



RESEARCH PAPER

**The Loudest Cries of American and European Theatre: A
Comparative Analysis of Silence between Eugene O’Neil and
Harold Pinter**

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: March 17, 2022 Accepted: June 21, 2022 Online: June 23, 2022	The aim of the present study is to explicate the functions of silence which is purposefully existing in literary writings of two difference theaters as an explorative comparative ground. This functioning of silence includes the impact of it, unfolding the notions of absurd-ism, as a result of a constitutive constrains of the emotions, feelings and thoughts which amalgamate to convey the intensified impacts possessed by the modern characters of drama. In order to extract the desired results from the data, it has been analyzed by keeping Kenny’s (2011) views in consideration. This perspective offers a unique interpretation to extract out of the silences of the characters by establishing the same as eloquent one. These integrated analytical grounds are applied on the data extracted out in the form of excerpts from two different theatrical dramas i.e. O’Neil’s Long Day’s Journey into Night and Pinter’s Caretaker. The study is significant as it provides unique view to study drama by assigning intensively communicative and rhetorical stance to silences in drama.
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Introduction

Anyone doing Pinter has to make us believe both in the reality of his world while exposing the primal emotions and actions under the surface of his silence (Ephratt, 2008). Whether the production is in London's West End or at the University of Illinois, on Broadway or in a community theater, onstage or on the screen, the principal challenge of realizing a Pinter text is always the same. On the other hand, in O’Neil plays “his own self” is always involved that’s why he requested that the play (Long Day’s Journey Into Night) be published posthumously, which meant that the play was not revealed to the world until O’Neil's death in 1956. This play has become a universal play representing the problems of a family that cannot live in the present, mired in the dark recesses of a bitter, troubled past (Al-Lehaibi, 2015). These implicitly impactful notions are the core purpose of the research which attempts to study it in the light of silence.

The research focuses on two renowned playwrights, who have artistically portrayed famous characters in the theatrical history of English Literature. Hence, the major aim of choosing these writers is to explore the silence in their works. This

eloquence of silence explicate the intensification of emotions foregrounded through different techniques and ways in works of both playwrights. The purpose of the present study will dig out the meaning behind this silence in both theatres. For this aim, Pinter's *The Caretaker* and O'Neil's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* have been selected.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to focus on the comparative grounds with respect to the implications of silence in two different theaters of English Literature, to highlight the modern dogmatic elements in both of the plays. The implicitly of silence is dominantly expressive for the concerns which are veiled behind the curtains of absurd-ism portrayed through modern theaters. Furthermore, the exploration of the reasoned silence within the literary domain of dramatic writing provides the space to extract meanings out of the nothingness, which is embedded with the constant urge to curve out the definitive grounds of the modern dilemmas as an absolute failure to verbally communicate yet speaking loudly by keep oneself latent.

In order to achieve the goal of this research, the study considers the notion of eloquent or rhetorical silence uniquely offered by Kenny (2011). Through this notion, the data purposefully is proven to be impregnated with reasoned silence, which in spite of proven to exert absurd-ism on the ground explicates those hidden notions which are left unexplained but not unexpressed. The present study considers these conception in order to explore the purpose of different kind of silences in the study.

The comparative analysis of these two master-pieces will discover the communication delivered through the stillness of characters, their words, their pauses and even in their exchange of dialogue. So, the current investigation would be done by pouring silence from the words and words from the silence of characters. This existence of purposeful silence and its absurd-ism explicates the imperative grounds of eloquent meaning construal. The study is significant as it considers the presence of silence in dramas as a source to explore the comparison of two different theaters and their implementation and portrayal of implicit notions which are better considered to keep unheard but not non-communicative.

Literature Review

There is an existence of immense literature related to theory of silence on the literary ground which explains the modern dilemmas of absurdity, vagueness, void, sense of nothingness and lost sense of belongingness. Therefore, the literature review of the study explains the both accounts of the study. The first one deals with the detail account of theoretical grounds of silence. The second one explains the study conducted and finding explored through implication of functions of silences in literature.

The presence of silence prevails in many forms in literature. The theorists like Steiner (1998) contributed by publishing essays on eloquent silence in literature. This exploratory study established unchallengeable associations of language with literature by bridging the untiring contribution of silence as a catalyst. Hence, silence acts beyond the linguistic boundaries of the literary writings. These essays have inspired examples from the literary works of William Shakespeare, Lawrence Durrell,

Thomas Mann, Leon Trotsky and others. Formerly, Hassan (1968) discovered the communicative functions of silences in the works of Becket and Miller. The research revolves around affirming the notion that Becket is the grammarian of nothing which has been tacitly explicated by tracing the grounds of silence.

Ephratt (2008) in the study has also explained the eloquence of silence and its performativity, implied on the field of language and literature. The study has implied the communicative functions offered by Jakobson (1960) to figure out the performance of silence with is employed as powerful tool as language is. The findings of the research suggested that silence works efficiently where language can possibly not irrespective of literary or non-literary genres.

Schmitz (1994) suggested the roles of silence in a successful communication, where silence leads the way towards convey more than language itself. The study explicates the essential presence of pauses and silence in clarity of message and indicating the connotative roles within a communicative context. The study is centered upon the roots of silence into nothingness of the being not lost sense of belongingness, hence, it modifies as well as predetermines one of the predetermined function of silence.

Furthermore, the descriptive theoretical grounds of the present study considers the notions of eloquent silence offered by Kenny (2018). According to which, eloquence silence is always impregnated with thoughts, feelings and ideas that are kept implicit by the participant of communication. Nonetheless, the receptors tacitly receive the essence of the communication. Thus, the study focuses the symbolic and expressive role of silences in literature.

Behnam (2014) asserted that the purposeful presence of eloquence silence in Persian and English literature leads to the notion and implications of conceals ideas which are essential for accomplishment of conveyed ideas. The findings suggested that the silence hidden in the text are manifolds of context, culture, topic and situation of participants of the conversation.

Likewise, Abbas, Ghaffar and Asghar (2021) explicate the communicative function of silence purposefully existing in Pakistani Literature (i.e. Manto's Ten Rupees). The study has revealed that the reasoned silence in the short story is an ultimate explanation and expression of unexplained and non-descriptive feelings, thoughts and emotions, which fail to fall from unconsciousness to consciousness because of the presence of abusing power practices in society.

In addition to this, the portrayals and expressions of silence within the literary domains are considerably related with the conviction of women oppression and its affirmation of the same within the contextual domains of the generic writing. As Lardinois, McClure and Mac Clure (2001) trace out silences of women as a silence expression of existence of oppression, which has played a substantial role to assign them passive social, political and economic acquaintances. The research has considered for citation of those instances from Latin literature which explains the silencing of women in more distinct terms. The research has focused on the expression of subjectivity of characters written by Hellenistic and Archaic female poets.

Hypothesis

The study is based on assertion that the present of silence engrosses more the ground of purposefulness and communicate something more than the words can rather confirming the modernistic notion of absurd-ism of the character. Hence, the study sets out to explicate the notion of silence as an agent to communicate more than the words even can.

Material and Methods

The research is purely qualitative in nature, which beseeches its entire foundational inspiration from Kenny (2018) explanations and implications of eloquent silence in literature. In addition to this, the research includes the text excerpts from the above two mentioned dramatic works of O'Neil and Pinter for comparative explications and employment of silences. These selected data for analysis is highly loaded with the tacit narrative techniques and implicit silences, which induce powerful impact to convey the intended notions to the target audience.

Furthermore, the data extracted from the literary works belong to twentieth century theatre of Europe and America, which has witnessed the presence of two renowned playwrights of time. Harold Pinter (1930-2008) from London, the Nobel Prize winner of year 2005 in Literature, is famous for his understatements to convey his characters' feelings and thoughts. On the other side, Eugene O'Neil (1888-1953) who was from New York City, won the noble prize in 1936 "for the power, honesty and deep-felt emotions of his dramatic works, which embody an original concept of tragedy".

The implication of Kenny's (2018) theoretical grounds in this study help to endorse the thoughtful employment of meaningful silences and comparatively meaningless utterances in the drama which prove the power of implicit notion hidden within linguistic boundaries. Hence, the major focus of application of the present research framework is to explicate the indirect acts performed by silence functions. The analysis and discussion of the study (see section 4.0) proves that the successful execution of data treatment aids to conclude rhetorical silences and its working on the literary grounds. Since, the study revolves around the portrayal of emotive and thoughtful constraints in two different playwrights drama, therefore, silences in following forms, are brought in the limelight in the present study:

- 1) Three dots
- 2) Pause
- 3) Silence

Three dots suggest that its minute kind of hesitation by the character. This hesitation implies that character is afraid of revealing something or he/she is hesitant in expressing him/herself. It also means that he got nothing to say. Likewise, pause within the drama constraints reveal the resistance of expression by the characters, which induces stillness amongst the characters as well as in the surroundings of the stage. Hence, it is an important constituent of absurd theater. Thirdly, the explicit

expression of mentioning silence is another impression of void existing in the characters of the drama.

Results and Discussion

The analysis and discussion is divided into two sections in accordance with the two different dramas, taken under consideration.

Pinter's *The Caretaker*

The play is divided into three acts, with a minimum plot. The action takes place in a single room over the course of two weeks. Pinter has created a tense, dramatic situation in which three working-class men confront each other. While the room of *The Caretaker* is inhabited by Aston (described briefly as "in his early thirties"), it actually belongs to Mick ('in his late twenties'). Immediately before the start of the action, Aston meets a tramp ('an old man') by the name of Davies in a nearby café. Aston has saved Davies from a fight and he now offers to give him a bed for the night.

The play *The Caretaker* is the product of absurd theatre, where the personae resort to silence whenever its language fails to express their emotions. Pinter's characters do not communicate in real sense, or if they do its just silence, pause or repetition. This kind of elliptical communication marks that characters are lacking belongingness and identity. Whenever the situation becomes inexpressible, the characters go silent which means that they do not have anything to say or reveal. Michel Foucault also suggests that "silence" is a powerful discourse because it tells so much of the characters' situation. And it's not just the situation of character or individual revealed through silence rather it points out the dilemma of whole modern society which is *The Waste Land* of Eliot.

A Pinter pause -- and the two words are synonymous -- wasn't so much a break in the action as a cue to the actor that the real action, the action of human revelation, should now commence. Three dots (shortest pause) are very significant in Pinter's work. For example

Aston: Just a minute

(Aston looks around for a chair, sees one lying on its side by the rolled carpet at the fireplace, and start to get it out)

Davies: Sit down? Huh I haven't had a good sit down! ... I haven't had a proper sit down! ... well, I couldn't tell you (p.).

(ACT ONE)

In the above example, Davies is confused about the sitting down matter which is a common or casual manner. Sitting down is not just a sit down in literal meanings, rather it's a settlement about which the tramp (Davies) is conscious and could not find it. His repetition of same words after every three dots suggests his lost belongingness. It also indicates the silence of his unknown tragedy which has made him confused enough over a matter of "sitting down".

Now observe the second example as follows;

Aston: You can sleep here if you like.

Davies: Here? Oh, I don't know about that.

(Pause)

How long for?

Aston: Till you ... get yourself fixed up.

Davies: (sitting). Ay well, that....

Aston: Get yourself sorted out...

Davies: Oh, I'll be fixed up ... pretty soon now (p.).

(ACT ONE)

In this instance, both Aston and Davies are hesitant. Aston is being kind to him as usual and offering him to sleep at his pace. He is hesitant in asking him to get fixed up even. On the other side Davies is not sure about his settlement. He is unaware of the time and not assure of himself. In last line, it seems that there is a thought involved in the background with which Davies's conscious is hanged up.

Davies's state of confusion can also be seen in ACT TWO, in exchange of dialogue with Mick.

"Mick: I'm afraid you're born fibber, en't you? You're speaking to the owner. This is my room. You're standing in my house.

Davies: it's his ... he seen me all right ... he ..." (p.).

In this example, Mick's dialogue can be observed in comparison to Davies. Mick's speech is firm and complete. Like an authority, he completes his sentences with a full stop. On the other side, Davies uses three dots three times in a row, which means he is not sure about himself to say what. He is homeless and dependent. He is psychologically and socially fragmented in this time which is clearly exposed through his disjointed speech. He is afraid of Mick's question and cannot answer him properly because of the fear of power.

In comparison to Mick's words, Davies and Aston use three dots as a little pause. But in the last scene of ACT THREE Aston sounds like Mick. His speech becomes short and complete in his decision while Davies left with no conversion and remains an accustomed man. See below;

"Aston: No.

Davies: Why ... not?

(Aston turns to look at him)

Aston: *You make too much noise.*

Davies: *But ... but ... look ... listen listen here I mean ..."* (p.).

(ACT THREE)

The stance of Davies changes right after saying *Why* , he has no authority to question it so he bends it to *Not* with a gap of three dots, which gives a complete sense of his marginalized being.

The second kind of silence is Pause, which is longer than three dots hesitation. Pinter intentionally uses it by writing pause in parenthesis. Pause is like the bridge; as if characters are at one side and after the pause they are at other side of bridge. Pause is alarming and it involves the position of the characters. Following are the instances from the play.

"Davies: This your room?

Aston: Yes.

Davies: You got a good bit of stuff here.

Aston: Yes.

Davies: Must be worth a bob, this ... put it all together.

(Pause)

There's enough of it" (p.).

(ACT ONE)

In this example, Davies intention about the stuff is changed after the pause. Being a homeless and penniless he thinks about earning the bobs but as he realize something he changes his words' attention in another direction.

Another example of pause from ACT ONE is exposing the fractured consciousness of Davies. It is as follows;

"Aston: What happened when you got there, then?

(Pause)

Davies: I used to know a bootmaker in Action. He was a good mate to me.

(Pause)

You know what that bastard monk said to me?

(Pause)

How many more Blacks you got around here then?" (p.).

As Aston asks a question from Davies, Davies takes three pauses and at the end he completely changes the sense of question by ignoring it and leaving it answerless. It signifies an alarming situation where a character could not answer the simple question and could not tackle the simple actions even. Davies wants to change the topic and in this effort he asks two questions from Aston. This makes his own speech direction less and it keeps suspense on spectator to find the fragmented history of the homeless man.

In ACT TWO, pause is playing in between the language of characters in this way;

"Mick: What's your name?"

Davies: I don't know you. I don't know who you are.

(Pause)

Mick: Eh?

Davies: Jenkins.

Mick: Jenkins?

Davies: Yes.

Mick: Jen ... kins.

(Pause)

You sleep here last night?" (p.).

In this instance, Davies is disturbed by the presence of Mick. Mick asks him his name and as usually he answers differently. The pause is Davies's realization where he understands the question and answers it by saying his name. On the hand, Mick cut off Davies's name into two words and then asks the next question. The pause exclusively gives a time to characters for their repositioning.

The third kind is complete silence itself. It is longest than the pause and it suggests that there is nothing to say further. Silence pours that now there is nothing to say. It also conveys the sense of aloofness on the stage. Silence points the loudest cries of the characters.

The play is consists of three acts and at the beginning each act observes silence. See the following examples.

Mick is alone in the room, sitting on the bed. He wears a leather jacket.

Silence.

He slowly locks about the room looking at each object in turn, He looks up at the ceiling, and stares at the bucket. Ceasing, he sits quite still, expressionless, looking out front.

Silence For Thirty Seconds

A door bangs, Muffled voices are heard. Mick turns his head. He stands, moves silently to the door, goes out, and close the door.

Silence (p.).

This silence is really thought provoking. Here Pinter has added it intentionally to let the spectator think over the situation. The action is not very much involved here rather settings of thoughts have been prepared like the stage. Mick's presence at the stage being expressionless is a way to let the audience feel emptiness. Then silence for thirty seconds is very important. This kind of timing adds meanings to the coming action.

In ACT TWO, following is the example of the silence that comes in between the action. See below;

"Davies: (.....) I got a knife here. I'm ready. Come on then, who are you?"

(he moves, stumbles, falls and cries out)

Silence

A faint whimper from Davies. He gets up" (p.).

Here, one can clearly observe the Davies's position before and after the silence. Before the silence, he was ready to fight and after the silence we find him on the floor. Pinter always gives a sudden action and reaction of his characters where their words become juxtaposed to their actions.

Similarly, in ACT THREE, Davies's lost identity and self is defined through the silence.

"Davies: What about me?"

Silence.

Mick does not look at him.

A door bangs.

Silence

They do not move" (p.).

Here the silence is really alarming for Davies. He enquires from Mick about his own self and the answer is silence which is completely communicating as there is no one to take care of Davies. Davies is in a condition of uncertainty and this is the silence only which has marked all the difference.

These were instances from *The Caretaker* in which Pinter has communicated through silence. He himself comments about silence in this way:

We have heard many times that tired, grimy phrase 'Failure of communication ...' and this phrase has been fixed to my work quite consistently. I believe the contrary. I think that we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and what takes place is a continual evasion, desperate rear guard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves, Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else's life is too frightening. To disclose to others poverty within us too fearsome a possibility. (p.).

O'Neil's Long Day's Journey into Night

The tragedy tells the story of a small middle class family in the early nineteenth century. All of the characters have abundant tragic flaws that eventually lead to the family's downfall. The man of the family, James Tyrone, is an extremely prudent individual that is consumed with pride. His wife, Mary, suffers from a morphine addiction acquired from long term medication after a painful childbirth. The eldest son, Jamie, was ejected from several different schools and is without a job due to his lack of motivation. The fourth and youngest member of the family, Edmund, suffers from Tuberculosis. James Tyrone is the main cause for the disintegration of the family due to his excessive pride and stingy nature.

O'Neil's stage is different. His most of the plots revolves around the families haunted by past. There lies some silence in his characters' speech although it may be different from the one by Pinter, but it still holds the loudest cries.

O'Neil's characters use language as a shield. They hide themselves behind the language and in this way their real selves remain silent behind the word's curtain. In America, his theatre is unique in its silence and teems with meaning. If one says that language is power and being speechless is synonymous to being powerless but here the case is different as what is spoken betrays the centrality of what is not.

O'Neil's characters are silent in their communication. The purpose of this silence or the hiddenness is a way to escape from the reality. His characters are deep with experience and cannot face the realistic question of life as it is. The only hope lies in his characters' life is unreality which is another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself and the ghost may lost itself in the sea of fog and salvation lies in being 'nothing more than a ghost within a ghost'. His theatre is the place of salvation for these ghosts, where they walk in dress of others language.

In Long Day's journey into Night, O'Neil has not mentioned any kind of pause, silence or hesitation rather it is understood from the context of situation that characters are no longer able to communicate the reality of them. Most of the plot of the play is repetitious, just as the cycle of an alcoholic is repetitious. This repetition and the whole plot at the same place suggest that, this day is not distinctive in many ways. Instead, it is one in the long string of similar days for Tyrones.

In the play, there are three male Tyrones and one female Tyrone. All of them become detached from their surroundings, consciousness and responsibilities in one or other way. The first example is of Mr. Tyrone' whose tragic flaws are his hubris, or excessive pride. Though self-pride can be healthy, in James' case it injured him profoundly. Instead of accepting his family's problems and dealing with them directly, James chose to ignore them and either forgot about his family's many problems by getting drunk frequently or blocked them out of his mind. For instance,

James's wife, Mary, had a constant battle with an addiction to morphine. Though James sent her to a rehabilitation clinic to help her get rid of her problem, they were never fully put to rest and she continued her abusive habits throughout the play. Rather than try to stop his wife's downfall, James refused to accept the problem and knowingly allowed her to use the addictive pain reliever.

For example, Mary Tyrone becomes detached from her surroundings, offering a periodic performance of her youthful self. She hides in her past and makes an escape from the reality through in-take of morphine. Abstracted Mary could be described as playing 'mad Ophelia'. Her characters rather than speaking their own lives, hide behind the language of others. For example, Male Tyrones have appropriate language of poets.

O'Neil's characters are left with a mutual support of fellow performers. He lets us watch the sub conscious and unconscious of characters through their movements and gestures. The whole text of the play is full of the poetic references by the characters which imply a notion of to speak as "another". This is the moment where the self is evaded which can be vulnerable to pain. Here the theatre dominates their lives as protection.

Mary Tyrone's language becomes echoic. The phrases she speaks are merely repetitions of linguistic circularity. Her drug induced state is her protection against the dangers of 'real communication'. For instance, she welcomes Fog, because it hides you from the world and the world from you. So, the language of mirrors does the same as fog in which she hides and loses herself.

O'Neil's play's nature is rambling. Language is layered, slabs of soliloquy (one upon another), characters make speeches rather than engaging in a dialogue. There is an inadequate grasp of dramatic structure with a sense of space between self and its expression. His characters carefully detach themselves from language they speak in an effort to relieve themselves of responsibility. O'Neil presents a critique of language as a profound suspicion of utterance- a betrayal of truth by words. He says:

"How we poor monkeys hide from ourselves behind the sounds called words" (p.).

Tyrones in the play are liars, deceivers, fantasizers, actors who put language forward for protection and destruction. The author himself was fascinated from the 'sailors' because of their in articulation as silence. His image of falsity in the play is concerned to get behind the language for a safe place. So, Language is figuratively dead in Long Day's Journey into Night.

The characters in play seek oblivion through alcohol, memory, narrative and in repeating the story of their lives as though to create those lives. In Edmund Tyrone, O'Neil has invaded himself. He dramatized himself to who speak his own lines and also of those created by the other poets.

The stage directions of the play are also for the audience because characters are deaf and blind to defeat their absurd lives. His characters are story tellers and also the victim of that story. The characters become victim of irony of time, as Jimmie

Tyrone confesses his jealousy to Edmund Tyrone is the tension between his narrated past and narrative present.

O'Neil's concern with radical incompletions of language is rooted in his sense of world where inner coherence have collapsed. The grammar and syntax have dissolved. He acknowledged this feeling that 'great language' was no longer possible for anyone living in the discordant, broken, faithless rhythm of our time.

Conclusion

This study is just an attempt to hear the loudest cries of both theatres. Pinter's business of language is highly ambiguous. So, often, below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken. This is a kind of similarity we find in O'Neil, where the characters speak but in order to hide themselves behind the curtain of language. In reality, modern man of both stages does not want to face the reality of communication. He cries in his words spoken and unspoken. The listeners have to figure out the meaning from detachments. Silence is not just a matter of choice rather it is enforced in the psychology of individuals through their socio economic disparities. No matter if the character is a tramp (stranger) or a family member, the absence of communication lies at both ends which could be found in their inarticulation. Hence, the study proves the set hypothesis to be right, as the findings and data analysis explicate how silences are communicative in nature and how the notion of conveying more than the words can assigns an essential status to silence.

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