

# Mountain Language

*By Harold Pinter*

## DRAMATURGY

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# WHY THIS PLAY NOW?

The following is a statement from a production dramaturg on: “why this play now?” Examining the political moment in which we are creating theatre, what does it mean to be approaching this text at this moment in time?

## WHY THIS PLAY NOW?

*by Jonathan P. Eburne*

*Mountain Language* is a drama of incarceration. With ruthless brevity, Harold Pinter’s 1988 play exists in a nameless present. *This could happen anywhere.* The play does not so much stage “universal truths” about the dehumanizing conditions of absolute power, as to insist on how mobile, how adaptable, how reproducible those conditions have been.

What does it take to divide a population from itself, to separate the disenfranchised from sovereign, the drowned from the saved? The history of the twentieth century offers a grim register of genocidal principles of division: the racial registration and identity cards of South African Apartheid; the laws and practices of racial segregation of the Jim Crow-era United States; policies of enforced assimilation in European settler colonies, as throughout the Americas; the persecution and murder of Jews in Russia and, later, throughout Europe during the Holocaust.

How tempting it is to view these acts of categorization and division—with the atrocities they produce—in the rear-view mirror of history. But they keep happening, again and again, in countless guises: think of the categorial discernment between “illegal” migrants to be arrested at the border, or hunted down, incarcerated, and deported, from “internationals” or “exiles” to be welcomed. Media photographs of children in cages depict not a time or place that is far away from us; these events are happening here, and now. As you read this, an Immigrant Detention Center is opening in Clearfield County, in a former prison; the plans were ratified in November 2021. Think dirty wars and disappearances of right-wing military dictatorships in Chile and Argentina, which subjected political dissidents to clandestine imprisonment, torture, and murder. Such covert acts of violence are not limited to the 1970s and 1980s; they are happening now in Russia, in Saudi Arabia, in Pakistan, in China. Think of civil wars and territorial denials of statehood that take place between and within established political borders: Northern Ireland; Syria; Palestine; Ukraine; Iraq; Kashmir; Tibet; Yugoslavia; Ethiopia. Today, this is also happening in Ukraine.

What makes Harold Pinter’s *Mountain Language* such an important response to the ongoing reality of political terror is that it does not demand a history lesson for us to feel its power.

As the play's title suggests, it is a drama of *language*, not a lecture on human rights. Pinter does not preach.

Pinter's brief drama does not preach, but it does speak—in a variety of languages: through silence and stillness, through disembodied voices, through violent acts and violent words, and through haunting, haunted faces. It has much to say about the way language works: the arbitrariness yet absoluteness of division, but also the possibilities of short-circuits, even unspoken truths. What is the “Mountain Language” of the title? It is not a language marked by idiom—or by race, gender, class, nationality, or any other identifying characteristics—but only by designation alone: the power of the state. Like the notorious Stanford Prison experiment, the violence of administrative language can enable an authoritarianism severed from any real basis, however misguided or ideologically suspect, in the bodies, minds, ethnicities, belief systems, sexual preferences, or religions of the victims. What is a “Mountain Language”? Perhaps it is another name for a language that can speak *in spite of* getting silenced by power.

# I. PRODUCTION HISTORY

## First Production

*Mountain Language* first premiered at the Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre, in London, on October 20, 1988.<sup>1</sup> The original production was directed by the playwright himself, Harold Pinter, and ran at just under twenty-five minutes.<sup>2</sup> The play was originally double-billed with director Richard Eyre's production of Ben Jonson's 1614 comedy, *Bartholomew Fair*.<sup>3</sup> The production ran from October 17, 1988 to 1989; press night was on the aforementioned October 20, 1988.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Cast***

Young Woman	Miranda Richardson
Elderly Woman	Eileen Atkins
Sergeant	Michael Gambon
Officer	Julian Wadham
Guard	George Harris
Prisoner	Tony Haygarth
Hooded Man	Alex Hardy
Second Guard	Douglas McFerran

### ***Production Team***

Directed by Harold Pinter  
Designed by Michael Taylor



*Programme cover of the first production of Mountain Language, at the National Theatre.*

<sup>1</sup> "Mountain Language," *Theatricalia*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Michael Billington, "Precisely, Mr. Pinter," *The Guardian* (London, UK), October 22, 1988, 17.

<sup>4</sup> "Mountain Language," *Theatricalia*.



*Michael Gambon as the Sergeant in, Mountain Language, written & directed by Harold Pinter at the Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre (NT) London in 1988.<sup>5</sup>*

### *Critical Reviews*

Michael Billington, of *The Guardian*, evaluated Pinter's play and his direction of the first production as "sharp, precise and committed," with favorable reviews of Pinter's ability to thoroughly explore the "use of language as repressive instrument, the arbitrary cruelty of military states which make up new rules as they go a long, [and] the brutish incompetence of totalitarian societies which shunt the wrong prisoners into the wrong places"<sup>6</sup> in such a short play. Billington observes, in a review published on Saturday, October 22, 1988:

"Directing the play himself, Pinter also makes his points—like the late Beckett—through a series of resonant images. The simple sigh of mother and son confronting each other in helpless non-communication across a table in a bleak, brick office ("I'm in the Blue Room." the Guard announces over the phone) is indelibly moving.

Pinter distills the daily barbarism of military societies with painterly precision. Michael Gambon (the paunchy Sergeant in pebble-specs), Tony Haygarth (the tortured son), Eileen Atkins (his frozen, terrified mother), Miranda Richardson (the mutinous younger woman) suggest a whole world beyond the confines of the action: the result is a masterly portrait of compressed suffering."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Michael Gambon as the Sergeant in MOUNTAIN LANGUAGE written & directed by Harold Pinter at the Lyttelton Theatre, National Theatre (NT) London in 1988*, photograph, Alamy.

<sup>6</sup> Billington, "Precisely, Mr. Pinter," 40.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

Michael Ratcliffe, of *The Observer*, published a theatrical review of the production on Sunday, October 23, 1988, evaluating Pinter's production as "a subject of overwhelming importance but overrepresented."<sup>8</sup> They elaborate:

"The degradation of human lives by those with the hardware of terror at their command is a subject of overwhelming importance as our grim century approaches its final decade, but it is solemnly over-presented here. Pinter directed the actors to play each scene at an identical *andante* so that much of the tension goes slack. The result is...politically less powerful than Pinter's own 'One for the Road' four years ago."

Paul Taylor of *The Independent*, took note of Miranda Richardson's role as the Young Woman, specifically, in his review published in October 21, 1988.<sup>9</sup> They note:

"With the young woman, Pinter explores a different atrocity to language. Played with a fine, nervous imperiousness by Miranda Richardson, she can attempt to parry the soldiers' illogicalities, because shares their foul-mouthed idiom. But, after, she has been treated to the sight of the hooded, broken man—whom the soldiers try to pretend is not her husband—something in her snaps. Told of a man who comes in on Tuesdays and might be able to help her, she snarls, "Can I fuck him? If I fuck him will everything be alright?", clearly gaining physical release from her pretense of relishing in the four-letter words. You find yourself torn between admiration for the satiric defiance with which she spits the soldier's bad language back at them and the outrage that she has been reduced to soiling her mouth with it at all."<sup>10</sup>

### *BBC TV Production*

The original production, directed by Harold Pinter, was filmed as a BBC TV production and broadcast on the BBC Two England channel, on Sunday, December 11, 1988, at 10:15 PM.<sup>11</sup> The broadcast ran at just over twenty-one minutes.<sup>12</sup>

Pinter's characteristic use of silences in his plays adopts a new function and meaning in the realm of filmed theatre, where the audience is more intimately acquainted with actors' faces. The pauses become more pregnant, more anticipatory; at times, however, the filmed production lags, where a stage production might be thrilled with the silence, a by-product of filmed products proceeding at a faster tempo. The filmed production, however, does allow one to witness the first production, and with Pinter's own direction, of the play. Notably, one can see how the text is adapted for this stage;

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Ratcliffe, "Over the peak," *The Observer* (London, England), October 23, 1988, 40.

<sup>9</sup> "Mountain Language - Premiere," HaroldPinter.org,

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> "Programme Index: Mountain Language," British Broadcasting Corporation.

<sup>12</sup> "Mountain Language - Harold Pinter - BBC2 - 1-12-88," video, 21:21, YouTube, posted by Studio2televisionextra, September 14, 2021.

for example, the “blue room” is, in fact, painted green and white, suggesting another layer of understanding to the relationship between language and reality.<sup>13</sup>

***Production Team***

Designer        Stuart Walker  
Lighting        Clive Thomas  
Producer        Louis Marks<sup>14</sup>



*Miranda Richardson as the Young Woman in the BCC TV filmed production of Mountain Language.*<sup>15</sup>



*Miranda Richardson as the Young Woman and Michael Gambon as the Sergeant in the BCC TV filmed production of Mountain Language.*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Watt, "Things, Voices, Events: Harold Pinter's 'Mountain Language' as Testamental Text," *Modern Drama* 52, no. 1 (2009): 49.

<sup>14</sup> "Mountain Language, BBC2, 11 December 1988," HaroldPinter.org.

<sup>15</sup> Miranda Richardson as the Young Woman in the BCC TV filmed production of "Mountain Language," photograph, The Movie Database.

<sup>16</sup> Miranda Richardson as the Young Woman and Michael Gambon as the Sergeant in the BCC TV filmed production of "Mountain Language," photograph, The Movie Database.

## Notable Subsequents Productions

### *Mountain Language* | Classic Stage Company Repertory Theater | October 31 – December 23, 1989

According to *New York Times* reporter Peter Nichols, “In the spring of 1988, [Harold Pinter] sent Lauren Bacall to scout an earlier [Classic Stage Company] production of *The Birthday Party*. Impressed with what he heard, Mr. Pinter later visited the theater himself. When Ms. Perloff proposed pairing the two plays, he not only approved the idea but asked her to direct.”<sup>17</sup> The double-billed program featured a cast including Peter Riegert, Jean Stapleton and David Strathairn.<sup>18</sup> Jean Stapleton won an Obie Award in 1990 for her performance as the Elderly Woman.<sup>19</sup>

#### *Artistic and Production Team*

Music	Wayne Horvitz
Director	Carey Perloff
Set Designer	Loy Arcenas
Costume Designer	Gabriel Berry
Lighting Designer	Beverly Emmons
Sound Designer	Dan Moses Schreier
Production Stage Manager	Richard Hester
Production Manager	Jeffrey Berzon
Casting	Ellen Novack
Dialect Coach	Nancy Lane <sup>20</sup>

#### *Cast*

Woman in Line	Katherine Cohen
Second Guard	Thomas Delling
Woman in Line	Ellie Hannibal
Woman in Line	Mary Beth Kilkelly
Young Woman	Wendy Makkena
Guard	Miguel Perez
Prisoner	Peter Riegert
Sergeant	Richard Riehle
Woman in Line	Gwynne Rivers
Elderly Woman	Jean Stapleton
Officer/Hooded Man	David Strathairn <sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Nichols, "THEATER; Even the Language Is Taken Away," *The New York Times*, last modified November 5, 1989.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> "Mountain Language," Internet Off-Broadway Database.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



Above, two photos of Carey Perloff's 1989 production of *Mountain Language* at the Classic Stage Company Repertory Theatre.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Mountain Language* | Oval House Theatre, London | November 29 – December 6, 2000**

Director Jessica Higgs's production, at the Oval House Theatre in London, notably presented in the play in British Sign Language (BSL), double-billed with Pinter's one-act, *Landscape*.<sup>23</sup> The work of the company that presented the play, Tandem TC, "[focuses] on difference and integration of difference in society, creating platforms for culturally diverse and unheard voices."<sup>24</sup> In a review from *The Guardian*, published in December 2000, the choice to present the play in BSL is understood as inspired, understanding the oppression of the use of the titular "Mountain Language" as similar to the oppression of the use of BSL up until recent times:

"Harold Pinter's plays take on a new depth of meaning in this intriguing double bill presented by a new company, In Tandem. The actors are all deaf, and the plays are performed in British Sign Language. For those in the audience who cannot understand BSL, there are spoken interpretations. This is, of course, the opposite of what normally happens in the theatre, where the actors speak and there are occasional sign-interpreted performances.

What immediately strikes you is that this is no gimmick, and nor is it merely a service to the hard of hearing. The 20-minute, *Mountain Language*, inspired by the plight of the Kurdish people in Turkey, is about oppressed people who are denied the right to speak their own language. Until recently, well-meaning but misguided ideas about assimilation into the mainstream meant that deaf children were often denied the right to use BSL and forced to communicate vocally. But even if you were oblivious of the history of BSL, Jessica Higgs's production of the brief play in which bully boy soldiers intimidate a group of women trying to visit their imprisoned husbands has a stark clarity. It is as if the gestural expressiveness of BSL means all of Pinter's pauses are filled up. But as fast as they are, more gaping holes appear."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Carey Perloff's 1989 Production of "Mountain Language," photograph, Classic Stage Company Repertory Theatre.

<sup>23</sup> "In Tandem TC," Unfinished Histories.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid,

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

### *Cast*

Jeni Draper, Frank Essery, Neil Fox, Lee O'Brien, Caroline Parker, John Paton, Steven Webb and Simon Whitehouse

### *Production Team*

Director        Jessica Higgs  
Designer        Kate Owen  
Lighting        Aideen Malone<sup>26</sup>



*Above, a photo of Jessica Higgs's 2000 production of Mountain Language, featuring Steven Webb, Frank Essery, and Caroline Parker.<sup>27</sup>*

### **Mountain Language | New Life Theatre Group, London | 1996**

In London, on June 19, 1996, a group of twelve Kurdish refugees who were rehearsing a production of *Mountain Language* in the Kurdistan Workers' Association community centre, in Finsbury Park, north London, found their rehearsal stormed by armed officers.<sup>28</sup> Believing the actors were armed with real guns, not props ones which they had obtained from the Royal National Theatre, the officers arrested the group at gunpoint, handcuffed them, and "held [them]" in the back of a police van for more than five hours without explanation."<sup>29</sup> The group included a twelve-year-old boy.<sup>30</sup> Similar to the events of the play, "the actors were forbidden to speak in their native language." The New Life Theatre Group was due to perform *Mountain Language*.<sup>31</sup> According to Julia Hartley-Brewer, "The men, who all have home office status as refugees after fleeing torture and oppression in Turkey, brought a civil action against the police for assault, trespass and false imprisonment."<sup>32</sup> The Metropolitan police reportedly paid £55,000 in damages to 11 of the refugees;

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Ainslie, "Mountain Language" by Harold Pinter, photograph, Unfinished Histories.

<sup>28</sup> Julia Hartley-Brewer, "Met pays damages for raid on actors," *The Guardian*, last modified February 2, 2000.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

the twelfth man's case was still in progress as of 2000.<sup>33</sup> The men's solicitor called the case "a horror story of life imitating art."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

## II. THE PLAYWRIGHT: HAROLD PINTER

### Biography

Harold Pinter was born on October 10, 1930, just beyond the borders of the traditional East End of London, to Jack Pinter, “a hard-working ladies’ tailor”, and Frances (née Moskowitz) Pinter. Of a working class background, this Pinter family was “part of the immigrant wave of Jews that arrived in the East End around the turn of the century”.<sup>35</sup> The family had origins in Eastern Europe, with three grandparents hailing from Poland and one from Odessa, and were of Ashkenazic Jewish ancestry.<sup>36</sup> Pinter grew up in the East End of London, in a working-class area, around “some big, run-down Victorian houses,” “a soap factory”, “tons of railway yards”, and “lots of shops.”<sup>37</sup> (Pinter wrote, about his experience growing up, “I actually lived in a very pleasant environment and in a very comfortable terraced house. The house was immaculate. My father was forced to work very long hours, but through this industry and my mother’s care we lived very well.”)<sup>38</sup>

In 1939, at the outbreak of war, Pinter was evacuated to the countryside, to a castle in Cornwall, where he lived with twenty-four other boys.<sup>39</sup> Pinter describes the location as a “marvelous grounds... on the sea,” but not “quite so idyllic as it sounds, because [Pinter] was a morose little boy.”<sup>40</sup> His parents would occasionally visit him from London, a traveling distance of 400 miles.<sup>41</sup> Pinter returned to London in 1944, where he saw “the first flying bomb.” He reports that his house never burned down, but his family had to evacuate it several times, and his garden was, at times, in flames.<sup>42</sup>

In 1947, Pinter left Hackney Downs Grammar School. Pinter describes his “English master, Joseph Brearley,” as a “brilliant man,” who was “obsessed with the theatre.”<sup>43</sup> Brearley directed Pinter in the roles of Macbeth and Romeo, in his time at the school.<sup>44</sup> Pinter was also involved in football, cricket, and running at the school. In 1948, Pinter applied for a grant to study acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA), and he attended the school for two years, leaving “of [his] own free will,” as he “didn’t care for it much.”<sup>45</sup>

In 1948-1949, Pinter turned eighteen and became liable for National Service.<sup>46</sup> Declaring himself a conscientious objector,” he appeared before two tribunals and magistrates.<sup>47</sup> As it was a civil offense,

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1997), 1-2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright*, 5th ed. (London: Methuen, 1992), 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

as Pinter was under twenty-one years old, Pinter was fined “ten pounds and then twenty pounds.”<sup>48</sup> (Pinter described himself as having “no religious beliefs by then.”)<sup>49</sup> In 1950-1951, poems by Harold Pinter, or sometimes, “Harold Pinta,” were published in *Poetry London*.<sup>50</sup>

“R.D. (Reggie) Smith, who had got Pinter his RADA grant, [gave] him small parts in radio features,” in 1950, in Pinter’s “first efforts to obtain work as an actor.”<sup>51</sup> Pinter’s first appearance in Shakespeare was as Abergavenny in R. D. Smith’s production of *Henry VIII* for BBC Third Programme. (Pinter is reported to have “[resumed] his training as an actor at the Central School of Speech and Drama,” after the production.)<sup>52</sup>

In September 1951 to autumn of 1952, Pinter toured Ireland with Anew McMaster’s touring company, playing “Horatio, Bassanio, and Cassio.” Pinter describes it, “He offered me six pounds a week, said I could get digs for twenty-five shillings at the most... It was my first job proper on the stage.”<sup>53</sup> The company included “a number of actors who later achieved prominence: Kenneth Haigh, Patrick Magee, Barry Foster.”<sup>54</sup> In 1953, Pinter first met actress Vivien Merchant (Ada Thompson), “with whom Pinter [appeared] in small parts in *As You Like It*.”<sup>55</sup> In 1956, Pinter met Merchant again, acting at Bournemouth, and the two played leads opposite each other and married.<sup>56</sup>

In 1957, Pinter wrote his first play, *The Room*, which was presented as a student play at Bristol University.<sup>57</sup> Friend of Pinter and student in the Drama Department, actor Henry Woolf, directed the play, which Pinter wrote in four days.<sup>58</sup> “Harold Hobson, drama critic of *The Sunday Times*... was so impressed by the play that he wrote about its performance,” drawing the attention of producer Michael Codron, who asked for any other plays Pinter had written.<sup>59</sup> Pinter submitted *The Room: The Party* (later, *The Birthday Party*) and *The Dumb Waiter*.<sup>60</sup> “The first performance of *The Room* led to Pinter’s acquisition of a first-rate literary agent,” Jimmy Wax.<sup>61</sup>

On January 29, 1958, Daniel, Pinter’s son, was born.<sup>62</sup> Despite both Pinter and Vivien Merchant receiving very well-compensated acting roles in Birmingham, Pinter insisted that the two stay in London to see the opening of producer Michael Codron’s production of Pinter’s *The Birthday Party*,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 7.

which Codron optioned for £50.<sup>63</sup> On May 19, 1958, the first London performance of *The Birthday Party*, at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, was “unanimously [rejected]” by reviewers.<sup>64</sup> The production closed on May 24, “after only a week’s run.”<sup>65</sup>

## Works

Harold Pinter’s works as a writer include some early poetry, many plays, and some screenplays. The plays are: *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Birthday Party*, *A Slight Ache*, *A Night Out*, *The Hothouse*, *The Caretaker*, *Night School*, *The Dwarfs*, *The Collection*, *The Lover*, *The Homecoming*, *Tea Party*, *The Basement*, *Landscape*, *Silence*, *Old Times*, *Monologue*, *No Man’s Land*, *Betrayal*, *Family Voices*, *A Kind of Alaska*, *Victoria Station*, *One for the Road*, *Mountain Language*, *Party Time*, and *Sketches*.<sup>66</sup>

Below summarizes information on some of Harold Pinter’s best-known works as a playwright.

### *The Room*

Martin Esslin summarizes the premise of *The Room* as something that came up often in Pinter’s play: a room with a door, “an outside the door is a cold, hostile world. The room is warm and light. Outside it is winter, cold and dark.”<sup>67</sup> The center of the play is a couple, the “brutal” Bert and the “sentimental” Rose.<sup>68</sup> Rose is completely devoted to and absorbed in looking after the man, who “just sits there, reads his paper, and allows himself to be fed and pampered.”<sup>69</sup> Esslin explains that such a warm room, in which a woman “so obviously wants to give love and the man so obviously does not accept her gift, must be a dangerous, ominous constellation.”<sup>70</sup> In the play, there is an “accumulation of such basically realistic detail, [in which] Pinter succeeds in building up an atmosphere of menace, of Kafkaesque uncertainty” in the “the silent giant van-driver, the anxious woman clinging to the warmth of her room, and the room being situated in a house of uncertain size.”<sup>71</sup> A “young man and girl” arrive at the door, and as Esslin explains: “So subtly has Pinter created the atmosphere of menace that surrounds the room... that the mere presence of people on the landing—an ordinary occurrence—strikes not only Rose but the public as well as a veritable shock.”<sup>72</sup> The couple asks the functional landlord to rent what they believe to be the one open room in the building, number seven, which happens to be the room Rose is in.<sup>73</sup> The landlord mentions that a stranger came by asking about Rose and now occupies the basement, and “a blind Negro”

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, v-vi.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 54.

enters. Esslin explains, “Rose reacts to him with all the symptoms of disgust, fear, even race hatred.”<sup>74</sup> Bert attacks “the intruder,” exclaiming, “Lice!”, apparently also in “race hatred.”<sup>75</sup> The beginning of the play’s “mystery and dreamlike anxiety” gives way to heavy symbolism and allegorical implication.<sup>76</sup> The play is very much open to interpretation, but the topics of “race hatred”, Rose’s isolation and fear of losing a man’s love and of abandonment, and Rose’s feelings of inadequacy may be possible interpretations.<sup>77</sup> What’s clear is that “Rose is annihilated.”<sup>78</sup>

### *The Birthday Party*

Esslin characterizes *The Birthday Party* as combining the “room [as a] safe haven” premise with the intruders from *The Dumb Waiter*, another play of Pinter’s.<sup>79</sup> Stanley Webber, a man in his late-thirties, has found refuge in a seedy boarding house, and his landlady, Meg, a maternal and flirtatious woman looks after him, along with Meg’s husband Petey.<sup>80</sup> Stanley is an artist, a concert pianist, and he seems totally dependent on Meg, “an adult who has regressed to the status of a babe in arms.”<sup>81</sup> Stanley “is disappointed in the world which has rejected him,” describing an encounter at a concert he was supposed to give in which a mysterious “they” wanted him to “crawl down on [his] bended knee.”<sup>82</sup> Meg surprises Stanley with a gift, insisting it is his birthday, and the “buxom” girl from next door, Lulu, shows up at the doorstep with a “big parcel.”<sup>83</sup> Two “emissaries of a mysterious and brutal organization,” Goldberg and McCann arrive, having been looking for Stanley all over town.<sup>84</sup> Meg’s gift is a drum, which Stanley plays, “regress[ing] him to the status of a little boy, a child.”<sup>85</sup> The second act is devoted to the titular, “birthday party,” an event that goes from mysterious to nightmarish with the cross-examination of Stanley’s two tormentors.<sup>86</sup> Stanley is made temporarily blind, and he “steps into his newly acquired drum (thus destroying the last vestige of his status as an artist? or putting an end to his being Meg’s little boy?)”, before trying to strangle Meg and raping Lulu, seemingly having “gone out of his mind.”<sup>87</sup> In the third act, the next morning, Meg is revealed to be unaware of the horrible torture that the now inarticulate Stanley was subjected to the night prior.<sup>88</sup> Stanley is taken away to get “treatment,” and Meg reflects on the “wonderful” party that was had.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 56-58.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 58-59.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 66-67.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 66-67.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 66-68.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 68-69.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 69-70.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 70.

Esslin asserts that, “A play like *The Birthday Party* can only be understood as a complex poetic image,” on that exists, “on a multitude of levels.”<sup>90</sup> Esslin asserts that the poet communicates “the totality of his own existential anxiety.”<sup>91</sup> On one level, Stanley is “the *artist* whom society claims back from a comfortable, bohemian, ‘opt-out’ existence.”<sup>92</sup> However, “on another level, *The Birthday Party* might be seen as an image of man’s fear of being driven out from his warm place of refuge on earth.”<sup>93</sup> Further, “on another plane again, that of psychological archetypes, *The Birthday Party* might also be seen as an image, a metaphor for the process of growing up,” with the combination of Meg’s “motherliness and senile eroticism.”<sup>94</sup> Esslin stresses that these three interpretations, and many more to be had, have “*no contradiction*”, but “a deep and organic connection between the multiple planes on which the layers of ambiguity and imagery operate.” They highlight that all overlap in being a “poetic metaphor for a basic human situation, . . . an existential crisis.”<sup>95</sup>

### *The Homecoming*

Esslin describes *The Homecoming* opening in the house of a family, with the seventy-year-old father, Max; his two sons, Joey and Lenny; and Max’s brother, Sam; the dead mother, Jessie, is noticeably absent.<sup>96</sup> Max’s third son, Teddy, and his wife, Ruth, come back to the family home to visit, and the violent Lenny who is shown to be violent to women and the head of a prostitution business offers that Ruth, the mother of three sons, an a former nude model, join the business as a prostitute.<sup>97</sup> Ruth accepts, and the Joey and Lenny engage with her sexually, while Teddy leaves and Max falls to his knees and begs Ruth for a kiss.<sup>98</sup>

Esslin summarizes reactions to the play, “*The Homecoming* shocked its audiences not only by the casual and matter-of-fact way in which sex and prostitution are discussed in it, but also, and even more, by the apparently inexplicable motivations of its main characters.”<sup>99</sup> Esslin argues that the play is, in fact, hyperrealistic in portraying the interactions of the characters, explaining that Pinter doesn’t use exposition but naturally introduces information through the dialogue of the play.<sup>100</sup> Esslin explains the action of the play, arguing that it is all natural and realistic as the family has been engaged in “less savoury occupations,” that the mother, Jessie, was likely a prostitute, that Ruth is a prostitute, and Teddy familiar with the family’s business.<sup>101</sup> On a metaphorical level, interacting with human desires and aspirations, Esslin proposes that Pinter is portraying “the desolation of old age and the sons’ desire for the sexual conquest of the mother.”<sup>102</sup> The play is explained to be a

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 70-71.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 76-77.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 125-126.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 127-136.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 137-138.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 137-138.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 138.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 139-140.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 141.

“wish-fulfillment dream,” as Ruth, a mother with three sons, replaces the absent mother. According to Esslin, “From the sons’ point of view therefore, *The Homecoming* is a dream image of the fulfillment of all Oedipal wishes, the sexual conquest of the mother, the utter humiliation of the father. From the father’s point of view, the play’s the terrifying nightmare of the sons’ revenge.”<sup>103</sup> Esslin describes this as a universal archetype that, “however much audiences may reject the play on the rational level, they ultimately respond in the depth of their subconscious.”<sup>104</sup>

### *Betrayal*

*Betrayal* tells the story of “a fairly trivial case of adultery among the London literary establishment: Jerry, a literary agent, has had an affair with the wife of his best friend Robert, who is a publisher.”<sup>105</sup> Notably, the story is told in reverse chronological order, starting “at the point when Emma’s marriage finally breaks up... in 1977, two years after the end of her affair with Jerry,” and ending “at the point in the winter of 1968 when the affair began.”<sup>106</sup> Esslin explains the effect of the chronology:

“The unrolling of the story in reverse chronological order establishes a very characteristic dialectic from scene to scene; the audience perceives past events as they appear at a given moment in what is, as we watch it, the present for the characters on stage, only to be jolted into realizing a little later, what *actually* took place when those events occurred. And what is more: we also watch the way in which, over a period of time, the perception of those very past events undergoes various transformations in the minds of the people who lived them.”<sup>107</sup>

The play depicts a complex series of betrayals, including in marriages and between friends, and Esslin characterizes the work as “mature and distilled Pinter.”<sup>108</sup>

### *One for the Road*

Although not one of Pinter’s more well-known works, *One for the Road* is another of Pinter’s openly political plays.<sup>109</sup> The play is composed of “four short scenes between an interrogator and his victims” continuing “Pinter’s preoccupation with ‘man manipulating man,’” just as in *The Room* and *The Homecoming*.<sup>110</sup> An interrogator, Nicolas, confronts an imprisoned intellectual, Victor, while his wife, Gila, is upstairs in their home being raped by the “brutal secret policemen” and his seven-year-old son is arrested.<sup>111</sup> The son is interrogated, and there is a confrontation between Gila

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 143.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 145.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 189.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 189.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 207.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 207-208.

and Nicolas.<sup>112</sup> The final scene shows Victor, now terribly bruised after torture, and implies that the child has been killed.<sup>113</sup> The play does not specify when or where it is depicted, refusing any exposition.<sup>114</sup> Martin Esslin notes that the most “puzzling aspect of the play” is that the “interrogator clearly is not trying to elicit either information nor a confession from the victim,” but is simply pursuing “unrelieved sadism, mental and physical torture for their own sake, and finally the murder of an innocent child.”<sup>115</sup> According to Esslin, “What the play expresses is horror at the existence of such persecution of intellectuals in general, where it may occur.”<sup>116</sup>

### *Screenplays*

Pinter wrote screenplays that transposed his own plays for cinema and television and many screenplays that adapted other writers’ novels, including: *The Servant* (made into a 1963 film), *The Pumpkin Eater* (1963), *The Quiller Memorandum* (1966), *Accident* (1966), *The Go-Between* (1969), *Remembrance of Things* (1972), *Langrishe* (written in 1970, produced into a 1978 BBC television film), *The Last Tycoon* (1976), *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1981), *Victory* (1982), *Turtle Diary* (1985), and *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1987).<sup>117</sup>

*An excerpt from Pinter: The Playwright, Martin Esslin’s survey of Harold Pinter’s career...*

### Analysis of *Mountain Language*

by Martin Esslin

Like *One for the Road*, *Mountain Language*, which Pinter himself directed at the National Theatre in October 1988, is an openly political tract, an anguished outcry against dictatorship and torture in a totalitarian society. It thus provided further evidence that Pinter had developed into an overt political crusader and activist in his work for the theatre as well as in his public persona as a signatory of Charter 88 and campaigner for other liberal causes.

There are still some ‘Pinteresque’ elements in *Mountain Language*—the speech patterns, repetition and inverted repetition of simple sentences—but beyond that the element of indeterminacy between a multiplicity of levels of possible interpretation and ultimate meaning, even the mysterious vagueness of *One for the Road*, is gone. The meaning here is clear, unidimensional and never in the slightest

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 208.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 209.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 217.

doubt: torture is obscene, the domination of human beings by other human beings is obscene, cruelty is obscene.

This point is being made with the utmost economy of means, in a succession of four terse scenes:

We are in a country in which the ruling regime has banned the use of the language of a minority, living in the mountains.

In the first scene we meet a group of women waiting outside a prison, wanting to be admitted to see their husbands and sons. An old woman has been savagely bitten in her hand by a guard dog; a younger woman who is not of the mountain people and might be English or American, protests about this.

In the second scene the elderly woman confronts her son in a visitor's room; she cannot speak the language of the capital, and is forbidden to speak to her son in her own language. The son protests, the guard calls the brutal sergeant to punish the prisoner.

In scene three the younger woman is confronted with the beaten and bruised body of her husband.

In the fourth scene we are back with the old woman and her son, who has now been brutally tortured. The guard informs the old woman that the regulations have now been changed, she will be permitted to speak her own language. Yet she has been so shocked and frightened that she cannot utter a word.

A novel feature for Pinter is the introduction of voiceovers of the thoughts of characters who do not speak. This is reminiscent of Brecht's introduction of the unspoken thoughts of characters in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* or in some of the later plays of Beckett. In its political explicitness this new phase of Pinter's oeuvre is, in fact, getting nearer to Brecht than to Beckett—the short scenes are reminiscent of Brecht's sketches in *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*. With further short works in this vein (the sketches *Precisely* and *The New World Order* and the play *Party Time* and others perhaps yet to come) Pinter might well assemble a major sequence that might add up to a full-length work of that kind—a kaleidoscopic sequence of scenes about the horrors and dangers of life in totalitarian or ostensibly democratic, but deep down essentially authoritarian, countries.

That *Mountain Language*, though set in an unspecified country, does in fact refer to Turkey, where for a long period the Kurdish language was brutally suppressed, is fairly clear, in view of the episode in which Pinter and Arthur Miller, as PEN delegates, interviewed Turkish dissident writers who told them of being tortured, and Pinter confronted the US Ambassador with strong criticism that his country should remain allied to such a regime. There is a technical problem in the play, which even the most skilful production will have difficulty in solving: how can the two distinct languages be effectively contrasted when the convention is that both are reproduced in English? Even Pinter's suggestion—in a stage direction at the beginning of scene 2—that the 'prisoner and the woman should speak in a strong rural accent' cannot quite solve this problem. Nor does the intentional lack of specificity about the languages involved help: instead of what might be 'Turkish and Kurdish we have the 'language of the capital' and 'the mountain language' which is clumsy and incorrect, as other places in the country beside the capital clearly also speak that language, on the one hand, and the 'mountain language' on the other.

What this highlights is an underlying difficulty in writing political drama that cannot quite call a spade a spade or document its argumentation by being totally concrete and specific. In fact, the play only makes sense if the audience is actually aware that there really are countries where the native language of minority groups has been so brutally suppressed. And such knowledge cannot too readily be assumed in Britain or the United States.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 209-211.

# III. THE PLAY

## Inspiration: Kurdish Oppression in Turkey

Martin Esslin's *Pinter: The Playwright* asserts that Pinter's inspiration for *Mountain Language* was the oppression of the Kurdish language in Turkey:

“That *Mountain Language*, though set in an unspecified country, does in fact refer to Turkey, where for a long period the Kurdish language was brutally suppressed, is fairly clear, in view of the episode in which Pinter and Arthur Miller, as PEN delegates [in 1985], interviewed Turkish dissident writers who told them of being tortured, and Pinter confronted the US Ambassador with strong criticism that his country should remain allied to such a regime.”<sup>119</sup>

(For more information on the Kurdish–Turkish conflict, please read the section, Appendix A: Case Studies → Case Study 4: Kurdish–Turkish Conflict.)

## Scene Breakdown

The following table details a brief synopsis of the actions of each scene of *Mountain Language*:

SCENE	SYNOPSIS	% of play (by page)
<i>Scene 1</i> A PRISON WALL	Lights up on a line of women, including the Elderly Woman and the Young Woman. A Sergeant asks the Young Woman for her name repeatedly, until an Officer interrupts, “Stop this shit.” The Young Woman complains that the Doberman pinscher has bit the Elderly Woman’s hand, and the Officer demands to know the dog’s name. The Officer tells the Sergeant to take any complaints, and the Young Woman voices that they’ve been waiting since the morning. The Sergeant interrupts and informs, “Your husbands, your sons, your fathers, these men you have been waiting to see, are shithouses [and] enemies of the State.” He asserts that the waiting are mountain people and that their language is dead. He warns that they will be badly punished if they speak the language and asserts that the language is dead. The Young Woman and the husband that she is here to see are identified as not coming from the mountains, and the Sergeant concludes, “She looks like a fucking intellectual to me.”	40%
<i>Scene 2</i> VISITORS ROOM	The Prisoner and the Elderly Woman sit in a visitors room under the watch of the Guard. The Elderly Woman speaks with a “strong rural accent,” trying to offer apples and bread, but the Sergeant silences her for speaking the forbidden language instead of the language of the capital. The Prisoner explains that the Elderly Woman doesn’t understand the Sergeant’s language. The Guard calls the Sergeant to the Blue Room, and, in a voiceover, the Elderly Woman and the Prisoner, identified as her son, discuss his homecoming. The Sergeant enters looking for the “joker.”	25%
<i>Scene 3</i>	The Young Woman finds the Guard and Sergeant holding the Hooded Man and	15%

<sup>119</sup> Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright*, 210-211.

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS	explaining that the Young Woman was sent through the wrong door. In a pause of action and voiceover, the Young Woman and Hooded Man communicate about holding each other. The Hooded Man collapses, and the Young Woman officers, “Can I fuck him? If I fuck him, will everything be all right?” The Sergeant affirms, “Sure. No problem.”	
<i>Scene 4</i> VISITORS ROOM	Back in the visitors room, the Prisoner has blood on his face, and the Guard explains that the rules have changed and that the Elderly Woman can speak in her own language. The Prisoner presses his mother to speak, but there is only silence. The Sergeant enters and says, “You go out of your way to give them a helping hand and they fuck it up.”	15%

### Characters by Scene

The following table charts each scene that each character is in according to spoken lines:

Scene	YOUNG WOMAN	ELDERLY WOMAN	SERGEANT	OFFICER	GUARD	PRISONER	HOODED MAN	SECOND GUARD
<i>Scene 1</i>	X	X	X	X				
<i>Scene 2</i>		X	X		X	X		
<i>Scene 3</i>	X		X				X	X
<i>Scene 4</i>		X			X	X		

# IV. WRITING STYLE

## Harold Pinter

Harold Pinter's style of writing has been given the label of "Pinteresque," in its unique characteristics. The label is used to describe Pinter's work and the works of others who follow a similar style—sometimes, parodies.

### *Oblique Dialogue*

Martin Esslin identifies Pinter's dialogue as: "[considering]...the use of language in ordinary human discourse itself. For here... Pinter has given us added insights into—has in a certain measure even *discovered*—the fact that traditional stage dialogue has always greatly overestimated the degree of logici which governs the use of language, the amount of information which language is actually able to impart on the stage—as in life. People on the stage have...always spoken more clearly, more directly, more to the purpose than they would ever have done in real life."<sup>120</sup> Esslin identifies that dramatists like Strindberg or Wedekind have introduced that "oblique" dialogue in which characters talk past each other rather than to each other.<sup>121</sup> Esslin identifies Pinter's use of repetition as key in communicating character's states, asserting that it is not what is repeated, but the repetition itself that conveys character.<sup>122</sup>

### *Repetition*

Martin Esslin characterizes Pinter's use of repetition in dialogue to be indicative of underlying logics of the speaking characters.<sup>123</sup> Esslin writes on the subject: "For repetition, which as Pinter has discovered is an aspect of real speech that stage dialogue has neglected under the influence of the rhetorical tradition (which rejects recurrence of the same word as stylistically inelegant) is, of course, also one of the most important elements of poetry—particularly in the form of whole phrases which recur as refrains, for example in ballad metre. On the realistic level Pinter uses the refrain-like recurrence of whole sentences to show that people in real life do not deliver well thought-out set speeches but tend to mix various logical strands of thought which intermingle without permanent connection: while the structure of rhetorical or written language tends to be logical, that of spoken language is associative."<sup>124</sup>

### *Comedy of Menace*

Pinter's "comedy of menace"-style includes "allegorical overtones, the gaps in the characters' previous backgrounds and areas of deliberately unexplained motivation, [and] the twilight zones between realism and dream."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Esslin, *Pinter: The Playwright*, 226.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 227

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, 228.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 230-231.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 234.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 188.

## *Silence & Pauses*

There is the repeated presence of two words in Pinter's stage directions: *silence* and *pause*. Martin Esslin characterizes the difference in their use, "When Pinter asks for a *pause*... he indicates that intense thought processes are continuing, that unspoken tensions are mounting, whereas *silences* are notations for the end of a movement, the beginning of another, as between the movements of a symphony."<sup>126</sup>

## *Mountain Language*

The following are some brief conceptualizations of how Pinter uses language in *Mountain Language*.

### *English as the Prohibited and Authoritative Language*

Andrew Goodspeed notes that both the "language of the capital" and the "mountain language" are presented as English in the text of the play.<sup>127</sup> Goodspeed argues that this makes the play "disturbingly recognizable to western audiences, thus removing the spectator's or reader's ability to judge such oppressions as being exotic, irrelevant, or encountered only in distant unstable countries."<sup>128</sup> Therefore, Goodspeed argues, Pinter's depiction of "linguistic prohibition, linguistic discrimination, and linguistic denigration is rendered unexpectedly universal through the reliance of the text upon English as the medium for both the prohibited language and the language of authority."<sup>129</sup>

### *The Power of Language*

C. Vairavan identifies the language of the capital as "constructed around ideology" and the "mountain language" as power, asserting, "The language of the capital is empowered to produce state controlled information and to destroy alternatives."<sup>130</sup> Notably, Pinter presents a paradox in how the officer characterizes the "mountain language", calling it both "dead" and "forbidden." According to Goodspeed:

"Pinter endeavors to unravel the simultaneous contempt and fear the officer has for the power of a language that he does not control. Yet the speech also moves rhetorically, with frightening ease, between statements of language prohibition and language elimination ('your language is forbidden'; 'your language no longer exists'). It is not difficult to associate the potential fate of the people with that of their language, particularly given that they are identified immediately before this decree with the bald declarative statement 'you are mountain people' and the only two concepts mentioned as being related to the 'mountain' in

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 251.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew Goodspeed, "'Your Language Is Forbidden': Language Negation as Political Oppression in Pinter's Mountain Language," *Sustainable Multilingualism* 14, no. 1 (May 1, 2019): 16.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> C. Vairavan, "A Cultural Materialistic Approach to Harold Pinter's Mountain Language," *Researchers World: Journal of Arts, Science and Commerce* 9, no. 1 (January 30, 2018): 14.

the entire play are the 'mountain language' and the 'mountain people.' If the language is proclaimed dead, the people may not be far behind."<sup>131</sup>

### *Explicit Language*

Ibrahim Yerebakan summarizes, "In this overtly political play, Pinter leaves the impression that, unlike in any other works, explicit language is used not only by the victimizers as a means of brutalization and intimidation, but also by the victim as a very effective means of defiance and resistance against the irresistible." Yerebakan notes that the Sergeant's use of the "f" word, in saying "Who is that fucking woman? What is that fucking woman doing here? Who let that fucking woman through that fucking door?", "[evokes] the immediate notion that language in this context is the most savage instrument and the torture equipment of these authoritarian."<sup>132</sup> However, the Young Woman's action in changing the use of the word from an adjective to a verb, "Can I fuck him? If I fuck him, will everything be all right?" shows courageous resistance in defying authority.<sup>133</sup> The Young Woman dares to place herself as the subject, not the object of the action.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Goodspeed, "Your Language," 21.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 164.

# V. LITERARY & THEATRICAL CONTEXTS

## Theatre of the Absurd

### “DIALOGUES OF THE DEAF”

The notion of a “Theatre of the Absurd” was coined by the Hungarian-British drama critic Martin Esslin in his 1961 book of that title, which sought to characterize a spare, haunting, abstract, and often darkly comic mode of theatre that began appearing in the early 1950s, most notably with Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. Notably, Esslin and his family were Jewish and had fled Nazi Europe for England in 1938; the shadow of the Holocaust certainly animates Esslin’s sense of this post-WWII theatrical mode, as it did for the playwrights as well— although plays addressed other, ongoing forms of political and existential alienation as well.

Esslin’s study focused on international playwrights performing in Paris and throughout postwar Europe, and all playwrights he considered were white men; the examples below seek to redress this and the idea of a “theatre of the absurd” is only a heuristic category, a description rather than a formal movement or “school.”

What is the theatre of the absurd? In a useful summation of Esslin’s definition of “The Theatre of the Absurd,” Chinyere Nwahunanya writes that Esslin considers the key to Absurdist theatre to be a “sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition.” What distinguishes the Theatre of the Absurd from other theatrical explorations of existential angst is “a striving for an integration between the subject matter and the form in which it is expressed...” (Esslin. 24, 25): that is, it expresses its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought; For this reason, this theatre “tends towards a radical devaluation of language” (p. 26). In essence, the thesis of Esslin’s analysis is hinged on the stylistic and thematic tilt of Absurd drama. [See Chinyere Nwahunanya, “Nigerian Drama and the Theatre of the Absurd,” *Neobelicon* 21, no. 2 (1994), 169-189; 170.]

Another important understanding of “absurdity” in this light draws from existential philosophy, particularly the work of Albert Camus, to describe how “senselessness” erupts in the world itself as a social condition, thus becoming a way to get a handle on the toxicity of racism and other forms of structural violence. For the African American novelist Chester Himes, for instance, this sense of absurdity thus pertains specifically to the conditions of Black life in America, through which African-American people become interpolated into racist relations independently of their will, an “absurdity” Himes likened to the writing of Albert Camus:

“Albert Camus once said that racism is absurd. Racism introduces absurdity into the human condition. Not only does racism express the absurdity of the racists, but it generates absurdity in the victims. And the absurdity of the victims intensifies the absurdity of the

racists, *ad infinitum*. If one lives in a country where racism is held valid and practiced in all ways of life, eventually, no matter whether one is a racist or a victim, one comes to feel the absurdity of life.”<sup>135</sup>

This absurdity suggests, etymologically speaking, a kind of deafness [surdit ], through which white people and Black people fail to make sense of each other. Consistent with Camus’s discussion of absurdity in both “The Rebel” and “The Myth of Sisyphus” (translated into English in 1952 and 1955, respectively), this set of conditions can be described as the confrontation between the irrationality of the world and “the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart.”<sup>136</sup> This wild longing is so often frustrated, broken, rendered mute.

### SOME NOTABLE PLAYWRIGHTS AND EXAMPLES

Alfred Jarry, *Ubu Roi* (France, 1888)

Janet Taylor/Handspring Puppet Company (South Africa): [Ubu and the Truth Commission](#) (South Africa, 1997)

Eug ne Ionesco, [Rhinoceros](#) (France, 1959)

Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, (Ireland/France, 1957) ([see production with Michael Gambon and David Thewlis](#))

Samuel Beckett, [Krapp’s Last Tape](#) (Ireland/France, 1958)

Athol Fugard (South Africa), *Blood Knot* (1961) ([highlights only](#))

Fernando Arrabal (Spain), e.g. *Guernica* (1961)

Max Frisch (Switzerland), ([Biedermann und die Brandstifter](#) *The Fire Raisers*, 1953/1960)

Wole Soyinka (Nigeria): *A Quality of Violence* (1959) or [Death and the King’s Horsemen](#) (1975) ([fragment](#))

### ARE THERE WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE “THEATRE OF THE ABSURD”?

Esslin’s coinage of “Theatre of the Absurd” describes a tendency in European theatre of the 1940s-1960s and is restricted to white men. Are there women playwrights associated with the “theatre of the absurd”— or who might be considered in this light? Yes. A few playwrights that might be designated this way include:

Marguerite Duras (Vietnam/France, 1914-1996), e.g. *The Viaducts of Seine-et-Oise* (1960)

Nathalie Sarraute (Russia/France, 1900-199), e.g. *Le Silence* (1964)

Adrienne Kennedy (USA, 1931-), e.g. [Funnyhouse of a Negro](#) (1964)

Caryl Churchill (UK, 1938- )

Maria Irene Fornes (Cuban/US, 1930-2018)

Janet Taylor (South Africa, 1947- ) (see above—*Ubu and the Truth Commission*)

Elena Garro (Mexico, 1916-1998) *Un hogar s lido* [House of the Dead](#), (1957) ([radio play, in Spanish](#))

Marie N’Diaye (France, 1967-), e.g. *Hilda* (1999)

<sup>135</sup> Himes, *My Life of Absurdity* 1.

<sup>136</sup> Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955), Trans. Justin O’Brien (New York: Vintage, 1991), 21.

# VI. POLITICS

## Sexual Violence

The play depicts sexual harassment in the Sergeant and Officer's treatment of the Young Woman. In the first scene, the officer objectifies the Young Woman, referring to her anatomically and reducing her to her body. The harassment is subtle but suggestive at first:

OFFICER. These women, Sergeant, have as yet committed no crime. Remember that.

SERGEANT. Sin! But you're not saying they're without sin?

OFFICER. Oh, no. Oh, no, I'm not saying that.

SERGEANT. This one's full of it. She bounces with it.<sup>137</sup>

Eventually, at the end of the first scene, the Sergeant and Officer explicitly objectify the Young Woman, referring to her "arse," and showing prejudice against intellectuals, as totalitarian powers often do in controlling a population:

SERGEANT. She looks like a fucking intellectual to me.

OFFICER. But you said her arse wobbled.

SERGEANT. Intellectual arses wobble the best.<sup>138</sup>

Later, in the third scene, as the Hooded Man, the Young Woman's husband, is dragged off, presumably to torture or harm, the Young Woman and Sergeant dialogue. Jonathan Pitches and Anthony Shrubshell characterize the ending of the scene, "The scene concludes with the Young Woman resorting to the brutalised language of the prison in response to the Sergeant's absurd posturing and the blurring of identities between the Prisoner and the Sergeant's computer engineer, Joseph Dokes"<sup>139</sup>:

SERGEANT. Yes, you've come in the wrong door. It must be the computer. The computer's got a double hernia. But I'll tell you what—if you want any information on any aspect of life in this place we've got a bloke comes into the office every Tuesday week, except when it rains. He's right on top of his chosen subject. Give him a tinkle one of these days and he'll see you all right. His name is Dokes. Joseph Dokes.

YOUNG WOMAN. Can I fuck him? If I fuck him, will everything be alright?

SERGEANT. Sure. No problem.

YOUNG WOMAN. Thank you.

*Blackout.*

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<sup>137</sup> Pinter, *Mountain Language*, 23.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>139</sup> Jonathan Pitches and Anthony Shrubshell, "Atmosphere, Space, Stasis: Staging Pinter's *Mountain Language* and a Kind of Alaska Using the Techniques of Michael Chekhov," *Studies in Theatre Production* 19, no. 1 (January 1999): 58.

This interaction suggests that the Young Woman would be able to be extorted for sex, in exchange for letting her husband leave the prison. Just as the Young Woman was referred to as “that fucking woman” earlier in the scene, Andrew Goodspeed explains:

“She feels that she must, in a sense, prostitute herself to this Joseph Dokes person, in order perhaps to secure some mercy for her husband. Yet this puts a notable point upon the initial description of her as ‘that fucking woman,’ for the audience initially presumes this expletive merely to serve an amplifying or emphatic function, but the cruelty of the prison will reduce it to the function of a verb; she will be reduced to ‘fucking’ Joseph Dokes in order to obtain some manner of leniency for her husband. The direct comparison that Pinter creates between the vulgarity and shame of ‘fucking’ a random prison functionary and the loving discussion with her husband about watching her sleep is stirring.”<sup>140</sup>

### An Excerpt: “The Parable of the Law”

This famous parable comes from Franz Kafka’s 1915 novel about the faceless, nameless workings of a powerful state and the capacity for this state, however invisibly, to eradicate life. This parable expresses the extent to which such power can function even without a logical explanation of why or how it is functioning.

An excerpt, “*The Parable of the Law*,” from Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* (written 1915; pub. 1925)

#### “The Parable of the Law” from *The Trial*

by Franz Kafka

Before the law sits a gatekeeper. To this gatekeeper comes a man from the country who asks to gain entry into the law. But the gatekeeper says that he cannot grant him entry at the moment. The man thinks about it and then asks if he will be allowed to come in later on. “It is possible,” says the gatekeeper, “but not now.” At the moment the gate to the law stands open, as always, and the gatekeeper walks to the side, so the man bends over in order to see through the gate into the inside. When the gatekeeper notices that, he laughs and says: “If it tempts you so much, try it in spite of my prohibition. But take note: I am powerful. And I am only the most lowly gatekeeper. But from room to room stand gatekeepers, each more powerful than the other. I can’t endure even one glimpse of the third.” The man from the country has not expected such difficulties: the law should always be accessible for everyone, he thinks, but as he now looks more closely at the

<sup>140</sup> Andrew Goodspeed, “‘Your Language Is Forbidden’: Language Negation as Political Oppression in Pinter’s Mountain Language,” *Sustainable Multilingualism* 14, no. 1 (May 1, 2019): 26.

gatekeeper in his fur coat, at his large pointed nose and his long, thin, black Tartar's beard, he decides that it would be better to wait until he gets permission to go inside. The gatekeeper gives him a stool and allows him to sit down at the side in front of the gate. There he sits for days and years. He makes many attempts to be let in, and he wears the gatekeeper out with his requests. The gatekeeper often interrogates him briefly, questioning him about his homeland and many other things, but they are indifferent questions, the kind great men put, and at the end he always tells him once more that he cannot let him inside yet. The man, who has equipped himself with many things for his journey, spends everything, no matter how valuable, to win over the gatekeeper. The latter takes it all but, as he does so, says, "I am taking this only so that you do not think you have failed to do anything." During the many years the man observes the gatekeeper almost continuously. He forgets the other gatekeepers, and this one seems to him the only obstacle for entry into the law. He curses the unlucky circumstance, in the first years thoughtlessly and out loud, later, as he grows old, he still mumbles to himself. He becomes childish and, since in the long years studying the gatekeeper he has come to know the fleas in his fur collar, he even asks the fleas to help him persuade the gatekeeper. Finally his eyesight grows weak, and he does not know whether things are really darker around him or whether his eyes are merely deceiving him. But he recognizes now in the darkness an illumination which breaks inextinguishably out of the gateway to the law. Now he no longer has much time to live. Before his death he gathers in his head all his experiences of the entire time up into one question which he has not yet put to the gatekeeper. He waves to him, since he can no longer lift up his stiffening body.

The gatekeeper has to bend way down to him, for the great difference has changed things to the disadvantage of the man. "What do you still want to know, then?" asks the gatekeeper. "You are insatiable." "Everyone strives after the law," says the man, "so how is that in these many years no one except me has requested entry?" The gatekeeper sees that the man is already dying and, in order to reach his diminishing sense of hearing, he shouts at him, "Here no one else can gain entry, since this entrance was assigned only to you. I'm going now to close it.

## Binary and Nonbinary Logics

### *Post-Colonialism, Feminism, and Queer Theory*

A foundational understanding of binary logics could be understood in the differentiation between the Self and the Other, as it exists in sociology, psychology, philosophy, neuroscience, and religion. In the structuralist view, one can understand what is by contrasting a given subject with the concept of what it is not.

Edward Said's 1978 book, *Orientalism*, proposes that the Occident or West (specifically, the colonial powers of Britain and France, and eventually the neocolonial United State of America) has socially constructed the concept of the Orient (or the East, or, more tellingly, the non-West), a land and culture of sensuality, splendor, and depravity.<sup>141</sup> The European invention of the Orient has been used to oppress peoples and cultures, using an us-versus-them dichotomy and antithesis in a binary logic to assert the superiority of the West over the lesser non-West. *Mountain Language* can be seen as setting up a similar dichotomy between two peoples, the people who speak the "language of the capital" and those who speak the lesser and oppressed "mountain language." A post-colonialist approach to the text of *Mountain Language* may aim to break down the binary conception of the two groups, showing how oppression is not naturally something that one group inflicts upon another, showing that some peoples are not naturally disposed to be oppressed to oppress. Oppression is founded in one's will to impose their will on others.

Judith Butler's 1990 book, *Gender Trouble* questions the essential view of gender, the theory that there are intrinsic, fixed qualities to the binary nature of women and men.<sup>142</sup> Butler puts forward the performativity theory of gender, saying: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."<sup>143</sup> Transgender experience can be understood when gender is understood as a social construct that is mutable, not fixed, and nonbinary experience can be understood when normative ideas of what is sex and gender are questioned. In *Mountain Language*, the text posits what initially seems to be a binary view of gender, with women waiting in line to see their imprisoned men. Initially, one may see women in a serving or caring role to the main subject of change, the imprisoned men, who represent the "truly" oppressed. However, it is the Elderly Woman's refusal to speak in the final moments of the play that show how female passivity can be an action of agential change. Waiting is still action. In the visitors becoming temporary prisoners while visiting their men, the text posits a fluidity to the categorization of prisoners, and therefore, the categorization of gender.

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<sup>141</sup> Shehla Burney, "CHAPTER ONE: Orientalism: The Making of the Other," *Counterpoints* 417 (2012): 23-24.

<sup>142</sup> Jay Stewart, "Academic Theory," in *Genderqueer and Non-Binary Genders*, ed. Christina Richards, Walter Pierre Bouman, and Meg-John Barker (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), 60.

<sup>143</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge Classics, 1990), 71, PDF.

# VII. LANGUAGE

## The Language of Institutional Bureaucracy as a Language of Violence

“Nonexistence. The society of the nonexistent.

In the street yesterday a nonexistent person trod on my foot with his nonexistent foot.”

—André Kertesz, *Detective Story* (1977)

What does it mean to deprive a fellow human, another living being, or an entire people, of their personhood? What does it take to render someone *nonexistent*, not only invisible but existence-less, a nonperson?

It is upsetting to consider how easily a linguistic slippage—changing a name, or removing a name, or changing a name into a number—can match up with acts of horrific genocidal violence. To have one’s identity erased, replaced with a code: this is the language of incarceration, of the Shoah, of Middle Passage.

Harold Pinter’s 1958 play *The Hothouse*, set in an asylum, opens with the asylum supervisor mixing up the identities of “patients” identified only by a five-digit numerical code. One of the patients has died; another has given birth.

Pinter’s drama speaks in the language of erasure.

The Ukrainian-born journalist Jacobo Timerman survived the Holocaust by moving to Argentina with his family; the editor and publisher of a leading newspaper, he was arrested by the fascist Argentine military dictatorship in 1977, blindfolded, locked in a cell, interrogated, and imprisoned without explanation. Having survived the ordeal, his memoir *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, describes the way fascist regimes continue to function through subtraction: in word and deed, they disappear people who speak out, disappearing possible dissidents, disappearing identities, and disappearing historical records and information.

What kinds of people live in this world? What does it take to transform a human into someone who can carry out such acts of violence, someone capable of making such erasures? The philosopher Hannah Arendt, writing of the Holocaust, described the “banality of evil”—the systematic extermination of 6 million Jews and other “undesirables” throughout Europe (homosexuals, Roma, political dissidents) was not carried out by Hitler alone. What makes acts of genocide both possible and terrifying is that they are carried out by many people. It is upsetting to consider how easily a linguistic slippage—a special name, a title, a badge—can match up with acts of horrific genocidal violence.

In his epilogue, Timerman gives an overview that characterizes some of the ways Pinter's dramatic works, particularly *Mountain Language*, explore the effects of such transformations. The work of torture, imprisonment, execution, extermination: does it just become a job like any other? Do the employees crack jokes, as if those people suffering from their actions were fundamentally *nonexistent*? The answer is yes. Timerman writes:

“The police in the clandestine prisons liked to joke. It was a form of omnipotence that consisted of converting a situation of horror into one of diversion. When a political prisoner was led to the torture chamber, they used to comment among themselves: will he sing an opera or a tango? If scant information was obtained, it was a tango. When it was a Jewish prisoner, the jokes would refer to the gas chambers, to Auschwitz—‘We’ll show the Nazis how to do things.’ Omnipotence likewise surfaced in the forms of consolation. ‘Well, don’t worry, you only die once.’ And always, seemingly normal forms of humiliation. For example, gathering all the prisoners of a clandestine jail into a single room, throwing one on top of another, the men and women trying to guess their individual fates through some gesture of the guards, all this under the pretext of having to make a general cleanup.”<sup>144</sup>

The language of carceral, institutional bureaucracy as a language of violence.

Pinter and other writers of the twentieth century were interested in how such language could both *work*—as an instrument of erasing people and histories, of turning living people into prisoners, or noncitizens, or slaves, or the living dead—and also malfunction, misfire. For one, people survive; future generations fight for remembrance and restitution.

At the same time, this “language of violence” produces all kinds of stark ironies, crazy juxtapositions. Think of what an interrogation often sounds like:

Here’s an interrogation scene from Timerman’s memoir:

“‘Timerman,’ he says, ‘your life depends on how you answer my questions.’  
‘Without preliminary trial, Colonel?’  
‘Your life depends on your answers.’  
‘Who ordered my arrest?’  
‘You’re a prisoner of the First Army Corps in action.’” (p. 11)

Do any of the questions get answered? Here, the interrogator doesn’t even *ask* a question. Such miscommunication or even non-communication abounds in Pinter’s dramas, from domestic settings to bureaucratic and dehumanizing environments alike.

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<sup>144</sup> Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*. Trans. Toby Talbot. New York: Knopf, 1981; 159.

The exchange of language between prisoner and guard, between victim and torturer, is a malfunctioning one. Language, in this sense, doesn't work to "communicate"—it bears power, often "absolute" power. But does it amount to communication, expression, a transfer of understanding or meaning? Often it is a "dialogue of the deaf," so to speak: a discussion in which each party is unresponsive to what the other says.

We use this term not to emphasize a disability so much as to point out that the term "absurd," or even "nonsense," extends from such a deafness: "surdus" is the Latin word for "deaf." Absurdity is a condition where sense cannot be made.

## Excerpts from Works on Language

*Gloria Anzaldúa: "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (1987)*

*An excerpt from Gloria Anzaldúa's 1987 essay, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (1987)...*

### How to Tame a Wild Tongue

*by Gloria Anzaldúa*

I remember being caught speaking Spanish at recess—that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler. I remember being sent to the corner of the classroom for "talking back" to the Anglo teacher when all I was trying to do was tell her how to pronounce my name. "If you want to be American, speak 'American.' If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong."

"I want you to speak English. *Pa'hallar buen trabajo tienes que saber hablar el ingles bien. Que vale toda tu educación si todavía hablas ingles con un 'accent:'*" my mother would say, mortified that I spoke English like a Mexican. At Pan American University, I and all Chicano students were required to take two speech classes. Their purpose: to get rid of our accents.

Attacks on one's form of expression with the intent to censor are a violation of the First Amendment. *El Anglo con cara de inocente nos arrancó la lengua.* Wild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out.

...So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. (*emphasis added*) Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex, and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingual and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate.

I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue—my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence.

*Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations (1953)*

*An excerpt from philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's work, Philosophical Investigations (1953)...*

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### Philosophical Investigations (Part 1, section 43)

*By Ludwig Wittgenstein*

For a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.

# APPENDIX A: CASE STUDIES

## Case Study 4: Kurdish–Turkish Conflict

### PLAYERS

The Kurds are among the largest stateless ethnic groups in the world, a population of roughly 20-25 million individuals, “across the Middle East, almost half of whom live in southeastern Turkey, northern Iraq, northern Syria and northwestern Iran, a region that some Kurds refer to as Kurdistan.”<sup>145</sup> Turkey is a country that lies in Asia and Europe.<sup>146</sup> The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) has fought for Kurdish autonomy since its establishment in 1978.<sup>147</sup>

### SUMMARY OF CONFLICT

The traditional Kurdish way of life was nomadic, before the breakup of the Ottoman Empire following World War I forced national borders on the region and divided the Kurdish population among various nation states.<sup>148</sup> While the Treaty of Sèvres (drawn up in 1920) proposed the establishment of an autonomous Kurdistan, it was not ratified, and the ratified Treaty of Lausanne (1923) “made no mention of Kurdistan or the Kurds.”<sup>149</sup> According to the Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica:

“The Kurds of Turkey received unsympathetic treatment at the hands of the government, which tried to deprive them of their Kurdish identity by designating them “Mountain Turks,” by outlawing the Kurdish language (or representing it as a dialect of Turkish), and by forbidding them to wear distinctive Kurdish dress in or near the important administrative cities.”<sup>150</sup>

According to William Grimes, “For years the Turkish government simply denied the existence of its millions of Kurds, calling them ‘mountain Turks who have forgotten their language.’”<sup>151</sup> In 1924, a mandate “forbade Kurdish schools, organizations and publications.”<sup>152</sup> According to Dominique Callimanoulos:

“Between 1925 and 1939, 1.5 million Kurds, a third of the population, were deported and massacred... While Kurdish persecution became more selective during World War II, largely restricted to Kurdish intellectuals, the overall policy in Turkey has remained consistent. This

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<sup>145</sup> The Associated Press, "A look at the Kurds, a stateless nation in a restive region," Associated Press News, last modified September 25, 2017; "Kurds in Turkey," Harvard Divinity School.

<sup>146</sup> John C. Dewdney, "Turkey," Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified December 26, 2021.

<sup>147</sup> "Who are the Kurds?," British Broadcasting Company, last modified October 15, 2019.

<sup>148</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Kurds," The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, last modified November 1, 2021.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> William Grimes, "In Northern Iraq, the Kurds Find Success Amid Struggle," The New York Times, last modified April 9, 2008.

<sup>152</sup> Dominique Callimanopoulos, "Kurdish Repression in Turkey," Cultural Survival, last modified June 1982.

stranglehold is reflected in Kurdish literature. In this century only about a dozen works have been produced in Kurdish. The authors have usually received prison sentences.”<sup>153</sup>

In 1978, the PKK, a “Marxist organization dedicated to creating an independent Kurdistan”, was founded, and “PKK fighters engaged in guerrilla operations against government installations and perpetrated frequent acts of terrorism.”<sup>154</sup> The PKK is “designated a terrorist organisation by Turkey, as well as the EU and US.”<sup>155</sup>

## REFERENCE MEDIA



*Above, the flag of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).<sup>156</sup>*

## Case Study 5: Stanford Prison Experiment

The Stanford Prison Experiment was a social psychology study “in which college students became prisoners or guards in a simulated prison environment.”<sup>157</sup> The intent of the experiment was “to measure the effect of role-playing, labeling, and social expectations on behaviour over a period of two weeks.”<sup>158</sup> However, principal investigator Philip G. Zimbardo ended the experiment after “only six days,” because the “mistreatment of prisoners escalated so alarmingly.”<sup>159</sup>

## PLAYERS

The plays involved in this were the twelve students in the role of prisoner; the twelve students acting as prison guards (three at any given time in three shifts of eight hours each day)<sup>160</sup>; the prison superintendent and principal investigator, Philip G. Zimbardo<sup>161</sup>; and roughly fifty

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Kurds," The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<sup>155</sup> "PKK 'would disarm for Kurdish rights in Turkey,'" British Broadcasting Corporation, last modified July 21, 2010.

<sup>156</sup> *The official and current flag of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).*, image, Wikipedia.

<sup>157</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Stanford Prison Experiment," Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified May 5, 2020.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Philip G. Zimbardo, "4. Guards," Stanford Prison Experiment.

<sup>161</sup> Philip G. Zimbardo, "8. Conclusion," Stanford Prison Experiment.

people—including parents, departmental secretaries, a priest, a lawyer—who witnessed the experiment.

## SUMMARY OF CONFLICT

Out of seventy applicants to a newspaper ad looking for volunteers in a study of the psychological effects of prison life for \$15 a day, twenty-four college students who were near Stanford University and were judged to be medically healthy were randomly divided into a group of “guards” and a group of “prisoners.”<sup>162</sup> The principal investigator acted as the prison superintendent.<sup>163</sup> A simulated prison environment was made out of a hallway in Stanford’s Psychology Department.<sup>164</sup> The prison was constructed out of the corridor, “The Yard,” where prisoners were “prisoners were allowed to walk, eat, or exercise”; laboratory rooms with doors replaced with steel bars and cell numbers; and toilets that prisoners were led to blindfolded, so they would not know how to leave.<sup>165</sup> Each prisoner was given a numbered “gown” or “dress” to wear, which was meant to simulate prisoners’ experience of feeling emasculated, and a chain around their foot, “to remind prisoners of the oppressiveness of their environment.”<sup>166</sup> The guards were given no specific training on how to be guards and were told to do whatever they “thought was necessary to maintain law and order.”<sup>167</sup> There were regular “counts”, including when prisoners were awakened at 2:30 AM, to familiarize prisoners with their numbers and to allow for guards to exercise control over the prisoners.<sup>168</sup> Push-ups were used as a form of punishment.<sup>169</sup> A rebellion broke out on the second day of the experiment, which guards eventually quelled.<sup>170</sup> Guards used psychological tactics to break down solidarity between prisoners.<sup>171</sup> Guards were either (a) tough, but fair, (b) “good guys” who did favors, or (c) “hostile, arbitrary, and inventive in their forms of prisoner humiliation.”<sup>172</sup> Prisoners were submissive in victimhood and identified by their number, rather than their name.<sup>173</sup> The experiment was ended after six days, as Zimbardo learned that guards were escalating their abuse at night, when they thought no one was watching, and as Christina Maslach, a recent Stanford Ph.D. witnessed the experiment and objected, “It’s terrible what you are doing to these boys!” which helped Zimbardo, who was fully playing the role of a prison warden, realize the immoral nature of how the experiment had evolved.<sup>174</sup>

## LEGACY

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<sup>162</sup> Philip G. Zimbardo, "2. Setting Up," Stanford Prison Experiment.

<sup>163</sup> Zimbardo, "8. Conclusion," Stanford Prison Experiment.

<sup>164</sup> Zimbardo, "2. Setting," Stanford Prison Experiment.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Philip G. Zimbardo, "3. Arrival," Stanford Prison Experiment; "The Real Lesson of the Stanford Prison Experiment," *The New Yorker*, last modified June 12, 2015.

<sup>167</sup> Zimbardo, "4. Guards," Stanford Prison Experiment.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Philip G. Zimbardo, "5. Rebellion," Stanford Prison Experiment.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Zimbardo, "8. Conclusion," Stanford Prison Experiment.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

Zimbardo's initial conclusion, what he publicly said about the experiment before his official paper about the experiment, and thus popular understanding of the Stanford prison experiment, would believe that "we all have an innate capacity for tyranny or victimhood."<sup>175</sup> However, objectors have brought up how the prison guard's abuse was enabled by the environment they were in, one that encouraged it.<sup>176</sup> (A follow-up experiment also noted that people who reached out to an ad about a "prison experiment" were naturally more predisposed to authoritarianism than those who responded to an ad without those words.)<sup>177</sup> Zimbardo suggested behaviors that made the structure of the "prison."<sup>178</sup> Thus, after BBC experimenters recreated the experiment with results that show the prisoners rebelled more with the hope of social mobility, Ph.D. in psychology and writer, Maria Konnikova, concluded instead that:

"[O]ur behavior largely conforms to our preconceived expectations. All else being equal, we act as we think we're expected to act—especially if that expectation comes from above. Suggest, as the Stanford setup did, that we should behave in stereotypical tough-guard fashion, and we strive to fit that role....Prisons aren't blank slates. Guards do indeed self-select into their job....The lesson of Stanford isn't that any random human being is capable of descending into sadism and tyranny. It's that certain institutions and environments demand those behaviors—and, perhaps, can change them."<sup>179</sup>

There was a 2015 film, *The Stanford Prison Experiment*, that dramatized the events of the experiment, created with the consultation of Zimbardo.<sup>180</sup>

## ICONOGRAPHY & CATCHPHRASES

Much of the iconography from the Stanford Prison Experiment merely simulates an actual prison environment, including jailed cells, prisoner numbers, and khaki-ed guards.<sup>181</sup> A unique visual icon, though, is the stocking that was wrapped around the prisoner's head to simulate a shaved head and minimize each individual's personality and individuality.<sup>182</sup> An iconic line from the experiment was a remark by a witness to the experiment, a graduate student who said, "Say, what's the independent variable in this study?", which prompted Zimbardo to question his own actions in unquestioningly accepting the role of prison warden.<sup>183</sup>

## REFERENCE MEDIA

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<sup>175</sup> "The Real," *The New Yorker*.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Zimbardo, "2. Setting," Stanford Prison Experiment; Zimbardo, "3. Arrival," Stanford Prison Experiment.

<sup>182</sup> Zimbardo, "3. Arrival," Stanford Prison Experiment.

<sup>183</sup> Zimbardo, "8. Conclusion," Stanford Prison Experiment.



*Prisoner Lineup*, PrisonExp.org, 1971.<sup>184</sup>



*Doing Pushups*, PrisonExp.org, 1971.<sup>185</sup>

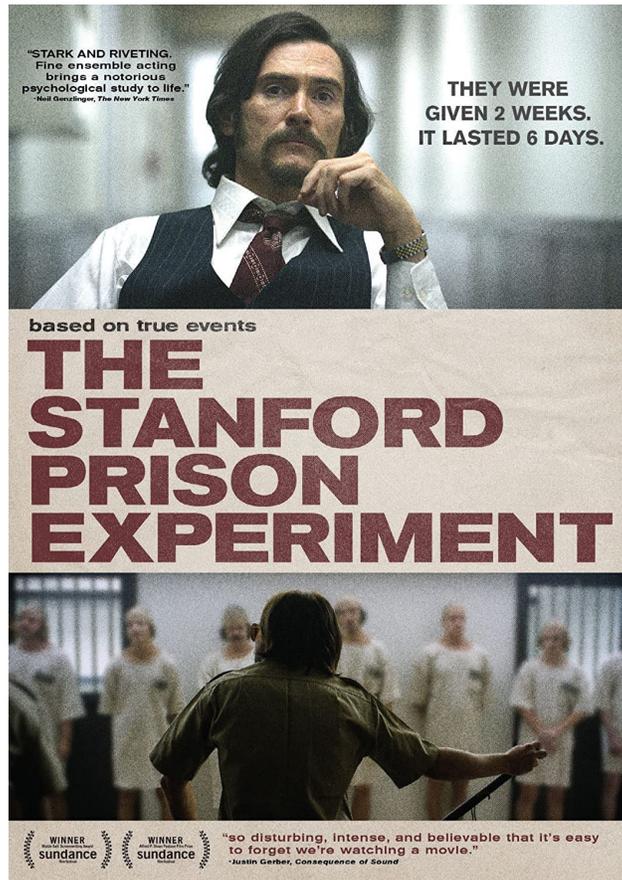
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<sup>184</sup> *Prisoner Lineup*, photograph, PrisonExp.org

<sup>185</sup> *Doing Pushups*, photograph, PrisonExp.org



*Rebellious Prisoner, PrisonExp.org, 1971.<sup>186</sup>*



*Above, the film poster for The Stanford Prison Experiment (2015), directed by Kyle Patrick Alvarez.<sup>187</sup>*

<sup>186</sup> *Rebellious Prisoners*, photograph, PrisonExp.org.

<sup>187</sup> "The Stanford Prison Experiment" Film Poster, image, Amazon.com.

REFERENCE VIDEO: The [trailer](#) for the film, *The Stanford Prison Experiment* (2015), which dramatizes the events of the experiment.

## Case Study 6: 13th Amendment/American Prison Industrial Complex

### PLAYERS

British colonists, the United States government, people stolen from West Africa, Black Americans...

## Case Study 7: Northern Ireland

### PLAYERS

The conflict began with England and the Londonderry Corporation, and the people in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. The British were largely Protestant at the time, while most Northern Irish were Catholic. The power was imbalanced, because it was the English government, corporations, and military against Northern Irish civilians.

### SUMMARY OF CONFLICT

The troubles are generally thought to have started in 1968. The Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was formed in 1967, inspired by the US American Civil Rights Movement. The first NICRA march was in 1968 was concerned about housing rights, specifically when a single Protestant woman was provided a house ahead of Catholic families. The troubles centered around a town then known as Londonderry.

In October 1968, NICRA focused on the Londonderry Corporation's discrimination in housing and organized a march which, though it was forbidden the day before, went ahead and was strongly attended. The police met the protesters with hatred, weapons, and violent intent. The BBC interviewed an apprentice radiographer, who said she "X-rayed about 45 skulls that day."

In August of 1971, a new law gave the authorities the power to imprison people without trial. The government insisted it was the only way they could restore order. Protests continued, pressure from England increased, and tensions grew, culminating in a massacre five months later on Sunday, January 30, 1972, or Bloody Sunday.

The march, beginning around 3:00 PM, was stopped by Army barricades on the way to the city center and directed towards Free Derry. There were scuffles between protesters and officers, but this was nothing new to the protests. An hour after the march began, as a few stones were thrown, police began to use tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons. Paratroopers began making arrests, but three minutes later, twenty-one soldiers opened deadly fire. Thirteen people were shot dead and at least fifteen more were wounded. 6 of the people killed were only 17. Almost all were in the process of crawling to safety.

The inquiry conducted the next day by Lord Chief Justice Widgery absolved the military of blame, though called the actions of the soldiers "bordering on the reckless." After immense public pressure,

a new inquiry began in 1998, led by judge Lord Saville, and ended in 2010 that confirmed that the English shot first with no warning to the crowd, and that none of the victims were doing anything that justified their shooting.

Obviously, Bloody Sunday did less than nothing for restoring peace or order to Northern Ireland. There was more outrage in Derry and beyond than ever before. The British Embassy in Dublin, Ireland was burned to the ground by angry protestors.

## LEGACY

The protests and violence, including Bloody Sunday, are now known as the Northern Ireland Troubles. England has taken full responsibility and blame for the Bloody Sunday deaths, with the Saville Inquiry setting into motion major steps toward justice. After the inquiry was concluded in 2010, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) began murder investigations, concluding in an announcement that they would be prosecuting Soldier F for the murders of victims James Wray, 22, and William McKinney, 27, and the attempted murders of four more march attendees. The Public Prosecution Service announced in 2021 that Soldier F would not face trial, following another ruling that the evidence against Soldiers A and C was inadmissible. A legal challenge was brought by the brother of one of the Bloody Sunday victims, and now the decision not to prosecute Soldier F is under judicial review.

The Northern Irish identity is still tenuous. Many Northern Irish identify as Irish, while others identify as English. Being caught as a Catholic or a Protestant in the wrong part of town can get you into a brawl. Brexit has rekindled debates across Northern Ireland about staying with Britain or joining Ireland. Tensions are not as violent as they were 50 years ago, but they are still present.

## SOURCES AND SUPPLEMENTAL READING



People carry the dying John "Jackie" Duddy, 17, through the streets of Derry after he was shot on Bloody Sunday.

[BBC - The Events of Bloody Sunday](#)

[BBC - The Victims of Bloody Sunday](#)

# APPENDIX B: HUMAN RIGHTS

## 1. **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

### **Article 3**

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

### **Article 4**

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

### **Article 5**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### **Article 6**

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

### **Article 7**

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

### **Article 8**

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

### **Article 9**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

### **Article 10**

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

## 2. **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948/1951)**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CrimeOfGenocide.aspx>

### **Article I**

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

### **Article II**

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

### 3. Geneva Conventions (1949)

<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/375?OpenDocument>

Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949.

The present Convention replaced the Prisoners of War Convention of 1929. It contains 143 Articles whereas the 1929 Convention had only 97. It became necessary to revise the 1929 Convention on a number of points owing to the changes that had occurred in the conduct of warfare and the consequences thereof, as well as in the living condition of peoples.

Experience had shown that the daily life of prisoners depended specifically on the interpretation given to the general regulations. Consequently, certain regulations were given a more explicit form which was lacking in the preceding provisions. Since the text of the Convention is to be posted in all prisoner of war camps (see Article 41) it has to be comprehensible not only to the authorities but also to the ordinary reader at any time. The categories of persons entitled to prisoner of war status were broadened in accordance with Conventions I and II. The conditions and places of captivity were more precisely defined, in particular with regard to the labour of prisoners of war, their financial resources, the relief they receive and the judicial proceedings instituted against them. The Convention establishes the principle that prisoners of war must be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities (Article 118).

Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field. Geneva, 12 August 1949.

#### **Conflicts not of an international character**

##### ARTICLE 3

In the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each Party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions:

(1) Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed 'hors de combat' by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria.

To this end, the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:

- (a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
- (b) taking of hostages;
- (c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment;

(d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

(2) The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.

An impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, may offer its services to the Parties to the conflict.

The Parties to the conflict should further endeavour to bring into force, by means of special agreements, all or part of the other provisions of the present Convention.

The application of the preceding provisions shall not affect the legal status of the Parties to the conflict.

4. **European Convention on Human Rights (1953)**

[https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention\\_eng.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf)

**ARTICLE 2**

Right to life

1. Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law. No one shall be deprived of his life intentionally save in the execution of a sentence of a court following his conviction of a crime for which this penalty is provided by law.

2. Deprivation of life shall not be regarded as inflicted in contravention of this Article when it results from the use of force which is no more than absolutely necessary:

(a) in defence of any person from unlawful violence;

(b) in order to effect a lawful arrest or to prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained;

(c) in action lawfully taken for the purpose of quelling a riot or insurrection.

**ARTICLE 3**

Prohibition of torture

No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

5. **Prisoner of conscience** (Peter Benenson, founder of Amnesty International) **1961:**

[https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/info\\_sheet\\_3.pdf](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/info_sheet_3.pdf)

Any person who is physically restrained (by imprisonment or otherwise) from expressing (in any form of words or symbols) any opinion which he honestly holds and which does not advocate or condone personal violence. We also exclude those people who have conspired with a foreign government to overthrow their own.

6. Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1975)  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/DeclarationTorture.aspx>
7. “Disappeared Persons” United Nations, 1978  
[https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/33/173](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/33/173)
8. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984/87)  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CAT.aspx>
9. Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals who are not nationals of the country in which they live (1985)  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/HumanRightsOfIndividuals.aspx>
10. Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment (1988)  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/DetentionOrImprisonment.aspx>
11. Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (1990)  
<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/512/07/PDF/N0651207.pdf?OpenElement>
12. Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance (1992)  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/EnforcedDisappearance.aspx>
13. International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (1992)  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/IntConventionEnforcedDisappearance.aspx>
14. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998). The Rome Statute established four core international crimes: [genocide](#), [crimes against humanity](#), [war crimes](#), and the [crime of aggression](#). Those crimes "shall not be subject to any [statute of limitations](#)"
15. Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2002/2006)  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPCAT.aspx>

**16. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of  
Indigenous People (2007)**

[https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/512/07/PDF/N0651207.pdf  
?OpenElement](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/512/07/PDF/N0651207.pdf?OpenElement)

**17. United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson  
Mandela rules) (2015)**

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/NelsonMandelaRules.pdf>

# APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Visual References



Inside the Central Processing Center in McAllen, Texas. US Customs and Border Patrol  
<https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/18/politics/immigration-mcallen-border-patrol-photos/index.html>



This March 20 (2021) photo provided by the Office of Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas, shows detainees in a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) temporary overflow facility in Donna, Texas.

(Courtesy of Rep. Henry Cuellar)

<https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/ny-immigration-border-texas-detention-rep-cuellar-20210322-g3tcdouuq5affddzvasw2mmdhm-story.html>



A picture of an overcrowded area holding families at a border patrol facility in Weslaco, released as part of a report by the US Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General.

Photograph: Handout/Reuters

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/02/migrant-detention-center-overcrowding-report-inspector-general>



Detained immigrants play soccer behind a barbed wire fence at the Irwin County Detention Center in Ocilla, Ga., on Feb. 20, 2018. Reade Levinson / Reuters file

<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/ice-close-2-troubled-detention-centers-georgia-massachusetts-n1268039>



Office of Inspector General/Department of Homeland Security via Getty Images  
<https://www.gq.com/story/private-profit-detention-centers>



Young children rest inside a pod at the Donna Department of Homeland Security holding facility in Donna, Texas on March 30, 2021.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/12/politics/border-migrant-children/index.html>



An overcrowded fenced area holding families at a Border Patrol Centralized Processing Center is seen in a still image from video in McAllen, Texas, on June 11. (Reuters)

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/07/border-facilities/593239/>



Asylum-seekers look through a fence at the Manus Island detention center in Papua New Guinea, March 21, 2014. Eoin

Blackwell/AAP/Reuters <https://theworld.org/stories/2017-09-08/asylum-seekers-one-australias-controversial-offshore-detention-camps-theres-good>



Migrants are seen outside the U.S. Border Patrol McAllen Station in a makeshift encampment in McAllen, Tex., on May 15, 2019. Credit...Loren Elliott/Reuters  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/04/style/reflecting-on-the-border.html>



A Syrian man and his son in the “Jungle” in Calais, 2015. Photograph by David Levene for the Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/03/refugees-horror-calais-jungle-refugee-camp-fee-l-like-dying-slowly>

## Taylor Swift and *Mountain Language*

The following is a series of playlists—divided by the overall play, setting, and character—that compares the text of *Mountain Language* to Taylor Swift’s discography. Comparisons were made both on superficial bases and with intent to uncover the deeper characterization of each categorized element. This summarizes the dramaturgical work of exploring the play’s text through comparisons to an external body of poetry. Each song is referred to in the following format: “Song Title”, *Album Title*. (Note: Lyrics from Swift’s songs are attributed to T.S., or Taylor Swift.)

<b>OVERALL</b> <i>Mountain Language</i>	SONGS
	“State of Grace”, <i>RED (Taylor’s Version)</i> “Message In a Bottle”, <i>RED (Taylor’s Version)</i>

SETTING		
A PRISON WALL	VISITORS ROOM	VOICE IN THE DARKNESS
“willow”, <i>evermore</i>  “Wait for the signal, and I’ll meet you after dark” –T.S.	“Speak Now”, <i>Speak Now</i>  “Don’t wait or say a single vow / You need to hear me out / And they said, ‘speak now’”	“You Are In Love”, <i>1989</i>  “You can bear it in the silence, silence, you You can feel it on the way home, way home, you You can see it with the lights out, lights out” –T.S.

CHARACTERS		
Character	Song	Lyrics & Lines
YOUNG WOMAN	“I Did Something Bad”, <i>reputation</i>	“If a man talks shit, then I owe him nothing / I don’t regret it one bit, ‘cause he had it coming” –T.S. “Can I fuck him? If I fuck him, will everything be alright?” –H.P.
	“The Man”, <i>Lover</i>	“I’m so sick of running as fast as I can / Wonderin’ if I’d get to quicker if I was a man” –T.S.
	“gold rush”, <i>evermore</i>	“I call you out on your contrarian shit” –T.S.
	“The Outside”, <i>Taylor Swift</i>	“I’ve been a lot of lonely places I’ve never been on the outside –T.S.
ELDERLY WOMAN	“peace”, <i>folklore</i>	“Give you the silence that only comes when two people understand each other” –T.S.
	“The Story of Us”, <i>Speak Now</i>	“I’ve never heard silence quite this loud” –T.S.
	“illicit affairs”, <i>folklore</i>	“You taught me a secret language I can’t speak with anyone” –T.S.
SERGEANT	“The Story of Us”, <i>Speak Now</i>	“Oh, a simple complication / Miscommunications lead to fall out” –T.S.
	“peace”, <i>folklore</i>	“Would it be enough if I could never give you peace?” –T.S.

OFFICER	“The Man”, <i>Lover</i>	“What’s it like to brag about raking in dollars / And getting bitches and models? / And it’s all good if you’re bad / And it’s okay if you’re mad” –T.S.
	“State of Grace”, <i>RED (Taylor’s Version)</i>	“A ruthless game / Unless you play it good and right” –T.S.
	“Nothing New”, <i>RED (Taylor’s Version)</i>	“And someone else lights up the room / People love an ingénue” –T.S.
GUARD	“Red”, <i>RED (Taylor’s Version)</i>	“Trying to change your mind once you’re already flying through the free fall” –T.S.
	“Superman”, <i>Speak Now</i>	“He’s complicated, he’s so irrational” –T.S.
PRISONER	“Blank Space”, <i>1989</i>	“Boys only want love if it’s torture” –T.S.
	“Getaway Car”, <i>reputation</i>	“It was the great escape / The prison break / The light of freedom on my face” –T.S.
	“Ours”, <i>Speak Now</i>	“My time is theirs” –T.S.
HOODED MAN	“Blank Space”, <i>1989</i>	“Boys only want love if it’s torture” –T.S.
	“All Too Well”, <i>RED (Taylor’s Version)</i>	“Cause there we are again / In the middle of the night / Dancin’ round the kitchen in the refrigerator light / Down the stairs / I was there / I remember it all too well” –T.S.
	“Dress”, <i>reputation</i>	“All of this silence and patience, pining in anticipation / My hands are shaking from holding back from you” –T.S.
SECOND GUARD	“gold rush”, <i>evermore</i>	“I don’t like that falling feels like flying ‘til the bone crush” –T.S.
WOMEN IN LINE	“New Romantics”, <i>1989</i>	“We wait for trains that just aren’t coming” –T.S.

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