the audience. As mentioned before, it is not simply a room, although the play starts with Petey coming in with a paper and then food being served accompanied by casual dialogue between Meg and Petey about the news in the paper. The audience is introduced to a room that is always clean, as understood from Meg's not accepting any criticism towards her house: "You won't find many better wives than me, I can tell you. I keep a very nice house and I keep it clean."[55] However, with Lulu's entrance, whose function "is to expose the extent of [Stanley's] slovenliness and his state of desperation,"[56] some contrasting information also emerges. Immediately after Lulu enters the room, she complains and asks Stanley why he does not open the door, since "It's all stuffy here." On this, she opens the back door and stays there for some time, relaxing gradually: "Oh, that's better." However, Stanley's reaction is worth noting: "Stuffy? I disinfected the place this morning."[57] Obviously, this is a lie,

53 Ibid., p. 22.
54 Kirby, op. cit., p.163.
55 Pinter, op. cit., p. 16.
56 Naismith, op. cit., p. 56.
57 Pinter, op. cit., p. 25.

because he thinks that the boarding-house is “pigsty”[58] and so is his own room, for he needs a “new room.”[59] Parallel to the previous dialogue in which the thought that there is no place to go reflects Stanley's outlook on his own situation, his rejection of the “stuffy” room also has a mirroring effect. Nevertheless, this time it calls to mind the possibility that he might have become a paranoid person as a result of being caught in the vicious circle of what society has done to him and his betrayal of the organisation. His rejection of Lulu's thought that the room is stuffy can be explained as what Kirby calls the “mechanism of projection.”[60] That is to say that Stanley projects his own sense of guilt on others and therefore objects, even rejects others' criticisms not only about him but also about other things. This is because of the fact that “The ambiguity between the general and the personal shows how the paranoid can experience delusionary ideas of reference, taking the comments of others personally when such may not actually be the case.”[61] The ambiguity that Kirby discusses rises during Stanley's dialogue with Goldberg, before it is reached at the climax (the birthday party scene) in the play:

> Goldberg. ...But a birthday, I always feel, is a great occasion, taken too much for granted these days. What a thing to celebrate – birth! Like getting up in the morning. Marvellous! Some people don't like the idea of morning, they say, what is it? Your skin's crabby, you need a shave, your eyes are full of muck, your mouth is like a boghouse, the palms of your hands are full of sweat, your nose is clogged up, your feet stink, what are you but a corpse waiting to be washed?”[62]

This grave, almost disgusting metaphor that is employed to describe a person not liking the idea of getting up in the morning could be Goldberg's general outlook on such people's idea rather than an attack on Stanley. It is clear that Goldberg's description befits, yet transcends Stanley's first appearance on stage. However, it is

58 Pinter, ibid., p. 19.
59 Ibid., p.19.
60 Kirby, op. cit., p. 162.
61 Ibid., p. 162.
62 Pinter, op. cit., p. 45.

highly probable that Stanley takes it personally, as if Goldberg is making an accusation towards him. He projects his innate sense of guilt and fear on them and thus commands Goldberg to "get out."[63] Therefore, "to Stanley, in a sense that suggests olfactory hallucination, it is Goldberg and McCann who emit the odor,"[64] because he defines them as a dirty joke: "You don't bother me. To me, you're nothing but a dirty joke. But I have a responsibility towards the people in this house. They've been down here too long. They've lost their sense of smell. I haven't."[65] Meg being Meg, there is no doubt that she cleans and airs her house regularly, as it is explained, and she frequently goes shopping as well. Petey is a placid man who has a job outside as a dock attendant and he, for sure, cannot lose his sense of smell, either. So, Stanley's outlook on the issue acquires a quality that approves of Kirby's argument that he has developed paranoia. Additionally, this can also be supported when Stanley's imagination of Meg and Petey is taken into consideration. His so-called responsibility towards Meg and Petey's losing their sense of smell can metaphorically be interpreted from Stanley's perspective as their forgetting the dirty, cruel politics, strategies and traps of the 'external' world due to the fact that they have stayed "down here too long." Moreover, later on in the play, the torrential accusations made by Goldberg and McCann to Stanley include references to the notion of smell that increases and become more violent as the inquisition proceeds. Stanley "is sweating" and he is "an overthrow", a "pong", "a plague gone bad" and finally "nothing but an odour."[66] All these imputations reveal how society regards Stanley and his conscious knowledge of this makes him consider himself as such, too. Thus, "We can now say, unkindly perhaps but with metaphorical precision, that it is Stanley not the room that needs 'disinfecting'"[67], which, again, reminds one of Swift's disgust of the human body and his theory that the souls of all human beings are sick and in need of a physician.[68]

Another significant point related to Stanley's confusion and his point of view about the others and himself is his names. Throughout the play, Stanley has been

63 Ibid.
64 Kirby, op. cit., p. 162.
65 Pinter, op. cit., p. 45.
66 Ibid., p. 52.
67 Kirby, ibid.
68 Anthony Burgess, **English Literature**, (Longman, 1971), p. 157.

addressed to as Stanley, and Webber as his surname. However, during the interrogation scene, Stanley cowardly expresses that he has chosen a new name for him, because he forgot the other one:

> Goldberg. Webber! Why did you change your name?
> Stanley. I forgot the other one.
> Goldberg. What's your name now?
> Stanley. Joe Soap.[69]

That Stanley's new name is Joe Soap implies that he is, in fact, as clean and crimeless as an ordinary man, for Joe means "an average or typical man"[70] and soap is associated with cleanliness. Thus, his old surname, on the other hand, is crucially a tricky point in terms of the audience's perception of Stanley. To echo Silvano Arieti's words, is he really a webber who is "caught in the web of his own projection"[71] or is he a real victim of society? Do Goldberg and McCann really exist? Is the room really stuffy and there is nowhere to go? It seems the answers to these questions can be both correct and incorrect. According to Martin Esslin, such questions in Pinter's drama are raised intentionally "as the metaphors of the fact that life itself consists of a succession of such questions which cannot, or will not be capable of an answer...How, in the present state of our knowledge of psychology and the complexity and hidden layers of the human mind, can anyone claim to know what motivates himself, let alone another human being?"[72]

As well as paralleling the idea of **The Birthday Party** being a poetic image of violence and power, Esslin's commentary also suggests the idea of potential human madness, which, in Stanley's case, is accepted and interpreted as 'paranoia' by Kirby. Together with Stanley's conscious feeling of guilt and dirt that is reflected through the element of odour, Naismith goes further to somewhat doubtfully argue that Goldberg is also a "part of Stanley's consciousness and, in deed, conscience. Goldberg is a fictional character, realised by an actor – a real presence in the room –

69 Pinter, op. cit., p. 50.
70 Cambridge Dictionary, 15 November 2011.
http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/joe-bloggs?q=joe
71 Kirby, op. cit., p. 159.
72 Martin Esslin, **The Peopled Wound: The Plays of Harold Pinter**, (Norfolk: Methuen & Co., 1970), pp. 44-39.

but he is also symbolic. Or he might be."[73] A detailed psychological analysis of Stanley's madness and the dream-like quality of Pinter's play would go beyond the scope of this chapter; however, the common idea in these interpretations is about violence, about to what extent power can affect individuals. This is why Pinter, in his interview with Arthur Ganz, explains that "The world *is* a pretty violent place, it is as simple as that, so any violence in the plays would come out quite naturally. It seems to me an essential and inevitable factor."[74] Stanley, probably by disobeying the organisation and 'betraying' it, takes refuge in Meg and Petey's boarding-house. However, he will not be able to survive there as well, because he is now the outsider that is considered to be dangerous by the System. The System does not want to exclude but to confine him in its wheel again. This means that it will always look for the disobedient, will always desire to 'treat' the non-conforming individual, so that it can make "a man of him"[75] again. In order to achieve this, the System has, from the very beginning, made an agreement with the individual, no matter if he agreed or not.

Discussing how the exclusion of the outsider from society has changed form throughout the history and become confinement, Foucault explains that

> purely negative measures of exclusion were replaced by a measure of confinement; the unemployed person was no longer driven away or punished; he was taken in charge, at the expense of the nation but at the cost of his individual liberty. Between him and society, an implicit system of obligation was established: he had the right to be fed, but he must accept the physical and moral constraint of confinement.[76]

This explanation is interrelated with Erich Fromm's assertion that once a man is free from power, he becomes a sufferer rather than a totally free individual. Similarly, despite Stanley's rebellion against the System, he still has the right to be fed and survive, but he is both sociologically and psychologically confined. Therefore, the

73 Naismith, op. cit., p. 43.
74 Ganz, op. cit., p. 29.
75 Pinter, op. cit., p. 83.
76 Michel Foucault, **Madness and Civilization**, pp. 44-45.

room becomes the establishment of the 'system of obligation' that points to the society's general flawed state and he cannot go beyond that implicit agreement. "At the opening curtain, [the room] look[s] naturalistic, meaning no more than the eye can contain. But by the end...they become sealed containers, virtual coffins."[77] So, as an answer to Lulu's question, that is the reason why Stanley can never go out. He is simply a living body with a suffering soul, nearly dead, and James Gilligan defines such people as those who

> come to realize that the only way to kill the pain in their souls is to kill the whole body. For these men, their living death is an intolerable, zombielike existence, like the tormented shades of the formerly living who inhabit the underworld in Homer, Virgil, Dante and the Bible – a situation of such distress that many decide to end their own bodily lives...Like the dead souls in the Book of Job...these men live in a universe of violence and despair.[78]

It is not known whether Stanley, unless abducted by Goldberg and McCann, would have eventually killed himself or not. Considering Meg's suffocating relationship with him (both like a mother and a lover), the room as a place of imprisonment, Stanley's constant anxious situation, and Pinter's saying that "In my play *The Birthday Party* I think I allow a whole range of options to operate in a dense forest of possibility"[79], Stanley's killing himself is a highly probable consequence. On the other hand, it can be argued that since he may potentially become a future tormentor, he cannot commit suicide; however, like the lyrics of the song titled "In the Shadows" by The Rasmus, such a character as Stanley would rather kill himself than turn into the System's slave. Thus, what is more important than this assumption is apparently Stanley's current "zombielike existence" in the universe of "violence and despair." As mentioned before, an outsider questions his place between being and nothingness, and Stanley too is a character who suffers

77 Cohn, op. cit., p. 56.
78 James Gilligan, **Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and Its Causes**, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1996), p. 40.
79 The Nobel Foundation, **Harold Pinter: Art, Truth & Politics** (**Nobel Lecture**, December 7, 2005), p. 3.

from this dichotomy. Esslin puts forward that “Existential adjustment, coming to terms with one's own being, precedes, and necessarily predetermines, one's attitude to society, politics and general ideas.”[80] Within the wheel of the System, Stanley's being was not content and he rebelled, but his disobedience has turned out to be his nothingness since he is now disoriented and too scared to act: “Not only is the room itself conceived of as a refuge, but those who have withdrawn to it enter into a state of inaction that involves the denial of some aspect of existence. Through fear or incapacity or trauma they have cut themselves off from some vital part of life.”[81] Overall, this is the relationship between Stanley and the room.

The previous paragraphs focused on the room and its qualities as the setting of **The Birthday Party**; however, apart from the room, the location of the boarding-house has a significant point to do with the idea of an avenging society, individual and violence. That the house is in a seaside town makes the play acquire two major concepts, one being madness and the next being freedom. To begin with the former, Foucault's discussion of the “Stultifera Navis” (Ship of Fools) should be taken into consideration.

Before the Renaissance, the “Ship of Fools” refers to the ship in which lepers are boarded and thus excluded from society. Then, poor vagabonds, criminals, and “deranged minds” start playing the role of the leper and replace the former group travelling on those ships. With the Renaissance, the image of the “Ship of Fools” has started to occupy a large place in literary tradition (**Narrenschiff**, **Ship of Princes**, **Battles of Nobility** and so on).[82] With such historical and literary accounts, Foucault writes that “One thing at least is certain: water and madness have long been linked in the dreams of European man.”[83] This is because of the fact that the theme of water has become

> ...the motif of the soul as a skiff, abandoned on the infinite sea of desires, in the sterile field of cares and ignorance, among the mirages of knowledge, amid the unreason of the world...In

80 Esslin, op. cit., pp. 34-35.
81 Ganz, op. cit., p. 13.
82 Foucault, ibid.
83 Ibid., p. 9.

> the classical period, the melancholy of the English was easily explained by the influence of a maritime climate, cold, humidity, the instability of the weather; all of those fine droplets of water that penetrated the channels and fibres of the human body and made it lose its firmness, predisposed it to madness.[84]

In **The Birthday Party**, then, the boarding-house can be interpreted as a skiff, or a ship populated with the six characters that compose a microcosmic community to represent the contemporary situation of the world, specifically Europe and England: It is a picture "of contemporary man beaten down by social forces...of man without identity and individuality, of man crushed into a rigid social mold...of contemporary life...of powerlessness of modern man...of absurdity of the human condition...of human hopelessness."[85] The social madness or the madness that is caused by social conditions is linked to water in **The Birthday Party**, as befitting the European conscious and its channels and fibres that have lost their firmness, their individuality. The fine droplets of water continue penetrating into these channels of human beings, because, apart from the house being located in a seaside town, there are other references to water in the play. The most important one of these references is given at the early beginning of the play. From Petey, who works as a dock attendant at the beach, it is learnt that Goldberg and McCann "came up to [him] on the beach last night"[86] to know if he could put them up in his boarding-house. These two key figures in the play, who contribute to Stanley's probable hallucinating madness and/or are the real representatives of a powerful System in society, first appear next to the sea. Therefore, the subtle meaning that they carry with them lies in the link between water, madness and society.

Firstly, Canetti explains that sea is amongst the symbols of crowd, which is society. Individuals are like the drops of water that form the sea:

> It is true that they only become drops in isolation, when they are separated from each other. Their

84 Ibid., p. 10.
85 Bernard Dukore, "The Theatre of Harold Pinter," (**The Tulane Drama Review**, Vol. 6 No. 3, Mar., 1962), p. 54.
86 Pinter, op. cit., p. 12.

> smallness and singleness then makes them seem powerless; they are almost nothing and arouse a feeling of pity in the spectator...The pity you feel for them is as though they were human beings, hopelessly separated. They only begin to count again when they can no longer be counted, when they have again become a part of a whole.[87]

Goldberg and McCann form the sea and Stanley is just a drop in it who decides somehow to let go of the sea and thus become small, single and pitiful. As mentioned earlier, the agreement that the System has made with the individual causes people's outlook on an individual to contain pity and contempt. Once free from the unity and single, Stanley is hopeless and powerless. Being together, Goldberg and McCann are strong and destructive. Yet, there is a warning in the play that approves of Stanley's sad case. In their initial entrance on stage, Goldberg and McCann speak out the following dialogue:

> McCann. Is this it?
> Goldberg. This is it.
> McCann. Are you sure?
> Goldberg. Sure I'm sure.
> *Pause.*
> McCann. What now?
> Goldberg. Don't worry yourself, McCann. Take a seat.
> McCann. What about you?
> Goldberg. What about me?
> McCann. Are you going to take a seat?[88]

From this exchange, it can be vividly perceived that McCann is highly anxious. He sounds almost indecisive whether to continue this business of destroying Stanley or not. In other words, he is thinking of rejecting it, but from the very beginning, he has always been afraid of becoming a small, powerless drop. Without Goldberg, he is nothing. His deep insecurity is reflected slightly and it increases in the course of the play, as it is further explained in the coming pages. Feeling these, Goldberg

87 Canetti, op. cit., pp. 93-94.
88 Pinter, op. cit., p. 27.

consequently warns McCann to learn how to relax “or [he'll] never get anywhere.”[89] Namely, he tells McCann not to question his situation, because once he does it, he will also be destroyed by the System, as it is shown in Pinter's **The Dumb Waiter**, where Gus is killed because of his questioning the System. As a result, Goldberg withholds McCann from falling into Stanley's situation, since Stanley now cannot 'get anywhere,' as well as suggesting that he is the master of this business. They are the inseparable drops that form the sea of crowds. Similarly, Naismith interprets their arrival on stage as the one that forms “one of the most famous double-acts in modern drama. As with [Tom] Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern...Beckett's Estragon and Vladimir or Ham and Clove, they are a dramatic duo who operate in tandem.”[90] Additionally, imagery-wise, Goldberg and McCann are also reminiscent of Pozzo and Lucky in Beckett’s **Godot**. Pozzo is the strong master and Lucky is his slave, carrying his suitcases. On their first entrance on stage, McCann “*carries two suitcases,* GOLDBERG *a briefcase.*”[91] Them operating in tandem and one acting like the other's master mean that they cannot exist and operate without each other. Their relationship suggests the madness of the System, of society. Once one is included in it, he never has the chance to be excluded and set free to realise his free self.

Soon after their entrance, Goldberg cherishes his memories belonging to his apprentice years in order to console McCann, and they are all related to the idea of water that is concurrently associated with the notion of madness: “When I was an apprentice yet, McCann, every second Friday of the month my Uncle Barney used to take me to the seaside, regular as clockwork. Brighton, Canvey Island, Rottingdean...After lunch on Shabbuss we'd go and sit in a couple of deck chairs...we'd have a little paddle, we'd watch the tide coming in, going out...”[92] With such a reference to Goldberg and his relation to water even from his childhood years, Pinter reflects, suitably through the image of the tides 'coming in, going out' – this can be interpreted as an intertextual reference to Virginia Woolf's novel **The Waves**, where the waves represent the natural cycle of life and birth, and the name of Pinter's

89 Ibid.
90 Naismith, op. cit., p. 48.
91 Pinter, op. cit., p. 26.
92 Pinter, op. cit., p. 27.

play is directly related to the idea of birth – that from the very beginning, it is the power, the crowds that create violence so oppressively that it leads to madness and dehumanization of a person. From the day one is born and on, he or she is always under the control of social institutions, no matter if it is family, school, religion or any other institutions. Therefore, due to the knowledge of being observed, he or she "assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection."[93] This would lead a free mind and a rebellious soul to madness and dehumanization under authority.

The second concept that is conveyed through the location of the boarding-house is freedom and this is hidden in Goldberg's memories that are quoted above. The towns that Goldberg mentions are all in easy-reach of London, the urban centre of England. Peter Raby, in his article titled "Tales of the city: some places and voices in Pinter's plays", interestingly explains that "You 'come down' from London. The seaside, and the seaside boarding-house, are where you escape to from London...The pier, with the sea surrounding it, provides Londoner with the illusion of freshness, of temporary freedom, of a voyage undertaken without the necessity of leaving land."[94] Using the word 'illusion' to describe what such towns mean to Londoners, Raby also means that it is an illusory freedom. In the play, the omnipresent illusion is made concrete by Meg, when she tells Stanley's experience of his piano concert to Goldberg in her own illusory perception. Before, it is quoted from Stanley who explains how the concert he gave was actually like in Lower Edmonton, which is a place that is "not associated with any significant concert hall"[95] and, for comparative reasons, the following is how Meg narrates it:

> Meg. ...He once gave a concert.
> Goldberg. Oh? Where?
> Meg (*falteringly*). In...a big hall. His father gave him champagne. But then they locked the place

93 Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, pp. 202-203.
94 Peter Raby, "Tales of the city: come places and voices in Pinter's plays," **The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter**, ed. Peter Raby, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), p. 64.
95 Naismith, op. cit., p. 76.

> up and he couldn't get out. The caretaker had gone home. So he had to wait until the morning before he could get out. (*With confidence.*) They were very grateful. (*Pause.*) And then they all wanted to give him a tip. And so he took the tip. And then he got a fast train and he came down here."[96]

This depiction not only enables Goldberg to get a false idea about Stanley[97] but also suggests that Stanley's 'coming down' to the boarding-house to escape the System he has been in is an illusory freedom; that he is still in the land, or more appropriately, in the wheel of the System. As well as the rural town names that are mentioned in the play, the place where Stanley used to live has no difference and it is ironic, too. He is from Maidenhead, a "quiet, thriving community" and he lived "well away from the main road."[98] Maidenhead is a countryside close to London and is known to be the only place in England that is unparished, which suggests, again, an illusory idea of freedom for Stanley's case since he cannot escape society's moulding him. Considering all of these rural towns, Raby asserts that they are the substitutes of the Garden of Eden, where 'the first human act' took place, as explained by Fromm. Escape seems impossible and freedom is only illusory.

Overall, with the confining room, the location of the boarding-house, Goldberg's memories of and apparition from next to the sea, the names of the towns and hidden references to London all take place within the triangle of water, madness and society, the latter imposing violence on individuals and dehumanizing them as a revenge. That is why, at the end of the play, when Stanley is taken away from the boarding-house, he is seen clean-shaven in his dark suit with his broken glasses in his hand, as noted earlier. This image of him refers to the fact that, together with Goldberg's briefcase that he brought down from London, he is "destined for the city, by now an image of bureaucracy, organisation, routine, conformity – a constructed environment where only faint traces of family life, childhood, religious belief, linger in the memory and in the phrases quoted from another era."[99] In short, in Foucault's terms, Stanley (and, in fact, all the other characters, too) is the "prisoner of [his] own

96 Pinter, op. cit., p. 32.
97 Naismith, op. cit., p. 46.
98 Pinter, op. cit., p. 29.
99 Raby, op. cit., p. 65.

departure"[100] in this 'Ship of Fools.'

1.3 Creating Illusions to Keep the Wheel Turn

Despite the fact that Pinter subtly alludes to London in **The Birthday Party** to be associated with such notions as conformity and organisation, its significance goes beyond these ideas and transforms into an implied and metaphorical place of the System where Goldberg and McCann come down from, as the oppressors that dehumanize Stanley through violence. This means that they are the mouthpieces of London and the decadent values it encompasses. Thus, whatever Goldberg and McCann speak would directly be related to them and to what Pinter conceptualizes as poetic images of violence in societies. The city, as a build-up, systematized and mechanical place, is fuelled up through transforming its inhabitants into cogs that contribute to the turning of its wheel. Therefore, it requires conformity and uniformity for the wheel to work like clockwork. In this respect, Pinter's characters can be considered as what have become the victims and beneficiaries of the outcome of the machine that arrived at Madame Ranevskaya's cherry orchard, symbolizing modernity and modern violence in Anton Chekhov's **The Cherry Orchard** written in 1904.

In order to keep the wheel turning, the System has to bribe individuals. One of the most effective ways of bribing, then, reveals itself as the notion of success and the ability to succeed. In **The Birthday Party**, Goldberg, as well as McCann, is a character that has lived under the illusion of an image of a successful city-man that is also associated with power and violence in terms of pulverizing others in order to reach success. This idea is maintained in E. Shils's article titled "British Society 2":

> The manners of public life are relatively gentle and considerate...There still remain, despite the transformation of the public appearance of the ancient regime, very deep strata of 'darkest England', of hierarchical harshness, of contemptuous hostility towards the weak and unsuccessful...The power of the aristocracy and

100 Foucault, **Madness and Civilization**, p. 40.

> gentry has been largely broken, but the aura of deference which attended that power still persists.[101]

In the above quote, it is implied that the shadow of the past still reflects itself on social life, meaning, through the superlative adjective “darkest,” that contempt and harshness should not still be the attitudes towards the unsuccessful. Considering this in relation to the examination of Canetti's explanation about what drops and sea symbolize, it becomes apparent that Pinter appoints Goldberg and McCann as the men of acrid, old clichés that remind one of the fading, invalidated values of the social structure in England. Cohn defines the two men as such that they “express the System by echoing modern commonplaces of social success. Pinter damns them with their own deadly clichés.”[102] Towards the end of the play, after Stanley has been beaten down, these are the short and to-the-point sentences uttered by Goldberg and McCann:

> Goldberg. Between you and me, Stan, it's about time you had a new pair of glasses.
> McCann. You can't see straight.
> Goldberg. It's true. You've been cockeyed for years.
> McCann. Now you're even more cockeyed.
> Goldberg. He's right. You've gone from bad to worse.
> McCann. Worse than worse.
> Goldberg. You need a long convalescence.
> McCann. A change of air.
> Goldberg. Somewhere over the rainbow...
> Goldberg. You'll be re-oriented.
> McCann. You'll be rich.
> Goldberg. You'll be adjusted.
> McCann. You'll be our pride and joy...
> McCann. You'll be a success.
> Goldberg. You'll be integrated.
> McCann. You'll give orders.[103]

It is quite apparent that as the city men, Goldberg and McCann possess the aura of

101 E. Shils, “British Society 2,” **The Sociology of Modern Britain**, pp. 330-331.
102 Cohn, op. cit., p. 58.
103 Pinter, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

power that persists in society. The reference to Stanley's glasses and the idea of seeing and being cockeyed are furthered in the next section; however, the other adjectives employed to picture Stanley's pre-decided future are all like the branches of a tree of success. Each of them stems from one root, that is, the root of being capable of achieving. Furthermore, being able to give orders is the utmost position a person can hold in a society, which serves as the strongest motivation for people to work, study, compete and ignore so much as to get deprived of their humanistic values gradually and become machines that operate the System without questioning. Therefore, from the point of view of Goldberg and McCann, these adjectives pave the way to a new home - both bodily and spatial - for the outcast, that is, Stanley. He has to be taken to 'London' to be at 'home'.

Detailing McCann's assertion that Stanley needs a change of air, Goldberg defines this as “somewhere over the rainbow.” These words are the lyrics of the soundtrack sung by Dorothy Gale, the protagonist in the 1939 movie **The Wizard of Oz**, when she unconsciously travels to the all colourful, lively and exciting but imaginary Munckinland. To Goldberg, this is what London is: he is mesmerized by the bureaucratic success he has achieved and it is pride and joy to him. However, this is as much illusory as Stanley's earlier explanation to McCann that he has come down to the boarding-house because “business call[ed].” Obviously, this is a lie as he never goes out the house. Continuing his lies (or foreshadowing his own future), he explains that he will “be moving soon. Back home. No place like home.”[104] His last sentence is echoed in Dorothy's realization after her waking up to reality saying that there is no place like home. In fact, Stanley knows, deep down, that he will be taken away by the two men, but maintains the illusion that the two men have no connection with him. He mentions his own individual plans, which turn out to be nothing but an ironic illusion, since his home is going to be the wheel of the System, the ultimate end for those who seek individuality and freedom from power. Overall, for Goldberg, success is to be “re-oriented” to home, which contradicts Stanley's perception of success, which is to be able to realize himself through freedom of speech and action.

Another indicative scene about the idea of success in the play takes place

104 Ibid., p. 40.

when Goldberg learns from Meg that it is Stanley's birthday:

> Meg. It's his birthday today...
> Goldberg.... Are you going to have a party?
> Meg. A party?
> Goldberg. Weren't you going to have one?
> Meg (*her eyes wide*). No.
> Goldberg. Well, of course, you must have one... We'll have a party, eh? What do you say?
> Meg. Oh yes!
> Goldberg. Sure. We'll give him a party. Leave it to me.[105]

Not knowing Stanley personally, not even seeing his face yet, Goldberg suggests organising a birthday party for Stanley, because, as Esslin writes, he "likes playing the part of a highly sociable fellow."[106] Being a highly sociable fellow is associated with success as well, for it involves the ideas of organisations, parties and being popular in one's social milieu. Comforting Meg by saying "leave it to me," Goldberg creates a perception for his audience that such occasions are usual and pieces of cakes for him. Thus, all these notions contribute to Goldberg's adoration of success, which eventually deprives one of his or her individuality and narrows the radius of aspiration due to the domineering effects of power and hierarchy in society, as E. Shils explains in the quotation cited above.

Goldberg has to scorn Stanley, because as a younger man, Stanley is considered to be unsuccessful and therefore unrespectable as opposed to Goldberg's life of appreciations due to his obedience to social rules. As Naismith explains, "By any of the standards that society uses to define 'success' Stanley is a failure."[107] Goldberg's idea of respectability is linked to not taking liberties and Pinter writes this in the form of Goldberg's little love affair back in his youth. He says "...I'd leave her with a little kiss in the cheek – I never took liberties – we weren't like the young men these days in those days. We knew the meaning of respect."[108] Undoubtedly, for Goldberg, taking liberties means disrespectfulness. In other words, obedience to so-

105 Ibid., p. 32.
106 Esslin, op. cit., p. 77.
107 Naismith, op. cit., p. 52.
108 Pinter, op. cit., p. 40.

called social norms is the ultimate virtue he knows and practices.

During his exchange with Petey and McCann, when Stanley is also present, Goldberg always mentions his childhood years, explaining how obedient and appreciating he was. As he speaks, it is noticed that his words are “filled with the clichés of the ideals of middle-class conformity.”[109] He starts with his memories with his mother: “'Simey!' my old mum used to shout, 'quick before it gets cold.' And there on the table what would I see? The nicest piece of gefilte fish you could wish to find on the plate.”[110] Then, further in the play, he talks about his wife, who, apparently, does not differ from her mother: “'Simey!' my wife used to shout, 'quick before it gets cold.' And there on the table what would I see? The nicest piece of roll-mop and pickled cucumber you could wish to find on a plate.”[111] The two allusions to the mother and wife suggest that the sequence of order, attitudes, reactions, expectations, service, warnings and exaggeration has not been broken. This is so naturally entrenched in Goldberg's life that he cannot think of other possibilities of life and as the representative of the System, he will not accept others to diverge from the line of it. For him, this is the way to be successful, which can also be understood from his confiding McCann “the secret of his success in life:”[112]

> You know what? I've never lost a tooth. Not since the day I was born. Nothing's changed...That's why I've reached my position, McCann. Because I've always been as fit as a fiddle. All my life I've said the same. Play up, play up, and play the game. Honour thy father and thy mother. All along the line. Follow the line, the line, McCann, and you can't go wrong. What do you think I'm a self-made man? No! I sat where I was told to sit. I kept my eye on the ball...And don't go too near the water.[113]

Assuredly, Goldberg adores the middle-class way of living that follows the line. He says that “nothing's changed,” which is proved by his reference to his mother and

109 Dukore, op. cit., p. 53.
110 Pinter, op. cit., p. 43.
111 Ibid., p. 59.
112 Dukore, op. cit., p. 53.
113 Pinter, op. cit., p. 77.

wife. He is blinded by his “position” and regards this as the consequence of his motto “play up, play up.” However, he is so captivated by this that he cannot notice the ironies and contradictions of his perspective. In one of the scenes in the play, after Meg gives a toast to Stanley's birthday, Goldberg celebrates her for its warmth. Then, he asks: “What's happened to the love, the bonhomie, the unashamed expression of affection of the day before yesterday, that our mums taught us in the nursery?”[114] Yet, it is ironic that Goldberg himself thinks that giving a big kiss to his lover means taking liberties, which contradicts with the cliché phrase “the unashamed expression of affection.” This can be interpreted as his gradual deprivation of his individuality and freedom as he restrains himself from showing his unashamed affection and love. Considering this situation in terms of the societal condition, it

> manifests itself in many ways, the most important of which is the inhibition of individuality and initiative. One of the features of British society which impresses a foreign observer is its constrictedness of imagination and aspiration. There is a lack of vigour and daring in the conception of new possibilities of life and a too narrow radius of aspiration.[115]

The idea that the individual is inhibited and loses his initiative through an oppressive society is related to what Goldberg and McCann, the city men of tradition, conformity and the System, inflict upon Stanley. Symbolically, this is also concealed in their names.

In the previously quoted passages of Goldberg's clichés, it can be noticed that Goldberg is referred to as “Simey” by his mother and wife. Similarly, his father addresses him as Benny and sometimes, McCann calls him Nat. Bernard Dukore discusses that these names are all related to religion and Pinter is telling his audience how society makes use of “the forces of religion to insure the conformity of its members. [Goldberg] has several given names, and these carry connotations of

114 Ibid., p. 56.
115 E. Shils, op. cit., p. 331.

tradition and religion."[116] At different stages of his life, Goldberg has various names and these change according to the various positions he assumes. To illustrate,

> although Goldberg's father called him Benny (Benjamin was Jacob's youngest son and the favorite of his old age), he is in his present capacity called Nat, and just as Nathan the Prophet, commanded directly by God, rebuked King David for having sinned against the Lord, and brought him back to the paths of righteousness, so does Nat, commanded directly by his organisation, bring Stanley back to the paths of conformity.[117]

Thus, Goldberg, from his name to the place he first appears in the play, from his representative features to his clichés, "supplies the brain" and McCann, as his apprentice, "supplies the muscle."[118] Their positions and so-called respectability are the result of their obedience:

> The obvious beneficiaries had their own religion of respectability, too. It was a respectability which was less confining but it was acquired by a discipline in institutions which restricted the range of experience and narrowed the imagination. It had the great advantages that those who survived it felt themselves qualified for anything. It was a discipline which was integral to ruling.[119]

As Goldberg proudly asserts, he has always played up and never given up following the line. His present belief in the paths of conformity he has followed, as mentioned earlier, is an illusory one, since the System desires one to take these roads and be awarded with success and respectability. Once acquiring these, Goldberg (and all other Goldbergs and McCanns in all over the world) believes that he becomes a man of high importance, a perfect individual. This is ironically because "Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals

116 Dukore, op. cit., p. 52.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Butterworth and Weir, op. cit., p. 331.

both as objects and as instruments of its exercise."[120] Therefore, Goldberg's individuality is the one that is created by the System. He believes in the truth and justice of the System, obviously quite blindly, and his aim is to train Stanley, too, to make him find the 'right' path of obedience through the archaic values he carries with him. In Robert Frost's lines, then, Stanley is not allowed to take the path that is "less traveled by" which would make "all the difference"[121] as it is written in his poem titled **The Road Not Taken**.

On the other hand, in order to show the other side of the coin, it is worth noting that as the values they represent are quite raw, no more applicable and tiresome for the new generation, Goldberg and McCann's condition in the final act also reflects this aspect. Namely, after the birthday party, both of them look tired and worn out. Yet, before elaborating this change, it is apt to focus firstly on the birthday party.

1.4 A Tiresome Party

While Goldberg and McCann get prepared to bring Stanley back to the paths of conformity, or of London and society, they should celebrate their achievement with a party, as befitting their status. This party, defined as "the ritual of Stanley's destruction"[122] by Esslin, most crucially turns out to be Stanley's alleged birthday party as mentioned earlier, which titles the play as well, attaining very significant functions to it in terms of the meaning and conceptualization of the notions Pinter demonstrates to the discerning audience.

To begin with, Stanley's birth date is not known for sure. Like everything else in the play such as the popularity of the boarding-house and the name of the organisation, the date is also ambivalent. First, Meg warns Stanley that he should not be sad today because it is his birthday. However, Stanley reacts by saying the followings respectively. "Uh?...No...This isn't my birthday, Meg."[123] But, Meg insists that it is and tells him to open the present she has bought for him. Soon after this,

120 Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, p. 170.
121 Robert Frost, **The Road Not Taken**.
122 Esslin, op. cit., p. 78.
123 Pinter, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

McCann congratulates Stanley, wishing him “many happy returns of the day” and the following dialogue starts:

> McCann. ...Were you going out?
> Stanley. Yes.
> McCann. On your birthday?
> Stanley. Yes. Why not?
> McCann. But they're holding a party here for you tonight.[124]

Before, Stanley was explaining to Lulu that there was no place to go. Now, Stanley, apparently struggling to 'act naturally' towards McCann in order not to reflect his fear of him – for that would approve of his 'guilty' position – behaves as if he has a life of his own outside the house, as well as confirming that it is his birthday today. However, later in the play, he confusingly explains McCann that his birthday is “not till next month.”[125] Yet, presumably, Stanley does not and cannot go anywhere and attends his own party, organised by Goldberg.

As for Meg, who is very excited about her beloved Stanley's birthday party, she gives her present to him in advance. It is a boy's drum[126], which is quite symbolic in various aspects and can be interpreted in different ways, all apt to Stanley's situation. One aspect is that if Stanley is a paranoid person on the verge of nervous/mental breakdown, the drum “refers to his childish defense mechanism. The giving is also clearly a gesture which could be 'recognized' by the paranoid as a veiled insult, a more or less secret 'understanding' of his lack of musical ability.”[127] In this commentary, there is a focus on Stanley's perception of the drum rather than Meg's unconscious knowledge of its suggestions as a gift. She simply wishes that he

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124 Ibid., pp. 37-38.
125 Ibid., p. 41.
126 On the side of Meg, choosing a drum is also symbolic in literary terms. She is the woman of order and stability as she is very punctual about the breakfast time and always keeps the house clean. Therefore, the monotonous sound of the drum points to her character. Apart from that, the fact that it is a 'boy's' drum is significant in that she considers Stanley as her son and shows him great affection which is disturbing since he is not the little boy of her bored imagination. This also reminds one of the film **The Tin Trumpet** (1979), made out of Günter Grass’s novel with the same title (1959); the protagonist with this drum refuses to grow up and participate in the degenerate adult world drifting towards World War II.
127 Kirby, op. cit., p.160.

could have “played tonight”[128] and to compensate her (and according to her, Stanley's) sorrow, she chooses to buy a drum just because “[he hasn't] got a piano.”[129] Further in the play, upon Goldberg's suggestion that Stanley “play a little tune afterwards,” Meg's happiness and desire are great: “Oh yes. Will you, Stan?”[130]

Another significant interpretation of the drum is its imagery function. When he hangs it around his neck, Stanley is shaped into a figure that connotes a soldier. At the end of the first act, Stanley

> *hangs the drum around his neck, taps it gently with the sticks, then marches round the table, beating it regularly.* MEG, *pleased, watches him. Still beating it regularly, he begins to go around the table a second time. Halfway round the beat becomes erratic, uncontrolled.* MEG *expresses dismay. He arrives at her chair, banging the drum, his face and the drumbeat now savage and possessed.*[131]

The vocabulary Pinter prefers to employ in the above stage direction mostly belongs to the military, which is one of the most apparent phenomenon of infusing violence into individuals in the form of order and discipline. Discussing the history of discipline under the title “Docile Bodies”, Foucault describes a soldier as “something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit.”[132] Thus, Pinter, creating such an imagery right before Stanley steps into the second act in which Goldberg and McCann actually start moulding him according to their discipline, shows how the members of society are conceived by the System and how violence and oppression are applied on the rebellious individual. His demonstration parallels what Foucault elaborates in his chapter:

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128 Pinter, op. cit., p. 32.
129 Ibid., p. 36.
130 Ibid., p. 53.
131 Ibid., p. 36.
132 Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, p. 135.

> What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines.[133]

Considering this, it is evident that as Stanley marches regularly, he feels himself like a soldier that is entering into a "machinery of power." The major words used to emphasize this are "savage and possessed." Stanley is now possessed not only by the automatisation of the way he plays the drum, but also by the power that has always haunted him. From this moment on, Stanley starts 'operating' as one wishes rather than as his own free will. The hidden violence inflicted upon him has started signalling that its negative effects are not going to be as subtle as its entrance into his life, but rather harsh and obvious. This is the final situation of Stanley at the end of Act One, meaning, at the same time, that this is how he participates in the second act, which is allocated to the party.

Before the party starts, Stanley is subject to "a weird surrealist cross-examination by his tormentors."[134] It is a surrealist one because the questions being asked are so irrelevant (at some point, the tormentors ask questions about the brands such as Enos and Andrews that are useful for digestion[135]) and torrential as to gradually silence Stanley down and make him never speak again until the end of the play. Initially, the order of speech follows Goldberg, McCann and Stanley, but soon after that, the frequency of Stanley's replies decreases and Goldberg and McCann, who reply to their own questions so far removed from reality, dominate. Talking about Stanley's non-existent wife, McCann asks:

133 Ibid., p. 138.
134 Esslin, op. cit., p. 78.
135 Pinter, op. cit., p. 48.

> McCann. How did he kill her?
> Goldberg. How did you kill her?
> McCann. You throttled her.
> Goldberg. With arsenic.[136]

The cross-examination is interrupted once Meg enters into the room holding the drum and the sticks. Its high time for her to start the celebration, because she regards it as an occasion that saves her from her monotonous life. When they start taking alcohol, Goldberg indulges in his clichés as explained above, which dominate *Stanley's* birthday party. In other words, London is presented as a birthday gift to Stanley, wrapped with Goldberg's clichés. Stanley is now speechless: everyone talks and decides on behalf of him now and he has already turned into a servant of Goldberg:

> Meg. Isn't the light in his eyes?
> Goldberg. No, no. Go on....
> Goldberg. Stanley, a drink for your guest. You just missed the toast, my dear, and what a toast.
> Lulu. Did I?
> Goldberg. Stanley, a drink for your guest. Stanley. (STANLEY *hands a glass to* LULU.) Right. Now raise your glasses. Everyone standing up? No, not you, Stanley. You must sit down.[137]

The reason why Stanley does not talk anymore is that "He has lost his power of self-expression, as he has surrendered the self which he had to express."[138] Now, he idly does whatever they tell him to do. With Meg's sudden demand to "play a game"[139], Goldberg is startled but accepts immediately and the discussion of what game to play is concluded upon Lulu's request of playing "Blind man's buff."[140] It is important to briefly note here that Lulu, as a mediocre next door girl, can be "placed with the exploiters as well as with the exploited...she pairs off with Goldberg. But even the sexual practices to which he introduces her do not corrupt her...She sleeps with

136 Ibid., p. 49.
137 Ibid., p. 55.
138 Dukore, op. cit., p. 54.
139 Pinter, op. cit., p. 61.
140 Ibid.

Goldberg, but we feel sure she will not stay with him."[141] Therefore, her suggestion of playing blind man's buff maintains its significance in that the nature of the game requires exploiters and exploited at the same time.

What is more important, however, are the scenes in which the game is played. It is played during the absence of Petey who goes to a chess club (indication of his passive intelligence as well as his potential comprehension of what the System does to individuals) and is "neither totally blind nor, except with Meg in certain areas, interested in deceiving others."[142] Therefore, there are Stanley, Meg, Lulu, Goldberg and McCann on stage, and "no selection could have been more apposite for symbolizing the cruelty inflicted upon Stanley during the 'party' without provoking the attention of Meg and Lulu, much less remonstrance from them."[143]

During the game, when it is Stanley's turn to be blind-folded, he

> *begins to move, very slowly, across the stage to the left.* MCCANN *picks up the drum and places it sideways in* STANLEY'S *path.* STANLEY *walks into the drum and falls over with his foot caught in it...*STANLEY *rises. He begins to move towards* MEG*, dragging the drum on his foot. He reaches her and stops. His hands move towards her and they reach her throat. He begins to strangle her.* MCCANN *and* GOLDBERG *rush forward and throw him off...*LULU *is lying spread-eagled on the table,* STANLEY *bent over her*.[144]

Since Stanley is speechless during and after his party, his possessed, yet ironically uncontrolled actions acquire importance. Firstly, breaking his own toy drum and dragging it on his foot suggest, according to Esslin, that it destroys "the last vestige of his status as an artist? or [puts] an end to his being Meg's little boy."[145] Apart from these possibilities, one more interpretation can be that of Stanley's forceful and destructive acceptance of his military image. The breakage of the drum is paralleled

141 Simon O. Lesser, "Reflections on Pinter's The Birthday Party," (**Contemporary Literature**, Vol. 13 No. 1, Winter, 1972), pp. 38-39.
142 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
143 Ibid., p. 40.
144 Pinter, op. cit., pp. 63.64.
145 Esslin, op. cit., p. 78.

with his nervous and mental breakdown. He tries strangling Meg and raping Lulu. After this, the stage directions that follow are equally crucial and determiner of his situation:

> *STANLEY as soon as the torchlight hits him, begins to giggle.* GOLDBERG *and* MCCANN *move towards him. He backs, giggling, the torch on his face. They follow him upstage, left. He backs against the hatch, giggling. The torch draws closer. His giggle rises and grows as he flattens himself against the wall. Their figures converge upon him.*[146]

Here, Stanley "seems to have gone out of his mind as the avenging representatives of the organisation finally lay hands on him."[147] Now, Stanley's image is intermingled with Goldberg and McCann's. They succeed in transforming Stanley into the 'correct' path and he is now under complete discipline.

To befit this scene in which Goldberg and McCann's figures converge upon Stanley and reflect the notions of what they represent, Yıldıray Şahinler, the director of **The Birthday Party** produced in İstanbul City Theatre in 2012[148] chooses, in the final act, to dress Stanley in the same way they are clad so that they all look like undertakers. This is so aptly beautiful in that "Stanley has had a birthday party: a new Stanley has been born. In order for the new Stanley to be born, the spirit of the old Stanley first had to be killed."[149] Hence, the association made through the costumes reinforces and verifies the idea that the party is actually the celebration of the birth of new Stanley.

As well as this major incident that leads to Stanley's capture and breakdown, two other minor elements contribute to his state. The first one is his frequent giggling, which now substitutes the drumbeats in the same manner, that is, savage and possessed. This is the reason why in the play's 1991 Faber and Faber edition, there is a picture of a man (apparently Stanley) on whose head is placed a drum, being played by some anonymous forces.

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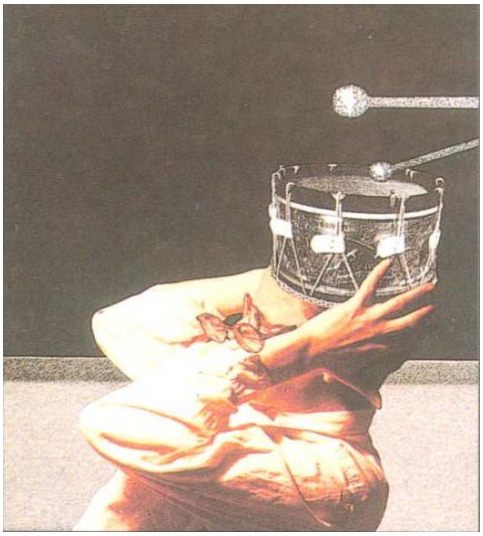
146 Pinter, op. cit., pp. 65-66.
147 Esslin, op. cit., p. 79.
148 İstanbul Şehir Tiyatroları, **Doğum Günü Partisi**, Dir. Yıldıray Şahinler, 2012, İstanbul.
149 Dukore, op. cit., p. 54.



In a very short period of time, Stanley giggles more often and the tone rises. Before, it was the drumbeats, now it is his mental condition that reflects his being possessed.

Else, the giggles are the reminder of Peter Schaffer's 1979 play **Amadeus** which is adapted to screen with the same name and in which Mozart's giggles characterize him. Salieri's irrepressible desire and actions to destroy Mozart's reputation are responded by Mozart's implicit giggles. Therefore, Stanley's giggles are the reminiscent of Mozart the great composer and Goldberg and McCann recall Salieri, who, entangled within his own cruel plans, has to continue living in mediocrity. This parallels Goldberg's clichés and, as mentioned, his (and McCann's) deteriorating state.

Another element that contributes to Stanley's breakdown is the torch light. The first time the torch emerges in the play is when Meg toasts to Stanley, before which Goldberg speaks on behalf of Stanley saying that the light does not disturb him. Throughout the party, the lights are switched on and off and McCann's torch is also employed as a device that contributes to the atmosphere: “The tension and atmosphere of the scene is enhanced by the lighting changes – both exterior and

interior – which move the action into the realm of the macabre."[150] After Stanley's assault on Meg and Lulu, there is an unknown blackout, leaving the stage to the function of the torch. Its function is like the employment of light projection in Samuel Beckett's 1963 shorter play **Play**. The three heads in muddy urns can talk only when the light is projected upon them, confessing, as fast as possible, what they consciously repressed about one another. Otherwise, they have to be silent. Thus, when Stanley shines under the torch light that is directed to him by McCann, he is seen trying to rape Lulu, an action which can be interpreted as his suppressed desire. More importantly, as the torch light draws closer to him, his giggle rises and he is converged on Goldberg and McCann's shadow on the wall. This, on the other hand, exposes Stanley's life-long conscious fear of being caught and restored to discipline.

When all these points are taken into consideration, it can be observed and concluded, as the foreign observer does in Shils' aforementioned explanation, that for the European man, the post-war world freezes the new possibilities of life and imprisons one into his or her idle state, without any vigour and daring, because a darer, to generalize Stanley, is not "permitted to be himself, whatever or whoever he is." Like Stanley, his identity has to be destroyed effectively and transformed "into the visual representation of respectable society...In appearance he is completely altered, but in fact he has become dehumanized because he has lost the definitive mark of identity – the power of human speech."[151] In fact, a significant oxymoron, employed by Meg upon her arrival to the party with the toy drum, determines and wraps up the whole idea of silencing down an individual and transforming him or her into a machinery that has to work perfectly by commands. She, referring to the drum, asks: "Doesn't it make a beautiful noise?"[152] The word 'noise' is usually associated with unpleasant, negative and disturbing - even annoying – feelings and evidently, these cannot be 'beautiful' as Meg describes. In her case, any extraordinary noise in the house would be fun for her since it provides a different occasion to be dealt with other than her routine. As for Stanley, on the other hand, his whole situation is hidden in this praise. He is about to be forced and transformed into a drum (a soldier and/or

150 Naismith, op. cit., p. 59.
151 Ibid., pp. 47-48.
152 Pinter, op. cit., p. 53.

an aide) that is considered 'beautiful' by Goldberg and McCann, but produces jarring and discordant sounds that everyone is deaf to. By this way, the idea of noise can symbolically be connected to societies' ignorance. Since it does not question, it has no option but to obey and praise the sound that the System produces. Consequently, Stanley, a potential artist of producing beautiful sounds, is allowed to travel around the world with his piano concerts as long as he does not betray the organisation. Otherwise, he has nowhere to go, and once again, as Lulu asks, he can never go out until he produces sounds that others tell him to produce- as clearly given at the end of the play and explained in the next section.

Mentioned but not furthered, Goldberg and McCann's state in the third act is worth discussing since it forms a counterpart for Stanley's initial situation and coincides with the relationship among society, power and individual. Harold Perkin, while writing to discover the roots of the modern English society, feels that

> a new society...was beginning to take shape in the aftermath of the Second World War. This was a society dominated no longer by agricultural landlords and bourgeois industrialists but by a new race of specialists – corporate managers, bureaucrats and the purveyors of intellectual services to a much more complex and sophisticated population.[153]

It is discussed before that Goldberg and McCann come down from London, thereby bringing together with them all the ideas that are associated with the city and with what Perkin defines as “complex” and “sophisticated” population. Yet, the complexity and sophistication are no doubt tiresome and wear out the ones in charge of controlling them. Thus, Goldberg and McCann should also be hinted at as deteriorating individuals, because, despite the power and force they possess, they are, after all, human beings who are in need of ‘fresh air’ for their soul that has long been captivated by the illusory concepts like success and position that are offered by the System. For the sake of power and success, Goldberg and McCann have to sacrifice their soul which connotes the ideas of freedom, self-expression and unique identity,

153 Harold Perkin, **The Origins of Modern English Society**, (London: Routledge, 2002), p. ix.

that are the major concepts which Stanley had fought for but could not win. Therefore, as it is by now quite clear, "The central conflict of the play is...between Goldberg – healthy, clean, conformist, respected, and respectable – and Stanley – a scruffy, unhealthy, and unsociable dropout."[154] Yet, these opposing features of the two central characters prove to be ironic when the play is retrospectively considered.

Now that Stanley has been dehumanized through subtle violence that hangs in the air, Goldberg seems to be weary the next day after the birthday party. Reflected through his anxious questions to Goldberg about what to do next, McCann's endless desire to "get [the business] over"[155] and evacuate the place as soon as possible is interrupted by Goldberg's sudden explanation:

> Goldberg. ...I don't know why, but I feel knocked out. I feel a bit … It's uncommon for me.
> McCann. Is that so?
> Goldberg. It's unusual....
> Goldberg *sits humped*.[156]

It can be noticed that Goldberg is both physically and psychologically corrupted and he has started to deteriorate from the inside. The fact that it is something new to him marks a definitive point in his 'career' and his points of view. He starts narrating one of his cliché success stories as a piece of advice to McCann. Yet, the way he finalizes his story and the stage directions that indicate this are significant in that they signal his loss of belief in the System. Goldberg assures that if McCann follows his advice, he

> will find – that what I say is true.
> Because I believe that the world is … (*Vacant*)….
> Because I believe that the world is … (*Desperate*)
> ….
> Because I believe that the world is … (*Lost*) ….

Right after this, he struggles "*Intensely, with growing certainty*"[157] to regain his assertive and self-confident state, yet shortly after this, he begs McCann to "blow in

154 Peacock, op. cit., p. 66.
155 Pinter, op. cit., p. 76.
156 Ibid.
157 Ibid., p. 78.

[his] mouth."[158] Esslin comments on this by explaining that "Goldberg, who seemed most vigorous the night before, now looks aged, deprived of his vitality. He is on the point of collapse, and McCann has to blow into his mouth to revive him with a kind of 'kiss of life.'"[159] However, the kiss of life will not work either, because his strong belief in the world and the System is now vacant, desperate and, most importantly, lost.

That Goldberg is now lost suggests that his belief in the crass-cliché rules of family, success and conformity is as much vacant, out of date and inapplicable as the register of the memorized, taught language he employs to preach to the others. Pinter creates Goldberg in order to be able to show his audience how much cliché-ridden these beliefs and stories are. Either merely being Stanley's imaginative projection of the fear of getting caught or a 'real' man with a high position in an anonymous organisation, Goldberg (and McCann) sociologically tells a lot about the situation in contemporary England and, in fact, in the post-war Europe. Keeping their religious names that are explained before in mind, it is important to examine what Keith Peacock has to say about Goldberg and McCann:

> ...the sinister comedy duo are associated with the two religious forces that have dominated Western society for two hundred years, Judaism and Catholicism. They appear, nonetheless, to be distinctly twentieth-century, lapsed versions of their religions. Goldberg cannot state what actually are his spiritual beliefs and is more concerned with the institutional and social features of his religion, particularly its emphasis on the family, than with the spiritual. His modest lower-middle-class English aspirations - "a little Austin, tea in Fuller's, a library book from Boots, and I'm satisfied" - clearly locate him within the concrete social context of contemporary Britain.[160]

It is implied in the quotation that Goldberg's values stem from obsolete religions and he is, symbolically, the twentieth-century version of them. Yet, the lack of spirituality

158 Ibid., p. 79.
159 Esslin, op. cit., p. 79.
160 Peacock, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

in his way of life is another crucial evidence which proves that these values and Goldberg himself will not work anymore, since it is related to the true, inner feelings of the soul.

Although this sounds hopeful, it would be wrong to categorize **The Birthday Party** as an optimistic play, because what happens to the three characters, Goldberg, McCann and Stanley, and what does not occur to Petey, Meg and Lulu are almost the concrete representations that Pinter leaves his audience to contemplate on. The latter group of characters represents the ordinary man who is ignorant, obedient and therefore, guilty.[161] There is no doubt that they will continue with their lives as if nothing has happened to Stanley, who is the victim of this very ignorant society. Meg's so-called sorrow will soon die away, Petey will live in his own passive world and Lulu will stick to her naivety forever. The former set of characters, on the other hand, will swap roles because this is what the nature of the System requires. As mentioned earlier, Goldberg and McCann ethnically belong to the two most suppressed communities, but now they have become the tormentors. Therefore, it is Stanley's turn to become the new tormentor who was once suppressed and tormented. This is the reason why Goldberg looks old and weary in the third act and McCann is more assertive than his initial nervous, nonplussed state. After torturing Stanley and gaining more experience in the 'business', McCann will leave his position as an apprentice and become the new Goldberg (because he has also obeyed, played up and never left the line). As for Stanley, who is now made ready to go to the city and is the new potential tormentor, he will assume the duty of McCann and become his yes-man. Thus, the opposing adjectives that are quoted above and describing Stanley and Goldberg can now change places. Stanley is the new conformist, respected and respectable; Goldberg is old, scruffy, unhealthy and, when compared to his initial state, signalled to become freer in terms of his devotion to his job. Overall, Goldberg and McCann are in the play not just for the sake of representing the System but also of suggesting how the cycle of the System works so naturally as to make individuals its cogs in the wheel. As Naismith puts forward, Goldberg and McCann are “fully realised characters. They are also vulnerable characters – subject to and victims of

161 Slavoj Žižek, “When the Party Commits Suicide” (Online)
www.egs.edu, 15/05/2012

their social background. Both are deeply insecure, and this becomes incredibly evident during the play."[162] The two incidents that most strongly make evident Goldberg and McCann's deep insecurity and vulnerability are reflected in the aftermath of Stanley's dehumanization and Goldberg's frustrated reaction to McCann who calls him Simey in the third act.

What has been done to Stanley during the night is extremely severe and horribly savage, as it is understood from McCann and Goldberg's exchange. Referring to Stanley's room upstairs where he is kept, McCann grimly asserts that

> I'm not going up there again.
> Goldberg. Why not?
> McCann. I'm not going up there again.
> Goldberg. What's going on now?
> McCann (*moving down*). He is quiet now. He stopped all that … talking a while ago.
> PETEY *appears at the kitchen hatch, unnoticed.*
> Goldberg. When will he be ready?
> McCann. You can go up yourself next time.[163]

McCann's rejections one after another about going upstairs suggest that he is hesitant about facing Stanley who would remind him of the cruelties they applied to him. In fact, his disturbance is not actually about Stanley but what he has done to a human being, befitting his initially anxious state which Goldberg was quite scorning, filling McCann's mind with his teachings of experience. This is why Goldberg, by asking "why not?" seems to be startled by McCann's reaction. As an experienced tormentor, he is callused and giving advice is the other best thing he can do. Therefore, unlike McCann, Goldberg is not vulnerable at this point. Yet, he is later subject to McCann's torrential questions: "Well?...Do we wait or do we go and get him?"...So do we wait or do we go and get him?...Is that so?...Will I go up?"[164] These questions are significant due to two reasons: firstly, they are the reminiscent of Stanley's cross-examination that gradually leads to his destruction and secondly, they are finalized by McCann's addressing to Goldberg as Simey, which triggers new interpretations about their situations:

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162 Naismith, op. cit., p. 49.
163 Pinter, op. cit., p. 73.
164 Ibid., p. 76.

> McCann. ...Simey!
> Goldberg (*opening his eyes, regarding MCCANN*). What – did – you – call – me?
> McCann. Who?
> Goldberg (*murderously*). Don't call me that! (*He seizes MCCANN by the throat.*) NEVER CALL ME THAT!
> McCann (*writhing*). Nat, Nat, Nat, NAT! I called you Nat. I was asking you, Nat. Honest to God. Just a question, that's all, just a question, do you see, do you follow me?
> Goldberg (*jerking him away*). What question?

After McCann's questioning, Goldberg's assault on him reminds one, again, of Stanley's attack on Lulu and Meg at the end of the birthday party. The reason why Goldberg's rage reaches at its peak after being called as Simey (and not for the first time) is that it is the name that was used to be employed by his mother and wife, who are the perfect implications of order, conformity, limitations and monotonousness, as suggested by the above discussion of both women's preparing the meal and calling Goldberg to table in the same manner, even with the exact same words. Therefore, now that Goldberg is feeling weird and tired, concurrently suggestive of his assignment of his position to McCann, he is irritated and frustrated with the name "Simey" that reminds him of, and perhaps, for the first time, makes him aware of the deadening, suffocating and colourless life spent by honouring "thy father" under conformity. As for McCann, whose early anxiety and attachment to Goldberg were interpreted above in relation to Canetti's images of sea and drops to symbolize the crowds and the weak, his discouragement, resulting from his fear of the System, of being able to make his mind and behave assertively is awarded, implicitly, by his claiming a stronger and higher position in his job.

1.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, in general terms, discouragement is what this subtle System of constant surveillance desires to achieve. This is to say that, as Foucault also discusses, the structure of the ruling and controlling System resembles Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, meaning disambiguation. It is a conceptual design of an

institutional building whose interiors allow a transparent view for the observer but renders it impossible for the dwellers to notice whether they are being observed at a given moment or not. The implementation of the philosophy of such a structure into a society results in "a society in which the principal elements are no longer the community and the public life, but on the one hand, private individuals and, on the other, the state."[165] Remembering Canetti's discussion above about how the crowds determine the way the individuals act, it is apt to cite Foucault's further detections on modern societies:

> Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth; behind the great abstractions of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces; the circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and a centralization of knowledge...it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.[166]

To be on the safe side, therefore, the residents of the System of surveillance always think that they are constantly observed and, taking it for granted, they neither consider escaping from an institution nor cheating it, since they know that whoever conforms most is granted with more money, higher position or one (more) title preceding his or her name, which can be summarized as the "great abstractions of exchange" as Foucault puts it. He employs the image of Panopticon as a metaphor to discuss and analyze how discipline and punishment are maintained in modern societies and, most remarkably amongst his contemporary playwrights, Harold Pinter, long before Foucault, understands and turns his land's post-war condition into a play, **The Birthday Party**.

The whole effect of such a system, then, is the fear element which leads to the discouragement of individuals. Charles Simic's poem titled **Fear** summarizes most

165 Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, p. 216.
166 Ibid., p. 217.

beautifully and poetically all the notions explained so far about the hidden violence that power makes use of in order to dominate and control individuals so as to form unity in society: “Fear passes from man to man/ Unknowing,/ As one leaf passes its shudder/ To another./ All at once the whole tree is trembling./ And there is no sign of the wind.”[167]

It is discussed above that in the crucial scenes of interrogation in the play, the concepts about which Goldberg and McCann talk (success, position, richness, pride) are like the branches of a tree whose root is the System itself. Therefore, the individuals, that is, the leaves of the tree that concurrently compose crowds are nourished from the same root and the unity that this root provides makes the leaves affected by one another so that the order is maintained. As befitting the theory of surveillance, under which the observer is not visible and/or known, there is “no sign of the wind” to reveal how this order is actually arranged and managed.

In terms of the major characters of **The Birthday Party**, Stanley, metaphorically, appears as a leaf that prefers abandoning the survival root so as to put down roots and lead an independent, free and new life by coming into leaf, so fresh and full of spirit and vigour. However, this is not rendered possible by Goldberg and McCann, who are, in Arthur Ganz's terms, “extensions...from a common center,”[168] like the main branches of a tree. They do not allow Stanley to realize his freedom, which suggests together with Fromm's discussion that one is never free from the bondage of authority, the System. In other words, Stanley becomes the outsider or the 'other' that has to be imprisoned in and therefore left alone to question his being and nothingness to death. In contrast, since the powerful group, that is, Goldberg and McCann follow the path of social obedience and never take liberties, they see no need in questioning their existence in life and turn out to be cuts out for what the System requires. Thus, they believe in outdated clichés and lead their lives accordingly, passing on these old, so-called values to younger generations, so that the members of it can shape their outlooks and attitudes in perfect obedience. This can be observed in most social institutions such as family, marriage, education

167 Charles Simic, **Fear**, May, 24, 2007 (Online)
http://ageofjahiliyah.wordpress.com/2007/05/24/fear-by-charles-simic/, 15 April 2011.
168 Ganz, op. cit., p. 15.

and religion, which proves Pinter's play's quality as a poetic image of coercion that is subtly implemented in societies in the form of hidden violence and rules individuals for social unity.

However, within the whole discussion of the System, there comes a significant junction where putting all the blame on the System solely seems to remain unfair. Like Petey's, the most aware yet self-indulgent character of **The Birthday Party** who takes cognizant of Stanley's abduction but does not act to prevent, it is the greatest guilt of the obedient public. It is because of the System that releases fear for individuals through which they are forced to 'prefer' refraining from acting against it, but then, it is due to this submissive guilt of humanity that the System can continue working perfectly. Thus Petey, being between the devil and the deep blue sea, *chooses* not to act in order to be able to keep his (way of) life safe unlike Meg, the victim of familial, patriarchal repression, who is not even aware that she has options. As a result of such social ignorance and inaction, the System can entrench its ideals within societies so smoothly that one regards it quite natural and normal, and cannot act against it.

All in all, Harold Pinter's first full-length play **The Birthday Party** locates itself as one of the most pervading manifestations of hidden, subtle violence in his canon and in the entire oeuvre of English literature. Similar to Petey's infamous line that diffuses into Pinter's life, this poetic image is also pervading because it does not provide its audience with any kind of catharses that would help the members of the audience release their emotions and be thankful for their own situation. Rather, as Hobson describes above, the violence and the image of it breathe in the air and this is what Pinter displays in the most disturbing and desperate way especially with his focus on the first and the last scenes of the play, where everything is seemingly the same on the surface, but a lot has changed from within and in depth through Stanley's gradual fading away that leads to his loss of speech and dehumanization.

Crimini di Pace[1]: Sarah Kane's Blasted and Social Violence

"*In old days men had the rack. Now they have the press.*"
Oscar Wilde

"*All that is to be found in love, in crime, in war, in madness*
the theatre must return to us if it is to become essential again."
Antonin Artaud

"*Theatre is all about location, location, location.*"
Aleks Sierz.

In **Guernica** (1937), Pablo Picasso not only strikingly depicts the cruelties of war and sufferings of innocent individuals but also helps deepen its concept through a famous anecdote that has now been inseparable from the painting itself. Any simple search about the painting would reveal the story, yet what becomes more significant for the aim of this chapter is that it is also cited by Slavoj Žižek in his book titled **Violence**: "According to the well-known anecdote, a German officer visited Picasso in his Paris studio during the Second World War. There he saw *Guernica* and, shocked at the modernist 'chaos' of the painting, asked Picasso: 'Did you do this?' Picasso calmly replied: 'No, *you* did this!'"[2] In this brief, precise exchange there is, of course, more than Picasso's sarcasm. Firstly, the idea of violence caused actually by the German officer, who stands for the ruling authority, is thrown into his face. Next, since he considers Picasso as the agent to represent violence rather than himself, the officer's prolonged (deliberate) ignorance is revealed and finally, as the rest of the story is not known, there is the question whether or not the officer walked away contemplating on what he had just been made aware of and took any action against it. It seems that, instead of taking any measurements, the 'German officer' as a symbolic ruler of power must have chosen to manipulate society for power's sake, just like the US Secretary of State Colin Powell who commands his officers to cover up the painting **Guernica** hanging up on the wall before starting to present the beneficial cases of war against Iraq to the Security Council.[3] Altogether, these two

1 Inspired from Franco Basaglia's essay's title "Peace-Time Crimes".
2 Slavoj Žižek, **Violence**, (London: Profile Books, 2009), p. 9.
3 **The Guernica Tapestry**, 3 April 2009, (Online)
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/newsnight/review/7979783.stm, 5 April 2012.

instances point not only to the power of art but also to the ruling power's knowledge of this. Therefore, the triangle is set: the manipulated society, the ruling power, and art, that is, the In-Yer-Face Theatre in this case. Like Picasso, British playwrights of the Nineties do have issues to hit in the face of the audience.

Leaving 1930s aside and moving to 2000s, the year 2001 can be marked as a crucial date, because Aleks Sierz coins the term In-Yer-Face Theatre in order to describe the violent, brutal British plays of the Nineties. However, the above statements and questions still persist in a way that is similar to the aim of the so-called In-Yer-Face plays. What are these plays throwing in our face? Whose face is Sierz talking about and, more importantly, given that individuals like wearing, symbolically, different masks everyday, which face exactly? What would change if they were almost literally hit in the face by the monstrosities and shock tactics in the plays? There remain such questions unexplained and hence, employing social violence in relation to the British society as an overarching theme, this chapter focuses on Sarah Kane's first and most confrontational play **Blasted** (1995) and by examining the functions, the process and the reasons why such plays of extremities have come to be nominated as In-Yer-Face plays, it argues that the worst of violence is actually created during peace times.

2.1 Manipulative and Manipulated Outburst

Following its debut at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in Sloane Square, **Blasted** received tons of negative reactions from various theatre critics of the time, who were prepossessed by the extreme violence in the play and thus missed its core meaning. As briefly compiled by Sierz, the most common imputations are: "'disgusting', 'disturbing', 'degrading' and 'depressing'. Kane's 'atrocity play' attracted labels such as 'prurient psycho-fantasies', 'unadulterated brutalism' and 'degradation in the raw'. Purple passages likened it to 'having your face rammed into an overflowing ashtray' or said it left 'a sour taste in the mind'."[4] Even more infamously, the drama critic Jack Tinker of the **Daily Mail** wrote a review titled "This Disgusting

4 Aleks Sierz, **In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today**, (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p. 95.

Feast of Filth”[5]. These comments made due to the play's luridness are as blind in being unable to see the simple fact as Ian, the frustrated, sick to death monster and the xenophobic tabloid journalist of **Blasted**. The fact is that the play is not solely about a specific war or the representation of sex and violence in their most disgusting forms, but precisely about “death, and the attitude of the living towards it.”[6] Such a fragile, tender subject is quite suitable for misconception, because, on Ian's cannibalisation towards the end of the play, it is hardly possible to interpret **Blasted** as actually being about human attitude towards death. The shocking cruelties of war, violence, sex, brutality, racism, and labelling would apparently cast a grey cloud over this frame, yet, then again it is nothing but these concepts that lead to social violence and death, which, in return, also display the human attitude towards the latter. In other words, the early critics fail to recognize the connection between the violent incidents in an expensive hotel room (the initial setting) and the war in Bosnia, a war that influences Kane while writing her play:[7] “So what could possibly be the connection between a common rape in a Leeds hotel room and what's happening in Bosnia?”[8] asks Kane and answers: “Of course, it's obvious. One is the seed and the other is the tree.”[9] This assertion and the metaphors were “misunderstood as a childish attempt to shock.”[10] However, the connection is that the tree is the war (violence, consequently death) and the seeds are the living human beings that lead to such violence. In other words, **Blasted** displays what Pinter implicitly hinted at in the characters of Meg and Petey in **The Birthday Party**. In brief, Kane's deserved reception in Britain takes place after she has written four more plays and hung herself with her shoelaces in King's College Hospital. Together with her newer plays (**Phaedra's Love**, **Cleansed**, **Crave**, **4:48 Psychosis**, **Skin**), her death pokes critics to re-evaluate **Blasted.** Michel Billington confesses that “Writing about the play the

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5 Ibid., pp. 94-95.
6 Sean Carney, “The Tragedy of History in Sarah Kane's Blasted,” (**Theatre Survey**, Vol. 46 No. 2, Nov., 2005), p. 278.
7 After watching a woman of Srebrenica crying for help on TV, Kane decides that the already started story between a man and a woman should change, because in the middle of such violence going on around the world, their story would be irrelevant. Therefore, she keeps the same characters but, momentarily changes the course of the play by planting a mortar bomb and making the setting blast.
8 **Sarah Kane: interviewed by Dan Rebellato**, (Royal Halloway, University of London), 3 November 1998, p. 6.
9 Ibid., p. 7.
10 Sarah Kane, **Complete Plays**, (London: Methuen Drama, 2001), p. x.

morning after, I took refuge in a defensive irony of which I have long felt ashamed."[11] Others like Tinker and Charles Spencer in the **Daily Telegraph** accepted that "[they] were all wrong."[12]

The gap between the negative perceptions of **Blasted** and its later confirmation accommodates the major reason why this play is examined in this study. A similar story in a completely distinct form is woven throughout the play through the stories and (inter) actions of Ian and the Soldier, who appears as a destructive intruder. Like the critics, Ian is also a journalist who is figuratively blinded and manipulated by the truth-distorting media, and the Soldier 'helps' him see the truth by literally blinding him. Thus, it helps me juxtapose the actions in the play and the aim of In-Yer-Face plays in such a way that serves for the aforementioned argument of this chapter.

On being asked why she received so many vitriolic and/or personal reviews, Kane provides a relatively long reply by referring to the critics:

> I honestly think it's because they don't know what else to say. If they don't know what to say about the work, they go for the writer. Or the director, or the actors...But I think largely what happened was that what I attempted to do, and probably succeeded, was to create a form for which I couldn't think of an obvious direct precedent so it wasn't possible to say: "This form is exactly like the form in a play written 20 years ago." I wanted to create a form that hadn't happened before. And because the form hadn't happened before, no one knew what to say...if they don't have a clear framework within which to locate the play then they can't talk about it. So they have to talk about other things, such as the writer's personal life, their mental health, whatever it might be.[13]

Despite its subjectivity, Kane's explanation seems to be valid especially when the reception of Osborne's **Look Back in Anger**, which marks the beginning of New

11 Michel Billington, **State of the Nation: British Theatre Since 1945**, (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 355.
12 Ibid., p. 355.
13 **Sarah Kane: interviewed by Dan Rebellato**, pp. 1-2.

Writing in Britain, is taken into consideration. It, too, received torrential reviews[14] celebrating the merits of this socio-realistic play which deals with the state of nation. The criticism was all about the play itself, because the critics were familiar with the form and content of it. However, **Blasted** provides no safe grounds on which critics could build their arguments, due to "'...the play being experiential rather than speculative. The title refers not only to the content but also to the impact it seems to have had on audiences. What makes the play experiential is its form.' *Blasted* is not a classic issue play that weighs up pros and cons. 'In *Blasted*, the form and content attempt to be one. The form is the meaning'"[15] Therefore, the leading Kane critic Graham Saunders is right to analyse in his book titled **Love me or kill me: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes** that "Looking back at those early reviews, what in fact *really* seemed to disturb the critics about *Blasted* was that they ultimately failed to consider or make sense of either its structure or its content. Here was a play making demands that critics chose to either ignore, scornfully dismiss, or react against with mock outrage."[16] Yet, apart from these traits, there are more to the play that carries it a step further within In-Yer-Face.

Along with the form and content, another outstandingly distinguishing characteristic of the dramatic strategy employed in **Blasted** is that "Her characters make no lengthy 'state-of-the nation' speeches nor are they usually representative in themselves of any political or social issue. In fact her characters elude psychological verisimilitude and do not allow us with any certainty to pin down their moral standpoint."[17] In addition, it is not only the characters' moral standpoints that cannot be pinned down but also the unity of time, place and action, because Kane prefers to be elusive with them. To be able to create a link between the story of the two people in the hotel room and the bomb suddenly destroying that very room by changing it into hell, Kane "[keeps] the same place but alter the time and action...Or...[reverses] it and [looks] at it the other way around: that the time and place stay the same, no the time and the action stay the same, but the place changes. It depends actually how you

14 Sierz, op. cit., pp. 15-16.
15 Sierz, op. cit., p. 98.
16 Graham Saunders, **Love me or Kill me: Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes**, (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002), p. 10.
17 Saunders, op. cit., p. 9.

look at the play. You can look at it either way."[18] The slippery quality of such a dramatic form parallels the meaning of the play, which is simply the following: "what happens in war – suddenly, violently, without any warning whatsoever, people's lives are completely ripped to pieces...are thrown into complete chaos with absolutely no warning whatsoever."[19] Thus, as mentioned before, what is left on stage after the main action in the play (a bomb blasting) is various attitudes of the living towards dying and death in both peace and war time, presented in an unfamiliar form with a forcible content.

Now that so much has been told about how **Blasted** is initially reflected in the British press, it is also necessary to talk of a detail which hints at the manipulative role of the media and paves the way for a further argument in this chapter that the media is interrelated with social violence, which is the major theme of the play in question. In his book **1956 and All That: The Making of Modern British Drama**, Dan Rebellato, by referring to the press reviews after the debut of Osborne's **Look Back in Anger**, writes that "The story of British theatre in 1956 has been so often retold that its shape, its force, its power and meaning have been lost in the familiarity of the telling."[20] Most probably, there were less people watching the play than writing or commenting on it: "despite the fact that *Look Back in Anger* was constantly brought back into the Court's repertory during 1956 and 1957, the biggest box office draw of those years was Devine's Christmas revival of William Wycherley's Restoration classic *The Country Wife* (1675)."[21] More or less, this is what happened with **Blasted** as well. There were so many talks, comments and reviews on the play that its perception was altered and/or manipulated. In one of her interviews, Kane angrily asserts that "'My first play at the Theatre Upstairs got extremely negative press reactions, because of the content of the play. I am not really happy to list that content because that is what the press did. Actually taking events out of their context does not do justice to my play."[22] Similarly, Sean Carney, in his essay titled "The Tragedy of History in Sarah Kane's Blasted", claims that "The

18 **Sarah Kane: interviewed by Dan Rebellato**, p. 7.
19 Ibid., p. 7.
20 Rebellato, **1956 and All That**, pp. 225-226.
21 Aleks Sierz, **Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today**, (London: Methuen Drama, 2011), p. 21.
22 Saunders, op. cit., p. 9.

violence in Blasted was similarly decontextualized and sensationalized in the British press."[23] Overall, the initial prejudices of the critics against the play surely caused a misconception due to the reviews removing the content of the play out of its context. Then, within this gap of perception can be located the play-media (as power)-audience (society) triangle so that the discussion of the questions posed about In-Yer-Face Theatre at the beginning of the chapter can be enabled.

2.2 Is That Today's Ideological Outlook on Your Face?

Sierz explains the phrase 'in-yer-face' to be "originated in American sports journalism during the mid-seventies...It implies that you are being forced to see something close up, that your personal space has been invaded. It suggests the crossing of normal boundaries."[24] As for the theatre of this label, it is

> any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message. It is a theatre of sensation...often such drama employs shock tactics, or is shocking because it is new in tone or structure, or because it is bolder or more experimental than what audiences are used to...it also taps into more primitive feelings, smashing taboos, mentioning the forbidden, creating discomfort. Crucially, it tells us more about who we really are. Unlike the type of theatre that allows us to sit back and contemplate what we see in detachment, the best In-Yer-Face theatre takes us on an emotional journey, getting under our skin....In short, it describes perfectly the kind of theatre that puts the audience in just such a situation.[25]

To illustrate, visualize, and connect Sierz's explanation to a more practical experience, I would like to refer to a picture of violence published as the banner headline in the **Haber Türk** and to the reaction the Turkish readers have shown.

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23 Sean Carney, "The Tragedy of History in Sarah Kane's Blasted," **The American Society for Theatre Research**, Vol. 46 No. 2, 25 October 2005, p. 274.
24 Sierz, **In-Yer-Face**, p. 4.
25 Sierz, op. cit., p. 4.



The picture shows a half-naked woman lying on a stretcher with a big knife stabbed in her back.[26] Effects of censoring such as blurring are hardly used. It was something definitely disturbing, even shocking to "the spectator's habitual gaze."[27] Like the negative reactions after **Blasted**'s debut, a large majority of people furiously reacted and verbally attacked the newspaper on the grounds that it was neither ethical nor moral to publish such a picture. This is to say that, because there are no technical effects employed to polish and smooth the representation of the violence committed, there is nothing, as Sierzs says, that allows the audience to "sit back and contemplate" what is seen in detachment. In other words, elevated from their safe "speculative" positions to an "experiential" floating on air without a net underneath, their familiarity to the ways of representing such incidents is broken, just like Kane's effectively setting up and exploding the first scene's "naturalism to lead the audience into the chaos of civil war and domestic violence, when the familiar and mundane become uncontrollable, dangerous, and terrifying."[28]

On the other hand, the news programmes and papers of those days in Turkey revealed that a limited number of advocates of that publication instantly issued a call for taking an immediate action towards preventing such violence and/or raising awareness, which proves the aim in publishing such a picture. Under the title "You are Disturbed, Aren't You?", the editorial director of the paper, who is both applauded and dismissed, writes that pretending not to know about the real violence behind a woman's purple eye, people live comfortably. Yet, putting the reality in its

26 The picture of violence (Online) 5 November 2012.
http://www.iklimim.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/haberturk_7_ekim_manseti.jpg
27 Sierz, op. cit., p. 5.
28 Annabelle Singer, "Don't Want to be This: The Elusive Sarah Kane," **TDR**, Vol. 48 No. 2, Summer, 2004, p. 146.

rawest form into their eyes means disturbing their conscience so that they cannot ignore and therefore give way to such violence any more.[29] Although the ethical aspect of this publication is arguable, surely, through this traumatic picture, the audience is taken by "the scruff of the neck" and is shocked. Similarly, Peter Buse, discussing the relationship between the trauma theory[30] and **Blasted**, asserts that "Trauma is a kind of brutalizing shock, and it is for submitting her audiences to exactly this, in heavy doses, that Kane has been both applauded and dismissed"[31] in its debut. Namely, she breaks the familiarity of the audience and disturbs their conscience, like the picture does in the Turkish newspaper.

Yet, apart from Sierz who evaluated the Nineties retrospectively, there are two other significant names that have helped shape the theatre of the Nineties. Even if they did not nominate their descriptions of drama as In-Yer-Face, the content of their ideas accommodates pretty much of what Sierz means by it. The first one is the father of the Théâtre de la Cruauté (Theatre of Cruelty), Antonin Artaud. Writing as early as 1938, he asserts in his **The Theatre and Its Double** that

> The agonizing and catastrophic period in which we live makes us sense the urgent need for a theatre which will not be left behind by the events of the day, and which will have within us deep resonance and which will dominate the instability of the times we live in. Our long familiarity with theatre as a form of distraction has led us to forget the idea of a serious theatre, a theatre which will shove aside our representations, and breathe into us the burning magnetism of images and finally will act upon us in such a way that there will take place within us a therapy of the soul whose effects will not be forgotten. All

29 Fatih Altaylı, "Rahatsız Oldunuz Değil mi?" (Online) 5 November 2012, My Translation. http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/fatih-altayli/677372-rahatsiz-oldunuz-degil-mi, My translation.
30 Peter Buse discusses that although the trauma theory has blossomed in the USA, its historical and intellectual roots are found in Europe, within Freud's essay titled "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920) in which he explains the repetition compulsion as being a subject unconsciously reliving and even acting out a traumatic experience from the past not just once but repeatedly. Furthermore, Cathy Caruth's detection of the soldier image repeatedly remembering the violent death of his friend in her **Unclaimed Experience** dominates the century and also points to the fact that it was not coincidental that Freud 'discovered' repetition compulsion right after World War I.
31 Peter Buse, **Drama Plus Theory: Critical Approaches to Modern British Drama**, (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001), p. 173.

> action is cruelty. It is with this idea of action pushed to its extreme limits that the theatre will renew itself.[32]

Considering the date he writes, Artaud's stress on images in theatre is interesting in that he believes that the cinema, which had become popular back then, assassinated the audience with shadows, which, "when filtered through a machine, no longer are able to reach our senses."[33] Thus, another factor that constitutes my choice to analyse **Blasted** in this study is the fact that "Kane's canon brims with a uniquely theatrical vision. Not dominated by dialogue, her plays use images and movement to re-imagine the British stage."[34] Consequently, this makes her play stronger in passing the message to the audience, as it is explained in detail later.

The next name is another playwright with another term: Howard Barker, who coins the term Theatre of Catastrophe in the late 1990s to describe his plays of violence, power and sexuality. In his book entitled **Arguments for a Theatre**, the essays he writes are interpreted to "exert a huge impact on [young theatre artists'] generation"[35], that is, the playwrights of the Nineties. Referring to the pervasive entity of the tiresome state-of-the-nation plays of the preceding decades, Barker maintains that "Only when an audience renounces its trained, servile attitude to narrative and its critical-realist habits"[36] can it avoid throwing light "on a subject, elucidating and illuminating its meaning for audience".[37] This is to say that

> The notion of the audience as an indivisible authority with rights of judgement over worked of imagination is central to the Critical Theatre, but it is an authority only so long as the dramatist regards himself as tutor, enlightener, truth-teller. If he or she refuses to plead an argument, and offers instead the spectacle of a free imagination disciplined not by morality but by an aesthetic of

32 Antonin Artaud, James O. Morgan, "Theatre and Cruelty," **The Tulane Drama Review**, Vol. 2 No. 3, May, 1958, p. 75.
33 Ibid., p. 75.
34 Ken Urban, "An Ethics of Catastrophe: The Theatre of Sarah Kane," **A Journal of Performance and Art**, Vol. 23 No. 3, Sep., 2001, p. 40.
35 Ibid., p. 40.
36 Howard Barker, **Arguments for a Theatre**, (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997), p. 148.
37 Urban, op. cit., p. 40.

> language and vision the audience is obliged to approach the work with neither power nor contempt...The net effect of this is that the stage acquires an authority over the audience, and in symbolic space this would entail the audience sitting on an inferior place to the actor, who is no longer the didactic agent of clarity but something dangerously unreliable...hypnotic and unlicensed. This is a theatre which abolishes debate, in which the play is a substitute for debate, and without obligation to notions of entertainment or enlightenment, neither 'delightful' nor instructive, it resolves nothing – on the contrary, resolution is anathema: it is tragedy without catharsis, tragedy in which the audience is implicated in the acts of cruelty it witnesses, and from which there is no relief or refuge in the reiteration of the utilitarian concept of the public good. It is, consequently, a theatre of silence and contemplation.[38]

In the above quotation, it can be noticed that Barker stresses the relationship between theatre and audience. He supports a theatre that "abolishes debate" for its audience, which consequently approves **Blasted** as a catastrophic play, because as Kane explains, the audience could not know how to react to this radical play, which means that it hinders any potential debate over the so-expected content about the pros and cons of a social issue. To juxtapose all three assertions, then, it can be put forward that a theatre of "silence and contemplation" should "breathe into us" by taking us to an "emotional journey" in order to get under the skin and help us notice "who we really are." Paralleling this idea, Kane, in her interview with Sierz claims that "If theatre can change lives, then it can change society...theatre is not an external force acting on society, but a part of it. It's a reflection of the way people within that society view the world."[39] Overall, it is clear that except for Artaud due to the date he writes, most of the well-known post-war playwrights' declarations are populated with desirous calls for a theatre of extremes that would so disturb the audience as to lead it to a change and consequently change a society as well.

Reasons for that need of change are various. However, the most outstanding

38 Barker, op.cit., p. 120.
39 Sierz, op. cit., p. 93.

one is Margaret Thatcher's conservative reign (1979-1990) which pervades the childhood and/or adolescence years of playwrights such as Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Philip Ridley, Martin McDonagh and David Greig. In order to be able to form the background to such playwright's work – in this case, Kane's **Blasted –** it is necessary to mention the period briefly. As Ken Urban summarizes, "The youth culture of the 90s often felt that no political alternative existed, just a monolith of the same. No event exacerbated that feeling in England, perhaps, more than the Yugoslav crisis, where both political sides eschewed any call for intervention and the media looked on indifferently at atrocities occurring only a short plane ride away."[40] In addition, apart from the politics, another issue of the period that directly appears in **Blasted** is the idea of 'political correctness' movement, "with its call for positive representations of women, gays, and other minorities...The new generation argues that there is no such thing as a 'correct' representation. Their plays often critique the conservative ideology that deems certain characters and subject matter unsuitable for art."[41] To illustrate, this is reflected in **Blasted** through the fragile and young Cate's football fanaticism which startles Ian, a brutal character who finds her clothes to be like that of lesbos[42] – a labelling that befits the logic of the conservative 'correct' representation period.

Together with these, the theatre policy and plays of the period are also worth noting since they are among the causes of the emergence of In-Yer-Face plays. Michel Billington explains that "Thatcherism had a profound effect on both the style and content of British theatre; and in many ways the medium is still permeated by the influence of the market forces,"[43] because in the Thatcherite era, the aim is to obtain the maximum revenue from the theatres. After the shift from subsidy to commercial sponsorship, "the only test of our ability to succeed is whether we can attract enough customers"[44] to the theatre. Billington interprets those words uttered by Thatcher's successor Richard Luce as the changing outlook on the performing arts: from audiences to customers. Therefore, the British stage, in the late seventies

40 Urban, op.cit., p. 39.
41 Ibid., p. 39.
42 Kane, op. cit., pp. 7-19.
43 Billington, op.cit., p. 283.
44 Ibid., p. 283.

and the eighties, was colonized by the musicals which, “In their wealth-making capacity and corporatism,...were the perfect expression of Thatcherite values: plays on the other hand, were less immediately popular and often expressed the obstinately dissenting vision of cranky individuals.”[45] Furthermore, a similar comment by Urban also reveals an interesting fact about the period, which connotes **Blasted**'s protagonist Ian, the tabloid journalist. Referring to the playwrights of the period, Urban reveals that “They had grown tired of the epic pedagogical dramas of the 1970s and 80s by writers such as David Hare and David Edgar, whose school of critical realism approaches political subjects with a journalistic eye, and it must be noted that there is a long tradition of journalists turning to playwriting in England.”[46] Therefore, this is why Ian is like one of those playwrights who focus on the state of the nation only rather than on broader social issues.

Nevertheless, circumstances have started to change with the political developments in both domestic and foreign affairs. Thatcher's exit from the political arena and the fall of the Berlin Wall that is followed by a rapid collapse of other communist Eastern European regimes[47] “showed those under twenty-five that, despite the evidence of political ossification, change was possible; the end of Cold War ideological partisanship freed young imaginations.”[48] However, those who did not recognize the change – and this forms a vast majority of the British public – preferred to live under the illusion of a celebratory period in which “the phrase 'style over substance' was used to describe both British politics and culture.”[49] With the coming of the Labour Party with its confident vision, the 'Cool Britannia' phase has started, where consumerism – in every form – become, in negative terms, a dominant and an exclusive attitude of British society. Thus, whereas Ravenhill's famous play **Shopping and Fucking** (1996) depicts a society in which everything is reduced to shopping, **Blasted** on the other hand, throws in the face of the British audience their “culpability as a nation in allowing the war to continue.”[50] The “war” here refers not

45 Ibid., p. 286.
46 Urban, op.cit., p. 39.
47 Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania.
48 Sierz, op.cit., p. 36.
49 Graham Saunders, **About Kane: The Plawright and the Work**, (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 14.
50 Ibid., p. 18.

only to the Yugoslavian war but also to any kind of violence that is represented in the play.

Overall, now that a brief outline of the period has been provided, it is time to examine what Kane desires to show to the members of her audience in order to lead to a change in them and consequently, in society. To be able to do this, it is apt to begin with a parallel drawn among **Blasted**, **Frankenstein**, Žižek's example of "today's ideological landscape"[51] in his aforementioned book and the main title of this chapter, that is, peace-time crimes.

In the final moments of Scene Four, while Ian, now raped and his eyes sucked out by the Soldier, and Cate are carrying out a superficial discussion on death that befits the play's core question of how individuals react towards it, Ian assures Cate that "Everything's got a scientific explanation"[52], but Cate asserts that she "believe[s] in God."[53] Although there are no more direct references to science and religion, these two lines following each other are significant in that they allude to the notion of the creator and the created in both scientific and religious terms. The relationship between the two connotes Ian's violent actions on Cate that result in a devastating war in the second half of the play, because at this point Ian is the creator of social violence, which becomes the outcome, the created. However, in literature, from Shakespeare's **The Tempest** to Goethe's **Faust**, from Shelly's **Frankenstein** to Wells' **The Invisible Man** and to George Bernard Shaw's **Pygmalion**, it is a generally known way of interpretation that a character consciously or unconsciously trying to create something beyond his power is doomed to become a victim. This is because of the fact that to create is to imitate God, which, in return, means questioning God and which results in God destroying his man.[54] Of course, the most well-known and frequently cited example is **Frankenstein**, which is recently adapted by Nick Dear for stage and has been performed at London National Theatre since 2011. If **Frankenstein** still appears today in different art mediums, then this must mean that it contains an idea that is contemporarily and globally valid and can be connected to

51 Žižek, op. cit., p. 18.
52 Kane, op. cit., p. 52.
53 Ibid., p. 52.
54 Sema Ege, **İngiliz Edebiyatında Dört Korku Yapıtı**, (Ankara: Zirve Ofset, 1995), p. 67. My translation.

cultural, psychological and social lives of individuals. Therefore, Kane, like the creature in **Frankenstein** asks, wants her audience to start asking existential questions such as "Who am I? Where am I from?"[55], whose answers would hinder individuals' involvement in social violence and lead to a positive change in society, because otherwise, individuals, like the blind De Lacey who beats the creature that hopes for friendship, would always hold on to the following ignorant belief that violence is the way it has always used to be:

> **Creature** Why do men live in herds in cities?...
> **De Lacey** We band together to help one another, and do good.
> **Creature** But then you massacre each other!
> **De Lacey** Yes, it's inconsistent...
> **Creature** I do not like inconsistent! Why must it be so?
> **De Lacey** I don't know. That's the way it is.[56]

The phrase "That's the way it is" indicates nothing but obedience to the manipulative, powerful, ruling System that fends individuals off the immense land of questioning so as to inure them to follow the "line," to borrow Goldberg's word in **The Birthday Party**. Like the one in Pinter's play, there is another anonymous, powerful organisation that manipulates Ian and, because he is a journalist, manipulates the media as well. However, this is not a one-dimensional relationship but an extensive one that symbolically covers societies and their interaction with the media. By writing on the media, Noah Wardrip-Fruin in his **The New Media Reader** etymologically defines manipulation as 'handling,' which means "technical treatment of a given material with a particular goal in mind. When the technical intervention is of immediate social relevance, then manipulation is a political act."[57] Thus, different than Pinter, Kane, as befitting the period's media religion, populates her play with notions related to the media-audience relationship in order to show how shallow and "inconsistent" our attitudes towards others and even to ourselves are. The inconsistency arises from the effect that the media have been having on individuals,

55 Nick Dear, **Frankenstein**, (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), p. 22.
56 Ibid., p. 23.
57 Noah Wardrip-Fruin, **The New Media Reader**, (Massachusettes: MIT Press, 2003), p. 265.

because “every use of the media presupposes manipulation” and Kane is aware of the fact that “There is no such thing as unmanipulated writing, filming, or broadcasting. The question is therefore not whether the media are manipulated, but who manipulates them. A revolutionary play should not require the manipulators to disappear, on the contrary, it must make everyone a manipulator.”[58] Thus, with the unfelt alterations of free individuals to manipulators, leading a comfortable life dominated by the above motto is, in fact, the process of planting the seeds of violence in peace time that would transform itself as planting bombs around to supposedly stop violence, which is ironic and befits today's ideological landscape.

Žižek explains today's ideological outlook to be the structure of one thing itself being the remedy against the threat it poses and provides an example of a chocolate laxative found in the US: “It is publicised with the paradoxical injunction: 'Do you have constipation? Eat more of this chocolate!' In other words, eat the very thing that causes constipation in order to be cured of it.”[59] If the chocolate laxative example is a metaphoric one, then the social reality is that society is manipulated to employ violence in order to vanish it from home. If this is to be applied to what Kane desires to display in **Blasted**, it can be claimed that Ian follows a similar strategy. It is his taught racist and sexist violence that leads to and creates more comprehensive social violence, contrary to his expectation that his applying violence stops a greater one.

Together with this and as implied before, the newspapers and Ian's relation to them form the backbone of the notions of social violence in the play, which also encompass the ideological stance of British society. In fact, to rewrite Žižek’s example in the form of the media industry that climaxes during the late Nineties and (re)shapes the British conception of the others, it can be quoted that “it operates to perpetuate an unjust society by convincing us to accept that society.”[60] Thus, in **Blasted**, these ideas are interwoven in the character of Ian, who is so extremely manipulated and convinced that he regards and accepts the inequitable British society to be just. In order to be more specific in showing this relationship, the play

58 Ibid., p. 265.
59 Žižek, op. cit., p. 18.
60 Wardrip, op. cit., p. 259.

and the characters should be evaluated in such a way that also leads the argument to a point where the audience and theatre notions are included.

2.3 A Blasted Britishness

In the opening scene of the play, the first action after Ian and Cate's entrance to this expensive, classy hotel room (further elaboration on the setting is provided in the coming paragraphs) is Ian's throwing *"a pile of newspapers on the bed*."[61] Through this move, it is apparent that his connectedness to the newspapers is crucially significant, since this is how the play is initiated. Also, the act of throwing metaphorically stands for aggressiveness, which dominates Ian's body and soul, and renders his second line that contains a racist discourse habitual within his own character: "Tip that wog when he brings up the sandwiches."[62] Moreover, when this line is surrounded with his initial assertion that he has "shat in better places than this,"[63] it is inevitable to expect a brutal, reeking action to be performed by this bestial guy together with the story of his body and mind that is guilelessly summarized as "I stink."[64] Within such implicit ideas is located the notion of Britishness.

One crucial aspect of **Blasted** is that it "is a play that asks uncomfortable questions about British identity, and in bringing a foreign war straight into a Leeds hotel room also asks questions about British engagement with a broader Europe."[65] Of course, this is reflected through Ian, his masculinity and his profession as a tabloid journalist. He is *"45, Welsh born but lived in Leeds much of his life and picked up the accent.*"[66] For him, "English and Welsh is the same. British."[67] Yet, he is utterly prejudiced against foreigners: "Come over from God knows where have their kids and call them English they're not English born in England don't make you

61 Kane, op. cit., p. 3.
62 Ibid., p. 3.
63 Ibid., p. 3.
64 Ibid., p. 3.
65 Saunders, **Love me or Kill me**, p. 51.
66 Kane, op. cit., p. 3.
67 Ibid., p. 41.

English."[68] For him, "It's attitude"[69] that makes an individual 'real' English. However, it is revealed that his notion of "attitude" does not go beyond being a passionate, racist patriot who is so much blinded by his ultimate rejection of others: "Hate this city. Stinks. Wogs and Pakis taking over."[70] Concerning Ian's such statements, Saunders firstly detects that his "sense of nationhood is narrow and parochial" and secondly that his "involvement in the sinister organisation seems to be motivated out of this misplaced sense of Britishness"[71] upon Ian's confession that he has "Done the jobs they asked. Because [he loves] this land."[72] Therefore, it can be argued that Ian is the extension of the dehumanized Stanley in **The Birthday Party** in that Stanley has been gradually turned into a potential destroyer by the two agents (Goldberg and McCann) of the anonymous organisation throughout the play, whereas Ian appears from the very beginning as a character who has long been engaged in the dark and subtle business of the organisation. He is such a brainwashed and racist character that his innocent-seeming explanation of his job that he is "a home journalist. I don't cover foreign affairs"[73] unfolds later as a journalist dictating news stories populated with racist approaches:

> A serial killer slaughtered British tourist Samantha Scrace, S-C-R-A-C-E, in a sick murder ritual comma, police revealed yesterday point new par. The bubbly nineteen year old from Leeds was among seven victims found buried in identical triangular tombs in an isolated New Zealand forest point new par. Each had been stabbed more than twenty times and placed face down comma, hands bound behind their backs point new par. Caps up, ashes at the site showed the maniac had stayed to cook a meal, caps down point new par. Samantha comma, a beautiful redhead with dreams of becoming a model comma, was on the trip of a lifetime after finishing her A levels last year point.[74]

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., p. 4.
71 Saunders, op. cit., p. 51.
72 Kane, op. cit., p. 30.
73 Ibid., p. 48.
74 Ibid., p. 13.

These cruel stories not only remind one of the terrifying stories in **The Pillowman**, but also signify Ian's narrow perception of nationhood: “The story concentrates on just one single murdered girl whose connection to Leeds is the sole justification for the story in Ian's newspaper. The other victims, who we assume to be from other nationalities, are ignored almost completely.”[75] Thus, Ian, under the influence of the racist point of view of the organisation to which he belongs, manipulates the reading public in the same way. What is worse is that he does this quite consciously, because, as mentioned above, he is extremely convinced that he loves his land. However, he is not aware of the fact that through such news stories he writes, he, if not directly, gradually and implicitly infuses society with the notions of labelling, discrimination and racism. This parallels Austin T. Turk's discussion of the sociology of terrorism in his homonym essay, in which it is maintained that “terrorism is not a given in the real world but is instead an interpretation of events and their presumed causes. And these interpretations are not unbiased attempts to depict truth but rather conscious efforts to manipulate perceptions to promote certain interests at the expense of others.”[76] What proves the validity of this assertion is Kane’s explanation that the story Ian dictates is “'actually straight from the *Sun*. They're not fictional at all. I just changed the names and the places and I think added a couple of details and took a couple out – just because I wanted to make them slightly different, but I did want them to be the real thing.'”[77] It is clear that Ian's story is not made-up for dramatic purposes. Consequently, his biased interest is only in Samantha just because she is from Leeds and his ignorance of the other victims creates a false premise for the public about the perception of violence committed. As Turk interprets,

> authorities have typically ignored or downplayed the political significance of such violence, opting to portray and treat the violence as apolitical criminal acts by deranged or evil individuals, outlaws or gangsters, or “imported” agitators...In official public usage, terrorism is far more likely to refer to incidents associated with agents and

75 Saunders, op. cit., p. 52.
76 Austin T. Turk, “Sociology of Terrorism,” **Annual Review of Sociology**, Vol. 30, 2004, p. 272.
77 Saunders, op. cit., p. 52.

> supporters of presumably foreign-based terrorist organisations...than with the violence of home-grown militants acting in the name of such groups.[78]

Leaving Samantha aside and continuing with Ian and his prism, it can be claimed that he is nothing but a home-grown militant acting for the mysterious, racist organisation which, at the expense of other victims, prefers to reflect violence as something acted by deranged minds ("sick" is the word Ian employs to depict the murder and hence the murderer), as it is explained in the above quotation. In **Blasted**, both the powerful organisation and the media, which is obviously controlled by that very organisation, become abstract concepts that the public cannot see but is manipulated by. In this subtle relationship, Ian becomes a mediator who "helps to shape public perceptions on who are to be perceived as heroes and villains in the minds of the British public" through his "filter for 'truth'."[79] Yet, of course, his idea of heroes and villains is also shaped sharply by the organisation and this is also proved to be true when his racist outlook on the foreigners is taken into consideration. For him, every single foreigner in the country is dirt, a villain and even a possible terrorist, as his former comment that they make the city stink underlines. Therefore, like Stanley's disturbance by the so-called smell in **The Birthday Party**, Ian is uncomfortable not because of his fear of them but because of his hatred towards their entity which, from Ian's perspective, results in his present situation.

Although no clear reason is provided for why he is wanted, it can be concluded that Ian has probably, either intentionally or accidentally, done something wrong. By referring to the other members of the dirty organisation, Ian explains his thoughts to Cate: "Think they're trying to kill me."[80] Furthermore, his suspicion is empowered when he innocently informs Cate about why he did not call her: "I'm being listened to."[81] And the probable reason for all these can be the fact that he has

78 Turk, op. cit., p. 272.
79 Saunders, op. cit., p. 53.
80 Kane, op. cit., p. 30.
81 Ibid., p. 29.

"Signed the Official Secrets Act,"[82] but possibly broke the agreement or thought to have broken it. Hence, he is in a restless situation continuously as befitting the angst of modern man. Despite his blind determinism in narrating the news stories from a manipulated point of view even from the hotel room, he is not comfortable about having to dictate the news via telephone. While narrating the news, Ian "*Covers the mouthpiece*" of the telephone and talks "*Into the mouthpiece.*"[83] This action suggests that Ian is constantly aware of the fact that he is under surveillance and he may be murdered like Samantha in the newspaper anytime. Therefore, neither he nor the place he occupies is really comfortable. However, there is a significant division here that should be noted down. Saunders asserts that Ian's narrating the news constitutes a "stronger dramatic point about Ian being made later to confront literally some of the events he reports from a comfortable distance"[84] Thus, although Ian's discomfort is at its peak, he can still continue narrating the events from a comfortable distance, which symbolically parallels Britain's ignorant (dis)engagement with the broader Europe and her culpability in letting wars continue, as mentioned earlier. As it is explained in detail later, Ian awakes only after he is made to encounter the similar terrific incidents that he narrates.

Ian's discomfort is also reflected dramatically at the early beginning of the play in two ways, one of which hints at the Pinteresque influence on Sarah Kane's drama. First of all, like the functions and meanings of the rooms and doors in Pinter's early drama, there is a similar attribution in **Blasted** as well. This is to say that "A door which does not explain itself or from which we expect some kind of explanation becomes mysterious, even ominous – it seems absurd to think of a door as ominous, but we find ourselves wondering if someone will knock on the door, come in, and make demands on us...the door becomes an extension of one's identity as well."[85] The door of the hotel room which Ian and Cate occupy is knocked on for the first time by whom the audience supposes to be the room service. However, Ian's reaction is worth quoting:

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82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., p. 12.
84 Saunders, op. cit., p. 52.
85 James R. Hollis, **Harold Pinter: The Poetics of Silence**, (Illionis: Illionis Universiry Press, 1970), p. 20.

There is a knock at the door.
Ian *starts, and* **Cate** *goes to answer it.*
Ian Don't.
Cate Why not?
Ian I said.
He takes his gun from the holster and goes to the door.
He listens.
Nothing.
Cate (Giggles.)
Ian Shh.
He listens.
Still nothing.
Ian Probably the wog with the sarnies. Open it.
Cate *opens the door.*
There is no one there, just a tray of sandwiches on the floor. She brings them in and examines them.[86]

The undertones of this comic scene are grave enough for Ian to be restless and panicking. It is not only that he may be taken away by some forces, but also that he is surrounded by those people he despises. However, on opening the door and seeing that no one is actually there, his alarmed state transforms into a contemptuous attitude towards the "wog", who is the one that is not there. The absence of the wog shows just how prejudiced Ian is towards them. In spite of his sardonic approach, a character like Ian definitely thinks that they can be potential terrorists, like the serial killer in the news he reported. For this reason, he asserts later that he "won't see [this country] destroyed by slag."[87] To him, no right-minded individual can relish a foreigner. Referring to Ian's dirty labelling of the man in charge of the room service, Cate advices Ian:

Cate You shouldn't call them that.
Ian Why not?
Cate It's not very nice.
Ian You a nigger-lover?
Cate Ian, don't.
Ian You like our coloured brethren?

86 Kane, op. cit., p. 6.
87 Ibid., p. 32.

Cate Don't mind them.
Ian Grow up.
Cate There's Indians at the day centre where my brother goes. They're really polite.
Ian So they should be.
Cate He's friends with some of them.
Ian Retard, isn't he?[88]

On Cate's explanation that she does not mind the foreigners, Ian's response suggests that he considers Cate as a child, who cannot see the 'real truth' about them contaminating his own land, that is, Britain. Later, when Cate explains that she would not shoot anyone firstly because she does not "believe in killing" and secondly because "It's wrong to kill",[89] Ian accusingly says: "Planting bombs and killing little kiddies, that's wrong. That's what they do. Kids like your brother."[90] Just because Cate's brother has learning difficulties and makes friends with wogs, Ian also considers him as a potential carrier of violence. However, Ian faces the remorseless truth of violence with the entrance of the Soldier to the room, which happens in such a twist that places Ian into a ridiculous, almost silly position, as well as leading him to realize the fact that he (and symbolically, all such people) is the seed of violence - a fact that can be seen only after he is blinded. This is to say that the danger comes from another soldier like Ian instead of foreigners: Ian is forced to confront himself. In other words, the violence that the Soldier inflicts upon Ian functions in such a way that is similar to the relationship between the audience and In-Yer-Face plays in that they attempt to cause a change in the audience.

Firstly, when compared with Ian, Kane describes the Soldier to be "worse. And I knew that, having created Ian, it was going to be a real problem having someone come through that door who made Ian look like a pussycat."[91] Therefore, again, the knocks on the door operate as a messenger signalling that danger is at the cradle and Ian's fear versus the Soldier's extreme brutality together transform into an "elaborate game of cat and mouse" [92]:

88 Ibid., p. 5.
89 Ibid., p. 32.
90 Ibid.
91 **Sarah Kane: interviewed by Dan Rebellato**, p. 15.
92 Saunders, op. cit., p. 57.

There are two loud knocks at the outer door.
Ian *draws his gun, goes to the door and listens.*
The door is tried from outside. It is locked.
There are two more loud knocks.
Ian Who's there?
Silence.
Then two more loud knocks.
Ian *looks at the door.*
Then he knocks twice.
Silence.
Then two more knocks from outside.
Ian *thinks.*
Then he knocks three times.
Silence.
Three knocks from outside.
Ian *knocks once.*
One knock from outside.
Ian *knocks twice.*
Two knocks.[93]

Turning Ian almost into a mouse, the Soldier enters to the hotel room and overshadows the violence Ian has made directly and physically to Cate, and verbally to other people he mentions throughout the play. In order to be able to contrast the Soldier's violence that is explained towards the end of this discussion, it is necessary to briefly summarize Ian's acts of violence performed on stage: He rapes Cate, forces her to perform oral sex, bites her vagina that still bleeds; threatens her by putting the gun to her head; swears, screams; curses foreigners, labels and despises gays, lesbians and football fanatics. These are happening on stage and, as if they are not enough to shock the audience, Kane writes even crueller off-stage actions for Ian that leave the spectators dumbfounded. However, with the Soldier's entrance, the absolute "shock-fest"[94] begins.

There are more functions of the character of the Soldier in the play, but the one that is relevant to the on-going analysis is that he makes Ian experience incredibly tyrannical acts of violence which are somewhat reminiscent of Ian's news stories to which he is quite indifferent and his actions towards Cate. In other words,

93 Kane, op. cit., pp. 35-36.
94 Sierz, op. cit., 36.

these actions are the ones that now make Ian confront the reality of violence in his "comfortable distance," as Saunders argues. The Soldier's violence overlaps Ian's, as it is also signalled by the echoing rhythm between them at the door, and yet they share common features as well, the most pathetic ones being the cases that they both lack love and tenderness, and are counterparts.

To start with the latter, Ian is a Welsh-born Englishman while the Soldier's origin is not mentioned clearly. However, in its initial drafts, the name of the Soldier in **Blasted** is known to be Vladek, which is a Serbian name that points to the fact that he is "very much a product of events taking place in the former Yugoslavia."[95] In the published version, on the other hand, he is nameless, but it is vividly emphasized that he is not British, because, on meeting Ian, he states that he has "Never met an Englishman with a gun before, most of them don't know what a gun is."[96] On the contrary, for Ian, the Soldier is nobody different than the murderer in the story he reported. He is a foreigner who is now spreading terror in Ian's native land and must therefore be perceived as a deranged terrorist. In Turk's further commentary on the portrayal of the terrorists in the press, it is asserted that "the established media have encouraged the belief that political violence in opposition to authority is both criminal and crazy. Assassins are widely portrayed as lone disturbed persons whose murderous acts are attributable to their individual pathologies, the consequences of loveless lives and frustrated ambitions."[97] For Ian, the Soldier is such a person. Here, Ian ignores the fact that he himself is a home-grown militant. It is nobody but himself that helps create hatred towards foreigners by focusing only on the victimization of individuals from his native land. Namely, the Soldier and Ian are the opposite ends of the System and therefore, they are the same. They are both terrorists, accusing each other for being terrorists.

The second common point that Ian and the Soldier share is their loveless lives which befit the description of terrorists in the authoritatively controlled media. The Soldier's loved one is raped and killed in a war and his longing for his lost love is portrayed in its rawest form soon after his entrance to the hotel room:

95 Saunders, op. cit., pp.52-53.
96 Kane, op. cit., p. 40.
97 Turk, op. cit., p. 274.

> *The Soldier is searching a chest of drawers. He finds a pair of Cate's knickers and holds them up.*
> **Soldier** Hers?
> **Ian** (*Doesn't answer.*)
> **Soldier** Or yours?
> *He closes his eyes and rubs them gently over his face, smelling with pleasure.*
> What's she like?...
> Is she soft?
> Is she - ?[98]

The Soldier so lacks love that even the smell of a woman's underwear can carry him into an almost daydreaming-like state. In a similar way, after the bomb explodes and the hotel is blasted, the first word uttered quite unconsciously by Ian is "Mum?"[99], which signifies his impossible longing for love, sense of security and search for home. However, both men's desire for love transforms into the brutal acts of rapes. Ian rapes Cate and as a result of this (the seed-tree relationship) the Soldier rapes Ian, which mark a moment in the theatre history where, for the first time, "the spectators have to deal with the rapes of both man and woman at the same time in the same story."[100] Therefore, Kane leaves her audience in an inexplicable situation: Which one is worse? Ian's or the Soldier's rape? Apart from that, there are more deeds of violence acted by the Soldier, which shade Ian's similar actions, if this can be an appropriate expression to depict the level of violence committed. Yet, among such enigmatic circumstances, there rises a core point which is about one of the basic questions in the play, that is, the question of justifying one's deeds of violence so that he or she can feel comfortable about them.

As the Soldier tells his story, the audience learns that he

> Went to a house just outside town. All gone. Apart from a small boy hiding in the corner. One of the others took him outside. Lay him on the ground and shot him through the legs. Heard crying in the basement. Went down. Three men

98 Kane, op. cit., pp. 37-38.
99 Ibid., p. 39.
100 Ahmet Gökhan Biçer, "Sarah Kane's Postdramatic Strategies in Blasted, Cleansed and Crave," **The Journal of International Social Research**, Vol. 4 No. 17, Spring, 2011, p. 77.

> and four women. Called the others. They held the men while I fucked the women. Youngest was twelve. Didn't cry, just lay there. Turned her over and - Then she cried. Made her lick me clean. Closed my eyes and thought of – Shot her father in the mouth. Brothers shouted. Hung them from the ceiling by their testicles.[101]

Upon these nauseating stories of extreme violence, Ian says that he has never done such things and on the Soldier's quest for confirmation, he explains that he "wouldn't forget"[102] if he did. However, the Soldier, quite indifferently and assuredly, lets Ian know that he would forget, which stresses the fact that the Soldier has already 'forgot' as much as possible in order to be able to continue with his life. After such traumatic incidents, this 'forgetting,' as Buse discusses, also befits the theory of trauma, because it is inherent in it since "the experience is too extreme to be assimilated by consciousness, to enter into the regular routes of memory, and it is therefore repressed, pushed out of consciousness."[103] Intertextually, then, in **The Birthday Party**, Stanley's possibility of being a paranoid as briefly pointed out in the first chapter turns out to be Ian and the Soldier's potential trauma in **Blasted**, just like them being each other's extensions. Apart from a one-to-one interaction with a violent incident that can lead to trauma, facing the representation of it also well agrees to what Žižek asks and clarifies about how people can continue with their lives after witnessing (the representation of) violence:

> Imagine the effect of having to watch a snuff movie portraying what goes on thousands of times a day around the world: brutal acts of torture, the picking out of eyes, the crushing of testicles – the list cannot bear recounting. Would the watcher be able to continue going on as usual? Yes, but only if he or she were able somehow to forget – in an act which suspended symbolic efficiency – what had been witnessed. This forgetting entails a gesture of what is called fetishist disavowal: 'I know, but I don't want to know that I know, so I don't know.' I know it, but

101 Kane, op. cit., p. 43.
102 Ibid.
103 Buse, op. cit., p. 177.

> I refuse to fully assume the consequences of this knowledge, so that I can continue acting as if I don't know it."[104]

While Žižek's explanation of the idea of disavowal befits the Soldier's condition in **Blasted**, Ian's ways of disavowing go beyond this relatively simpler ignorance to a point where he looks for and finds 'justifiable' reasons that prove his deeds right. Ian, like any member of the audience, knows about such violence, reads about them and even commits them. As he confesses to Cate, he is even "A Killer."[105] Nevertheless, as the Soldier keeps narrating what he has done, Ian distances himself from him, which confirms his ignorance and indifference towards violence in societies.

> **Soldier** ...I broke a woman's neck. Stabbed up between her legs, on the fifth stab, snapped her spine.
> **Ian** (*Looks sick.*)
> **Soldier** You couldn't do that?
> **Ian** No.
> **Soldier** You never killed?
> **Ian** Not like that.
> **Soldier** Not
> Like
> That
> **Ian** I am not a torturer.
> **Soldier** You are close to them, gun to head. Tie them up, tell them what you're going to do to them, make them wait for it, then...what?[106]

Examining the above dialogue, it seems that for Ian, killings are grouped into categories and his class is a different one, in which the violence committed is done for the sake of his job. In another complementary dialogue between the Soldier and Ian, Ian confusingly tries to explain:

> **Soldier** Thought you were a soldier.
> **Ian** Not like that.
> **Soldier** Not like that, they are all like that.
> **Ian** My job -

104 Žižek, op. cit., pp. 45-46.
105 Kane, op. cit., p. 30.
106 Ibid., 46.

> **Soldier** Even me – have to be. My girl – Not going back to her. When I go back. She's dead, see. Fucking bastard soldier, he -[107]

When compared, it can be noticed that in both cases Ian responds in the same way, that is, “not like that.” This is because of his limited, misconceived love for his country which has been nourished by the racist organisation he has been devotedly working for, as discussed before. As for the Soldier, although he uses the pronoun “they” to refer to other barbarous soldiers and hence distances himself, he immediately comes to 'realize' that what he has been doing is justifiable since he asserts that he “has to be.” However, the way he utters it is significant in that the punctuation marks Kane employs are quite determining. At the beginning of **Blasted**, Kane notes that “Punctuation is used to indicate delivery, not to conform to the rules of grammar.”[108] Thus, when the usage of hyphen after “Even me” is taken into consideration, the Soldier's hesitation to explain the reason and his interruption after which he jumps to the cause can be interpreted as the Soldier's thought that he does not deserve any blame for himself. In other words, he is above reproach. Just because of the fact that he “has to be”, it seems that he justifies his deeds to be right and necessary.

In her article titled **Collective Violence as Social Control**, Roberta Senechal de la Roche discusses collective violence in its different phases with different nominations. Whereas previously it was regarded as “a form of mass hysteria and the dictatorial domination of a group mind,” since the last decade it has been commonly understood as “a form of protest, a quest for justice.” Namely, it is “described as 'popular justice.'”[109] Even more importantly and in a way that parallels the level of violence that Ian and the Soldier commit, Roche maintains that

> The violence of some is more rational and comprehensible than that of others. In particular, while collective violence 'from the bottom up' by socially subordinate groups tends to be portrayed

107 Ibid., p. 44.
108 Ibid., p. 2.
109 Roberta Senechal de la Roche, “Collective Violence as Social Control,” **Sociological Forum**, Vol. 11 No. 1, Mar., 1996, p. 98.

> as reasonable and possibly even worthy of sympathetic understanding, that 'from the top down' by dominant or majority groups against minorities, the poor, or members of labor movements, is not.[110]

When **Blasted** is in question, the latter category of ‘top down’ violence becomes applicable. The historical and political aspects of the Bosnian war, which triggers Kane to write her play, go beyond the scope of this study, yet the process and the outcomes of any kind of violence are at hand and required to be discussed. In the play, Ian scorns foreigners and considers them as minorities polluting his country. Furthermore, his extreme patriotism is captured by the racist, anonymous organisation which takes Ian under its control and surveillance. Therefore, for Ian regards himself superior to the others and so does the organisation, they commit “top down” violence which is aimed at destroying the weak (foreigners) and is not considered to be rational or comprehensible. In the case of the Soldier, despite no direct information is provided, it can be deducted that he is also a soldier working in accordance with an organisation of the same sort. While he is trying to convince Ian that he would also commit such cruelties as cited, it is hinted at this possibility:

> **Soldier** You're a soldier.
> **Ian** I haven't -
> **Soldier** What if you were ordered to?
> **Ian** Can't imagine it.
> **Soldier** Imagine it....
> **Soldier** In the line of duty. For your country. Wales.[111]

Through the Soldier's method of providing context for Ian to imagine how it becomes possible to kill with torture, the conditional sentence suggests that he was ordered to do so by some racist organisation. However, in one way or another, it turns out that the Soldier can go on with his life, since he can justify that what he has done is not his own will but power's enforcement upon him. Consequently, both Ian and the Soldier appear to be stronger terrorists spreading terror from top to bottom

110 Ibid., pp. 98-99.
111 Kane, op. cit., p. 45.

and showing no sympathy for the destroyed ones. When their acts themselves are under examination, their excuses and justifications are ready: they are seeking justice in a form of so-called protest, as Rocher asserts, for the 'good' of their beloved countries. In other words, both Ian and the Soldier consider themselves to be "'clean' at home"[112] and that is how they can continue with their lives, "like [the tortures they have done] never happened."[113] This is just like the USA's campaigning her attack on Iraq as "War on Terror," with Colin Powell concealing **Guernica**, which suggests his ignorant justification like Ian and the Soldier. Moreover, it can also be associated with a parallel idea found in H. G. Wells' book titled **The War to End the War**, which refers to World War I and discusses how, in peace time, major and manipulative powers in society constitute the coming of wars.

This relation is presented not only through Ian but also through his and the Soldier's interaction. From Ian's racist perspective, the Soldier (and alike) has to be destroyed, because he does not belong to 'home.' Similarly, the Soldier, from wherever he is, regards Ian and alike as the ones that threaten the 'peace' at home and, thus, they should be terrorized. However, due to the fact that the Soldier is more monstrous than Ian, he is more aware of the reality that both of them are as violent as each other and that there is no degree of justification to violence. Therefore, the Soldier has to make Ian confront (or Ian somehow has to face) the cruelties he has done so far, which carries the argument to the discussion on the relationship of the victim and the torturer, and/or the torturer turning into the victim, that is, Ian and the Soldier, Frankenstein and the creature, Griffin and Dr. Kemp and so on. Henceforth, the very reason for violence is concurrently the cause of it in peace time as well, which is explained in reference to Ian's attitudes in the play and is provided initially with a theoretical background that is also accompanied by intertextual references such as **Frankenstein**. Subsequently, now that the relevant parts of **Blasted** is analysed, the discussion now requires alluding back to the former references in order for the main ideas to be linked together.

In a way that is similar to Victor Frankenstein who is blinded by his pursue of

112 Gaelle Ranc, **The Notions of Cruelty in the Works of Sarah Kane**, p. 6. (Online) http://www.iainfisher.com/kane/eng/sarah-kane-study-gr1.html
113 Kane, op. cit., p. 48.

the secret of life, Ian first emerges as a proud citizen of British nation who is convinced that his extreme anger and intolerance towards others would help protect his nation from them. As mentioned, this is displayed dramatically through his interaction with Cate in the first half of the play. However, in the setting of a hotel room that "lures the audience into a false sense of naturalistic security" there exists, "eclipsed behind the invisible fourth wall, that anaesthetic, insulating conspiracy Brecht found so dangerous to social engagement."[114] Therefore, the apparition of the Soldier towards the second half of the play and the raw cruelties that barge in the blasted hotel room are the consequences of Ian's unconscious creation of violence that has been constituted invisibly in a deceiving environment. Similar to Foucault's description of the unequal and inconsistent method of punishing the foreign offender that becomes the common enemy of the native, Ian becomes "worse than an enemy, for it is from within society that he delivers his blows – he is nothing less than a traitor, a 'monster'. How could society not have an absolute right over him? How could it not demand, quite simply, his elimination?"[115] So now, like the creature that indirectly destroys Frankenstein, the Soldier, who is the result (creation) of Ian's violence at the hotel room, will shatter Ian, because, as Saunders also declares, the Soldier is "an expression of Ian himself; a metaphorical creation, summoned up from the darkest recesses of his subconscious."[116] Thus, whatever Ian has done in peace time in the hotel room reappears as even worse and in a two-way interpretation, that is, what the Soldier does to Ian was done to him or to his beloved:

> The most obvious link with the first part of the play is the re-enactment of the rape Ian originally perpetrated on Cate. It is also carried out with a gun held to Ian's head, yet we realise that throughout this vicious and dehumanizing act '*the soldier is crying his heart out*', and is a form of re-enactment, as he physically copies what other soldiers have done to his girlfriend.[117]

114 Christopher Wixson, "'In Better Places': Space, Identity, and Alienation in Sarah Kane's Blasted," **Comparative Drama**, Vol. 39 No. 1, Spring, 2005, p. 76.
115 Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, p. 90.
116 Saunders, op. cit., p. 46.
117 Ibid., p. 47.

Retrospectively, then, it can be interpreted that Ian is initially the torturer, but later he becomes the tortured or he turns out to be the victim of his victimization, which shows itself as a concealed, dangerous and "vicious" outcome, to borrow Saunders' adjective, of the violent acts committed in everyday life.

In addition, to support the discussion of how a victimizer, through victimizing the others can become the victimized (or tortured), it is apt to refer once again to Žižek. Ian's restricted sense of nationhood shows itself as what Žižek describes as an "obsessive fear of harassment" which is counterpointed by the "tolerance towards others, the respect of otherness and openness towards it...the Other is just fine, but only insofar as his presence is not intrusive, insofar as this Other is not really other."[118] Furthermore and in parallel with his chocolate laxative example, Žižek asserts that "tolerance coincides with its opposite. My duty to be tolerant towards the Other effectively means that I should not get too close to him, intrude on his space. In other words, I should respect his *intolerance* of my over-proximity."[119] This situation of (in)tolerance, which is at its peak in Ian's case or in **Blasted** in general, stems from what Erich Fromm explains in his book entitled **The Sane Society**.

For Fromm, the mental health of an individual and society are inseparable. He argues that man needs peculiar conditions to be fulfilled in order to satisfy his existence. In such a basic and ancient way that is like that of animals, man can become very powerful, and thus, violent and destructive, if his hunger, thirst, need for sleep and sexual satisfaction are not met.[120] However, "even [man's] complete satisfaction is not a sufficient condition for sanity and mental health. These depend on the satisfaction of those needs and passions which are specifically human...the need for relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, the need for a sense of identity and the need for a frame of orientation and devotion."[121] This being the case, Ian's animality and the portrayal of his unfulfilled needs mount as the play progresses. Initially, he is hungry and stuffs himself with sandwiches, quenches his thirst with gin, rapes Cate to satisfy his sexual need and sleeps the night away. Towards the end

118 Žižek, op. cit., p. 35.
119 Žižek, op. cit., p. 35.
120 Erich Fromm, **The Sane Society**, (New York: Premier Book, 1955), p. 67.
121 Ibid.

of the play, similar actions that are associated with such needs are presented in their rawest forms, which show how low and awful the basic human needs can make an individual in complete solitary[122]: in quick snatches of light and darkness, Ian is seen to be masturbating, shitting, laughing hysterically, having a nightmare and crying.[123] Eventually, "*lying very still, weak with hunger,*"[124] he eats the dead baby's body that Cate brings in from the war zone outside. As it can be noticed, Ian's needs are met twice throughout the play. However, Ian, not as an animal but as "specifically human," is not satisfied and fulfilled. This is due to the fact that "Man has to relate himself to others; but if he does it in a symbiotic or alienated way, he loses his independence and integrity; he is weak, suffers, becomes hostile, or apathetic; only if he can relate himself to others in a loving way does he feel one with them and at the same time preserve his integrity."[125] Namely, on the social level, Ian is a character whose failure of tolerating the others shows itself in the form of intolerance that leads to violence. He employs the source of the problem (his sense of his over-proximity being intruded) as a way of solving it, just like the example of today's ideological landscape.

On the other hand, his individual and forced relationship with Cate is also depicted as befitting the assertions of Žižek and Fromm. Cate is Ian's ex-beloved and, although Ian "didn't think [Cate] would", she comes to the hotel room just because she "was worried" that he sounded "unhappy"[126] on the phone. However, Cate's innocence and thoughtfulness are misused: due to Ian's deep lack of the sense of relatedness, identity, and integrity that emerges in the form of destructive violence, Cate has to suffer from this, because Ian considers Cate as a bulk part of the source of all his needs. The situation is ironic, since Ian envisages Cate as the remedy to his problems, but also thinks that her absence means the threat *she* poses to the solution of his problems. Therefore, although he does not "want [her] to leave"[127] because she makes him "feel safe"[128], Cate suffers all those cruel, violent

122 Kane, letter to Graham Saunders, 31 March 1997 in Saunders, op. cit., p. 63.
123 Kane, op. cit., p. 60.
124 Ibid.
125 Fromm, op. cit., p. 68.
126 Kane, op. cit., p. 4.
127 Kane, op. cit., p. 5.
128 Ibid., p. 28.

acts that Ian performs on her. If Cate does not give Ian what he needs willingly, then, as Ian falsely assumes, he has to 'consume' her by ignoring her reluctance in order to satisfy his needs, thinking that this is the only way to regain all the sensations that make one feel fully human(e). However, as Fromm maintains, "Eventually, only to the extent to which [one] grasps reality, can [one] make this world *his*; if he lives in illusions, he never changes the conditions which necessitate these illusions."[129] In other words, continuing to live in illusions is perceived as the solution of removing the illusions, just like Ian's way of (mis)understanding his love for his nation, his love for Cate.

In order to be able to show how it is really possible to reach self-awareness and therefore lead to a change, as well as suggesting a hopeful ending, Kane writes "the most interpretively rich moment in the drama"[130], as Sean Carney puts it.[131] After Ian eats the baby, the next moment is his death, which is followed by his resurrection with his "*head poking out of the floor.*"[132] Upon resurrecting, he finds Cate entering with some bread and gin in her hand. She then "*feeds* **Ian** *with the remaining food. She pours gin in* **Ian***'s mouth.*"[133] This is the only voluntary action performed by Cate[134] and it is the only time that Ian feels related and integrated. It is at this very moment that Ian is ripped of his illusions. That is why, on Cate's feeding him, Ian's final words to Cate which also end the play are "Thank you."[135] He thanks her, because, nothing worse could have happened to him anymore; he could suffer no worse pains than what he has finally gone through (died and came back to life), which, concurrently means and confirms that even the Soldier remains insufficient in making Ian reach self-realization but only to an understanding of how it is like to suffer. All the while that he is alive and lives in illusions, he always struggles to find an explanation for his crisis of identity, relatedness, love, and integrity by dispersing

129 Fromm, op. cit., p. 68.
130 Carney, op. cit., p. 276.
131 This scene can be interpreted in several distinct aspects such as tragedy, trauma, religion and history.
132 Kane, op. cit., p. 60.
133 Ibid., p. 61.
134 It can also be argued that nobody has forced Cate to come and visit Ian at the hotel room and that it is also her volunteer action. However, this happens before the play begins and there is provided no reference to such possibility.
135 Kane, op. cit., p. 61.

violence, which is not the solution but the cause of it. However, Kane "reminds us that change is possible, but not as the end point of some utopian political narrative. Rather, change occurs in those moments where comfortable designations break down (woman/man, victim/victimizer; native/foreigner, self/other) and everything must be rethought."[136] The fact that the hopeful final scene provokes rethinking and remains away from being a political utopia stems from the scenic imagery: when Ian comes back to life, Cate tells him that he is "sitting under a hole"[137], which suggests that he is not in a perfect situation, but in a hole that only reveals his head, symbolically emphasizing and pointing to the audience the notion and significance of rethinking in order to change the world of violence.

Apart from this, the final scene is the only time that Ian's pain is shared. Annabella Singer maintains in her essay "Don't Want to Be This: The Elusive Sarah Kane" that

> Pain is an individual experience – enter representation. The pain that is suffered by one is unknown by another. Only by communicating pain does it become believable and therefore real. In this way, experiencing pain becomes a divider between the one who suffers and others who do not, who must be convinced. Pain becomes a boundary...Even when pain is communicated, the full experience is not apprehended. Only a representation of "pain" (pain as we have understood it to be, to feel like) is communicated. Pain ensures the instability of even the material world because it is both undeniable and intangible.[138]

What is explained in the above passage may be deceptive if Cate is interpreted as the agent who understands Ian's pain. The most suitable commentary would be the one which involves Ian and *his* relation to the other individuals. Ian makes Cate suffer, the Soldier makes Ian suffer; but the pain itself is never communicated as a method of empathizing with the others, for violence has always overshadowed it. Therefore,

136 Urban, op. cit., p. 46.
137 Kane, op. cit., p. 60.
138 Singer, op. cit., p. 152.

the failure to understand has continued to be a “divider” (which can also be considered as Ian's racist and sexist discourse) that is perceived as not being ‘real’, which, subsequently, means that it is ignored. Such a discussion brings in mind Edward Albee's 1958 play **The Zoo Story**, in which the miscommunication between the complacent Peter and desperate Jerry leads to the dehumanization of Peter. In brief, together with the language, the dramatic imagery that Kane employs elevates the last scene to a hopeful redemption and self-awareness for Ian. The blood on his face is washed away by the rain dropping through the roof, suggesting cleansing and a possibility of a new beginning, as well as forming a reference to Elias Canetti's **Crowds and Power** via the rain image that stands for the crowds and power that destroy individuals, as explained in the first chapter.

2.4 Journalists, Newspapers All Blasted

Consequently, with all such disturbing imagery and harsh use of language, anger and violence, Kane writes **Blasted** in such a form that conjures its whole meaning, as mentioned earlier. As opposed to the Kane critics such as Saunders, Sierz and David Greig, who have interpreted the form of the play under the light of Kane's commentary of how wars turn people's lives illogically and suddenly into hell, there is one issue that they imply but not further interpret to present it as a whole idea of In-Yer-Face Theatre in relation to **Blasted**. Referring to the process in the play, the vocabulary Greig prefers to employ gains importance:

> It is as though the act of rape, which blasts the inner world of both victim and perpetrator, has also destroyed the world outside the room. The play's form begins to fragment. Its structure seems to buckle under the weight of the violent forces it has unleashed...The dialogue erodes, becoming sparse. The scenes are presented in smaller and smaller fragments until they are a series of snapshots: images of Ian, all the structures of his life destroyed, reduced to his base essence...[139]

139 Kane, op. cit., p. x.

Especially through the words “sparse,” “snapshots” and “fragments,” it is inevitable not to notice how similar the way the actions performed in the play is to those on a newspaper page. Therefore, it is now required to analyze Ian and his relationship to newspapers, which has been noted earlier at the beginning that throwing the newspapers on the bed is Ian's first action after entering on stage. Yet, the last movement with them is the most striking one that completes the unity of action, as claimed by Saunders for the functions of the props employed in the play[140]. In one of the 'base form of Ian' scenes that resemble a series of “snapshots” due to the quick change of lighting and action, Ian is seen while he is “*trying to clean [his shit] up with newspaper.*”[141] This scene is symbolic in that it refers both to Kane's idea of seeds and tree, and to the discussion of the victim and the victimized. The image of shit can be connected to the notion of production in that it is the solid waste of what the body is fed with. As for Ian's horrible condition, it can be claimed that he is reaping what he has sown through the newspaper stories he makes and the violence he scatters. As a character who stands for the agent that helps shape the public opinion as discussed before, Ian's misperceived love for his nation and his ignorant comfort of the knowledge that he is a home journalist negate his journalist ethics as a whole and, furthermore, concurrently falsify John W. Frick's former supposition that “the analysis of political violence occurring in the context of military dictatorships and police states, in times of transition during and after civil wars and wars of liberation, was best handled by journalist. Anthropologists were too slow, too hesitant, too reflective, and our knowledge was too local and too embedded to keep pace with political events which were altogether too fast and unstable.”[142] As revealed through the dialogue in which the Soldier narrates what the other soldiers have done to his girlfriend Col, Ian, indirectly, explains his outlook on his profession which clearly proves that he is not that journalist who could deal perfectly with filtering the truth of violence and/or coercion.

Soldier Col, they buggered her. Cut her throat.

140 Saunders, op. cit., p. 41.
141 Kane, op. cit., p. 59.
142 John W. Frick, **Theatre and Violence**, (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), p. 9.

> Hacked her ears and nose off, nailed them to the front door.
> **Ian** Enough.
> **Soldier** Never seen anything like that?...Not in photos?...Some journalist, that's your job.
> **Ian** What?
> **Soldier** Proving that it happened. I'm here, got no choice. But you. You should be telling people.
> **Ian** No one's interested. I write . . . stories. That's all. Stories. This isn't a story anyone wants to hear.[143]

This brief yet intense exchange is significant in that the Soldier points out the real task of a journalist which is to tell people that something cruel has happened and to prove it by publishing photos. However, Ian, careless of the fact that he is the one who is responsible for shaping the public opinion, puts the blame on the members of his beloved nation. It is a taken-for-granted reality of the present century that the news media is "telling prospective readers about the violence that defines their everyday lives. Yet the media also create and respond to expectations that news stories be shocking."[144] Such news of suffering soldiers does not 'lure' them. Instead, Ian does "other stuff. Shootings and rapes and kids getting fiddled by queer priests and schoolteachers. Not soldiers screwing each other for a patch of land. It has to be . . . personal. Your girlfriend, she's a story. Soft and clean. Not you. Filthy, like the wogs. No joy in a story about blacks who gives a shit? Why bring you to light?"[145] Such soldiers have to be kept either in the dark or be reflected as loveless and deranged outcasts. Doing the opposite through pumping love and understanding towards such people would mean a criticism directed at the powerful System that 'produces' terrorists, rules societies and allows wars to outbreak. Thus, making use of the fact that "no one's interested", the media supports violence in order to end it.

However, there is an important yet concealed notion in Ian's assertion that the Soldier's ordeal is not "a story anyone wants to hear" which signals the illusion to which individuals cling. No one desiring to hear such stories necessarily means that that particular story does not exist. In fact, each individual lives with this knowledge:

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143 Ibid., pp. 47-48.
144 Bruce B. Lawrence, **On Violence: A Reader**, p. 2.
145 Kane, op. cit., p. 48.

he or she knows from within, but pretends not to know from the outside, which proves his or her actions or inactions like it happens with Meg and Petey in Pinter's play. As Žižek maintains,

> The experience that we have of our lives from within, the story we tell ourselves about ourselves in order to account for what we are doing is fundamentally a lie – the truth lies outside, in what we do. One thing that never ceases to surprise the naive ethical consciousness is how the very same people who commit terrible acts of violence towards their enemies can display warm humanity and gentle care for the members of their own group. Isn't it strange that the same soldier who slaughtered innocent civilians was ready to sacrifice his life for his unit?[146]

That individuals tell themselves stories in order to account for their actions parallels the earlier discussion of justifying one's own deeds. Ian and the Soldier justify their cruel actions by basing them on their love for their countries while the public justifies its ignorance of (metaphorically) Ian and the Soldier's terrifying performances in foreign countries by its fear of them (because the media reflects them as fearful 'creatures'). In both groups, the service is for the sake of the System, of the anonymous organisation, of the ruling power. However, in this tacit agreement between the latter and the former social units, there exists the other side of the coin, in which this

> limitation of our ethical concern to a narrow circle seems to run counter to our spontaneous insight that we are all humans, with the same basic hopes, fears and pains, and therefore the same justified claim to respect and dignity. Consequently, those who constrain the scope of their ethical concern are in profound sense inconsistent, 'hypocritical' even...Refusing the same basic ethical rights to those outside our community as to those inside it is something that does not come naturally to a human being. It is a violation of our spontaneous ethical proclivity. It

146 Žižek, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

involves brutal repression and self-denial.[147]

Brutal repression and self-denial that together constitute the hypocrisy of the members of societies show themselves again in the powerful versus the weak relationship which is about, so to speak, Ian's racist attitude towards the foreigners inhabiting his country. Both parts' mutual entity concurrently creates the “naive ethical consciousness” that they are, after all, human beings. However, due to the limited ethical perspective that human beings possess, the same basic ethical rights that Žižek mentions 'fail' to be bestowed to the others. Retrospectively, then, this has to give the reader some clues about the British society's attitude towards the global violence represented on the media, how it is represented and what its relation to these In-Yer-Face plays is.

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to turn back to the notions about the function of In-Yer-Face Theatre that are put forward at the beginning of this paper and attach them to social issues in terms of creating a change in the audience, which is also related to the messages such plays so forcefully desire to pass.

It has been mentioned that the stories narrated by Ian in the play are taken directly from **The Sun**. This information is significant, because when considered under the Thatcherite regime that is quite harsh, conservative and self-contained, it becomes clear why those young playwrights have eventually ended up with such brutal, violent plays. To touch on the issue briefly, it is a truth, a generally acknowledged fact that British tabloids are categorized according to their relation to the political parties, which means that they publish events from a manipulated, subjective outlook. For instance, **The Mail** and **The Express** are the voices of middle-class Britain and both papers favoured Thatcher's regime. They are quite patriotic and royalist and most importantly they do not trust the world outside Britain, which coincides with **Blasted**'s theme of asking disturbing questions about British identity, as discussed earlier. As for **The Sun**, it is the tabloid that changes the face of British journalism with its photos of naked women, its obsession with

147 Žižek, op. cit., p. 41.

football and television and its patriotism which is almost xenophobia.[148] Thus, it must be no coincidence that Kane prefers to make use of the news stories especially from this newspaper and create the xenophobic character Ian to deal with the manipulated reporting business as a journalist. This is also the reason why Buse describes **Blasted** as a play that "implies that modern Britain is a society where potentially traumatizing events, such as rape and murder, are rendered inconsequential by the constant diet of them provided by the press. In a language at once sensational and habitual the reporting 'limit events' is evacuated of any significance and real trauma is buried without a trace."[149] Henceforth, the real violence that is concealed from the reading/watching public's eyes is thrown, like the picture in the **Haber Türk** newspaper, into its face.

Besides, although the play does not contain references to them, it can be argued that rendering violent acts inconsequential is also the business of television and cinema that lack in reaching directly to the senses, as cited before. Both bombard the audience with numerous images of violence so as to make them familiar to the viewer. However, the terrific images of violence in **Blasted** differ from the ones on television or cinema in the sense that the play "makes those events strange by presenting them so graphically and in such an intimate environment. This is where theatre has a capacity to defamiliarize the kinds of images television and film bombard us with, breaking up the 'automatism of perception' of horrific events."[150] Moreover, one more aspect of **Blasted** that adds up to the disturbing feeling it creates on the audience is that "Unlike our familiar film, television, and video game violence, Kane's *Blasted* refused to distance us with a stylized wink or a gift-wrapped moral."[151] Kane explains the reason why the violence in her play is more devastating than the violence read in a newspaper to be the fact that "all the boring bits have been cut out."[152] Considering all the three assertions, it can be maintained that Kane has been successful in breaking the audience's "automatism of perception," a notion that connotes Artaud's "burning magnetism of images" in

148 **The British Tabloids**, (Online) 30 January 2012.
http://worldnews.about.com/od/7/qt/britishtabs.htm
149 Peter, op. cit., p. 186.
150 Buse, op. cit., p. 186.
151 Singer, op. cit., p. 140.
152 Sierz, op. cit., p. 103.

theatre, as quoted before.

And so, how does In-Yer-Face Theatre break that "that's the way it is" ignorance as expressed by De Lacey of **Frankenstein**? Obviously, by centralising the terrific reality so as to make the benighted audience endure the social issues that it would normally ignore and take for granted while it is viewing such violence on television, because "Violence on television has nothing to do with art, and everything to do with terrorism, whose primary goal is to create general insecurity, creating imaginary or real focuses of danger, whilst hiding its origins, seeding a formless dread: where will the mortal blow come from? From what darkness, from what ill-lit recess? Where is the executioner hiding? Who will be the next victim? Why?"[153] From this assertion of Augusto Boal, it can be understood that Kane desires to remove such fear from society; a fear that arises from seeding violence in peace time. However, of course, such centralisation does not occur for the first time with the playwrights of the Nineties, as briefly mentioned before. The history of theatre from **Titus Andronicus** to **King Lear** is populated with violent actions performed in front of the audience. However, the difference is that "the expectation that morality would be finally restored gave [the audience] permission to guiltlessly enjoy such poetic inflammations of sensation, such orgies of feeling."[154] Even so, there is still another question which, in fact, pervades the whole theatre business. That is the question of whether by centralising the violence, both **Blasted** (and other In-Yer-Face plays as well), the picture of the stabbed woman and Picasso, as cited initially, can really succeed in passing the message to their audiences or not. This remains a pervasive question due to the fact that the core of theatre is mimesis.

At this point, therefore,

> ...we are faced with a paradox, however, because in performance what cannot be articulated must be shown, and when it is shown, it ceases to be what it was. Thus when terror enters the information systems of performance, it ceases, in a sense, to be terror – which is unspeakable, and unrepresentable – and becomes a mask of itself.

153 Augusto Boal, **The Aesthetics of the Oppressed**, translated by Adrian Jackson, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 25.
154 Sierz, op. cit., p. 11.

> Terror is transformed into imaging system of terrorism.[155]

Yet, for In-Yer-Face Theatre, imagery is essential rather than pure dialogue and action which are easily forgettable. As Sierz explains, through the intensity of imagery, "while no one believes literally in what is shown onstage – no actual atrocity is actually being committed – many spectators will invest emotionally in it. Although what is shown is make-believe, they take it close to their hearts. And because the actors are always real people breathing the same air as the audience, the public tends to empathize strongly with them."[156] Nevertheless, this is not always valid for every single audience due to the following fact: Images are also representations. It is always 'as if' that, say, Ian eats the baby, the Soldier sucks Ian's eyes out, Cate's vagina bleeds and men are hung from their testicles outside. However, what is significant about them is that, instead of making the audience sit back and contemplate the situation, they "[throw the audience] back on [its] imagination."[157] During the imagination process, the audience passes through two phases that are nominated as 'counter-mimetic' and 'neuromimetic transferral' by Rebecca Schneider and Stanton B. Garner, respectively. The former one occurs "in an almost complete inversion of naturalism, disbelief rather than belief is put forward like a dare."[158] The complete inversion of naturalism is the primary concept that makes **Blasted** blast in the post-war British drama. Pointed out but not furthered before, a brief analysis of the first scene of the play is now crucial, since it demonstrates how the inversion of naturalism takes place and related to the counter-mimic process.

The setting of the first scene is "*A very expensive hotel room in Leeds – the kind that is so expensive it could be anywhere in the world. There is a large double bed. A mini-bar and champagne on ice...A bouquet of flowers.*"[159] At the first glimpse, there is nothing disturbing about this setting. It seems naturalistic and

155 Anthony Kubiak, **Stages of Terror: Terrorism, Ideology and Coercion as Theatre History**, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991), p. 11.
156 Sierz, op. cit., p. 7.
157 Saunders, op. cit., p. 66.
158 Rebecca Schneider, **The Explicit Body in Performance**, (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 101.
159 Kane, op. cit., p. 5.

peaceful enough for the audience to expect to watch a well-made play. However, this mise-en-scène transcends itself and the symbolic meanings it has can be carried up to a point where they meet the background idea of the play. Initially, Leeds strikes the reader with its historically famous nomination as the leading industrial towns in Britain. The idea of industry brings in mind the Industrial Revolution, which enables developments in science and technology that consequently give birth to the atomic bomb and other fatal weapons, which is like the idea of the creator and the created relationship. Secondly, the kind of the hotel is significant in that its expensiveness is associated with the notion of Capitalism through the information that it could be anywhere in the world. Together with the industry, the development of capitalism and its application today contribute to the great modern war of discrimination, labelling, abuse and manipulation. As for the props, they are not only the objects of love, but also the images that Hollywood film industry and capitalistic trade bombard crowds with. All in all, there is nothing either unique or disturbing that would poke the 'habitual gaze' of the audience, whose mind perceives such everyday images automatically without questioning. However, when the mortal bomb blasts, it is all of a sudden that all the audience's ideas of familiarity and sense of security that give way to ignorance are devastated. Consequently, as Schneider asserts, “viewers have to suspend their belief in order to look at some of the nasty underpinnings propping those belief systems.”[160] Henceforth, it is through such a method that **Blasted** removes its audience from its safety zones.

Interrelated to this counter-mimic process is Garner's theory of neuromimetic transferral, which is defined, for example, as “the impulse to close one's eyes during simulated blindings on-stage”[161] Coincidentally, one of the most pervasive scenes in **Blasted** is the one where the Soldier sucks Ian's eyes out. Yet, right before this scene, the soul-shattering violence that the Solider narrates is significant, because there emerge those images that one cannot bear conceptualizing, as befitting the aim of In-Yer-Face Theatre. The Soldier compares the cruelty of a man raping another man and claims that

160 Schneider, op. cit., p. 100.
161 Stanton B. Garner, **Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama**, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 180.

> It's nothing. Saw thousands of people packing into trucks like pigs trying to leave town. Women threw their babies on board hoping someone would look after them. Crushing each other to death. Insides of people's heads came out of their eyes. Saw a child most of his face blown off, young girl I fucked hand up inside her trying to claw my liquid out, starving man eating his dead wife's leg. Gun was born here and won't die. Can't get tragic about your arse. Don't think your Welsh arse is different to any other arse I fucked...
> **Ian** Are you going to kill me?
> **Soldier** Always covering your own arse.
> *The* **Soldier** *grips* **Ian***'s head in his hands. He puts his mouth over one of* **Ian***'s eyes, sucks it out, bites it off and eats it. He does the same to the other eye.*[162]

What the Soldier tells Ian connotes one of the latest Pinter plays **Ashes to Ashes** (1996) in which the traumatic character Rebecca, in an almost hallucinatory state with echoing sounds, tells Delvin her experience of the trains and babies that alludes to the cultural representation of Nazi soldiers ("They were taking the babies away ECHO the babies away"[163]). As for **Blasted**, the fact that such a density of pounding imagery is followed by an incredible blinding runs alongside with Garner's idea of transferral in that, for the audience, such a compact and instant action "reflects not simply an aversion to the representation of pain, but also a deeper defence against its sympathetic arising in the field of one's own body."[164]

Taking all these aspects into consideration, it can be argued that Kane comes closest to the point where the audience's knowledge of 'as if' and emotions that it is forced to feel so intimately are blurred. The two theories explained above

> work in combination to demand an active engagement from the audience – the reactions are to performed terrors and the repulsion implicates us because we are so accustomed to distancing

162 Kane, op. cit., p. 50.
163 Harold Pinter, **Ashes to Ashes**, (New York, Groove Press, 1997), p. 78.
164 Garner, op. cit., p. 181.

> ourselves from brutality. Kane tears apart the domestication of mimesis, the 'kitchen sink' realism that has been perceived as the dominant dramatic mode...in the post-war period.[165]

Nevertheless, although Kane almost goes beyond the idea of mimesis in theatre, the issue of passing the message is still a problem within the context of In-Yer-Face Theatre, since the members of the audience wear, symbolically, pretentious masks in their everyday lives, which is also the same when they watch a play.

Here, by masks, I do not mean masks as objects, but rather a feeling or a need of disguise within an individual. Yet, masks, regarded either as objects or abstract concepts, the relationship between them and identity goes hand in hand:

> the mask is normally considered a technique for transforming identity, either through the modification of the representation of identity, or through the temporary – and representational – extinction of identity...masks are not merely pictures of other beings, but are more fundamentally considered to be ways in which the identity of those beings is attributed to or predicated of the mask-wearer as well.[166]

It is because of the above functioning of the masks that Sierz makes such an interesting comment about the British audience: “While in Britain most metropolitan audiences are unshockable, or want to appear to be so, small-town audiences may react with greater disgust, or perhaps greater candour.”[167] The desire to appear unshockable reminds one of Goldberg in **The Birthday Party**, who is a Londoner and is therefore associated with all that social power and status. Similarly, Ian in **Blasted** is initially the agent of power and he so assumes the responsibility of this role (mask?) as to destroy the others for the sake of his potent. Therefore, both men's actions become significant for them due to the fact that “Every perception is a form

165 Helen Iball, **Sarah Kane's Blasted**, (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2008), p. 4.
166 Donald Pollock, “Masks and the Semiotics of Identity,” **The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute**, Vol. 1 No. 3, Sep., 1995, pp. 582-583.
167 Sierz, op. cit., p. 9.

of action and our deeds get significance from the meanings we attach to them."[168] It is clear that wearing masks is in contact with the idea of power and the powerful that the System inflicts upon individuals.

This is why, as Eugenio Barba asserts in his "The Essence of Theatre", theatre must have an obligation to work on the audience in order for them to get the message about themselves:

> their senses, their skepticism, their ingenuousness, and their cruelty must be put to the test, asked to face a storm of contrasting reactions, allusions, ambiguities, and clusters of meanings that grapple with one another. They have to resolve the enigma of a performance – a sphinx ready to devour them. The performance is a burning caress that touches their sensibilities and intimate wounds, pushing them toward the hushed landscape that lives in exile within us. We must open the spectators' eyes with the same gentleness that we close those of a loved one who has just died.[169]

Despite Barba's emphasis on the importance of the performance in opening the eyes of the audience, what In-Yer-Face Theatre adds to this is the idea of shock, which is directly related to the powerful "cluster of meanings" that hold a society strongly together. Namely, "shock comes from demolishing the simple binary oppositions that hold society together...It can educate the senses as well as stimulating curiosity."[170] Therefore, as opposed to the masks the members of the audience wear in order to pretend their sense of power and unity, which is well possible while watching a state-of-the-nation play, **Blasted** breaks this cluster of values and drops the masks. This is because, in addition to its initially cited definition, In-Yer-Face Theatre "is about intimate subjects, it touches what is both central to our humanity and most often hidden in our daily behaviour. The public staging of secret desires and monstrous acts both repels us and draws us in. And there is always the possibility that what we enjoy watching might tell us unwelcome

168 Elizabeth Tonkin, "Masks and Powers," **Man, New Series**, Vol. 14 No. 2, Jun., 1979, p. 237.
169 Eugenio Barba, "The Essence of Theatre," **TDR**, Vol. 46, No: 3, Autumn, 2002, pp. 15-16.
170 Sierz, op. cit., p.99.

truths about who we really are."[171]

Consequently, it can be observed that, paralleling Frankenstein's creature's existential questions as mentioned before, **Blasted**, as an In-Yer-Face play, leads the audience towards such questioning. However, those who "walked out...hid their eyes...giggled...irritated...moved by the starkness of horror or by the psychological accuracy of the relationships"[172] could not face with what John Fraser describes as the horrifying honesty of the artist about an individual's existential philosophy.[173] Finally, in order to be able to relate the arguments being discussed to the play, a crucial scene should be quoted.

At the early beginning in the play where verbal violence, racism and discrimination are at the peak, Cate tells Ian that she does not like his clothes. Upon this, Ian takes off all of them and stands naked in front her, commanding to put her mouth on him. Suddenly and without no obvious reason, Cate

> *bursts out laughing.*
> **Ian** *No? Fine. Because I stink?*
> **Cate** *(Laughs even more.)*
> **Ian** *attempts to dress, but fumbles with embarrassment. He gathers his clothes and goes into the bathroom where he dresses...***Ian** *returns...picks up his gun, unloads and reloads it.*[174]

What is perceivable from the stage directions is that Ian is extremely disturbed and embarrassed about his nudity on Cate's laughing at him. Even if in some other circumstances taking off clothes can be interpreted as an act of liberation, here it is hardly so due to Ian's feelings and going into the bathroom to 'reload' not his gun but, actually, himself. This is because "A naked body's vulnerability can be heavy with metaphorical significance: it can be morally 'exposed', or 'stripped' of illusions."[175] For Ian, then, being laughed at his nudity means his lack of power, which is also proved with phallic symbolisation of him reloading his 'gun.' Henceforth, when this

171 Ibid., p. 9.
172 Ibid., p. 99.
173 John Fraser, **Violence in Arts**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 110.
174 Kane, op. cit., p. 8.
175 Sierz, op. cit., p. 8.

is considered in terms of **Blasted** and the audience, the former laughs in such a way that the latter is disturbed and embarrassed about themselves.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, paralleling Žižek's explanation of ethical concerns, Singer defines Sarah Kane to be "a moral hardass who, through her plays, aimed to force others to think through the ethical paradoxes of their lives. She hoped to produce change in others..."[176] She achieves this in two major ways. The first one is based on the fact that "It is not the violence per se which causes damage to the viewer, but the lack of rationale for this physical activity."[177] Through the characters and other elements that are related to the dominant journalism of the period, then, Kane displays the logic and/or the reason of the continuation of violence, in general sense, in the world, to which Britain is indifferent and complacent: "There was a widespread attitude in the country that what was happening in central Europe could never happen here. In Blasted, it happened here."[178] In this sense, the idea in the play is like the one in Stanley Kubrick's 1987 film **Full Metal Jacket** in which the logic of militarism is neutralized and normalized. Constructing the form and the content of **Blasted** on the seed and tree metaphor that refers to the idea of peace-time crimes, Kane passes the message to the audience not through a didactic discourse but through powerful imagery. A specific example that would also wrap the notions discussed throughout the chapter would be the stage directions that follow Ian's confession that he is a killer: "*On the word 'killer' he comes.*" As soon as Cate hears the word, she bites his penis as hard as she can. Ian's cry of pleasure turns into a scream of pain...He hits her and she lets go."[179] Ian's ejaculation right after the word 'killer' suggests the relationship between the metaphors of seeds and tree: Just like Ian's scream of pleasure turning into a cry of pain, there is a very thin line between giving birth and death (killing), because the one that is born becomes the killer, the violence itself.

176 Singer, op. cit., p. 141.
177 Boal, op. cit., p. 23.
178 Sierz, op. cit., p. 98.
179 Kane, op. cit., p. 31.

While Ian and Cate's relationship refers to the peace-time crimes of racism, labelling and discrimination, the Soldier and Ian's interaction depicts quite powerfully and violently the results of those crimes. In a way, the latter correlation of Ian and the Soldier connotes the concept of “revanche de dieu” (the revenge of god) which is an idea that is constantly employed in theatre and cinema in order to show how an oppressor that sets off with retaliation and revenge in mind will eventually encounter another despot who seeks to take his own revenge.[180] Thus, Ian's isolating and misconceived love for his country that motivates him to obey the anonymous, racist organisation's commands and become a killer makes him confront the Soldier who is the same of Ian in his own country. Consequently, for Ian and the Soldier, obeying their racist organisations' orders is essential, which in return, transforms them into home-grown militants to be destroyed by that very society that also produces them, as explained before through citing Foucault. This is the reason why both Žižek and the creature in **Frankenstein** (and by implication, Foucault) use the word “inconsistent” to depict the paradox of the way societies believe without questioning and under the illusion of 'helping' each other.

Finally, what **Blasted** so passionately desires to show to its audience can be aptly summarized with Kane's own words on the media's initial reactions to the play: “The thing that shocks me most is that the media seem to have been more upset by the representation of violence than by violence itself.”[181] They are upset because even they as the mediators between the audience and the violence happening in the global world misrepresent violence by distorting or making it smoother by using censoring effects. Thus, Kane, by writing a play with powerful, pervading images of violence, makes the audience almost forget about the idea of mimesis in what they watch, because she, unlike Martin McDonagh’s protagonist Katurian in **The Pillowman** in the next chapter, is aware of the fact that “what happens in front of the spectators' eyes is less important than what happens inside their minds.”[182]

180 Yusuf Eradam, “Tiyatrofobi,” **t24**, 30 May 2012 (Online) http://t24.com.tr/yazi/tiyatrofobi/5058, 31 May 2012.
181 Sierz, op. cit., p. 97.
182 Ibid., p. 16.

Jack-the-Ripper is Telling Stories: McDonagh's The Pillowman and Violence

"No one will have directly experienced the actual cause of such happenings, but everyone will have received an image of them."
Jean Baudrillard

"God made man because he loves stories."
Elie Wiesel

"Life is short and brutal, but stories are fun. Plus, they have the chance of living forever."
Ben Brantley

> Part of the enjoyment of any McDonagh work lies in a willingness to embrace its ambiguity, to see our uncertainty not as a frustrating shutting down of meaning, but as the initiation of our own contribution to the creative process. But there is also a need to move beyond creativity, and to consider how our interpretation of the plays allows us to re-read ourselves. If we find ourselves laughing at violence, political murder, terrorism, the bullying and marginalising of the weak and vulnerable – if we find ourselves undisturbed by the apparent mockery of things that are normally treated as sacred or sacrosanct – then there are (at least) two possible responses. One is to become angry: to criticize the author, to leave the theatre, to complain in print or in person about being forced to endure an unpleasant experience. And another is to ask a question: why am I reacting like this?...I do wish to propose that one purpose – and one major value – of that work is that it allows audiences to subject their responses to closer scrutiny than is possible in almost any other cultural context.[1]

The reason why this chapter begins with this quotation from one of the leading Martin McDonagh critics, Patrick Lonergan, is that the ideas maintained

1 Patrick Lonergan, **The Theatre and Films of Martin McDonagh**, (London: Methuen Drama, 2012), p. 227.

about the functions of McDonagh's plays on his audience not only recap the subject matter of the previous chapters but also prepare a ground for the discussion in the current one. What Lonergan mainly points out, in fact, summarizes Aleks Sierz's definition of the term In-Yer-Face Theatre and its aim on the audience, which are explained in detail in the second chapter in relation to Sarah Kane's **Blasted**. With Harold Pinter, on the other hand, who is not a playwright of the (In-Yer-Face) movement, his play **The Birthday Party** forces its audience to embrace its ambiguity so that the spectators can reflect on their own attitudes while following their mind maps that carry them to a conclusion about both the play and themselves. As for McDonagh's play, it is the one that puts the audience into such a situation in most extreme ways.

3.1 Imagery, Form and Content

As for **The Pillowman**, all of the notions mentioned so far are valid, yet with a completely different and distinct content, however familiar and naturalistic its form is. The content is full of horror stories and fairy tales that are about child abuse and child abduction, and the basic plot line is that Michal acts out the fictitious murders in his brother Katurian's stories. How this relates to the idea of violence, the overarching theme of this dissertation, is that it paradoxically and ironically demonstrates how artistic creativity can turn out to be a simultaneous way of nurturing both the personal and collective memory with the stories and tales that (un)consciously manipulate the perception of childhood in a culture and teach racism, sexism and nominating foreigners as 'others' which eventually lead to violence like it happens in **Blasted** with Ian's extreme love for his nation. Hence, this chapter holds the ever-lasting narration of stories as a symbol for what an individual inherits from and thus shapes within and according to social institutions such as family, school and religion. Together with this, the fact that the stories in the play are about lost children triggers a discussion on children's various receptions such as their being non-existent or economic burdens in Western cultures. Furthermore, by juxtaposing this with the oppressive system of the powerful authority, it examines how individuals are made to believe and manipulated for the so-called benefits of

(performing) violence by arguing that through this they are made thankful, passivised and therefore obedient to the authority; a transformation which involves total conscious or unconscious ignorance.

In **The Pillowman**, there is not much violence animated on stage apart from the story writer Katurian K. Katurian's[2] interrogation process in a room in a fictitious totalitarian police state by the two policemen named Tupolski and Ariel. However, the numerous stories written and narrated about children and child abuse are so populated with violence that the fearful imagery in them remains imprinted on one's mind forever. To refer to the two most pervasive ones as examples, in one of the stories titled "The Tale of the Town on the River", a driver "in the darkest of robes, the black hood of which bathed his craggy face in shadow"[3] approaches a little boy and "from a secret inner pocket of his robes the driver pull[s] out a long, sharp and shiny meat cleaver, raise[s] it high in the air and [brings] it scything down onto the boy's right food, severing all five of his muddy little toes."[4] This image of butchered toes is later transferred on stage as evidence. Upon opening the box's lid (the box recalls the myth of Pandora's Box that contains all the evils of the world) in which the toes are conserved, Katurian "*recoils in horror at what's inside, shivering in a corner.*"[5] Soon after this, Katurian is forced to swallow the toes. Else, the story of a girl dying on the heath is rich in horror elements as well. Ariel proclaims that the murderer copied the plot in the story and killed the girl with "Two razor blades down her little fucking throat, both wrapped in apple, funnily enough."[6] Taking such fearful imagery into account, from a retrospective aspect it can be noticed that the bloodthirsty imagery in the plays becomes more intense than ever as modern British dramatists continue writing plays especially with the impact of In-Yer-Face Theatre. Not only the action being performed on stage is savage but also the narrated stories (news, tales, etc.) contribute to this ferocity. It has been mentioned in the final

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[2] John Crowley, "Mourning Becomes Electra by Eugene O'neill; Howard Davies: The Pillowman by Martin McDonagh," (**Theatre Journal**, Vol. 56 No. 4, Dec., 2004), p. 107.
John Crowley interprets that the abundant use of K letters in Katurian's full name connotes the name Franz Kafka, whose literary works include the themes of parent-child conflicts and physical and psychological brutality, which relate to the themes in the play under discussion.
3 Martin McDonagh, **The pillowman**, (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), p. 21.
4 Ibid., p. 22.
5 Ibid., p. 28.
6 Ibid.

sentence of the previous chapter how what happens inside the minds of the audience is more important than what happens in front of them and with Martin McDonagh, this addressing and adhering to the idea of making the spectators realise their real, dark and violent sides through putting them into the process of giving unusual, even uncanny reactions to the actions on stage and images on their minds reach at its peak. This is due to the fact that with the choice of employing fairy tales, McDonagh hints not only at the present condition of humanity but also at the religious, social and psychological roots of how storytelling and its variations have played and can play an enormous part on the credence of individuals. Although the play is multilateral with extensive fields of social and cultural studies, I shall focus majorly on the sociological side in order to be able to develop my argument that shaping according to the rules of social institutions without being allowed to find our own ways are the original source of unexpected violence in a society. However, before that, some detailed lines should be jotted on the content and form of the play so that it would form a background on the importance, nature and effects of stories and fairy tales on the audience and pave the way towards a closer look at the characters and plot.

Like Pinter and Kane, McDonagh also "utilizes elements of naturalistic theatre within a grotesque framework in order to play with audience expectations."[7] However, different than his earlier plays such as **The Beauty Queen of Leenane**, **A Skull in Connemara** and **The Lieutenant of Inishmore** which are set in Ireland, **The Pillowman** is, to borrow Ondřej Pilný's phrase, his first 'non-Irish' play. For this reason, the setting of the play can be anywhere in the world. Although the character names generally have central European undertones, "The linguistic melange of names only underscores the fictitious nature of the setting: the writer's name appears to be Armenian in overdose...his hometown is called Kamenice which is Czech, but features a Jewish quarter with the non-Czech name of Lamenec."[8] Within such an ambivalent atmosphere are inserted many stories in great doses of which the spectators lose control of perception after a point when they can no more distinguish what is factual and what is fictional. This is because "in the end, you will never

7 Ondřej Pilný, "Grotesque Entertainment: *The Pillowman* as Puppet Theatre," in **The Theatre of Martin McDonagh: A World of Savage Stories**, eds. Eamonn Jordan, Lilian Chambers, (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2006), p. 215.
8 Ibid.

know, for instance, whether Katurian's mentally handicapped brother Michal really killed the little girl and the little boy, an act for which he ended up murdered by Katurian...Is the play supposed to be an allegory or a travesty, one is made to ask?"[9] In addition to such vagueness of events, there are several different themes and motifs in the play as well such as the artist figure, child abuse and the oppression of the totalitarian states. These shift throughout the play and other crucial questions and moments of uncertainty are also present and will be exemplified along the chapter. However, the main question that Pilný asks and answers in his article is that "If there is no consistency of genre and theme in *The Pillowman*...and the plot abounds in digressions, what is it that holds the play together? Clearly, it is the mere power of the story...every time the audience gets close to piecing the plot together and being able to predict what may follow, the play leaves everyone baffled again." To that end, it is of paramount importance to dig into the nature of stories in order to comprehend how they can leave the audience puzzled.

3.2 An Interrogation of Stories and the Human Condition

In general, Michel Jackson explains the nature and function of stories in human life in his book titled **The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity** to be

> counterfactual or fictional, not because they aspire to mirror reality and pain, not because they offer escapes from reality, but because they aid and abet our need to believe that *we* discern and determine the meaning of our journey through life: where we come from and where we are going. In making and telling stories we rework reality in order to make it bearable.[10]

If the ideas of the horrific and the supernatural (these are the types of stories in the play) are added as an exciting ingredient to this reworking process that Jackson mentions, then it is apt to claim, based on Nicholas Royle's redefinition of the

9 Ibid., pp. 214-215.
10 Michel Jackson, **The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity**, (Denmark: Narayan Press, 2002), p. 16.

uncanny[11], that the audience is captivated just like the political systems' strategies of keeping the public engaged and attentive to the authorities by always changing the agenda and telling new stories everyday, which result in obedience and conformity that finally lead to violence as it is explained towards the end where a conclusive discussion is provided. With the combination of the familiar form and appealing content in **The Pillowman**, "the audience...can hardly ever be sure about the status of what they are told – but fact or fiction, they still find themselves deep in the tenets of the tale which unravels in front of them, as the lure of the uncanny is enormous and we essentially *want* to believe in it."[12] As well as the attractiveness of the uncanny, what is more to the lure of the stories is literature's general role on its audience: "Literature makes us *feel* the lives of other people, and it does this through revelation of their secrets. We all have different secrets, but because we are all members of the human family, at bottom our secrets are the same. Literature shows us – and makes us feel – this connection."[13] In other words, the audience regards those stories as saviours in reworking the reality of their existence to make it bearable.

Besides the functions of the stories explained above, it is also necessary to have a look at the human condition in relation to the authorities and stories, since these are among the noteworthy themes in **The Pillowman**. Stanley Milgram in his book **Obedience to Authority** analyzes through certain experiments why people are obedient and puts forward that "we are born with a *potential* for obedience, which then interacts with the influence of society to produce obedient man."[14] The realisation of this potential depends on the social milieu of an individual and in modern societies, it is impossible to find fully free, disobedient social circles due to the authoritative Systems that control every action of man. According to Milgram, in

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11 Nicholas Royle, **The Uncanny**, (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003), p. 1.
He explains that the uncanny "is concerned with the strange, weird and misterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something supernatural. The uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced...It can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or of something strange and unfamiliar arising in a familiar context."
12 Pilný, **Grotesque Entertainment**, p. 218.
13 Terry Davis, "Literature Tells Our Family Secrets," (**The English Journal**, Vol. 83 No. 8, Dec., 1994), p. 28.
14 Stanley Milgram, **Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View**, (New York: Pinter & Martin, 2010), p. 126.

old times,

> men were able to give a fully human response to any situation because they were fully absorbed in it as human beings. But as soon as there was a division of labour among men, things changed. Beyond a certain point, the creaking up of society into people carrying out narrow and very special jobs takes away from the human quality of work and life. A person does not get to see the whole situation but only a small part of it, and is thus unable to act without some kind of overall direction. He yields to authority but in doing so is alienated from his own actions.[15]

Milgram interestingly explains the source of man's alienation and obedience by implying the notion of hierarchy that is brought about by the division of labour that results in man's lack of ability to acquire the whole picture of him. However, when Hannah Arendt's simple yet significant assertion on man's words and actions is also taken into consideration, it can be noticed that Milgram does not go beyond in his analysis to demonstrate how the already alienated man's condition is made even worse through the suppression of ideas, thoughts, actions and language. As stated by Arendt, it is "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance."[16] With the simile of a man's second birth, then, it is no coincidence that Pinter's play's title refers to Stanley's ironic 'birthday' party, that Kane's Ian cannot even die properly and resurrects, and that Katurian desires to be remembered even after his death through his stories which are burnt by the representatives of the oppressive system in the end. All of the protagonists are the victims of those Systems that deprive them of words and deeds, and destroy their life in the form of either death or strict, eternal conformity to the authority without any freedom of choice. Arendt, therefore, is right when she continues maintaining that "A life without speech and without action...is literally death to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived

15 Ibid., p.13.
16 Hannah Arendt, **The Human Condition**, (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1958), p. 176.

among man"[17], which happens to be an assertion that parallels Milgram's discussion of man being alienated to himself when he is taken out of its own direction.

With such an insight into the problem, it can be argued that from the very beginning, the powerful Systems have deliberately and cautiously degraded man into a condition in which the notion of individuality is lost. They have taken over the control of every action of man and as a result of such fragmentation of the total human act, "no one man decides to carry out the evil act and is confronted with its consequences. The person who assumes full responsibility for the act has evaporated. Perhaps, that is the most common characteristic of socially organised evil in modern society."[18] From such a loss of assuming the responsibility of man's actions, the System itself benefits the most since it finds a gap in man's chaotic mind to be filled with the suspicion of fear, so that man refrains himself from searching and finding his individuality again. As Jordan asserts,

> citizenship within totalitarian states is generally equated with powerlessness, unerring regimentation, fragmentation, centralized rule, and ideological control of culture, education, judicial, religious, political, and interpersonal relationships. The mass media, art, pedagogy, and technology are tools of subordination and regimentation, as is popular culture.[19]

Thus, as it is generally known, within this created world of systematic limitations, spreading fear and acting out the part of the so-called saviour of man have always been the task of the Western world of authorities, which aim at reducing the space for hope and pumping violence instead so as to lead humanity into a fearful world of loneliness and death. By this way, man would grow even more ignorant of his naive condition and passively wait to be entertained through stories, TV shows, films and so on, as it is also implied in Dennis Kelly's 2006 play **Love and Money**: In one of the scenes, Duncan the powerful agent tells helpless Debbie the client that through viewing the millions of Saturday night shows, he displays his naivety and

17 Ibid., p. 176.
18 Milgram, op. cit., p.13.
19 Eamonn Jordan, "War on Narrative: *The Pillowman*," in **The Theatre of Martin McDonagh**, p. 178.

that if he were not naive, exploiters like him “wouldn't exist.”[20] This can be interpreted as a remark that suggests how the powerful agent requires unquestioning, unconditionally trusting naïve people for its System to continue working perfectly. In the case of **The Pillowman**, then, stories become the prominent element of entertainment through which McDonagh represents the whole picture of man to man himself by utilizing stories as a bridge between individuals and authorities. In the oncoming paragraphs, this point is elaborated further within the context of child disappearance in fiction, yet before that the general picture of the play is analyzed to be able to provide a background to the topic.

The play opens in a "*Police interrogation room. Katurian sitting at table, centre, blindfolded. Tupolski and Ariel enter...with a box file containing a large sheaf of papers.*"[21] While the mise-en-scène instantly reminds one of Stanley's birthday party where Stanley is blindfolded by Goldberg and McCann, the cruel men of authority who can be said to be re-emerging as the two policemen in **The Pillowman**, it also connotes the concept of 'legal actors,' an ironical discourse that refers to those who apply the written laws on individuals. Apparently, Katurian has no idea why he is in that room: he explains that he has "been racking my brains, but I can't think" any reasons "Because I've never done anything. I've never done any anti-police thing, I've never done any anti-state thing..."[22] However, as Tupolski reveals, there is resemblance between the murders in Katurian's stories and some actual murders going on around the town, so he is taken to the room in order for "The security of the state, the security of the general whatever-you-call-it."[23] Upon this, when Katurian starts defending himself as a writer, he also puts forward some paradoxical issues that become the problem of the play and leave the audience baffled as well:

> **Katurian** I mean, I agree. You read these things, these 'stories', supposedly, 'The police are all this,' 'The government is all this.' All these political...what would you call 'em? 'The

20 Dennis Kelly, **Love and Money**, (London: Oberon House, 2006), p. 45.
21 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 3.
22 Ibid., p. 5.
23 Ibid., p. 7.

> government should be doing this.'...I say if you've got a political axe to grind...go write a fucking essay, I will know where I stand...You know? A great man once said, 'The first duty of a storyteller is to tell a story,' and I believe in that wholeheartedly...Or was it 'The *only* duty of a storyteller is to tell a story'?...I can't remember, but anyway, that's what I do, I tell stories. No axe to grind…[24]

As this questioning and explanations take place at the very beginning of the play, it acquires a form of intertwined problem of the relationship between the authority and storytelling, be it literal or figurative. If Katurian is the *author* of horrific stories, it can be interpreted that he is concurrently the authority that makes his audience listen to and believe him. Yet, the two policemen also represent the coercive authority that deprives man of his speech and actions. However, as the play unfolds, it becomes almost inexplicable for the audience to identify which agent is right or wrong, or if it is really necessary to make such an identification at all. This is to say that the paradox of the play is that Katurian's history of authorship and his stories are in fact the actual source of the murders acted out by Michal. In this case, then, one can never be sure whether the two policemen were really being despotic on Katurian in burning Katurian's stories and torturing him or not, because there arises a key question that Eamonn Jordan asks in his essay "War on Narrative: *The Pillowman"*: "Can literature perform a subversive activity that confronts with subtlety or otherwise the imposed order or does most writing serve as a means of perpetuating values, and of subliminally and aggressively conditioning the citizen?"[25] In fact, the answer is concealed within the question itself. Literature does both because it is both subversive and manipulative in both positive and negative terms. However, "Either way, literature as a text or state rule delivers suggestive and counterfeit narratives that cannot be without ideological imperatives and inhibitions."[26] Furthermore, another role of literature is to tell the truth and according to the critic Terry Davis, "It's a sinful practice to deny our children – to deny anyone, but particularly to deny

24 Ibid., p. 7.
25 Jordan, op. cit., p. 190.
26 Ibid., p. 190.

our children – information that is going to help them understand the complexity of being human and passing time on this earth. Literature tries to tell the truth about that complex process; writing that makes no attempt to tell the truth isn't literature."[27] Thus, if the relationship between literature as a text or state rule and violence in **The Pillowman** is brought under examination, it is apt to discuss the parallels between various violence performed by the policemen and Katurian, not to mention Michal.

First of all, as the dominant stage setting is inside an interrogation room, the state rules and laws in the form of texts and, symbolically, stories should be taken into consideration, which becomes a concept that can momentarily be associated with the notion of legal actors. By bringing the inside of an interrogation room onto stage, McDonagh apparently touches on the issue of "how law is written in the books and how it is actually practiced by legal actors in the social world."[28] Of course, the play has nothing to do with the laws, but regarding laws as stories, it has a relation to the actions and roles people play when exposed to any kind of stories. For this reason, "The roles that...characters play...have a symbolic significance that expresses their view of the world, their sense of morality and their understanding of how past events have shaped them."[29] Within this context, it is required to mention the policemen's past and how their past, in the form of stories help them cope with the violence they have to inflict upon (innocent?) individuals.

Firstly, Ariel, whose name connotes Shakespeare's **The Tempest** in which Ariel is the obedient spirit of the air who is looking for his freedom in exchange of accomplishing Prospero's orders, appears to be a character who is good at applying the violent and dehumanizing orders the authorities command him to. However, later in the play, it turns out that he considers himself as a man of perfection for he believes that he saves children from some bad men around by punishing them and that when he is an old man, he says, "Little kids are gonna follow me around and they're gonna give me some of their sweets in thanks...Because I'm a good policeman. Not necessarily good in the sense of being able to solve lots of stuff...but good in the sense of I stand for something. I stand for something. I stand on the right

27 Davis, op. cit., p. 31.
28 Richard A. Leo, "Inside the Interrogation Room," (**The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology**, Vol. 86 No. 2, Winter, 1996), p. 266.
29 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 104.

side."[30] Ariel's strong conviction about his ironic situation in the future can be read as a story of his own creation which helps him rework the reality of his having to be a violent man and make it bearable, as Jackson has asserted. In other words, like Ian's nomination of his fearful deeds as his love for his nation in **Blasted**, Ariel's is "an attempt to justify and give meaning to the brutality that he routinely inflicts upon people"[31] and "[cowering] behind the protection offered to them by narratives of justification and by the state."[32] Similarly, Tupolski also concludes from a story that reinforces his sense of morality of his duty. He says, "(*proudly*) See, the old wise man, he represents *me*. He's up in his tower all day, he's doing his calculations, he hasn't got much affinity with his fellow man. The little deaf retarded boy comes along, he represents my fellow man."[33] Through his calculations, Tupolski's representative hero in the story rescues the deaf boy from death; however, the stage directions and the emphasis on the object pronoun 'me' imply how significantly he regards himself and his duty as the saviour of individuals. In fact, his position reminds one of Foucault's interpretation of the Panopticon, as discussed in the first chapter, because in his tower, he is invisible to people outside and acts under the pretence of safety provider who eventually achieves oppression in a society (as a form of violence) as its by-product. Altogether, Tupolski and Ariel "also show an awareness that their ability to wield power has a symbolic meaning of its own", because they reveal that "We like executing writers. Dimwits we can execute any day. And we do. But you execute a writer, it sends out a signal, y'know? (*Pause.*) I don't know what signal it sends out... No, I've got it. I know what signal it sends out It sends out the signal "DON'T...GO…AROUND...KILLING….LITTLE... FUCKING....KIDS'"[34] The policemen's detection on what signal executing a writer sends out is a misconception and indicates their ignorance since killing a writer has more to do with the idea of repression rather than their narrow outlook about preventing child murders through banning the spread and publication of horror stories. Yet, it is more than the symbolic meaning of being able to employ power on

30 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 78.
31 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 104.
32 Jordan, op. cit., p. 185.
33 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 89.
34 Ibid., p. 30.

individuals that counts: the literal performance of these policemen during the interrogation process is also essential since it is possible that "interrogation can be a form of performance, that it involves a playing of roles in order to force a prisoner to reveal a truth"[35] and in this case, it is not only that the policemen are aware of their power but also that they apply it destructively.

Therefore, while the 'legal actors' can justify their actions within their belief in their own stories, the excessive amount of unjust violence applied on individuals reveals itself in the play and in real interrogation rooms as well, as Richard A. Leo explains the real interrogation sessions in his book **Inside the Interrogation Room** through observations. As for the literature of the laws of punishment, there is no doubt that they become dangerous when they are practised. This is to say that every single brutal point that Leo observes is also applicable for the interrogation scenes in **The Pillowman**. He informs that "I occasionally observed behaviour inside the interrogation room – such as yelling, table pounding, or highly aggressive questioning – that straddled the margins of legality."[36] Likewise, Tupolski and Ariel perform the same and even more violent actions such as Ariel pulling Katurian by his hair off his chair; gouging into his face[37], and Tupolski screaming at him to "Open the fucking box!!"[38] In fact, their interrogation goes beyond what can be described as violent to an action that is coercive, which is interrelated to violence in any form. Starting from the ancient methods of punishment as extensively described in Foucault's **Discipline and Punish** until the present day, the definition of the line between a coercive and non-coercive interrogation has always varied, because "'coercion' in the context of interrogation is not an external thing one can independently observe or something whose existence one can objectively verify, but rather a concept that courts attack to a variable and sometimes quite amorphous set of police behaviors."[39] This situation both parallels and diverges from Milgram's assertion that "challenges to hierarchy provoke violence."[40] It is similar, because it is highly probable that a suspect, when pushed really hard, may challenge a detective;

35 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 103.
36 Leo, op. cit., p. 270.
37 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 12.
38 Ibid., p. 28.
39 Leo, op. cit., p. 282.
40 Milgram, op. cit., p. 126.

however, in the part of **The Pillowman**, the case is different in that Katurian is exposed to violence even before he challenges the authority and is tortured when he confronts it. Yet, whenever Katurian rebelliously shouts at the policemen[41] and therefore challenges them, Charles G. Bolte's warning should be taken into consideration: "we need to be diligent in challenging power and questioning the premises of all those, in or out of office, who want a certain result with all their heart, even if it means destroying what is in ours."[42] Hence, under the unforgiving and impatient shade of power, Katurian is both physically and psychologically tortured and oppressed, because his ordeal is in direct relation with the ten conditions that Leo lists in his article, noting that an interrogation is coercive even if just one of the items is present during the process. Among the ones that suit Katurian's interrogation are:

> (1) The detective failed to read the *Miranda* warnings;...
> (3) The detective touched the suspect in an unfriendly manner;...
> (5) The detective threatened the suspect with
> physical or psychological harm;
> (6) The detective promised the suspect leniency
> in exchange for an admission of guilt.[43]

Whereas the first item has already been mentioned when the policemen directly start questioning Katurian, the rest is elaborated in the coming paragraphs that discuss the idea of justice. As it is clear, these policemen act out their roles violently, brutally and oppressively in order to show, prove and make Katurian accept and confess how the meaning of his stories of child murder has been influential on Michal, who is said to slaughter some children around the town in the ways that are like the ones in those stories.

However, there remains a significant question about the meaning of both the stories and the play. At the end of the play and afterwards, the audience still cannot understand certain points about the characters and murders which are acknowledged

41 Katurian's first challenge occurs when he learns that his brother is kept in another custody room, as it is also explained further in the chapter.
42 Charles G. Bolte, "Security Through Book Burning," (**Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science**, Vol. 300, July, 1955), p. 88.
43 Leo, op. cit., p. 282.

initially. In addition to those, the audience can never learn whether Katurian is actually guilty or not (because he is eventually executed), neither can they be sure about the degree of achievement "in [the parents'] experiment of creating a great writer."[44] Consequently, when Katurian is thought as the spectator of the legal actors who has argued that he is "not trying to say anything at all"[45] through his art but desires his readers to "draw [their] own conclusions"[46], the real audience should also be examined as they are in the same shoes with Katurian. If the real spectators of **The Pillowman** (and other plays in general) demand a play that *says* something clearly and readily without leaving any space for imagination (and this has always been the case with the domineering state-of-the-nation plays after World War II), then they would find themselves in the weirdest situation which befits the thought-provocative feature of In-Yer-Face plays. Spectators will catch themselves "identifying not with Katurian but with Ariel and Tupolski: men who are limited in their perspective, brutal in their outlook and violent in their impulse to reduce everything to one narrow 'truth'."[47] To exemplify, the reactions of the policemen to Katurian's story 'The Little Apple Men' should be quoted:

> **Tupolski** This is a story, it starts off, there is a little girl, and her father treats him badly...
> **Katurian** He slaps her around and that. He's a ...
> **Tupolski** You seem to have a lot of st ... He's a what?
> **Katurian** What?
> **Ariel** 'He's a ...' something, you said.
> **Tupolski** He represents something, does he?
> **Katurian** He represents a bad father. He *is* a bad father. How do you mean, 'represents'?[48]

Although Katurian is simply summarizing the story, the perceptual selectivity of the policemen allows no space for possibilities but demands one instant truth, because this is how they are conditioned and convinced, as it is also obvious from the positive question tag "does he?" instead of a negative one that suits better

44 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 226.
45 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 16.
46 Ibid., p. 11.
47 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 110.
48 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 10.

grammatically.

Accordingly, when identified with Ariel and Tupolski, the audience is concomitantly obliged to think how similar their outlook, clemency, tolerance and forbearance might be to an authoritative, oppressive, destructive and dehumanizing power of a totalitarian regime. Additionally, given that violence is brought about by the oppressive governments of such Systems, then it can also be argued that people without tolerance for dissimilarities and possibilities turn out to be the carrier bodies of violence. Thus, McDonagh "is not trying to communicate with the viewers of his work, but to inflict an experience upon them – an experience that will at least partially be determined by the needs, interests and assumptions of the individual audience members themselves."[49] If the audience needs a message to be clearly conveyed in a play, which is a situation that reveals spectators' narrow perspectives in life, then the utmost ambiguity in **The Pillowman** versus such limited demand of the viewers tell something not about the play but about a given society which is formed of those viewers and alike. This is due to the fact that the 'normal' expectations of the audience require the ideas in a play to be closely and strongly connected as opposed to those in **The Pillowman**.

Shifting the argument onto a social level and interpreting the audience's such desire within Foucault's discussion of a generalized punishment in reference to the French publicist J. M. Servan's work, it can be claimed that, for the audience which represents society,

> the ideas of crime and punishment must be strongly linked and 'follow one another without interruption...When you have thus formed the chain of ideas in the heads of your citizens, you will then be able to pride yourselves on guiding them and being their masters. A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas; it is at the stable point of reason that he secures the end of the chain; this link is all the stronger in that we do not know of what it is made and we believe it to be our own work; despair and time eat away the

49 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 114.

> bonds of iron and steel, but they are powerless against the habitual union of ideas, they can only tighten it still more; and on the soft fibres of the brain is founded unshakeable base of the soundest of Empires'.[50]

As it is clear, Katurian is strongly bound by the chain of the authorities of a totalitarian police state and he is finally killed, which means that there have been no interruptions in his punishment, as it befits the intolerance of the authorities to the vagueness, probabilities and misconceptions of and in a situation. As for the audience of the play, their "habitual union of ideas" (a phrase that brings Sierz's term "habitual gaze" of the pre-In-Yer-Face spectators to mind) versus the interruptions and gaps in the plot of the play create for them a space of thought where they can contemplate on their tight bonds of iron ideas in their lives. Consequently, it becomes needless to mention that such powerful and unshakable habits of thought also pave the way to violence in a society as it is witnessed in Katurian's violent death, because what matters is not what the authoritative laws tell humanity to do but how the practitioners apply it, as it is also discussed in the final paragraphs. Briefly, Tupolski and Ariel operate as legal actors since they put what is written into practice. Nevertheless, their determinism in reaching only one pre-planned result without any questioning of other possibilities reflects how narrow-minded and therefore oppressive they are, which are the qualities of the causes of violence in societies, as it is also the case with Goldberg and McCann in Pinter, and Ian and the Soldier in Kane's plays.

3.3 Who to Blame? Children?

After this discussion, there appears a two-dimensional question whose one end involves the policemen and the other end reaches out to Katurian and his family within the themes of storytelling and violence. The answer, on the other hand, is the equivalent of each other. Therefore, changing the focus to Katurian and Michal, the rest of the chapter argues whether or not the authorities (Katurian the author, written laws of states) are to be blamed as the actual source of violence rather than those

50 Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, pp. 102-103.

who practise them on man. The result juxtaposes both the policemen and Katurians, and in order to achieve this, an interrelated discussion of both of the agents pursues.

Like the two policemen belonging to the unnamed totalitarian state in the play, that is, they work for it and are shaped according to its rules and regulations, Katurian and Michal brothers belong to the Katurian family. However, instead of functioning only as a unit of raising their children and shaping them into socially acceptable forms of obedient, docile bodies, the Katurian parents perform explicit violence on Michal the younger son for the sake of an artistic experiment on Katurian. The following passage from the play in the form of a story demonstrates how the parents carry it out:

> **Katurian** Once upon a time there was a little boy upon whom his mother and father showered nothing but love, warmth...All the seeds of creativity were implanted in him from an early age and it was writing that became his first love: short stories, fairy tales, little novels...some of them were very good. His parents' experiment had worked.
> *The Mother and Father, after caressing and kissing Katurian, enter the adjoining room, and leave our sight.*
> ...The room next door to his own room had always been kept bolted and padlocked for reasons the boy was never quite sure of but never questioned until the low whirring of drills, the scritchety-scratch of bolts being tightened, the dull fizz of unknown things electrical, and the muffled screams of a small gagged child began to emanate through its thick brick walls. On a nightly basis....'What were all those noises last night, Mama?'...
> **Mother** Oh little Kat, that's just your wonderful but overactive imagination playing tricks on you.[51]

Resembling through its mysteriousness and macabre to Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, this is how Michal is sacrificed in order for his brother's imagination to burst. As Katurian keeps hearing the dreadful noises, "his stories got darker and darker and

51 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 32.

darker. They got better and better, due to all of the love and encouragement...but they got darker and darker, due to constant sound of child-torture."[52] While the parents, as the representatives of a manipulative social institution, have "implanted" creativity into Katurian's imagination, they have also made both children inherit unforgettable experiences that are impossible to vanish and play significant and determining parts in their shaping into adults and finding their own individuality in their society.

In his book entitled **The Cultural Psychology of Self: Place, Morality and Art in Human World**, Ciarán Benson defines the concept of family as being

> the crucible in which self is forged. Whether directly by incorporating or indirectly by rebellion, the family and its associates (the church to which the family belongs, the schools it chooses for its children, its various loyalties in politics and play) supply and edit the self-constituting narratives available to its offspring, and powerfully influence the structuring of their identities.[53]

Noticing the similar meanings of the words "implanted" employed by Katurian's narrative voice and "incorporating" in the above quote, the Katurians definitely supply and impose self-constituting narratives on their offspring in the form of violence.

As a result of this "artistic experiment", Katurian's stories are populated with incidents that are "about the threat of individuality in the face of apparent state or parental omnipotence."[54] He is forged in the family crucible and as the immediate result of what he has inherited from his parents, apart from his imaginative creativity, he becomes the murderer of his parents and arguably, through his stories, many little strangers.

Before progressing with the after-effect of the experiment, it must be noted that Katurian's killing his parents is intertextually important in that it has ironic and comparable themes to both Pinter's **The Birthday Party** and Kane's **Blasted**

52 Ibid.
53 Ciarán Benson, **The Cultural Psychology of Self: Place, Morality and Art in Human Worlds**, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 212.
54 Jordan, op. cit., p. 180.

Maintaining his narrative, Katurian reveals that upon noticing a note left by Michal, he breaks into the room and "his brother he found in there, alive, as such, but brain-damaged beyond repair, and that that night, whilst his parents were sleeping, the fourteen-year-old birthday boy held a pillow over his father's head for a little while...and, after waking her a moment just to let her see her dead blue husband, he held a pillow over his mother's head for a little while, too."[55] Considering McDonagh's predecessor Pinter and his contemporary Kane's influences on **The Pillowman**[56], it is hardly a coincidence that it is Katurian's birthday when he suffocates his parents. Like Stanley's birthday party that marks the initiation of his 'new', restricted life, Katurian's saving both Michal's and his life on his birthday is ironic since he would also kill Michal in the same manner and get executed. Furthermore, the idea of a brain-damaged brother also emerges in Kane. It is Cate's retarded brother that Ian labels and performs oral violence. Similarly, Tupolski, nominating Michal as 'backward', is corrected by Katurian with the explanation that "He is not backward, no. He's slow to get things sometimes."[57] Altogether, it can be deducted that all the three plays share common themes and details which remain either as the result or as the cause of violence in societies.

Among the various stories that are Katurian's creation as a result of the experiment, the most crucial one that is narrated in the play is presumably the one called 'The Pillowman.' It is the story of a man made up of "fluffy pink pillows"[58] who would turn back time and go to the childhood years of a suffering adult "to get that child to kill themselves, and so avoid the years of pain that would just end up in the same place for them anyway: facing an oven, facing a shotgun, facing a lake."[59] The reason why the Pillowman directs children to hazardous spots so that they die 'accidentally' is that "mummies and daddies always find it easier to come to terms

55 McDonagh, op. cit., pp.34-35.
56 Lisa Fitzpatrick, "Language Games: *The Pillowman*, *A Skull in Connemara*, and Martin McDonagh's Hiberno-English," in **The Theatre of Martin McDonagh**, p. 141.
Fitzpatrick writes that it is noted by scholars and reviewers that McDonagh is not only influenced from other playwrights such as J.M. Synge, Harold Pinter, Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka, but also from Quentin Tarantino, soap operas, and contemporary British playwrights like Mark Ravenhill and Sarah Kane.
57 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 9.
58 Ibid., p. 43.
59 Ibid., p. 44.

with a five-year-old lost in a tragic accident than they do with a five-year-old who has seen how shitty life is and taken action to avoid it."[60] Consistent with the stories behind which Tupolski and Ariel hide and conceive as the reason that validates their bestiality, the Pillowman in like manner adopts the above supposition on the pretext of guiding children to death and saving them from the future tortures of life.

Nonetheless, "The Pillowman" is the central story in the play since it also gives its name to the title of the play and aligns all the dualities and complexities in the play. The story calls back some moments from the past of each character to their minds and even foreshadows some actions that occur in the course of the play. In order to save his brother from the torture of the policemen, Katurian suffocates Michal just like the Pillowman who kills children: He "*takes the pillow and holds it down forcefully over Michal's face...After another minute he is dead.*"[61] However, the murder can also be interpreted as Katurian's desire to save his stories, because for Katurian, "It isn't about being or not being dead. It's about what you leave behind."[62] That is why immediately after killing Michal, Katurian calls the policemen and asks "to make a confession to my part in the murders of six people. (*Pause.*) I have one condition. (*Pause.*) It involves my stories."[63] His keenness on his stories are so powerful that he is not aware of the comic situation he puts himself in, since the policemen would not care about his condition at all but reach their aims in anyway.

As for Michal, he also becomes the Pillowman:

> **Michal** ...He's a very good character. He's a very very good character. He reminds me a lot of me.
> **Katurian** How does he remind you of you?
> **Michal** You know, getting little children to die. All that.[64]

However mad and even sentimental it is, Michal's attachment to the story and identifying himself with the Pillowman have a counterpart on Tupolski's side. He reveals that his son was drowned while fishing alone and that the story has an aspect

60 Ibid., p. 45.
61 Ibid., p. 67.
62 Ibid., p. 60.
63 Ibid., p. 67.
64 Ibid., p. 52.

that stays with him: "There was something gentle about it...And the idea of it, if a child died, alone, through some accident, he wasn't really alone. He had this kind, soft person with him...And that it was the child's choice, somehow. Made it somewhat, reassuring, somehow. That it wasn't a stupid waste."[65] This account turns out to prove the fictional Pillowman's belief in his deeds, as mentioned previously. It indicates how people in real life also require stories to hold on to for a more bearable reality and to justify their actions, as discussed before. Finally, Ariel too can be associated with the Pillowman as a killer. He murders his father by holding "a pillow over his head while he was sleeping"[66], because the father used to rape him when he was a child. Briefly, it is through such resemblances of the characters and plot of the play to “The Pillowman” story that it becomes inconceivable to distinguish the rightful and the unjust, and the fictional and factual in the play.

What is complementary to this story is its thematic relation to Katurian's only published story "The Tale of the Town on the River" that is explained before from the aspect of its violent imagery of slaughtered toes of a child. To go into detail, the story is the reminiscent of the Brothers Grimm's version of **The Pied Piper of Hamelin** not only because generally all the stories in the play are under the influence of Grimm's writing but also because the adult driver in the story is revealed to be the Pied Piper who steals away children. However, in Katurian's version, the toes of the Piper’s child victim are cut and thus, "by disabling his victim, he ensures that the child will not be able to follow the other children from the town to their demise."[67] Correspondingly, the Pillowman disables its victims to make them avoid great sufferings in the future. Altogether, these stories exemplify "a philosophy that has dominated Katurian and Michal's life: that suffering can indirectly benefit its victim."[68] Katurian benefits from his brother's torture and Michal is freed upon Katurian's killing his parents. Overall, like other Grimms' tales such as **Hansel and Gretel**, these stories "are shocking because they take the values that we regard as unshakable (such as the notion that parents will always protect their children), and

65 Ibid., p. 92.
66 Ibid., p. 82.
67 Ibid.
68 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 110.

then consider what happens when those values no longer apply."[69] What happens is actually simple: violence. But still, who is guilty of this is ambiguous.

There is no wonder that Katurian is arrested and interrogated not just because of his political views which the policemen believe also to be reflected in his stories, but because of the fact that he pokes the 'unshakable' system of social institutions and therefore poses a threat towards such authorities, since literature has the power to spread subversive ideas, as discussed earlier. In addition to this mission of literature, the raison d'être of horror stories specifically disturbs the rule makers because, as Jackson declares,

> "While metaphors of unimpeded movement and free speech characterise situations of balanced reciprocity, the ontological metaphors that surface in situations of radical victimage tend to express loss or limitation in one's freedom of movement (being bound, cornered, trapped, cut off, imprisoned, petrified, paralysed, exposed, alone, stuck, crushed, oppressed, undermined, thrown) or severe restrictions on one's freedom of speech (being gagged, silenced, stifled, speechlessness, dumbstruck, unheeded). These are the recurring metaphors in stories of rape, refugee flight, child abuse, separation trauma, political persecution, and warfare, in which one finds himself powerless in the face of some external force or Other that is deaf and indifferent to one's very existence. But victimage and violation are never simple functions of physical subjugation or speechlessness; they encompass the deeply-engrained, disguised, and habitual forms of 'structural violence' that systematically negate the will and deny agency to vast numbers of people in modern societies simply because they are poor, 'coloured,' infirm, elderly, vagrant, or migrant.[70]

As it can be deducted from Jackson's assertion that the stories of radical victimage involve the metaphors of restrictions of freedom, the reason of Katurian's interrogation extends to a point where the policemen's actions of confining Katurian

69 Ibid., p. 112.
70 Jackson, op. cit., p. 43.

prove to be due to the threat towards the breakage of the chain of structural violence that spreads itself out on the members of modern societies like a web. This is to say that if one unit of a social institution is shaken through the spread of subversive literature, then the power of the invisible but all-seeing and controlling despot positioned in his tower in Panopticon can also start quaking. This is because the more disobedience would appear in public, the more he would lose control. To set an instance, the Christian church's (as another social institution of oppression) reaction to the effects of Gutenberg's invention of the printing press can be cited: “Book fairs made their appearance. Most of this wave of publications were ideologically innocent or orthodox, but the very proliferation of printed materials made the church soon aware that it was losing control of ideas.”[71] Hence, as it is quoted before, Foucault's explanation that the chain of punishment should not be interrupted so as to keep the chain of obedience firm shows its efficacy once again.

Apart from the notion of radical victimage of children in the stories that Katurian writes, there emerge other themes that have connections and implications to social violence happening all around the world. They are the patterns of child disappearance in fiction and the attitude the adults and authorities assume towards children's disappearance. In a social context, these can be the reflections of child murders, abductions and abuse in real life along with their representations in the leading American and British media that “constitute a hegemonic social and cultural construction of the late twentieth century”[72]. One example can be given from both the American and the British media which reflect the incessant incidents of children being murdered or abducted from American and British schools.

Before proceeding with social and cultural aspects of the stories, it should be noted that while translating **The Pillowman** into Turkish for its 2011 Ankara National Theatre production by İlham Yazar the director, Yusuf Eradam realizes the fact that the most recurring word in the play is 'little.' The repetition of this word suggests belittling and creates ironies in that a serious case is attributed to children

71 Hans J. Hillerbrand, “On Book Burnings and Book Burners: Reflections on the Power (and Powerlessness) of Ideas,” (**American Academy of Religion**, Vol. 74 No. 3, Sept., 2006), p. 598.
72 Margarida Morgado, “A Loss Beyond Imagining: Child Disappreance in Fiction,” (**The Yearbook of English Studies**, Vol. 32, 2002), p. 244.

and/or the severity of the case is despised.[73] This idea is also reflected in the banner of **The Pillowman**'s 2007 production by Lillian DeRitter and Sam Creel in Scotch'n'Soda Theatre at Carnegie Mellon University.



The reflection of the smiling child figure is that of a ghost-like pouting creature which signifies the horrific outcomes of excluding children from society in terms of how they are perceived. Also, as the pink figure is shaped like a soft and comfortable pillow, the reflection of it is also given in 'W' letter at the end of the word 'pillow', appearing as an 'M' to write the word 'man', that is, children turning into adults through how they are understood in Western societies.

Thus, as expected, within the content of this study, it is social violence that can be attributed to children as a serious case. Hence, McDonagh's emphasis on the word 'little' and his fascination in horrific stories of children in the present age suggest more than just an element of the plot of an In-Yer-Face play because its social and cultural branches reach out and touch to the roots of violence that is brought about by the authoritative Systems in modern societies.

During the examination of his stories, Katurian, in a startled manner, asks the policemen: "What, are you trying to say that I'm trying to say that the children represent something?"[74] According to Jordan, this is not only a "comment on the processes of representation, but also on how children have been used in literature, parables, and fairy tales as ways of gaining access to certain root values and

73 This comment is noted by Prof. Dr. Yusuf Eradam in his translation drafts.
74 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 12.

emotions."[75] The idea of the root values and children can be analyzed deeper if Margarida Morgado's discussion is also taken into consideration. Writing in the same year with McDonagh, Morgado asserts in her article titled "A Loss Beyond Imagining: Child Disappearance in Fiction" that one thing is for sure:

> child disappearance cannot be dissociated from the places occupied by children on the streets, in wars, as consumers, as viewers of television, as information technologies experts, and as the first mortal victims of global business and of war in all parts of the world. It has become impossible to insulate the lives of children from the manifold narratives that sustain their presence, and from the cultural and economic politics of the East and the West that represent children as an economic liability, a burden, voracious and frivolous consumers, and lazy and greedy offspring.[76]

Morgado explains that the locations from which children disappear are as crucial as the incident itself and that it has economic and cultural significations rather than just a terrible incident. If this subject is to be narrowed down for focal purposes, it can be argued that the most poignant place from where children are lost in **The Pillowman** is home which has symbolical connotations with the concepts of nation, family and the idea of safety that these provide. Instead of analyzing Katurian's fiction, which can also be the possibility that all in the play belong to his imagination, concentrating on the play itself by regarding it as a horror story being narrated to the audience would be more pertinent inasmuch as the part of the setting is the Katurian house in which Michal is locked in a room and made non-existent for Katurian. Michal's predicament per se is symbolically an eloquent social matter on the premise that the idea of children lost by their parents can be "connected to several theories that warn that childhood is disappearing or that we are witnesses to the 'end of childhood'."[77] As generally accepted, children are the symbols for future and hope, and their loss means the simultaneous destruction of the two notions. However, when the question is child loss, Morgado maintains that

75 Jordan, op. cit., p. 184.
76 Morgado, op. cit., pp. 245-246.
77 Morgado, op. cit., p. 244.

> it is never quite clear whether the child does not exist or that it is we who do not see him/her. Do children disappear from culture because there is nothing to see (since children have become similar to adults) and nothing to know (because it is always adults who speak for and interpret the meanings of children), or because there is nothing to say about them due to the fact that we have ceased to care?[78]

Ignoring children, turning them into 'little adults', and speaking and acting on behalf of them all point to the emergence of violence; the subtexts of such deeds accommodate the idea of raising obedient children since their rights and voices are suppressed by the powerful operators of the governing Systems. As Jordan explains,

> totalitarian states are never on the 'child's side'. Moreover, Katurian's actions, in killing his parents, are about the 'child's side'. However, the re-enactments carried out by Michal, are not from the child's side. There are huge contradictions to be followed through in both plays around the rights of children and the status of innocence and how violence is used to disable innocence. The Katurian family guarantees neither security nor innocence of their children.[79]

For this reason, the relationship between a powerful institution and an individual is important, because children are shaped according to the discipline they acquire from their parents with whom they form a family that stands for one of the most determining social agents in societies. Contrary to Lonergan's claim that "What marks one man as different from another is the extent to which they allowed their parents' actions to determine the direction of their own lives"[80], Michal is unable to physically react to his parents' brutalising him, but apparently, his difference derives from a psychological shaping since his potential identity is hindered by his family as authority. On the other hand, Katurian kills his parents so as not to allow them

78 Ibid., p. 245.
79 Jordan, op. cit., pp. 183-184.
80 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 113.

influence Michal and his life anymore; however, his difference or his struggle to be unique in his writing style, his stories and self encounter an obstacle: the authorities of a totalitarian police state.

Although it is made clear in the play that Katurian is brought to the custody room due to some murders that resemble the ones in his stories, his being there can also have other meanings that are related to the reasons of social violence when it is considered under the light of the implications of child disappearance in fiction. As cited, the two stories written by Katurian have twists which convey the reader the idea that the children are murdered for their own good: they die before they lose their innocence. In other words, they are averted from the hands of authorities which would subtly and systematically inject the seeds of violence into them as they continue growing up in said institutions. Therefore, it can be maintained that the stories are found to be subversive by the policemen, because the beneficiaries of destroying such literature are the very systems of power since they have the opportunity to pump the idea that innocence does not exist anymore and encourage societies not to die but to kill. This opportunity stems from the obscurity of the receptive status of children in societies that Morgado also mentions before posing various questions on the disappearance of children. As the cultural and economic politics make children turn into consuming burdens on families, it is not the children that do not exist but families that do not see them. For them, there is nothing to see, because children have become new adults. Symbolically, then, together with children, the innocence is lost as well which suggests the end of hope for humanity and consequently emerges in the form of an expectation of and dependence on a saviour, as mentioned before within the discussion of how the policemen regard themselves. This is why the ruling authorities are the only advantageous side of such situations because, just like it is impossible to put the whole blame on Katurian for writing stories after which some real murders are modelled, it is not families that are solely guilty. While families struggle to "reinvent their authority in the alienating living conditions of the capitalist and industrialized world"[81], the ruling power makes use of this endeavour and for the sake of its policies and control issues, makes adults

81 Morgado, op. cit., p. 246.

become “enmeshed in education policies and family conceptions that hide conservative politics.”[82]

A concrete and culturally local example for this would be the one from the Thatcherite period in Britain. While Tupolski and Ariel wish to destroy Katurian's work so as to restrict the access to them, under the Thatcher regime in the 1980s “children are puppets manipulated by the politicians and governmental policies...Even before the subcommittee on reading and writing has ended its meetings with a view to producing the Childcare manual, there is already a copy of it, the 'Restricted Reading Copy E-8. Copy nr. 5'.”[83] Thus, it can be concluded that authorities are on constant surveillance and control, and govern each social institution according to their interests. Hence, the more the individuals ignore social issues due to the lack of future hope, the more the System benefits in terms of spreading stories of fear in order to enchain free thought and human will for action and speech. As a result, like Michal and the policemen's (mis)interpretation of the stories and laws respectively, what becomes significant is not what the authorities command but how humanity reacts or interprets those commandments. As Lonergan asserted, it is only through man's degree of obedience to other's orders that he can be a unique individual, free from societal enforcements. That is the reason why McDonagh in **The Pillowman** creates such a cruel family. Their torturing Michal indicates that authorities, as the agents of so-called safety and provision can in fact be the very source of violence and not only the victim (Michal) but also the blind, unbeknown individual (Katurian) suffers from this.

Consequently, in order to keep the public’s eyes closed, the authoritative System is so perfectly organized that in order not to leave any doubt on the side of individuals, it has political inventions (stories?) that keep man in constant belief in the truth and rightfulness of their restraining, violent actions and strategies. By doing so, such Systems destroy individualism and freedom as it is also indicated in Martin Crimp's **Attempts on Her Life** (1997), which is a play that lacks characters and substitutes subheadings for the scenes. Under the subheading “Tragedy of Love and Ideology”, by referring to an imaginary woman, the notes write that “- The leaders

82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., p. 247.

who in her naive and passionate opinion have destroyed everything she values in the name (a) of business and (b) of laissez-faire. - In the name (a) of rationalization and (b) / of enterprise. - In the name of (a) so-called individualism and (b) / of so-called choice."[84] Hence, for the sake of the media (as mentioned before with a reference to Kelly's play), business, rationalization and economy which are all related to the ruling authorities, men are told lies (stories?) just like Katurian's mother who makes up lies[85] to keep him feel special and powerful among other children when he starts hearing the awful sounds of torture as described previously. Yet, in order to achieve such an aim, controlling authorities must do it under the name of justice to cover their hypocrisy.

3.4 Justice?

Discussing the surveillance systems in societies, Foucault remarks that

> the idea that the machinery of justice must be duplicated by an organ of surveillance that would work side by side with it, and which would make it possible either to prevent crimes, or, if committed, to arrest their authors; police and justice must work together as two complementary actions of the same process – the police assuring 'the action of society on each individual', justice 'the rights of individuals against society'.[86]

After the brief analysis of some possible ways of how the loss of children is perceived by the Western capitalistic culture, it has been mentioned that the policemen in **The Pillowman** consider Katurian's stories subversive and, since the idea of subversion is directly linked to the concept of an obedient society, the police, as the representative agent of social order and security, must take an action to prevent Katurian so as to maintain both its interest and society's unquestioning state. So, as in Foucault's argument, the policemen in the play assure the 'safety' of society; however,

84 Martin Crimp, **Martin Crimp Plays 2**, (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 212.
85 Upon Katurian's question whether all little boys of his age hear such sounds of torture each night, the Mother replies that only the extraordinarily talented ones do so and therefore, engages him in a lie that is allegedly for his own good (McDonagh, 32).
86 Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, p. 96.

the topic of the rights of individuals remains neglected and violated.

Referring back to Leo's criteria in which the circumstances that prove an interrogation coercive, it can vividly be detected that as an individual, Katurian's experience with the policemen has nothing to do with what is said to be justice not only because it is coercive but also due to the fact that even before the process begins, they have already planned the end of and for Katurian. Clearly, the entity of the police should be signalling justice, but what happens behind the doors is different than what is normally expected from a just organisation. Thus, to start with the two of the most striking features of the coercive interrogation in the play, the issues of touching the suspect in an unfriendly manner and psychological harm that the policemen inflict upon Katurian should be prioritised since they, especially the latter one, involve an intertwined plot with the past events occurred in the Katurian house.

Early at the beginning of the interrogation, when the policemen ask Katurian if he has "anything *against* any Jews", Katurian replies as "No. Should I have?" and on this Tupolski comments that it is "Kind of lily-livered and subservient on the one hand, yet vaguely sarcastic and provocative on the other..."[87] And the conversation continues as follows:

> **Katurian** I wasn't trying to be provocative.
> **Tupolski** Were you trying to be subservient?
> **Katurian** No.
> **Tupolski** Then you were trying to be provocative.
> And now Ariel is going to hit you again.[88]

From this exchange, it can be comprehended that Ariel has hit Katurian before, an action which goes ahead of what can be described as an 'unfriendly manner.' Additionally, while the passage proves once again the policemen's intolerance towards greyness of ideas as mentioned before, it also demonstrates their pre-determination in destructing Katurian and triggers Ariel for remembering one thing upon Katurian's strict assertion after the threat that his life is all about staying in and writing stories.[89] The thing that Ariel remembers is Michal, who is thought to be at

87 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 14.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., p. 14.

school by Katurian but is in fact being kept “one door down.”[90] Soon after Ariel exits to visit Michal, Katurian is given the promise that his brother “will be fine.”[91] However, after some time, there is heard a “*Sound of a man screaming hideously a few rooms away. Katurian stands, becoming flustered.*”[92]

While watching or reading the play, the spectators will instantly recall these stage directions once the scene of Michal's brutalisation in his own room that is adjacent to Katurian's is animated. Hence, even if they seem to be two distinct locations, the brothers' rooms in the Katurian house and the ones in the interrogation area are spatially the copies of each other along with the violent occurrences in them, yet with an important difference in terms of the methods of manipulation. For example, at home, Michal is literally tortured horribly as his psychological condition reveals; however, his hideous screams in the interrogation room are not genuinely the outcome of his agony since the following dialogue acknowledges the true nature of what has happened to him there. By referring to the police torture, Katurian asks:

> **Katurian** Did yours hurt?
> **Michal** Did my what hurt?
> **Katurian** When they tortured you.
> **Michal** They didn't torture me.
> **Katurian** What?
> *Katurian looks him over for the first time, seeing there are no cuts or bruises.*
> **Michal** Oh, no, the man said he was *going* to torture me, but I thought, 'No way, boy, that'd hurt,' so I just told him whatever he wanted to hear, and he was fine then.
> **Katurian** But I heard your scream.
> **Michal** Yes. He asked me to scream. He said I did it really good.[93]

In like manner to Katurian's mother who makes him believe that it is out of his powerful imagination that he hears those sounds of torment, Ariel makes use of Michal's child-like quality to fake some screams in order to deceive Katurian. While this befits Leo's list of coercive interrogation from its psychological aspect, it also

90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., p. 15.
92 Ibid., p. 23.
93 Ibid., p. 38.

introduces the manipulative relationship between authorities and individuals that lacks justice. In any way, as Pilný reminds us, “Manipulation is an overall defining feature of *The Pillowman*...the point is that all the characters in the play are puppets, swung around by their manipulative creator, while the ultimate aim seems to be to shunt the audience to and fro in a similar way without losing a firm grip over it.”[94] Considering the puppet metaphor under a social context, it can be detected that individuals helplessly yield to the rules and demands of the authorities since they are the powerful agents before a weaker side, which is an idea that recalls Fromm's assertion made under the subheading “Man in Capitalistic Society”, explaining how the twentieth century Capitalistic societies are populated with “the increasing number of people who manipulate figures and people.”[95] Thus, authoritative power always has the manipulative strength to make the latter (or to leave it without options by grasping its freedom away) believe in its self-interested, capitalistic, political, economic and cultural strategies which are pointed out in Morgado's discussion of child loss that has been mentioned above. In other words, once again, authorities make individuals believe in their 'stories' that accommodate violence in them and inject those stories into man's soul, just like Katurian's mother and Ariel making up lies to make Katurian believe in first, his imaginative power and second, his brother's misery.

The concept of make-believe, which renders justice inapplicable, is also a theme that is handled in **The Pillowman**. After Katurian's shock on Ariel's deception, he does some reasoning and comes up with crucial questions and statements that also involve the function of the audience both as play watchers and as the members of society. He asks: “Why are we being so stupid? Why are we believing everything they're telling us?...This is just like storytelling.”[96] Then, he remembers that the first rule of storytelling is not to “believe everything you read in the papers.”[97] Since what the audience views is also a story, then, through those lines, McDonagh is in like manner asking the audience not to believe directly in everything they are told. The major lines follow when Katurian contemplates on how he believed in the

94 Pilný, op. cit., p. 219.
95 Fromm, **The Sane Society**, p. 101.
96 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 39.
97 Ibid., p. 40.

policemen's remark that some children were murdered. As befitting his naivety, Michal answers Katurian in the following lines:

> **Michal** It was in papers.
> **Katurian** Who runs the papers?
> **Michal** The police. Ohh. You're quite clever.[98]

In Michal's realization there is concealed the idea of authorities' manipulative power to make-believe, as it is also discussed in the previous chapter. However, the significant problem is about understanding the drive in human beings that enables them to instantly believe in stories both as literature and as statements of authorities. Basing on Charles E. Winquist's statement that "Both story-telling and mythmaking are actions that require a content for their realization"[99] and regarding stories and story-telling as a form of myth-making, Raphael Patai's explanation in his book titled **Myth and Modern Man** should be emphasized.

Considering myths as validating agents of customs, rites, institutions and beliefs, Patai suggests "New myths create new socio-cultural patterns, and, conversely, new customs and new social situations create new myths."[100] Being aware of the power of myths, authorities make use of them in order to build their ideological outlook in societies so as to form 'new social situations' that befit their interests. What is more, to be more effective in communicating those myths and making people believe in them, Patai proposes that the truth in myths "can be best expressed and communicated in the narrative form...it requires repetition before it can have a full impact on its audience. The repetition may be literal, or they may take the form of variants."[101] Hence, through oral repetition, Katurian is made believe in both the child murders in town and in the policemen's promise of not harassing his brother and sociologically, this is how strong beliefs are formed in societies.

Beyond the latter circumstance's trait of affirming a coercive interrogation, it

98 Ibid., p. 41.
99 Charles E. Winquist, "The Act of Storytelling and the Self's Homecoming," (**Journal of the American Academy of Religion**, Vol. 42 No. 1, March, 1974), p. 106.
100 Raphael Patai, **Myth and Modern Man**, (USA: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 3.
101 Ibid., p. 3.

holds another feature that discloses and confirms the intention of the oppressive authorities on individuals. Terry Davis acknowledges that in order for the authorities to be able to inflict such violence on other human beings,

> we need to see them as less than human. People who do this don't believe in a human family. And when we treat people as the Nazis treated the Jews and the others in the camps, we scour the humanity out of all but the strongest. This is our purpose, of course: if we can reduce them to animals whose only motivation is the instinct to keep themselves alive, we can control them more easily before we gas them.[102]

Despite the tough vocabulary that Davis employs, he means that the idea of every despot is to devoid human beings of thought, reasoning and questioning so as to be able to control them easily along with acting out the role of the so-called saviour and therefore guaranteeing obedience. Therefore, the greatest power through which authorities can control and manipulate individuals turn out to be written or visual stories on the various media, since it is the most widespread tool for communication and the one that has the utmost number of users. That is why Katurian congratulates Michal on his not reading the papers at all: “Good. You'll always be one step ahead of everybody else.”[103] Through not reading the papers, Michal, to some extent, can avoid social and political manipulation.

However, Katurian's commendation proves to be ironic, since it is Michal who is most directly affected and manipulated by the stories that Katurian writes. With his damaged brain, Michal defends himself against Katurian in quite a simple way: “I wouldn't have done anything if you hadn't told me, so don't you act all the innocent. Every story you tell me, something horrible happens to somebody. I was just testing out haw far-fetched they were. 'Cos I always thought some of 'em were a bit far-fetched.”[104] Upon learning that Michal did actually kill some children, Katurian, by acting out the role of the Pillowman, suffocates Michal to save him from the tortures of the policemen as explained before. In the end, he becomes the

102 Davis, op. cit., p. 29.
103 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 40.
104 Ibid., p. 50.

one that is also tormented and killed. This has to be so, because

> violence, like storytelling, occurs in the contested space of intersubjectivity, its most devastating effects are not on individuals per se but on the fields of interrelationship that constitute their lifeworlds. This is why violent threats against those one loves, or the loss of family and homeland, can be more damaging than any assault against oneself, and why a person's powerlessness to speak or act against such events is so terrible; for in violence one can act only under the threat of pain, of degradation or of death – and speak only to debase or incriminate oneself, or assent to the other's will.[105]

It can be noticed that the policemen's violent but fake threats on torturing Michal and his parents' torments have resulted in Katurian's killing Michal in the end. Thus, Katurian's situation becomes even more inexplicable since the violence affects not directly him in the first place but his 'interrelationship that constitutes his lifeworld' and leaves him all powerless to speak and act for himself, which is a characteristic of modern violence. Furthermore, as Arendt claims, it is "the presence of others who see and hear what we hear" that "assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves."[106] Therefore, while Katurian's reassurance of the reality of his world is gradually being taken away from him[107], McDonagh also demonstrates how the trusted, unquestioned social institutions such as family can become agents of individual suffering, pain and devastation through the two unjust incidents analysed above.

What remains next for Katurian is his weak struggle for his stories to be kept after he is executed. Right after he learns about Michal's confession of the murders,

105 Jackson, op. cit., p. 39.
106 Arendt, op. cit., p. 50.
107 In the final scene 'The Pillowman' story is renarrated in the form of Katurian and Michal's own stories. However, this time, Michal is not killed for the sake of avoiding further tortures and the following questioning takes place by Michal: "But if my brother never gets to hear me being tortured, he may never write the stories he's going to write, might he?" (McDonagh, 103). This question parallels Arendt's assertion that it is in fact other people's witnessing to our actions that make us reassure the reality of our world. Michal's loss would mean the loss of Katurian's stories which are so at the center of his life that he begs the policemen not to burn them, as it is explained in the coming paragraphs.

Katurian is worried about his stories: "They're going to destroy everything now. They're going to destroy us, they're going to destroy my stories. They're going to destroy everything."[108] Although this line seems to be very simple, the register of language reveals crucial notions about the drives that make Katurian insist on the policemen not to destroy his stories. The emphasis on the word 'everything' and the obvious reference to that 'everything' being 'us' and 'my stories' signal the possibility that, rather than an immortal reputation, Katurian's "desire to ensure that his stories survive could be seen as an attempt not to protect his art, but rather to make the abuse of his brother seem meaningful in some way", for "Katurian clearly feels a sense of guilt because his parents had tortured Michal in an effort to stimulate Katurian's imagination."[109] Yet, whatever Katurian thinks, believes and defends would not matter before the powerful policemen. For instance, in order to prove his innocence, Katurian is ready to accept the burning of those stories which supposedly have political insights in them, a point which can also be interpreted as Katurian's not living "up to his principles."[110] Although it is understood at the end that he is not guilty of the child murders and the two other killings (his parents and Michal) he committed have valid reasons, as the representative of the authority, Ariel's subjectivity and derision are worth noting:

> **Ariel** (*pause*) I know all this isn't your fault. I know you didn't kill the children. I know you didn't want to kill your brother, and I know you killed your parents for all the right reasons, and I'm sorry for you, I'm really sorry for you, and I've never said that to anybody in custody before. But at the end of the day, I never liked your stories in the first fucking place. Y'know?[111]

As it is clear from Ariel's speech and as it has been mentioned before, Katurian's end has already been decided even before the start of his interrogation and however right he might be, a very subjective reason of the authority members is enough for the stories to be destroyed. Therefore, in order to comprehend the subtle goal of the

108 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 53.
109 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 109.
110 Ibid., p. 107.
111 McDonagh, pp. 100-101.

authorities behind such destruction, the nature of burning books and the idea of providing security through book burning should be taken into examination under the ideologically oppressive societies.

3.5 Book Burning and Conclusion

Although it is not shown on stage, the final two stage directions clarify that Katurian's stories are burnt down: "*Ariel puts the stories in the box file...Ariel snuffs out the fire in the bin with water, as the lights, very slowly, fade to black.*"[112] This brief and silent moment has direct links to the notion of violence in the form of repressing and therefore preventing the spread of free thought, ideas, and self-expression. As the dictator Vladimir Lenin once asked,

> Why should freedom of speech and freedom of the press be allowed? Why should a government which is doing what it believes to be right allow itself to be criticized? It would not allow opposition by lethal weapons. Ideas are much more fatal things than guns. Why should any man be allowed to buy a printing press and disseminate pernicious opinions calculated to embarrass the government?[113]

From Lenin's narrow, oppressive and fearful outlook, it can be inferred that, similar to and because of the hypocritical nature of every despotic regime, he contradicts himself because if a government is certain about the rightfulness of whatever measures it is taking, then there should remain nothing that would embarrass it. Hence, it can be argued that out of their fear of losing their all-powerful, ruling positions, the repressive authorities choose to pump fear into societies in order to silence them down, and one efficient way of doing this is burning books, that is, suppressing and banning ideas in a more general sense.

Although book burning or suppressing the ideas in a book occasionally happens these days (in fact, the word ‘occasionally’ could be invalidated if it is

112 Ibid., p. 104.
113 Alan Barth, **Government by Investigation**, (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), p. 183, cited in “Security Through Book Burning”, p. 88.

argued and shown as an example the two books – **Of Mice and Men** and **Şeker Portakalı** – that are considered ill-advised in Turkey in the year 2013), there are various examples throughout the history and the most striking one is the Nazi book burnings of May, 1933. Even more closely connected to what happens in **The Pillowman** is another instance that the writer Salman Rushdie had to experience with his book **Satanic Verses**. Published in 1989, the book was burnt later due to its content and Rushdie was even issued a death decree.[114] Apart from those, there are numerous artistic representations of book burning such as the movies **The Name of the Rose** and **Fahrenheit 451** in which books are burnt down to prevent the spread of ideas and hinder people's independent thinking. No matter in real life or in artistic representations, the reason behind these oppressive actions is not just to validate the ideologies of a given repressive regime, but to eliminate the power of words so as to block the awareness and consciousness (about social issues such as history and culture) that words can create in individuals. This is due to the fact that, as Hans J. Hillerbrand remarks, "Words make possible an awareness of a past, and a present, and a future, a sense of wonder about what there was before we were and what there will be when we are no more."[115] Also, if the act of writing is considered to be a simultaneous building of (national, conceptual) identities, then a tyrant's desire to destroy books is 'understandable', because Like Lenin's dubious assertion, he refrains himself from the possibility of 'embarrassment' and guarantees the application of his ideological identities to prevail.

Turning back to **The Pillowman**, from his passion for stories, it is apparent that words for Katurian mean a lot, and as the speaker in Emily Dickinson's poem did, he "ate and drank the precious Words". Despite his distaste for autobiographies, ("I kind of hate any kind of writing that's even vaguely autobiographical. I think people who only write about what they know only write about what they know because they're too fucking stupid to make anything up."[116]), some of his stories such as "The Writer and the Writer's Brother"[117] and "The Three Gibbet Crossroads"[118]

114 Hillerbrand, op. cit., p. 594.
115 Ibid., p. 595.
116 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 76.
117 Ibid., p. 34.
118 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 17.

can be regarded as Katurian's autobiographies, since they can retrospectively be read as the stories that indicate certain aspects of his life. In the latter story, a man, not remembering what his crime is, is put to an iron gibbet on which writes his crime, visible to everyone but him. He demands for certainty, yet in the end, he dies without knowing his guilt. Lonergan interprets this story by discussing that

> Katurian, like the prisoner in the gibbet, is guilty without having committed a crime (that he knows of). And like the prisoner, Katurian will die experiencing a desperate desire for certainty rather than survival. The prisoner does not seem to mind being killed so much as not knowing *why* he has been killed; similarly, Katurian does not seem to be bothered by his execution once he knows that his stories will certainly be preserved. The tale, then, tells us something about Katurian's past – but it also comments upon his present and in some ways anticipates his future.[119]

This being the case, both of Katurian's dislike of autobiographies and, as mentioned before, his claim that his stories are depthless prove to be paradoxical firstly because they show "how stories have a capacity to reveal truths about their authors even when no such revelation is intended"[120] and secondly due to the fact that Katurian defines his stories to be a "puzzle without a solution."[121] Hence, it can be concluded that writing embeds in itself the idea of forming an identity through enabling various interpretations of the written words. Whenever this identity and/or sub-meanings confront the interests of authoritative states by that particular piece of writing's power of bringing new, revolutionary ideas in a culture or society, then both the work and its writer should be destroyed.

While doing this, as the agents of violence, power holders are in fact aware of the fact that what they are doing is ironic. This is because "Indirectly (and inadvertently) book burning is a testimony to the power of ideas...the powerful sway of ideas finds expression in the language used to describe the books to be

119 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 109.
120 Ibid.
121 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 17.

destroyed..."[122] In other words, book burners attract more attention to that particular book than the attention a public would normally pay to it. Additionally, the fire that is produced to burn books is (though somewhat religious) symbolically crucial and ironic as well. Fire "purifies. It is a burnt offering. It cleanses...the community is cleansed, for fire cleanses as it destroys."[123] Despite such positive messages that book burning sends out to societies, authorities do not neglect performing such actions, because for them, the main message conveyed is the notion of fear in societies on which they can establish their ultimate ruling power. Therefore, in order to prevent the spread of ideas, book burning is regarded as an efficient public performance since "Ideas *are* dangerous; and in a perfectly regulated world, new ones would not be admitted."[124] Yet, it is only those disobedient individuals that are apprehensive of the fact that "Ideas cannot be eradicated by burning; they can only be eradicated by stronger ideas"[125], for only they hold the potential power of reawakening the obedient masses through producing and spreading stronger ideas that would erase the ones infused by the powerful System. It is only via this way that individuals can become independent and unique, which would consequently lead to the formation of free, unprejudiced, non-violent and indiscriminating societies, and eventually to peace at home; peace in the world.

A similar notion is also conveyed in McDonagh's play through Katurian's story titled "The Little Green Pig". This story is also particularly crucial not only because it is the one and only story mentioned once more at the end of the play but also due to the first rendition of it being right before Katurian's murdering Michal with a pillow in the custody room in order to save him from the tortures of the policemen, concurrently revealing that it is the story that Michal likes the best probably because there is no apparent imagery of violence in it.[126] Therefore, dealing with a peculiar pig, the tale "could be read indirectly as Katurian's celebration of his brother, who, though 'a little bit peculiar', is still deserving love."[127] Apart from those, the story is symbolically important for its social and cultural attributions to

122 Hillerbrand, op. cit., p. 603.
123 Ibid., p. 605.
124 Bolte, op. cit., p. 89.
125 Hillerbrand, op. cit., p. 606.
126 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 67.
127 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 108.

Britain's perception of Irish nation, which can also be regarded generally as a contemptuous, discriminating outlook on Jews, an issue that also takes place in **The Pillowman**, with its details going beyond the scope of this study. In the story, in a way that reminds one of George Orwell's **Animal Farm**, there is a farm in which lives a little green pig among other all-pink pigs. This green pig "liked being a little bit different, a little bit peculiar. The other pigs around him didn't like him being green, though. They were jealous and they bullied him and made his life a misery."[128] Thus, the farmers decide to paint the pig in pink with a special paint that does not come off when wet. However, a special kind of green rain falls one night and paints all the pink pigs in green, momentarily leaving the pink-painted pig pink and therefore different and peculiar again. In spite of the lack of direct violence and terrifying imagery in this pig story, there is still violence hidden in the intention of the farmers which clearly represent society, that is, the dominant, obedient majority ruled and controlled by authorities, because they take the pig's freedom and uniqueness away and unify it, like what Goldberg and McCann do to Stanley in Pinter's play. Hence, it can be argued that the reason why Michal likes this story exceptionally can be his potentially disobedient, unique and questioning[129] nature that is impeded by his manipulative parents who represent the devious social institutions.

As for the recurrent green colour in the story, Jordan explains that

> The colour green has also a fundamental association with Irishness, and, secondly, classical British stereotypes have long associated the Irish with pigs. Victorian representations of Ireland used illustrations of the Irish families sharing living spaces with pigs, as indications of the lack of civilization amongst the Irish, rather than reading the fact of shared accommodation as having more to do with grave economic lack.[130]

128 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 65.
129 Note that Michal decides to experiment with Katurian’s stories upon his thought that they are a bit far-fetched. This indicates his critical thinking in his own limits.
130 Jordan, op. cit., p. 191.

In an era (Victorian) when the industrialization (the source of the atomic bomb and modern capitalism) is at its peak, British people's failure or ignorance in differentiating between poverty and civilization reflects how societies can ignore the powerless and are even disturbed by the other's so-called 'uncivilized' way of living. This is similar to how the green pigs are disturbed by the pink one in Katurian's story. Since they are together in the farm, it is impossible to ignore it and thus, the disturbance of the pigs can be read in terms of a threat to the authoritative controllers of the farm since "It got on the nerves of the farmers"[131]. This is the moment when violence is initiated in societies. Although Katurian defends his stories to be apolitical, "they do reveal a world view that is subversive of the status quo."[132] Hillerbrand detects that "Societies become persecuting societies when they perceive a threat to the status quo, a threat that may be real or merely imagined. When perceiving a threat, society responds with restrictive measures, redefining ever more narrowly what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour."[133] The pig's colour was unacceptable, so it had to be changed. Yet, after the rain, "His uniqueness is re-affirmed" which "suggests that individuality cannot be obscured, despite the broad strokes of an ideologically repressive society."[134] Therefore, while Katurian turns out to be an active character who has been exceedingly manipulated and re-shaped in the hands of his family, Michal seems to be the passive one. However, after all, it can be observed that it was Michal who, after freed, has actually lived his life in the way he wished whereas Katurian had to bear the outcomes of his not being able to slip through the net of his parents, his taught imagination and his pre-planned career as a story writer.

Consistent with the other two plays examined in this study, once again there is a protagonist that lacks the ability to see the truth before he is made blind or blindfolded, after which it becomes too late to turn back time and rewind his awakening. At the end of **The Pillowman**, the stage directions inform that "*Katurian pulls the hood on*"[135] and therefore form a linkage to the initial scene of the play,

131 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 65.
132 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 108.
133 Hillerbrand, op. cit., p. 608.
134 Jordan, op. cit., p. 188.
135 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 101.

where he is also blindfolded. Katurian cannot see the influence of authoritative power over him and cannot conceive "himself as inseparable from his vision."[136] His blind vision of himself categorizes Katurian in the latter class of the following analysis made by Lonergan as a conclusion: "For all McDonagh's characters, then, a major distinction is between those who create their own lives and those who instead merely reproduce the inherited narratives of family, religion, national tradition, politics, geography, gender and so on."[137] Although Katurian kills his parents, which can be interpreted as a rebellious action towards the authority, he ultimately becomes the reproduction of his parents to write (once again) the stories that have probably been written or told over and over again to reinforce the tight bonds of repressive and controlling ideas. This notion is implied in the play in a scene where Katurian bangs Michal's head on the floor upon which Michal starts teasing his brother by saying that he is "just like Mum and Dad! Hitting me, and shouting at me!"[138] To this, Katurian is extremely frustrated and he does not accept the blame. However, it is, in fact, the truth because it is Katurian who, whether consciously or not, reproduces stories in the way his family desired him to, that is, horror stories. Michal, on the other hand, by actualizing those stories, reveals his difference and he is thus able to create his own life, as befitting Lonergan's first category of characters. At the first glance, it can be argued that Michal is also reproducing, yet for Michal, he was just simply testing how far-fetched Katurian's stories are, as discussed before. Although this may seem to be a comment made by a brain-damaged boy, it is this mental situation per se that proves his naivety in the way he approaches the stories. Michal is curious about the stories and he goes on to find the answer by acting out the plot of the stories and therefore killing some citizens. Overall, it can be maintained that Katurian's failure to notice what he has actually been writing and its relation to violence is crucial because, as Fintan O'Toole remarks in his review of **The Pillowman**, violence stems from "a distortion of perspective, the loss of a sense of proportion...violence functions as a wildly disproportionate response to

136 Crowley, op. cit., p. 690.
137 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 227.
138 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 54.

circumstances."[139] Taking O'Toole's explanation into consideration, there emerges a problem which also dominates the play: the question of who is to be held responsible for the actions performed after reading the ideas in a book: the audience or the author?

A concise dialogue between Katurian and Michal addresses to that issue. Shortly before their wrangle on being the copies of their parents, Katurian asks Michal to explain why he killed those children. Michal's reply is as follows:

> **Michal** You know. Because you told me to.
> **Katurian** (pause) Because I what?
> **Michal** Because you told me to…
> **Katurian** I don't remember telling you to take a bunch of little kids and go butcher them.
> **Michal** ...'Butcher them.' That's a bit strong.[140]

As it is clear from the dialogue, Katurian is oblivious of the fact that for Michal the original source of his actions is nobody but him. Apparently, taking this possibility for granted, Katurian has never contemplated on it and he is shocked. Such a circumstance immediately brings Goethe's **The Sorrows of Young Werther** to mind, after whose publication many youngsters had committed suicide. If Goethe is guilty of writing such a novel, then Katurian can also be condemned. According to Richard Hornby, although it has a side-purpose of saving him from the worst tortures, Katurian's killing Michal indicates that he "feels some responsibility."[141] This seems to be possible in that by killing him, he guarantees his own death as well, because otherwise, that is, if his punishment was only burning his stories, he might feel guilty all along his life. For Lonergan, though, the situation is different and more comprehensive. He comments that "we are being asked to consider whether the creator of something is responsible for his creations: just as parents should not be blamed for the actions of their children, so we should not blame an author for the consequences that arise when other people read his or her stories."[142] Lonergan's

139 Fintan O'Toole, "*The Pillowman* Program Note," in **The Theatre of Martin McDonagh**, p. 388.
140 McDonagh, op. cit., pp. 49- 51.
141 Richard Hornby, "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt," (**The Hudson Review**, Vol. 58 No. 3, Autumn, 2005), p. 473.
142 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 113.

statement seems to be valid when it is supported by Davis's assertion on the relationship between the audience and a narrative work. He argues that

> No matter how powerfully a story forces us to experience the life in it, our experience with that life is vicarious. The world of literature is a world of ideas. All those places and people and things are ideas. Beautiful, vicious, erotic, subversive, enticing, absurd, inspiring, execrable...ideas. And the only people in danger from ideas are people who don't want other people thinking for themselves. That's what literary experience is: it's the most intimate experience in the world; it's thinking for ourselves.[143]

Basing on Davis's explanations, it can be put forward that Tupolski and Ariel in the play are the ones that try to prevent people from being exposed to ideas. They are the puppets of a powerful totalitarian state, yet when they are alone in the interrogation room with a suspect, their actions before the written laws also involve the relationship between the creator and the created. By dehumanizing individuals, they create violence and finally they obtain what they need: absolute conformity. As for Katurian, who turns out to be the puppet of his parents in the first place, although the guilt of murdering little children does not belong to him, he can neither differentiate himself from what has happened after all nor continue his career as an independent writer of literary stories. His freedom to be able to think for himself is taken away from him. However, it seems impossible to put the blame on Katurian solely or on Michal alone, because the audience, who found themselves identifying with Tupolski and Ariel as analysed before, now catches themselves identifying with Michal and arguably, with Katurian since he is the source of the stories.

During their discussion on why most of Katurian's stories do not have happy endings, Katurian ensures Michal that in life, there are no happy endings. However, Michal feels offended, because, to him, his "story was a happy ending. You came and rescued me and you killed Mum and Dad. That was a happy ending."[144] Such explanation seems to be valid and justifiable enough for a child of parental

143 Davis, op. cit., p. 31.
144 McDonagh, op. cit., p. 59.

sufferings; however, it is quite strange that through this agreement with Michal's remark, "the play, then, puts the audience on the side of child-killers and patricides, and allows us to be fairly comfortable with that position."[145] The audience, put in the shoes of each character in the play except for Mum and Dad (in fact, if they are considered as the representatives of parental authority, then their position can be similar to the policemen's parts as the authorities), finds themselves in a puzzle and hence they need to contemplate and decide which group of characters are to be supported and which one to be discarded. Through this dramatic strategy, by writing **The Pillowman**, McDonagh not only demonstrates that "It is not what we think or what we feel that makes us decent people; it's how we act in the world"[146], but also illustrates

> his apparent belief that what matters most are not the views of the author, but the actions of the audiences. McDonagh's challenge to audiences is...to consider ourselves as active in the interpretation and analysis of what we see: not to receive a play passively, but instead to view ourselves as actors too, as creators of meaning and as people who have responsibilities as a result.[147]

Not receiving a play (or any other situation) passively but pondering it helps man to become an active meaning maker, which would direct him to act and therefore assume the responsibility of his actions. Consequently, instead of passively yielding to the demands of authorities in an expectation that they are the providers of every need such as security and money, individuals, by acting and filling with new ideas, new possibilities again, will start finding the fresh ways of thinking for themselves.

In conclusion, as well as its themes on the (in)dependence of thought and of man, **The Pillowman**, in a much broader sense, asks its audience to think about modern social and cultural circumstances by exposing them to a good amount of horror stories about children being abducted and murdered supposedly for their own good. As a stage language, McDonagh's choice of employing numerous narratives in

145 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 111.
146 Davis, op. cit., 31.
147 Lonergan, op. cit., p. 113.

his play to communicate with his audience relates to the present day from the aspect of those domineering modern communication tools. Through many stories whose content intermingles with the life animated on stage, the playwright constructs the idea that "Narrative is a battlefield, given the globalisation of the media and its communication through images of laceration, carnage, trauma, and death. If terrorism is, in part, the fate of the first world countries, child murder is the ultimate depravity."[148] Hence, the play probes the idea of violence as societal madness through the images of lost children, which is the result of terrorism going on around the world. The common point about those children in the play is that, either boys or girls; city-dwellers or villagers, they have somehow "escaped from familial containment and have dissolved into the big threatening outside world, thereby losing the possibility of incarnating innocence."[149] This dissolution contains in itself the idea of fear and its relation to the authoritative Systems in terms of the fact that fear is the most powerful element that they prefer spreading to societies so as to turn the members of that particular society into docile bodies. Consequently, what is narrated and shown in **The Pillowman** is this very idea that abducting children in order to save them from future tortures of a life lived under the shaping of social institutions can really be something good. This is due to the fact that it is only during childhood when man can experience his individuality however unconscious it may be, as it also parallels the idea of them being and symbolizing innocence that is lost once they start interfering with social circumstances. This concept then becomes an element of a threat for the power of the ruling authorities since it would start faltering when the absolute belief and trust of man in them would lose its grip, since such stories are subversive in their contents and functions. Therefore, besides its promise (which can also be regarded as a form of story) of economic and social safety in which man is made believe, the so-called function of an oppressive regime as the ultimate saviour of the supposedly hopeless man is shown to be shaken in McDonagh's play. Furthermore, what disturbs the audience of **The Pillowman** even more powerfully is another aspect of the play that deconstructs the whole values attained on the concept of family as a social institution. Whereas “...the modern

148 Jordan, op. cit., p. 193.
149 Morgado, op. cit., p. 251.

family is characterized by an emotional and domestic unity of mother (parent) and child, by romantic love, and by 'home' as the protected haven from an aggressive and dangerous outside"[150], in the play this idea is reversed in the sense that the aggressive and dangerous outside becomes the very home of Katurian's where the parents torture their child Michal for the sake of Katurian's imagination. Hence, the concept of the modern family is also questioned.

Apart from those, McDonagh creates two sets of characters, that is, the brothers and the policemen, and has his audience experience identification with each group. While this feature of the play puzzles the audience, it also helps them to reassess their actions and attitudes before violent social occurrences, since they find themselves identified both with the men with no tolerance at all and with the children of child murders. In other words, man needs stories to make the burden of existence more bearable and rework its reality in his own way like the characters do in the play through the stories through which they can justify their violent actions. Via the above method applied on the audience, McDonagh makes them question in which side's story they would believe, which would consequently hit some truths in the face of the audience: the insufferable truth that they have become the source and even the performers of violence and yet they can still continue living 'peacefully' through their conviction in their stories that seemingly justify those actions.

150 Ibid., p. 250.

CONCLUSION

The instantaneous and negative reactions given to the representations of violence and taboos in debuts of some In-Yer-Face plays have a quality that actually explains us why violence persists in societies. In today's capitalist and consumerist culture, through the 'help' of the media as well, events, ideologies and pervasive images of violence are eviscerated and consumed all too quickly. We can simply skip the lamentable occasions that arise from violence by saying that we are 'depressed', or we are able to think that we actually help those in need by sending an SMS to charity organisations from our comfortable distance. Unfortunately, humanity nurtures violence by not stepping into action and not providing real, humane help; concurrently playing into the hands of those that govern us, since power needs individuals not to be active but passive in order for its reign to be easier and perennial. Therefore, unless he evacuates the hall, the audience that watches an In-Yer-Face play is exposed to those incidents that he would normally ignore and even though what he sees is only a representation of reality, every kind of reactions that he gives will tell something not about the play but about that particular audience so as to push him to contemplation on his own humanistic situation.

This being the case, **The Birthday Party**, **Blasted** and **The Pillowman** are examined in this study as fine examples of In-Yer-Face plays that aim at awakening the public through their harsh content and discourse. Although the initial play does not belong to this period, its theme and content have such a quality that serves as a ground to the emergence of In-Yer-Face Theatre. The other two, on the other hand, are distinct examples of such plays, one displaying extreme violence on stage and the other doing the same thing not on stage but in the minds of the audience through the rich use imagery. The representations of the violent and/or terrorized on the media are translated to stage language with such plays in an aesthetic manner, so that the audience can watch what has been automated so far as something artistically new.

This study has focused on the process of the change both in the type of the

audience and the content of British plays which have been written since the Second World War. Soon after the war, while Britain is recovering from it, there appears, especially in cities, a new system of management that demands hierarchy of positions rather than an industrialist work-force. While the prosperity caused by this new system of success, money, and capitalistic approach to business has dominated the atmosphere in cities and led to the emergence of a more complex and sophisticated population, the conception of new possibilities and imagination has decreased, without any urge in individuals for initiative and aspiration. Everyone has followed the crowds and in order to keep the mechanism working, rules and regulations are forced to be strictly obeyed under the illusion of more money, more success, and more titles with higher positions. However, those who have struggled to escape the system through a simple ability of saying 'no', in other words, through rebellion, found themselves in isolation reigned by constant fear of getting caught and readapted into the wheel of the system again.

Hence, in the first chapter that deals with Pinter's **The Birthday Party**, Stanley's case, which fits in that social context, is taken under examination in order to analyze Pinter's aim in writing this play, how the System works on and dehumanizes individuals, and what the general setting of the play tells us about the madness in/of civilizations. As a result of the juxtaposition of the close reading of the play with some theories and ideas on societies, violence, punishment and drama, the findings suggest that escape from the System's mechanism is possible, yet with irremediable consequences on the individual. This means that once an individual rebels against the System and chooses not to act in accordance with it, he is free from it; however, he is not free to rebuild his individuality. Even though he takes refuge in the unthinkable places, he will have to live with the possibility of being caught at any moment, which shows itself in Pinter's drama through the employment of doors that function as cradles of potential menace and violence, for someone may knock it anytime and change the course of life of the residents. Eventually, the door knocks in Meg's and Petey's boarding house, Goldberg and McCann come in and Stanley's dehumanization process begins, after which he is completely out of his speech and ability to act.

Within the world of Pinter's play, violence shows itself not as something

explicit but as an inherent characteristic of such Systems of surveillance and control. Resembling the conception of Panopticon, each individual in modern societies is under the constant observation of power, whose ambiguity becomes the reason of fear infused in individuals, since one can never know when he is being monitored and who exactly is doing it. It is due to this feature of the surveillance system that it renders ambiguity organic and it is for this reason that Pinter prefers writing a play with utmost vagueness of events in it. Unlike the prevailing plays of the period that display the binary oppositions in ultimate clarity and talk about the state of the nation with pros and cons, therefore putting the audience in judiciary seats of distant agreement, Pinter's drama depicts the societal condition as it is, without raising anything politically arguable and disturbs the audience so as to provoke thought on their own condition. Approximately three decades from the time that Pinter writes, there starts appearing a new kind of drama, which is retrospectively nominated as In-Yer-Face Theatre in 2001 by Aleks Sierz.

In the meantime, Britain undergoes various political and social events such as its public witnessing the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reign and exit of Thatcher, which show especially the discerning youth that change is possible in their ways of life, after a period of stagnation, ignorance and complacency, which reflects to the theatre as well. With the increasing effect of the media, the idea of viewing, looking, seeing, showing, reflecting and representing images has become popular, contributing to the formation of a new, virtual culture.

Within this cultural situation, the second chapter reaches to a conclusion that is about how violence is spread especially through the media and the people in that business. It is discussed that from the two types of violence, that is, from top-down and from bottom up, the initial one is the most frequently applied and involves a hierarchical organisation of powerful agents that arrange and control the manipulation of the public mind. The analysis made in the chapter about this point reveals that the media, particularly the print media in the setting of the play, is in accordance with the organisation and spread of violence, since it holds the power of shaping the public mind and perception through what it narrates or displays. In the play, emphasized by Ian's partisan dictation of an international terrorist attack, it is reflected that extreme patriotism may seem to acquire a quality of loving and caring

for one's nation, yet since it involves racism and discrimination, it concurrently indicates the idea of violence committed on the others.

Apart from this, when a good many of images and/or stories of terror become commonplace, the main idea, that is, violence in those objects starts losing its severity and significance before the public acquisition. As a result of this, man can gradually distance himself from violence and act ignorantly, taking violence for granted by assuming that it will never happen to him, an assumption that is the seed of violence in peace times. In other words, man creates violence, and within the relationship of the creator and the created, the creation then destroys man the creator. All of these ideas foster the form and content of **Blasted**, disturbing the media in its artistic representations of violence. In the chapter, it becomes clear that the reactions given to the violence represented on stage are different and more furious than the ones shown to the media, because theatre, as a live form of art, forces its audience to 'endure' what is being animated. Thus, due to this 'ordeal', those who watch what mankind can actually cause feel so ironically offended that some of them leave the auditorium, as discussed within the subject of In-Yer-Face Theatre in the second chapter.

The notion of violent imagery also exists in **The Pillowman** which is handled in the third chapter within a different context as well as a multi-dimensional discussion of violence, coercion and power. As a result, it is argued that the theme of child loss in fiction is not just a coincidental frenzy of a psycho writer, but a signification of the cultural situation that children are considered either to be economic burden or treated as adults, which removes their perception as children. At the same time, it can be the reflection of the actions of some terrorists in West that abduct children from schools and kill them, an idea which connects to the policemen in the play capturing Katurian as the suspect of the violent murders of some children in town. Thus starts the parallel plot of the interrogation scenes and the crimes Michal commits after reading Katurian's stories. In the chapter, focusing on the studies carried out on what happens inside police interrogation rooms helped me put forward that as a so-called symbol of justice, police are both coercive and violent while applying the laws, because they, too, serve for a more powerful organisation, this being a government or any other regimes. Such attitudes of force and intolerance

for not being a partisan explain us, for example, why we still have the incidents of book burning happening even today in real life, which is a contributing idea in the play as well. As generally known, books contain ideas, some of which are considered dangerous by power due to their ability to change the perspective of a whole by awakening them from their ignorant sleep. Yet, it is argued and concluded that it is only more powerful ideas that can eradicate the undesired ones and therefore, any kind of banning of books can be reckoned as an act of violence and coercion.

Katurian's stories are burnt, because they are found to be setting bad examples for children. This issue in the play points towards the idea that art can sometimes be destructive as well, yet the only problem it raises is the difficulty in identifying the guilty part: the writer or the audience who reads the work of that author? It is concluded in the chapter that one of the factors that prevents societies from violence is not to what we react but how we respond to that particular thing. Under this outline of thought is inserted the discussion of how literature and/or storytelling can influence people both in good and negative ways, and that literature always has audience due to its inherent power to reveal secrets, which people run after to find out. As a general result, it is claimed that people are made to believe in the promises, propagandas and other political speeches (which can symbolically be considered as stories) by the ruling agents so that their places get stronger as more people believe in their crass clichés, which, in fact, turn out to be a belief that makes individuals the carrier bodies of violence.

Overall, this study is a theoretical journey taken with the concept of violence in relation to the emergence of In-Yer-Face Theatre in Britain. It is a text-based study that pursues a close reading of plays and theories of some modern man of thought so as to combine the two and reach a conclusion that attempts to prove the modern origins of In-Yer-Face to be violence in societies. As in every academic study, this one also concentrates on one major theme, violence, yet at certain points, it briefly touches to some other subjects such as the media studies, (the history of) punishment, storytelling and alike, because, one way or another, they are all connected to the idea of (social) violence. Due to the diversity of content of the selected plays, narrowing down the topic to, say, violence and the media would impoverish the columns of conceptions in the study. Nevertheless, I suggest those who intend to carry out a

research in this field to pick up one of the aforementioned concepts and examine it in relation to In-Yer-Face so that they contribute to this relatively recent and less exploited area in British Drama. Furthermore, it is also highly recommended to the concerned to conduct a practical study and examine various productions of such plays, preferably in different (geographical) locations by different directors. Measuring the tension and reactions of the audience, it can be analyzed how responses to the representation of violence differ in various settings and cultural contexts.

In brief, as these three British plays disclose, from after the Second World War to the beginnings of the new century, violence in every form and the application of it have changed dramatically, influencing the artistic and cultural arena of the British. Also, if a future assumption is to be made, it can be claimed that the length of the newly appearing English plays are getting shorter and the content is focusing on the reactions of people to a usually single and terrible event. Occurrences with generally open ended implications are replacing the long plot lines and such examples can be found in the texts of playwrights such as Caryl Churchill, Dennis Kelly, David Greig. I assume that this trend befits the way the media, as one of the chief sources of violence, (re)presents the images of violence – like snapshots running incessantly on the news, allowing no opportunity for the audience to digest, or even to understand. Hence, In-Yer-Face Theatre, through its content and form, enables the audience to have enough time to perceive what is actually happening around the world in terms of violence, showing cause-effect relationships as well for a better self-questioning. This is how we can take action against those institutions that have connections to power and understand only one thing, that is, violence.

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