

Harold Pinter: The Horizon of Human Rights Charter

Vafa Nadernia (Corresponding author)

Ruzy Suliza Hashim

Noraini Md. Yusof

School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

National University of Malaysia, UKM, Malaysia

E-mail: nadernia2004@yahoo.com

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Abstract

We contend that the issues of Human Rights are central in the plays of Harold Pinter, English playwright and Nobel Prize winner for literature in 2005. By focusing on two of his early plays both published in 1957, *The Room* and *The Birthday Party*, we show features of human rights concerns which have been neglected in previous research on Pinter. While the two plays have been analyzed from the perspective of absurd drama, we argue that they exhibit latent manifestations of Human Rights features. To prove our contention, we choose three focal articles of the Human Rights Charter – Article 2 entitled “Don’t discriminate”, Article 5 named “No Torture” and Article 12 specified as “The Right to Privacy” – to show the initial stages of Pinter’s inclination towards Human Rights which became overt in his later plays.

Keywords: Drama, Theatre of Absurd, Social interaction, Human rights, Pinter

1. Introduction

In his speech made in the Nobel awarding ceremony in 2005, Pinter made overt his political and humane leaning of his works. He said

Everyone knows what happened in the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe during the post-war period: the systematic brutality, the widespread atrocities, and the ruthless suppression of independent thought. All this has been fully documented and verified. But my contention here is that the US crimes in the same period have only been superficially recorded, let alone documented, let alone acknowledged, let alone recognized as crimes at all. I believe this must be addressed and that the truth has considerable bearing on where the world stands now. (Art, Truth, and Politics: Nobel Lecture, 2005)

In this speech, Pinter declared himself as a real political playwright who “focuses on the exploitation of victimized countries that are unable to fight back against the proverbial schoolyard bully, the United States Government ... and its subsequent dictating measures that manipulate incompatible countries until they are entirely dominated” (Halwas, 2007, p. 1).

Political concern is a prevailing viewpoint of Pinter’s drama. Pinter reacts toward politicians to defend humanity. His Nobel Prize for Literature, in 2005, is a token of Pinter’s enthusiastic trend toward humanity, to observe humans, and to fight on behalf of human rights:

Many had thought that his [Pinter] outspoken views might preclude any chance of such an honor [Nobel Prize for Literature], but in the last decade the Nobel Prize judges have increasingly linked the award with a politics of human rights and a championing of freedom of expression (Luckhust 2010, p. 105)

While it is true that Pinter’s later plays and writings display overtly human rights concerns, we argue that latent manifestations of these issues can be also traced in his early plays. It is, therefore, the aim of this paper to map two of his plays, *The Room*, and *Birthday Party* to three articles of Human Rights Convention and consequently to show the early burgeoning of Pinter’s inclination.

Harold Pinter has always shown his opposition to the sources of totalitarian powers both in society and culture. The genre of absurd drama does not merely bear a specific meaning, and the well-known proponents of absurd theatre, such as Camus, Ionesco, and Esslin, have argued that there is no definite meaning for absurd and Absurdity. In “*The*

Myth of Sisyphus", Albert Camus (1969) describes the concept of absurdity as the deprived old memories of mankind who has also no hope for the Promised Land:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions of light, man feels a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of memories of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of Absurdity (Camus, 1969, p. 13)

On the contrary, the meaning of absurdity is something different to Eugene Ionesco's definition. He defines the feeling of absurdity in human life when he is actually separated from his spiritual and transcendental origins. As Esslin (1961) quotes in *The Theatre of Absurd*, Ionesco believes that absurdity dominates when a kind of devoid and gap exists in the meaning of life:

... that which is devoid of purpose ... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost: all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless. (Esslin, 1961, p. 5)

The other depiction of the theatre of absurd is defined as the theatre of resistance. The notion of resistance was put forward once there was no specific meaning assigned to the genre. It seems that there exists different resistance in the core of the absurd drama: Resistance against concretization, Resistance against remembering and thinking; Resistance against the language; Resistance with the Language, and Resistance and Lacanian jouissance (*Beckett and Ionesco: the Absurd and Resistance*, 2009).

Pinter is identified with the movement of absurd drama as Esslin (1961) puts him in the line of absurdist in his book *The Theater of Absurd*. Esslin enlisted a set of figures that were considered as the leading practitioners of the Absurd Drama. This sort of drama flourished as a literary genre in the middle of the 20th century. In Esslin's list we can see, from the most to the least importance, those figures like "Adamov, Beckett, Genet, Ionesco, Pinter, Albee, Arrabal, Gunter Grass, Pinget, and N.F.Simpson" (Cuddon, 1979, p. 962).

Pinter's drama attributes meaningless features to Man's life. The human being is shown as a doll controlled or menaced by an indiscernible exterior force. The images are horrific and tragic. Characters are trapped in desperate conditions and are forced to do monotonous or futile actions; *Birthday Party* depicts the case properly (Esslin, 1961, p. 237).

As we go further, the characters in absurd drama mislay their channel of communication. It is full of nonsense words which shape cyclical or absurdly expansive plots. Characters are alone and unable to communicate. They are always afraid of the world outside and the terror of betrayal is a psychic wound of their soul:

Pinter's world has frequently been described as profoundly ambiguous, full of uncertainty, and menace. From the first his characters are isolated, withdrawn, vulnerable, and passive victims in retreat from communication and human connection... they are wary, edgy, and unpredictable. All of them are obscurely anguished, suffering ... from personal psychic wounds They are often not only friendless but identity-less. Anxiety surrounds them. They are creatures caught in what is certainly the uneasy amber of the moment, but they are still suffering, still writhing, because of some imprisonment of the spirit which, it turns out, took place long ago (Johnson, 1958, p. 2)

The concept of absurd is not a new realm in Pinter's dramaturgy. He has studied a lot of books from prominent figures of literature such as Beckett and Ionesco who were ancestors of absurd drama. Sense of betrayal and terror of the outside world are other suppressive elements of absurdity that push characters to look for a safe refuge and cozy haven to escape outside intruders. The reader can actually see how Pinter alludes to the indirect role of Religion as an intruder in Human lives. He roughly depicts this dramatic allusion in *The Birthday Party* when he selects the two main protagonists of his play from Jewish and Christian sects. Pinter writes about them in this way: "Goldberg and McCann [in *Birthday Party*] are, respectively, Jewish and Catholic Irish and, hence, may be seen as representatives of Judaism and Catholicism... [And] how religious forces ruin our lives" (Karwowski, 2003, p. 229).

The Room and *The Birthday Party* have traditionally been read with different point of views. *The Room*, which was written in 1957, raises different implications. Susan Rusinko (1970, p.114) defines the basement in *The Room* that "can be equated with Auschwitz", a town in southwest Poland which was a site of Nazi concentration camp during World War II. Moreover *The Room* has also "a claustrophobic atmosphere" which is "an emblem of safe existence" (Rosador, 1971, p. 200).

The Birthday Party, as Pinter himself describes in a letter to Peter Wood, "is a comedy because the whole state of affairs is forced and inglorious" (1958, p. 5). The main character is Stanley Webber; he is under the pressure of two sinister forces called Goldberg and McCann, who are from an unspecified organization, and they finally take Stanley with them:

Stanley in his fog of self-fakery and flight has not lost freedom of expression since he never had any understanding of what authentic self-expression might be, but there is an argument, and Pinter pursues it, that in these last moments of traumatic utterance before he is removed from his day-to-day world to an infinitely worse place, he gains momentary self-knowledge. These blood-curdling sounds are the last noises he will make in public, perhaps the last sounds he will ever make: the belated recognition of the loss of himself provides him with the only moments of self-perception he has ever had (Luckharst, 2005, p. 109).

The plays show Pinter's basic ruminations of human rights issues. By studying the features that make the plays interesting such as verbal communications, subject matter, characterization, portrayals, and narration, we show the latent manifestations of human rights concerns.

The Human Rights Charter includes a series of moralistic principals that have been legally established after the Second World War. It is, in fact, a set of moral rules rendered in 1948 by the United Nations to set up the relation of different governments together and to authenticate the way of equal treatment toward human beings.

In this paper, we choose three focal articles of the Human Rights Charter – Article 2 entitled “Don't discriminate”, Article 5 named “No Torture” and Article 12 specified as “The Right to Privacy” – to show the initial stages of Pinter's inclination towards Human Rights which became overt in his plays.

2. Human Rights Charter (Article 12): The Right to Privacy

The right of privacy is one of the essential rights of human beings that keep them together due to their personal needs and social presence. The right to privacy is the most well-known right which has been designated for each person. It is a right in being alone, having limited access to one person, preventing from any unwanted access to an individual, keeping secret some private affairs from the others, putting control on private data, and advocating one's dignity and personality.

In essence, people deserve the right to stay in peace. It is not just a home to live in but a place which is both secure and exhibits calmness. Nowadays, the Right to Privacy is a legal right which belongs to any citizens of a country and must be observed by others. Everybody must know that individual privacy should be respected in any possible way, and violation of this right comprises legal actions.

With reference to Article 12 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the privacy of any person has been defined well. It has been worded that article 12 discards any illogical maltreatment that degrades the dignity and eminence of individuals and their families:

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks (Ghandhi, 2008, p. 11)

The first play of Pinter, *The Room*, is a one-act play written in 1957. The atmosphere of this play resembles the gloomy and mysterious scene – a setting which has been identified as a place of absurd existence. It is portrayed as a place of menace, terror and obscurity. In this room, all actions are performed. It has a symbolic meaning which, through the course of the play, resembles a dreadful dungeon and horrible abyss where characters are trapped in. The characters are “bewildered; mechanical and afraid of the world outside. The Plot has neither a beginning nor an end; and dialogues are incoherent babblings” (Esslin, 1961, p. 5). Esslin's reading of the play demonstrates the features of an absurd drama.

The main characters are an old and naive woman named Rose, in her fifties, who is living in the room with her ever-silent husband, Bert, a man in his sixties. Bert is a character who never speaks. Rose is the main story-teller of the play who indirectly, through her monologue with Bert, visualizes the gloomy situation of their marital relationship. They live in an apartment with a few rooms and a basement. The room they are now living in is the most suitable place in the building, especially for Rose. The basement is a dark and soggy place which she refrains from going.

The landlord is Mr. Kidd who is living in the same building but in another room. There are also two newcomers, Mr. and Mrs. Sands, who are looking for a room to rent. The last character is a blind black man, Riley, who is living in the basement and acts as a messenger to Rose and brings her a message from her father, calling her to come back home. In the play, Rose is living with his husband, Bert, in room number seven of a remote house. She is very satisfied with her tenement and sees it as a calm and secure place to live in. She never wants to lose that place because it is a shelter for her to secure her privacy and protects her from outside threats. The climax of the play is when Mr. and Mrs. Sands knock on her door and inform their intention of living there as new tenants. Rose is shattered and attempts to defend her room, which symbolizes both her living place and secured shelter.

Another intruder is a black man, Riley, who is introduced to Rose by the landlord, Mr. Kidd. Riley insists on convincing Rose to return to her father's home, but Rose resists this and feels no need to come back. At the same time Bert returns home and challenges Riley, beating him on the head and killing him. The play ends with Rose's blindness.

Pinter implicitly uncovers a set of truths in mankind's relationships. He paves a narrow path for the audience to consider the issue of human rights through the use of farce. In *The Room*, we confront the same characters who are marginalized with their lack of communication in the same milieu of bizarre loneliness. They have become strangers with one another, and the room increases their alienation. According to article 12 of Human Rights, no one is allowed to shatter and disturb the privacy of others. Rose is very keen to know how the new residents are living there. The newcomers are not only strangers to Rose but also an outside treat for her privacy:

ROSE. ...*Still the room keeps warm. It's better than the basement, anyway.*

She butters the bread.

I don't know how they live down there.

She sits in the rocking-chair.

I've never seen who it is. Who is it? Who lives down there? I'll have to ask. I mean, you might as well know, Bert. But whoever it is, it can't be too cozy.

pause

But I think someone else has gone in now. I wouldn't like to live in that basement. Did you ever see the walls? They are running.

..... No, this room's all right for me. I mean, you know where you are. When it is cold, for instance. (Pinter, 1976, p. 102)

This scene shows the fear of betrayal and the intimidation of the outside world which threatens Rose's security. Rose is hopelessly fearful of losing her cozy room. While the room may be cold both emotionally and physically, she has a right to be there since it is a safe place to guarantee her calmness. No one has the right to take away her privacy. Some elements exist that make the reader sympathize with Rose. She is so alone and feels that this cozy place is a safe spot to secure her privacy. She never intends to disturb the other privacies and never wants to be disturbed by the others. This is a definite right for any human being to live in peace and tranquility, while this sense of calmness has been taken away from Rose and the reader sympathizes with her.

The Right of Privacy is a crucial issue for the sanity of human beings. This right is a decisive right which is a must for any citizen. Rose must not be deprived of this right in any sense. She has selected this room to live in but drastically feels that someone has attempted to disturb her. Her feelings of insecurity is later justified when a young and newly married couple – Mr. and Mrs. Sands – arrive and symbolically throw tiny sands onto Rose's privacy and calmness:

MR SANDS. *Well we'd better try to get hold of this landlord, if he's about.*

ROSE. *You won't find any rooms vacant in this house.*

MR SANDS. *Why not?*

ROSE. *Mr. Kidd (the landlord) told me. He told me.*

MR SANDS. *Mr. Kidd?*

ROSE. *He told me he was full up.*

MR SANDS. *The man in the basement said there was one. One room. Number seven he said.*

Pause

ROSE. *That's this room.*

MR. SANDS. *We'd better go and get hold of the landlord.*

MRS SANDS. *(rising). Well, thank you for the warm-up, Mr. Hudd. I feel better now.*

ROSE. *This room is occupied. (Pinter, 1976, p. 118)*

The sense of intrusion and breaching of one's privacy begins here. The man in the basement has told Mr. and Mrs. Sands that the room "number seven" is vacant, but it is Rose's room where she is comfortable. This makes Rose nervous as shown in this way:

They go out. ROSE watches the door close, starts towards it, and stops. She takes the chair back to the table, picks up the magazine, looks at it, and puts it down. She goes to the rocking chair, sits, rocks, stops, and sits still. There is a sharp knock at the door, which opens. Enter MR KIDD. (Pinter, 1999, p. 118)

Once Mr. Kidd, the Landlord, enters, Rose starts to complain and eagerly asks him to find out Mr. and Mrs. Sands's assertion of the vacancy of room number seven. But the story changes and the problem becomes two-fold as Mr. Kidd says there is a man, a stranger, downstairs who wants to see her:

ROSE. *Who?*

MR. KIDD. *The man. He's downstairs now. He's been there the whole week-end.*

ROSE. *Who is he?*

MR. KIDD. *How do I know who is he? All I know is he won't say a word; he won't indulge in any conversation. (Pinter, 1976, p. 120)*

This is again an intrusion into Rose's peace and tranquility. Her privacy is breached with arrival of these outsiders.

3. Human Rights Charter (Article 5): "No Torture"

Article 5 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) announces that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". To elaborate further, the definition of torture embraces any kind of deliberate physical or mental abuses on an individual; it is specified broadly in United Nation Convention against Torture (Article 1, 1984) as follows:

For the purpose of this convention, the term 'torture' means any act by which severe pain or suffering whether physical or mental is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person, information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions (Ghandhi, 2008, p. 76)

The Second play of this discussion is *The Birthday Party* which is Pinter's first full play. *The Birthday Party* is the story of a middle-aged pianist, Stanley Webber, who has come to stay in a remote hotel in a seaside town. Why he has come to this place; what is his background; and what he has done before; these are a set of ambiguities of the play. He lives there with an old couple who are in their sixties and seem to be the landlord of the hotel: Petey and Meg Boles. There is a peculiar and sensational attachment between Stanley and the couple, especially Meg. There is also a girl in her twenties, Lulu, who has a minor role. The conflict is played out when two sinister men, Goldberg and McCann, enter the town and intend to stay in the same hotel as Stanley does:

PETEY: *Oh Meg, two men came up to me on the beach last night.*

MEG: *Two men?*

PETEY: *Yes. They wanted to know if we could put them up for a couple of nights (Pinter, 1976, p. 22)*

When Stanley hears about the intention of the two strangers wanting to be there, he is filled with a sense of anxiety. They have apparently come to participate in Stanley's birthday party, but they turn it finally into an investigation meeting; they abuse him physically and mentally, and take him away to an undisclosed place.

One of the first clues of torture on human being is depicted in this play. The application of torture centers on the main character of the play, Stanley Webber, who is brutally questioned by the two investigators during his birthday ceremony:

The victim is Stanley, who is singled out for a visit by two interrogators, Goldberg and McCann, and is subjected to surreal rituals of verbal abuse both on- and off- stage (Luckhurst, 2010, p. 107)

Article 5, *No Torture*, is an embodiment of the insatiable desire of people to be safe both physically and mentally. In *The Birthday Party*, Pinter, in a fabulous dramatic technique, presents the mental torture done by two unknown investigators, Goldberg and McCann, on Stanley who is bombarded by a set of repetitive, and order-less questions which resemble the scene of an investigating session in a Police headquarters. Worse still, Stanley cannot understand the interrogation:

GOLDBERG. *Webber, what were you doing yesterday?*

STANLEY. *Yesterday?*

GOLDBERG. *And the day before. What did you do the day before that?*

STANLEY. *What do you mean?*

GOLDBERG. *Why are you wasting everybody's time, Webber? Why are you getting in everybody's way?*

STANLEY. *Me? What are you –*

GOLDBERG. *I am telling you Webber. You're a washout? Why are you getting on everybody's wick? Why are you driving that old lady off her conk?*

GOLDBERG. *Why you behave so badly,*

GOLDBERG. *Why do you treat that young lady like a leper?*

GOLDBERG. *What did you wear last week?.... Where do you keep your suits?*

McCann. *Why did you leave the organization?*

GOLDBERG. *What would your old mum say, Webber?*

GOLDBERG. *Where is your old mum?*

STANLEY. *In the sanatorium. ((Pinter, 1976, p. 57-59)*

Legally speaking, Goldberg and McCann have no right to investigate and abuse Stanley without any specific reason. They have no right to condemn and make suffer him bodily and emotionally. The questions they ask are meaningless. Through their interrogation, it is not clear to us, more so for Stanley, why he has become their target of grilling interview.

In *The Birthday Party*, Goldberg and McCann are the symbol of a totalitarian government that tortures Stanley and knocks him down. As Luckhurst has mentioned, *The Birthday Party* is the best example of vocal cruelty toward the protagonist of the play, Stanley Webber:

Pinter has claimed that all his dramas are to do with 'terrorizing through words of power - verbal power, verbal facility', but none is more so than his first professionally performed play, The Birthday Party. The victim is Stanly, who is singled out for a visit by two interrogators, Goldberg and McCann, and is subjected to surreal rituals of verbal abuse both on- and off- stage (Luckhurst 2010, p. 108)

Many instances in *The Birthday Party* show how in retrospect the atrocities of some totalitarian governments that deprive people from their primary civil rights and response to any opposition – verbal or practical – by torture, suppression, and at most killing. The violent treatment of interrogators, Goldberg and McCann in *The Birthday Party*, is a symbol of the dreadful dominance of animalism on humanism which might be portrayed in any legal and accepted shape of advisor or counselor; Pinter depicts it through his letter in 1958 to the director of *The Birthday Party*, Peter Wood, in this way: “Goldberg and McCann? Dying, rotting, scabrous, the decayed spiders. The flower of our society. They know their way around. Our mentors. Our ancestry. Them. Fuck ‘em’”. (Pinter, 1958, p. 4). Therefore, according to article 5 of Human Rights, an illegal action happens to Stanley when he is severely tortured by two investigators.

4. Human Rights Charter (Article 2): “No Discrimination”

Racial discrimination is an unaccepted policy in the 21st century. Human societies separate themselves from each other due to land, race, blood and social status. This separation is sometimes defined as a right to peruse one's benefits without any attention to the equal and fair rights for the others. Racial discrimination has different levels. Fondness to one specific country, nation, race, or tribe forms the most important levels of discrimination. The social systems such as Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy, Zionism in Occupied Palestine, Islamic Fundamentalism in Afghanistan and a number of Arabic countries are the most important tokens of discriminations.

The main concern of Pinter in his plays is human beings. He intends to portray the human beings in a matrix of social and political problems which provide conflicts and challenges. The social problems are everyday troubles of mankind which will never let him escape. In the modern society, as Pinter depicts, man is restricted to the societal rules of life, and the reality of modern community is restriction and violence. Belarus Free Theater illustrates properly the case when performing a play called “Being Harold Pinter” in (2005).

Belarus Free Theatre creates visually striking images with simple means, and underscores the fierceness of Pinter's words with the intense physicality of the actors. Being Harold Pinter blurs the boundaries between art and reality, delivering a poignant contemporary commentary on violence, oppression, freedom and human dignity”.

Discrimination means to disgrace and mortify the rights of individuals due to their racial, religious, sex, and political tendencies. It has a direct relation with the social condition of the people: those who have lower-hand social status in the society will be deprived from equal rights in comparison with the upper-hand citizens. Article 2 of Universal

Declaration of Human Rights (1948) defines the equal rights for all people and despises any violation of these rights due to social status:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (Ghandhi, 2008, p. 10)

In the *Birthday Party*, Pinter demonstrates in a delicate manner that the concept of discrimination is innate. It is us who make differentiations; it is us who draw lines between people in race, color, and religion; and, finally, it is us who make mal-judgments of the people based on their color, race, language, thought, and religion. Therefore, *The Room* and *The Birthday Party*, as we claimed before, show Pinter as a human rights activist who seeks to protest discrimination and be mindful of human rights.

Article 2 of the charter precisely talks about discrimination and looks for a worldly consensus to reject it — in various shapes, and in any human community. This article intends to convince both people and the governments of the world that discrimination in any shape and in any sort is condemned. Let us see an example here in *The Birthday Party*:

MEG. *What are you reading?*

PETEY. *Someone's just has a baby.*

MEG. *Oh, they haven't! Who?*

PETEY. *Some girl.*

MEG. *Who, Petey, who?*

PETEY. *I don't think you'd know her.*

.....

MEG. *What is it?*

PETEY. *(studying the paper). Er—a girl.*

MEG. *Not a boy?*

PETEY. *No.*

MEG. *What a shame. I'd be sorry. I'd much rather have a little boy.*

PETEY. *A little girl's all right.*

MEG. *I'd much rather have a little boy. ((Pinter, 1976, p. 21)*

As we see here, discrimination is happening to an unborn baby. It is a girl. Meg, who is also a female, calls the birth of the baby as “a shame”. On the contrary, Petey, as a male, accepts that “a little girl's all right”, but Meg clearly represents her own sense of discrimination when she replies “I'd much rather have a little boy”. As the spirit of Human Rights charter manifests, all human beings are equal and are born free. Who made such discriminations between boys and girls? Through Meg's words, Pinter reveals an alarming unfairness that currently exists toward females. The first implication is that even Meg, who is a female, is not satisfied with her own condition as a female in society. It will be a “shame” to have a baby girl, because it will be someone as she is now. Pinter intends here to criticize and challenge the concept of “Mother or Whore” and show that the concept of discrimination must be removed toward females, and they must be treated equally.

Another discrimination is seen toward the black man, Riley, in *The Room*. He is both blind and black. Riley is degraded by Bert, Rose's husband, because of his skin color and other degrading features. In an interview with Mireia Aragay and Roman Simo in December 1996, Pinter depicts the brutal treatment toward Riley:

My Plays are living things. They are certainly not debates. They are violent. Violence has always been in my plays, from the very beginning. The Room ends with a sudden, totally gratuitous act of violence on the part of a man who kicks a Negro to death. I was quite young at the time, but looking back it doesn't seem to me to be a wild or bizarre thing. We are brought up every day of our lives in this world of violence. (Smith, 2005, p. 93)

Riley's low social status parallels his dwelling “downstairs”, and he is murdered by a white man, Bert. Riley lives in the basement which is dark, cold and gloomy that even Rose has no desire to go there for a short time to visit him. She neither intends to meet him upstairs nor to invite him to come up:

ROSE: *who?*

MR KIDD: *The man. He's been waiting to see you. I can't get rid of him. You've got to see him.*

ROSE: *See who?*

MR KIDD: *The man. He's downstairs now. He's been there the whole week-end... He lies there, in the basement.*

ROSE: *But it's damp down there*

MR KIDD: *Shall I tell him it's all right?*

ROSE: *See him? I beg your pardon, Mr. Kidd. I don't know him... Do you expect me to see someone I don't know? ... I don't know anybody. (pp. 119-120)*

.....

Riley enters the room with a stick till he reaches the armchair

RILEY: *Mrs. Hudd?*

ROSE: *You just touched a chair. Why don't you sit in it?*

He sits.

RILEY: *Thank you*

ROSE: *Don't thank me for anything. I don't you up here. I don't know who you are. And the sooner you get out the better. (Pinter, 1976, p. 122)*

The resistance against discrimination is hidden in Pinter's play. In *The Room*, Riley as a black man stands for the mere representative of the Black People who suffer from social, economical, educational, inequalities. Although the United States of America and Britain introduce themselves as the leaders of democracy in the world, the social realities at present in America and Britain signify that a number of black tribes and races are under severe discrimination. Riley's life in "the basement" stands as a hidden theme of discrimination in *The Room*. Riley has to live in the basement because he has no right to have a better life than this. Therefore, the lack of social and economical equality has urged Riley to live in the lower part of the house. The house, thus, stands for the system of hierarchy in American and English societies.

5. Conclusion

In this article, three issues related to human rights were discussed: discrimination, torture and right of privacy. Departing from previous research on Pinter which mainly focused on the absurdist elements in his plays, we chose to re-view his works from the perspective of human rights. This angle of reading Pinter highlights his preoccupation with human rights issues long before they became overt in his later writing life.

Discrimination is considered as an essential element of human rights that can also be detected in Pinter's dramas, namely in *The Room* and *The Birthday Party*. Meg in *The Room* has a pessimistic viewpoint toward females and calls the birth of a baby-girl as "a shame". In the same play, Riley is treated as a second-grade citizen in society, who must live in a "basement", and is treated lower than White Citizens. He is a symbol of the Black community who has been mal-treated in modern society. Again it can be observed that Pinter was a human rights advocate who seriously regarded discrimination to be condemned in any form.

Torture as a dreadful means of investigation has always prevailed in modern societies. Pinter depicts this frightful type of investigation in *The Birthday Party* where Stanley is physically and mentally abused under severe agony. He is totally shattered under the atrocities of threatening pressures from Goldberg and McCann who have no right to treat Stanley in this way and, as depicted in human rights charter, any investigation must be done in a court of law. The torture of Stanley illustrates Pinter's advocacy of human rights. Pinter also announced his humane standpoint against torture when he challenged and severely criticized, in his Nobel Lecture (2005), the atrocities of United States in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba:

What has happened to our moral sensibility? ... Look at Guantanamo Bay. Hundreds of people detained without charge over three years, with no legal representation or due process, technically detained forever. This criminal outrage is being committed by a country which declares itself to be 'the leader of the free world'. Do we think about the inhabitants of Guantanamo Bay? At present many are on hunger strike, being force-fed, including British residents. Just a tube stuck up your nose and into your throat. You vomit blood. This is torture. (Billington, 2007, p. 438)

And finally the right of privacy is a matter of importance in Pinter's drama. As we saw in *The Room*, Rose is frightened of the outside world. It means to Pinter that the character's right to be alone or her right to be prevented from unwanted access has been shattered. She is under the attack of unwanted desires which are imposed on her by new and outside treats. Mr. and Mrs. Sand are the symbol of those who never advocate one's privacy and dignity

when they spy at the back of Rose's apartment while she is inside and unaware of their presence outside. They interfere in Rose private life and disturb her physical and mental privacy. They even extend some private quarrels about their own relationship in front of Rose who becomes nervous; the negative impact of their presence makes her anxious. Based on the discussed elements, it can be clearly concluded that Pinter was a human rights activist and the right of privacy has the most important value for him.

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Author

Vafa Nadernia is currently a PhD student of English Literature at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, UKM. Since 2010, he has been appointed as a Lecturer at Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas branch, Iran. His areas of interest include drama and literary criticism.

Ruzy Suliza Hashim is professor of literature at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, UKM. Her areas of research include gender matters in literature and rhetorics of revisionary writings.

Noraini Mohd Yusof is associate professor at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, UKM. She is a creative writer and her short stories have been published internationally. Her areas of research cover the intersection of history and fiction as well as e-methods in literary production.