



Power Motif and its Conduciveness in Harold Pinter's Homecoming (A Critical Follow-up Study)¹

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ABSTRACT

Power, as the ability to control, influence, or command behaviour, is relational. It requires a community, a relationship between an oppressor and an oppressed, a ruler and a subject, or a man and a woman. Drama, especially the social and realist plays of Harold Pinter, represents this dynamic very well, and his play *The Homecoming* represents how power governs relationships among characters through several distinct dimensions. That is to say that power is conducive to some other manifestations that would emerge through the interplay among the dramatis personae. And any character may play this or that role and it would come under this duality of the use of Power. So, for the conveniences of dealing with such a topic, 'such manifestations' are regarded as 'conducivenesses'. The study examines five conducivenesses of power in *The Homecoming*: dominance and control, aggression, violence and threat, obedience and silence, and masculinity and sexuality.

Keywords: Power; motif, conduciveness, dominance, Harold Pinter, *The Homecoming*, masculinity, silence.

¹ The study will depend on Pinter's play *The Homecoming* as it was published by Grove Press in 1967. Hence, the research will refer to the play in the abbreviated form as HC and to the number of the Act together with the page No. related when necessary.



1.Introduction

The concept of Power runs into the warp and woof of Pinter's play HC. It infiltrates the whole tissue of the relationships among the dramatis personae since it governs the whole characters by one way or another. Hence, it should be pondered over profoundly by considering in the HC text all its dimensions. Power's dimensions permeate social, political, psychological, and cultural fields, revealing a dynamic interplay with conducivenesses such as masculinity, sexuality, repression, obedience, submission, silence, violence, threat, control, dominance, and aggression. Power is neither monolithic nor static. Rather, it functions relationally, contextually, and symbolically, reshaping identities, behaviours, and institutional orders. Connell's elucidation of hegemonic masculinity shows how power entwines with gender norms to produce and sustain inequalities, in which sexuality becomes a regulated terrain that further consolidates male dominance (Connell, 1995, 77). Psychological and sociological studies emphasize power's role in shaping obedience and submission, with obedience reflecting externally compelled compliance, and submission often enacted through consensual, negotiated relations that both challenge and reproduce hierarchical order (Jhangiani, 2022; Omoogun, 2024). The relationship of power with violence and threat further underscores its capacity to physically and psychologically coerce, yet empirical findings illustrate this link as contextual and mediated by individual and social factors (Logan, 2017; Verona et al., 2022). Power, an omnipresent yet elusive concept, fundamentally shapes human social existence, governance, and cultural expression.

Literary discourse interrogates power through narrative and representational strategies, revealing and contesting societal power arrangements. Terry Eagleton asserts literature's role as an ideological battleground where hegemonies can be reproduced or subverted, emphasizing the dialectical relationship between text, ideology, and power (Eagleton, 1978, 45). Edward Said's postcolonial critique foregrounds how imperial power inscribes itself in cultural representations, constructing knowledge that serves domination and epistemic violence (Said, 1978, 12).

Harold Pinter's dramatic texts reveal how power is enacted through language, silence, body language, and social positioning, underscoring power's relational and spectral qualities (Jajo, 2015, 1224). And this is quite to be followed in tracing the conducivenesses of power in Pinter's play HC by pinpointing them through what is voiced by the characters and what is recognized through their relationships. But before fathoming deeper these items further, the research tends to focus on determining the definition of 'motif' in relation to relevant terms as 'theme', 'symbol', and 'technique' so as to set the demarcations among them and to know which is which. And now let's move to the next step which is the definition of the motif.



2. Definition of Motifs

In drama, a motif is a recurring symbol, image, sound, idea, object, or word that appears repeatedly throughout the play to reinforce a central theme or idea. These repeating elements create a pattern that draw attention to specific concepts and providing depth and nuance to the narrative. Motifs are a powerful tool for playwrights, which connects different scenes and subtly guiding the audience's understanding of the play's deeper meaning and message. The repetition of a motif can link different scenes, characters, or plot points that can help to bring the narrative together. By appearing again and again, a motif can develop symbolic importance and convey abstract ideas without explicitly stating them, enriching the overall meaning of the play HC. Motifs provide a recognizable pattern for the audience to follow, subtly guiding them to consider the underlying messages and central ideas the playwright intends to convey. Motifs serve as powerful vessels of symbolism, encapsulating abstract concepts within tangible and recurring images. Motifs play a pivotal role in reinforcing and amplifying central themes within a literary work. Through the repetition of specific motifs associated with emotions or moods, authors craft a consistent emotional resonance throughout the narrative (Childs and Fowler, 2006). Having identified what is meant by a 'motif', let's set a comparison between 'motif' and other literary terms such as 'theme', 'symbol', and 'technique'.

Motif and Theme

Motifs and themes are juxtaposed below in order to have a full meaning of both. Motifs are a smaller aspect of a theme. While themes are overarching, central ideas in stories, motifs serve to emphasize themes with specific images and symbols throughout the story. The main difference between a motif and a theme is that a motif is a concrete part of the story that can be quoted whereas a theme is an overall message or idea that is being illustrated by the story. The theme is the crux of a story, and motifs can be used to help portray the theme to the reader. Moreover, a theme is a central, organizing idea of a piece of literature, while on the other hand, a motif advances a theme by being repeated across a piece of literature. Thus, it can be said that a theme is an abstract idea explored in a piece of literature, and motifs are concrete explorations of those ideas. In other words, they embody thematic elements so that the theme can be explored concretely. And let us move to define the relations between 'motif' and 'symbol' as it is handled below.

Motif and Symbol

Now, in the same vein, motifs and symbols are set together in order to define each one. Symbols usually refer to any images or objects that symbolize a larger idea or theme. The difference between a symbol and motif is small and simple: whereas a symbol can stand alone in one isolated scene or sentence, motifs by definition must repeat throughout a composition (Davron, 2024). The difference between a motif and symbol is that a symbol is usually used once or a few times to represent something, which then aids the motifs which, in turn, emphasizes the theme.



Having reached this point, we are to explore the conducivenesses of Power in HC, but before going deeper into our follow-up procedure, it is necessary to fix the demarcations between what a 'motif' is and what a 'technique' is which is dealt with below.

Motif and Techniques

Technique is a literary technique is any deliberate method, device, or tool an author uses in writing to enhance the narrative, convey a deeper message, or evoke specific emotions in the reader. These techniques go beyond literal language, creating imagery, structure, and meaning to make a story more engaging, layered, and memorable. Techniques help not only as the building blocks of creative writing but also convey the message of novels, poems, and even non-fiction, in ways that would bring people attracted to the narrative and make it memorable. A literary technique is any method any author uses to tell a message.

3. Power Motif in HC

Within dramaturgy, such as in Harold Pinter's oeuvre, power is often conveyed through nuanced silences, gestures, and dialogue laden with ambiguity, dramatizing psychological and social domination in interpersonal relations (Lahr, 2009, 217). Harold Pinter's perception of power, though not explicitly codified in treatise form, emerges vividly through his dramatic oeuvre. Pinter's plays articulate power not as a static or heroic force but as a fragmented, tension-ridden phenomenon manifesting most palpably in human relationships and institutional interactions. Pinter's Nobel Lecture on Power and Truth articulates his sociopolitical view of Power: "The majority of politicians, on the evidence available to us, are interested not in truth but in power and maintenance of that power. To maintain that power, it is essential that people remain in ignorance..." (Pinter, 2005).

In HC, Pinter explores the fluid and contested nature of power within familial and social hierarchies. Power here is finite and tenuous; it is sensitive to shift in knowledge and critical perception. Pinter's portrayal of power is dialectical, imbued with paradox and ambiguity, reflecting the broader social conditions of insecurity and the human struggle for identity and control (Ijaz, 2014, 494). Pinter's work aligns with Foucauldian conceptualizations of power as diffuse and constitutive, since it works through discourse and implicit societal structures rather than solely through overt coercion. His scripts expose the mechanisms by which language both conceals and enacts power dynamics, where silence and ambiguity intensify the sense of menace and control (Abdulla, 2024).

In economic and political terms, Pinter critiques systems of wealth and authority in his society when he reveals how power is used and how, in social affairs, it relies on different manifestations that arise as a result of the use of power or are concomitant with it. This is what "conducivenesses" refers to. Power is conducive to the use of violence and subjugation, submission and silence, control and dominance, aggression and threat, obligation, sexuality, and masculinity (Jajo, 2015, 1224). These



conducivenesses are woven into *The Homecoming*, as the discussion below demonstrates, beginning with dominance.

A. Dominance

The concept of power is conducive to Dominance. Power is often closely intertwined with dominance, yet the two are distinct in their theoretical definitions and practical manifestations. Power can broadly be understood as the capacity or ability to influence the behaviour, beliefs, or actions of others, often through control over resources, authority, or social structures (Weber, 1978, 53). Dominance, however, may be conceived as a specific behavioural expression or strategy through which power is asserted or enacted, typically characterised by coercion, intimidation, or assertiveness intended to impose one's will (Anderson et al, 2005, 1). Power encompasses a broader spectrum including both overt dominance and covert forms of influence such as prestige, which derives from respect or admiration rather than fear (Anderson et al., 2024, 2). As Mina, Abdelgawad, and Soliman elucidate, "Power is broadly defined as the ability to exercise influence by possessing one or more power bases, dominance is but one means of many for expressing power" (Mina et al., 2018, 3). Therefore, dominance is a mode, often visible and direct, by which power may be exercised, but power may also be latent or exerted through consensual and symbolic means. Power and dominance maintain an intrinsically linked yet analytically distinct relationship. Power signifies the overarching capacity to influence and control, while dominance refers primarily to the observable behaviours used to assert that power.

Dominance in HC

Harold Pinter's *HC* is an intense exploration of power and dominance within the microcosm of a family set in a London house. Throughout the play, dominance surfaces not merely as overt control but as subtle, shifting presentations of power among family members, particularly in their struggles for control over identity, space, and sexual authority. This section examines the motif of dominance in *HC*, supported by key quotations that elucidate how dominance operates in interpersonal relationships and the social hierarchy embedded within the familial structure (Pinter, *ibid*; Muhsen, 2023). Dominance in *HC* is complex and multifaceted, rooted in dynamics of gender, sexuality, and patriarchal authority. Ruth, the sole female character, wields a potent, ambiguous dominance, often using her sexuality as a tool to destabilize the male hierarchy. For example, in *HC* Act 1, Ruth's power over Lenny is evident when she boldly challenges his demand for her water glass with the line: "If you take the glass... I'll take you" (*HC*, I.57). This moment subverts traditional gender norms by placing Ruth physically and verbally above Lenny, signalling a reversal of expected dominance roles (Alankar-Das, 2022).

The patriarch Max initially claims dominance through aggressive language and physical posturing but is undermined repeatedly, especially by Ruth's sexual



presence and Teddy's unexpected return. Max's verbal assertion, "You're a whore!" (HC, 1.23) coexists with his later submission, encapsulating the fragility and performativity of power. Meanwhile, Teddy's unexpected presence disturbs the household's power equilibrium as he confronts Lenny, stating: "You don't know how to defend yourself, and you don't know how to attack" (HC, 1.68) highlighting the tension between knowledge and power (Muhsen, 2023). Dominance here extends beyond physical control into psychological warfare, as exemplified by Lenny's attempts to assert his authority: "Hand over that glass, woman" (HC, 1.55).

Pinter's HC presents dominance as fluid, deeply entangled with sexuality, language, and psychological control. The characters engage in a continuous struggle to assert or reclaim power, reflecting broader themes of patriarchal tension and identity conflict. The play's dominance motif challenges viewers to interrogate how power is negotiated, resisted, and manifested in everyday interactions.

B. Aggression

Again, the Power motif leads immediately to 'aggression'. The research would show first Power motif and Aggression as its immediate conduciveness and secondly it would pick examples from the HC text in order to make it clear. Hence, the dynamic relationship between power and aggression has long been a subject of scholarly investigation, while Power provides individuals or groups with the capacity to influence, control, or dominate others' behaviour, beliefs, or resources (Weber, 1978). Aggression, meanwhile, refers to behaviours intended to harm or exert dominance over others, ranging from verbal antagonism to physical violence (Jhangiani, 2022).

Therefore, Power confers a capacity to shape outcomes, often through control over resources or coercive means (Mina et al., 2018). Aggression is frequently a behavioural mechanism employed to obtain or maintain power, especially in competitive social environments where hierarchical status is contested. Power and aggression are moderated by relational dynamics as high power may reduce the need for aggression, as social dominance may be maintained through status and prestige without coercion (Keltner et al., 2003, 81). Yet, power can also facilitate aggressive behaviour by disinhibiting normative controls, thereby increasing risk-taking and assertiveness (Bugental et al. 1989, 4). Hence, the interplay between power and aggression is bidirectional and context-dependent. Nonverbal expressions of power, such as dominant postures and assertive eye contact, often serve as precursors or signals of aggressive intent within social hierarchies (Mina et al., 2018, 3). Such embodied displays of power negotiate social dominance and can either escalate or mitigate conflict. In conclusion, power and aggression share a complex, dialectical relationship wherein aggression may function as both a symptom and instrument of power. This relationship is mediated by individual traits, social context, and psychological states. A sophisticated understanding of this nexus requires attention to the distinctions between power as capacity, power as felt or desired, and aggression as



strategic behaviour. Such comprehension advances knowledge across psychology, sociology, and related fields of human behaviour.

Aggression in HC

The HC is flooded by an undercurrent of aggression manifesting through dialogue, physical confrontation, and psychological tension. This motif serves to unravel the complex relationships between the characters and highlight's themes of dominance, control, and repression within the family household (Ahawat, 2022, 229; Fayadh, 2024, 221). This section offers an analysis of the aggression motif in *The Homecoming*, supported by key quotations from the text. Aggression in HC is often embodied by the male characters, particularly Max and Lenny, whose confrontations range from verbal abuse to implied physical threats. Early in the play, Max's reprimand of Lenny escalates into an aggressive standoff:

LENNY: "You'll go before me, Dad, if you talk to me in that tone of voice."

MAX: "Will I, you bitch?" (HC. 1.31).

This exchange demonstrates not only generational conflict but also the use of aggression as a means to assert dominance and authority (Fayadh, 2024, 223). Lenny's aggression surfaces in his brusque and often hostile speech. His verbal assaults serve to maintain a fragile appearance of control within the familial hierarchy. When he orders Ruth, "Hand over that glass, woman" (HC.1.55), the command carries an unmistakable aggressive charge masked as a domestic demand. Ruth's calm and provocative response, rooted in sexual power, intensifies the scene's simmering violence (Ahawat, 2022, 231). Verbal aggression is rampant, serving as a proxy for physical violence and psychological intimidation. Max's insults, such as calling Lenny a "bitch" and "a raving lunatic" (Pinter 1.30), are expressions of violent power meant to destabilize.

Lenny's retaliatory verbal onslaught, branding Max a "dog cook" (HC. 1.27) illustrates cyclical aggression (Ahawat, 2022, 230). Physical aggression is suggested through stage directions and implied gestures, such as, Max grips his stick (HC.1.31). The stick symbolizes the latent threat of violence that undergirds the characters' interactions. This tension culminates in acts of psychological intimidation and emotional coercion, which convey a deeper, more pervasive aggression beneath surface dialogue (Fayadh, 2024, 222). Teddy's restrained but pointed verbal frustration reveals a subtler form of aggression rooted in intellectual and emotional superiority: "You wouldn't understand my works... You're just objects" (HC. 1.68). Here, aggression operates through the denial of subjectivity and the exercise of mental domination (Ahawat, 2022, 232).

Lastly, Ruth exercises a distinctive form of aggressive control through her sexuality and assertiveness, challenging male dominance and unsettling established power balances. Her line, "Don't be too sure though. You've forgotten something. Look at me..." (HC. 1.70) encapsulates the power of silent and embodied aggression (Fayadh, 2024, 230). Aggression in HC functions on multiple levels, from overt verbal confrontations to symbolic gestures, revealing the tensions that define familial power



relations. Pinter portrays aggression not merely as physical force, but as an intricate social and psychological phenomenon intrinsic to human relationships (Ahawat, 2022, 233).

C. Control

The third item to be focused on is 'Control' as a 'conduciveness' to Power. The relationship between power and control is foundational to understanding human social interactions, encompassing interpersonal, organizational, and societal levels. Power broadly refers to an individual or group's capacity to influence others' behaviour, decisions, and beliefs, deriving from the possession or manipulation of resources, authority, or social capital (Weber, 1978, 53). Control, conversely, involves the direct regulation or management of people, situations, or environments, signifying the actual exercise or implementation of power to shape outcomes (Colquitt et al., 2010, 3). In same manner, as 'Control' is considered as a conduciveness to Power, the research would fasten examples or quotations cited from HC to show how 'Control' is set in its context as it is done below.

Control in HC

In HC, the motifs of control and physical authority operate as central forces shaping the play's tense interpersonal dynamics, family relations, and broader sociopolitical commentary. The play's claustrophobic domestic setting becomes a stage for a perpetual power struggle, where characters assert control through language, bodily presence, and manipulation. This section explores how Pinter dramatizes control and physical authority, supported by key quotations from the text (Ahawat, 2022). Control in *The Homecoming* manifests in multiple dimensions, emotional, psychological, physical, and sexual. The patriarch Max embodies physical authority, policing decorum and asserting dominance often through violent imagery and presence. As mentioned before, he wields a stick, which is a symbol of physical control and patriarchal power.

"You'll go before me, Dad, if you talk to me in that tone of voice" (HC.1.31). This moment epitomizes the tension between generational authority and rebellion, with Max's physical posture symbolizing dominance while Lenny verbally contests control (Fayadh, 2024). Ruth's reconfiguration of physical authority is crucial; she upends the traditional patriarchal order by using her sexuality and bodily presence to reclaim power. Her dominance is verbal and physical, as when she confronts Lenny: "If you take the glass... I'll take you" (HC. Act 1.57). Ruth's threat blurs the lines between verbal command and physical assertion, emphasizing control through both language and body.

Teddy, with his calm but penetrating demeanour, exercises psychological control that unsettles the household's fragile hierarchy. His return is a disruption that disarms the established order: "You don't know how to defend yourself, and you don't know how to attack" (HC.1.68). This line critiques the malleability of power in the family unit and highlights an intellectual form of dominance (Fayadh, 2024).



Lenny's insistence on control is often expressed through aggressive verbal commands, as he demands physical submission from Ruth: "Hand over that glass, woman" (HC.1.55). The simplicity of the command veils the deeper struggles for physical and psychological authority (Ahawat, 2022)). The spatial dynamics of the stage further reinforce control and authority. Pinter's stage directions repeatedly emphasize the physical positioning of characters to signify dominance, as when Ruth rises to stand over Lenny, visually asserting her ascendancy:

Ruth rises and stands over Lenny (HC. 1.58). So, HC intricately maps control and physical authority as mutable, contested elements. Pinter poses control as fragmented yet all-pervasive, negotiated through violence, sexuality, language, and physical presence. The ambiguity leaves the ultimate locus of control uncertain, revealing the complex weave of power relations in familial and social spheres.

D. Violence and Threat

It is innate in the use of Power, two conducivenesses would result as immediate corollaries. They are 'Violence and Threat'. In the following lines, the research is to portray how Violence and Threat are manipulated throughout the play The nexus between power, violence, and threat constitutes a critical field of inquiry across social sciences, highlighting how power's exercise can encompass coercion and harm. Power, defined broadly as the capacity to influence or control behaviours (Weber, 1978. 53), frequently manifests through strategies of violence and threat to establish, maintain, or negotiate dominance over others. This relationship is especially apparent in contexts of intimate partner violence, state coercion, and social control mechanisms.

Threats serve as pre-emptive assertions of power designed to compel compliance through fear, often preceding or accompanying actual violence. Michel Foucault's theorization conceptualizes violence and threat within the broader matrix of power as mechanisms of discipline and biopolitics. (Foucault, 1995, 93). Those in positions of power may use the credible threat of violence instrumentally to control or intimidate, modulating the deployment of force without necessarily resorting to physical aggression (Widyananda, 2023, 3). This underscores the strategic use of violence and threat as intertwined expressions of power—one actualized, the other latent. The intersection of power, violence, and threat permeates cultural and social contexts—from domestic abuse. In same manner, as 'Violence and Threat are' are considered as two conducivenesses to Power, the research would fasten examples or quotations cited from HC to show how 'these conducivenesses' are set in its context as it is done below.

Violence and Threat in HC

HC is a tense and unsettling exploration of violence and threat, motifs that permeate the domestic sphere and shape the play's grim psychological landscape. Violence in the play is not merely physical but also verbal, psychological, and implicit, serving as a tool for asserting control and expressing the fragility of human relationships (Ahawat, 2022).



The play opens with an immediate atmosphere of menace, marked by the conflict between Lenny and his father Max. Lenny's insulting of Max triggers a violent threat from the patriarch: "Don't you talk to me like that. I'm warning you." Max lifts his stick and points it at him (HC. 1.23). This moment sets the tone for violence as an ever-present undercurrent, a looming option employed or threatened but not always enacted. The stick, a symbol of physical authority, emphasizes Max's readiness to assert dominance through force (Fayadh, 2024. 221).

Ruth introduces a complex dynamic of violence and threat intertwined with sexuality and power. Her calm, frank disposition juxtaposed with implied threat suggests control beyond physicality. Ruth's declaration, "If you take the glass... I'll take you" (HC. 1.57), blends verbal threat with physical dominance, subverting patriarchal expectations. "You don't know how to defend yourself, and you don't know how to attack" (HC. 1.68). Here, violence is metaphorical yet charged, emphasizing mental and emotional vulnerability (Ahawat, 2022.). So, the *Homecoming* reveals the instability underlying familial bonds through physical, verbal, and psychological aggression, a currency of power manifesting symbolically and literally (ibid, 233).

E. Obedience and Submission

The concept of power is conducive to both Obedience and Submission. The relationship between power, obedience, and submission is a foundational element in understanding hierarchical social dynamics and interpersonal relations. Power, broadly conceived, is the capacity of an individual or group to influence or direct the behaviour of others, often by shaping choices or commands that evoke compliance (Weber, 1978, 53). Obedience is a behavioural manifestation of power, entailing compliance with directives or authority figures, often without active consent but under perceived necessity or coercion. Submission, however, differs subtly yet significantly; it frequently implies a voluntary or consensual yielding to another's authority, marked by trust, respect, or mutual recognition.

Submission possesses a more nuanced relational character, often entwined with psychological and emotional dimensions. It is enacted willingly, involving trust and mutuality that avoid coercion (Omoogun, 2024). This voluntary submission can foster intimacy through the deliberate transfer of control, thereby transforming traditional power hierarchies into negotiated, dynamic exchanges. Submission thus reflects an interplay where power is not merely imposed but shared, cultivating relational depth through obedience internalized rather than externally imposed. The distinction between obedience and submission is further illuminated in their implications for autonomy and agency. Obedience may often suppress agency, reducing individuals to passive compliance under threat or social pressure (Jhangiani, 2022). Submission, however, can coexist with active agency, whereby individuals consciously negotiate their surrender within boundaries that preserve their autonomy. This complexity underscores that power relations are not invariably coercive but can be relationally constructed through consensual obedience and submission. Power manifests through both obedience and submission, yet these responses differ



ontologically and functionally within social interactions. Obedience denotes compliance to authority, often imposed externally and associated with control, whereas submission involves a consensual, often affective yielding that maintains relational agency. Appreciating this dichotomy enriches our understanding of power's exercise in social, psychological, and intimate domains. In same manner, as 'Obedience and Submission' are considered as two conducivenesses to Power, the research would fasten examples or quotations cited from HC to show how 'these conducivenesses' are set in its context as it is done below.

Obedience and Submission in HC

In HC, motifs of obedience and submission underpin the fraught relationships within a patriarchal family structure. The play scrutinizes how power dynamics compel characters into roles marked by compliant submission or enforced obedience, particularly in relation to gender and generational tensions. This section explores how obedience and submission function as motifs in the play, foregrounding the psychological mechanisms through which dominance is sustained or challenged. Key quotations from the play illustrate these motifs in action.

Obedience is often demanded or expected explicitly through commands or implicitly through the characters' acquiescence to authority figures. Max wields patriarchal authority over his sons and others in the household, enforcing obedience through intimidation and threats of violence. When Max orders Lenny, "Sit down!" (HC. 1.12), the tone brooks no refusal, reinforcing hierarchical submission. Lenny's verbal responses vacillate between resistance and reluctant compliance, illustrating the uneasy submission enforced by paternal power (Fayadh, 2024).

Ruth's position is ambivalent, embodying both submission and strategic obedience. Though she negotiates terms when agreeing to stay with the family, "All aspects of agreement and conditions of employment would have to be clarified... before we finalize the contract" (HC. 1.90). Her consent reflects a controlled submission operating within the constraints of a patriarchal household. Ruth's calculated compliance is a form of submission that masks an underlying assertion of control.

Teddy's paternal role is complicated by his intellectual detachment and absence, which subjects the household to a vacuum of authority partially filled by Max's crude enforcement of obedience. Teddy attempts to placate Ruth by saying, "I am with you. There is no need to be nervous" (HC. 1.39), appealing to emotional submission while signalling his weakened command over familial dynamics.

Lenny's repeated demands to Ruth, such as "Hand over that glass, woman" (HC. 1.55), symbolize assertive control attempts reinforced through expected female submission. Ruth's responses often undermine these commands, suggesting an oscillation between submission and subversion. Finally, Sam's feigned ignorance—"I don't do nothin' for nobody"—reflects passive submission to the established order and an evasion of direct confrontation with power, reinforcing reluctant obedience



(HC. 1.65). Thus, submission and obedience are not merely signs of weakness but complex modes through which power is exercised, negotiated, and contested, revealing the fragile equilibrium of dominance within the family.

Now, the research nearly reaches a point before its end in this follow-up method analysing the Power Motif and its conduciveness. This time, the conduciveness are three manifestations. They are 'Repression, Silence and Pauses'

F. Repression, Silence and Pauses

The relationship between power and repression is integral to understanding how authority is maintained and contested within the social structures. Power, broadly defined as the capacity to influence or control others, becomes closely intertwined with repression when dominance is sustained through coercion, restriction, and the suppression of dissent (Weber, 1978). Repression is the deliberate and systematic use of power to curtail freedoms, silence opposition, and enforce conformity, making it a key instrument through which power manifests in authoritarian contexts and statecraft. Repression is enacted through everyday interactions, where power relations enforce compliance and social order at the grassroots level (Bramsen, 2019, 2). Foucault's theoretical framework situates repression within a broader understanding of power as diffuse and productive rather than solely repressive. He examines how power permeates societal institutions and discourses to produce "docile bodies" through disciplinary regimes, internalizing control and rendering repression a normalized dimension of social life (Foucault, 1995). This expands the notion of repression beyond physical force to include symbolic and epistemic domination. Repression is a fundamental relational expression of power that operates through multifaceted mechanisms—from overt violence and coercion to subtle institutionalized discipline. The dynamics between power and repression illuminate both the vulnerabilities and resilience of subjects under domination, underscoring repression's ambivalent role in political stability and social contestation.

Repression, Silence and Pauses in HC

HC is distinguished by its masterful use of the motifs of repression, silence, and pauses, such motifs significantly contributing to the play's psychological complexity and tension. They function not only as dramatic devices but also as symbols of unspoken conflicts, suppressed desires, and fractured communication within a family undergoing profound power struggles. Repression in HC is pervasive, manifesting in the characters withheld emotions and stifled communication. The characters' conversations are frequently fragmented, highlighting their inability or unwillingness to engage openly. It intensifies the play's claustrophobic atmosphere, as seen in the opening elliptical exchange between Max and Lenny:

Max: "What's that smell?"

Lenny: "What smell?"

Max: "That smell."

Lenny: "I can't smell anything." (HC. 1.2).



The disjointed dialogue encapsulates the characters' reluctance to confront underlying issues directly, embodying repression through linguistic disconnection (Fayadh, 2024). Silence and pauses, famously termed "the Pinter pause," are crucial to the play's texture. These moments of stillness stretch the dramatic tension, creating a charged atmosphere where meaning is conveyed more in absence than speech. For example, after Teddy returns, the stage direction: "Pause. They all watch him." (HC.I. 22) signals heavy silence loaded with unspoken emotions and expectations, compelling the audience to sense the emotional weight beneath surface calm (Ibrahim, 2024).

Ruth's line shows the psychological dimension of silence as repression: "It is the silence that frightens me. It is like a scream. But a scream without a mouth. A scream in mind" (HC.I. 33). Repression seems to cultivate internalized suffering in this metaphor as it is full of tension and longing that remain unvoiced (Ahawat, 2022). The frequent talking past one another and use of non-sequiturs enforces the fragmented family relations, even though they are housed beneath polite conversation or avoidance. As Lenny muses to Ruth, "You know, I've always been very interested in women... as a subject" (HC. I. 10), such evasiveness and passive aggressiveness is evidence of the characters' inability to communicate authentically. Finally, the play's silences as moments of power allow the characters to exert control through withholding, dominant observation, or passive resistance. This makes silence a potent motif linked to repression and authority (Ibrahim, 2024). Pinter's use of these motifs conducive to Power invites audiences to read between the lines and decode the complex human emotions lying beneath the sparse dialogue.

G. Masculinity and Sexuality

Masculinity and Sexuality are the last two conducivenesses of Power Motif. And the interrelationship between power, masculinity, and sexuality constitutes a critical axis for understanding gendered social dynamics and identity formations. Masculinity, as a socially constructed set of behaviours, norms, and roles traditionally associated with men, is deeply enmeshed in systems of power that mediate social relations at individual, institutional, and cultural levels (Connell, 1995, 77). Sexuality, similarly, is not merely a biological or private domain but is profoundly regulated and shaped by power structures, influencing and being influenced by dominant conceptions of masculinity. Sociologist R.W. Connell's concept of "hegemonic masculinity" theorizes how particular forms of masculinity become exalted as normative and authoritative within patriarchal societies, thereby sustaining male dominance and gender hierarchies (ibid.). This hegemonic masculinity valorises traits such as aggression, competitiveness, emotional restraint, and heterosexuality, establishing ideals that marginalize alternative masculinities and femininities (ibid., 81). Power operates through these cultural ideals by prescribing acceptable masculine behaviour and regulating sexuality as a key site of male dominance and control (ibid., 82). Patriarchal power structures sustain masculinity's connection to authority and



control, wherein men are socialized to embody power through domination coded in both public and intimate spheres (Gender Studies, 2025).

This system not only privileges men socially and economically but imposes restrictive norms that constrain men's emotional expression and relational possibilities, perpetuating toxic cycles of power assertion through control over sexuality and gendered bodies. Furthermore, the nexus of power and sexuality manifests in the regulation and policing of sexualities that deviate from heteronormative ideals. Sometimes, sexuality becomes a critical ideological terrain where power is exercised, contested, and symbolically reproduced. Contemporary studies in men's mental health and social connectedness reveal how hegemonic masculinity's valorisation of independence and stoicism restricts emotional support and authentic relational engagement among men, linking power with both privilege and psychological constraint (McKenzie et al., 2018, 310). This dynamic presents a paradox where masculinity, while privileged in power hierarchies, simultaneously generates vulnerabilities through its rigid prescriptions, shaping men's sexuality and interpersonal relations. In sum, power's relationship with masculinity and sexuality is dialectical and multifaceted, where cultural norms of masculinity enact and sustain male power while simultaneously framing sexuality as a domain of control, exclusion, and identity negotiation. Interrogating these intertwined domains illuminates broader social structures and offers pathways for more inclusive and equitable gender relations.

Masculinity and Sexuality in HC

HC offers a profound examination of masculinity and sexuality motifs that are intricately entwined with themes of power, identity, and dominance within the patriarchal family structure depicted in the play. These motifs serve both to expose the fragility of male authority and to challenge conventional gender norms, articulating complex interactions where masculinity is both asserted and undermined. This section analyses how Pinter explores these motifs through characterization, dialogue, and dramatic situations, supported by key quotations from the text (Muhsen, 2023). Masculinity in HC is portrayed as both physical and ideological, often linked to traditional notions of strength, control, and sexual prowess. Max, the patriarch, embodies a physical, almost primal masculinity, evident in his occupation as a butcher and his command over the household. He derides his brother Sam's less physically demanding profession, asserting: "I used to be a butcher like you. Not a bloody cab driver" (HC. 1.45). Here, physicality equates with masculinity and strength, while Sam's masculinity is implicitly questioned due to his 'softness,' a recurring theme in male rivalry.

Lenny's masculinity is complex and performative, often taking the form of aggressive posturing and verbal dominance to conceal insecurity. His dismissive and sexually charged exchanges with Ruth reveal attempts to assert power: "Hand over that glass, woman" (HC. 1.55). Ruth's reaction destabilizes Lenny's machismo, highlighting the tenuous nature of his authority. Sexuality is the locus of both domination and



submission. Ruth's character functions as a site of sexual power that disrupts and redefines male control. Her awareness and strategic use of sexuality invert traditional gender roles, as seen when she confronts Lenny: "If you take the glass... I'll take you" (HC. 1.57). This assertion signals her capacity to reclaim agency and challenge the phallogocentric power structures within the household. Moreover,

Teddy's professional background as an academic contrast with the other men's physical working-class identities, and this difference is framed as a lack of traditional masculinity: "You don't know how to defend yourself, and you don't know how to attack" (HC. 1.68). Teddy's intellectualism alienates him and diminishes his perceived masculinity, contributing to the conflict between the characters (Muhsen, 2023). The play's interplay between masculinity and sexuality is also emphasized through the motif of the phallus, symbolized in objects such as Max's walking stick and cigars, which function as phallic signifiers reinforcing male authority and dominance. Pinter's HC critically interrogates the construction of masculinity and sexuality as intertwined motifs that sustain and challenge power hierarchies. Ruth's sexual assertiveness contrasts with the men's fragile masculine identities, revealing the inherent instability and performativity of normative gender roles.

Conclusion

It has become evident that power is a dynamic, multifaceted construct whose conduciveness in the play HC permeate the identity formations, social structures, and interpersonal relations. The use of power runs deep into the tissue of HC revealing crucial mechanisms through which concentrated power not only silences, dominates, subjugates, controls but also disciplines characters, persons or in the wider sense the populations or citizens in any society, a process elaborated by Foucault's conception of power/knowledge and disciplinary regimes (Frantz, 2022). Complementing these insights, investigations into the relationship between power, violence, and threat demonstrate that while power can manifest coercively, this expression is context-dependent, mediated by individual, relational, and structural factors influencing aggression and control (Logan, 2017). Additionally, distinctions among power, control, dominance, aggression, and their behavioural conduciveness enhance what has been revealed in our follow-up analysis of Pinter's HC.

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