



Muted Voices and Oppressed Bodies: An Intersectional Feminist Reading of Gendered Violence in Harold Pinter's Mountain Language

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: May 24, 2025

Revised: June 28, 2025

Accepted: June 29, 2025

Available Online: June 30, 2025

Keywords:

Harold Pinter
Mountain Language
Gendered Violence
Feminist Criticism
Intersectionality

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates Harold Pinter's play Mountain Language in a feminist and intersectional context to discover how the text demonstrates gendered violence, silencing, and organizing violence. This study's main argument is that language and suppression of language are a means of control, along with the fact that gender plays a significant role in identifying how the various individuals are victimized. Utilizing Judith Butler, bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as my frameworks, I interrogate Pinter's performance text as an intersectional consideration in which class, ethnicity, language, and sex all intersect and layer different forms of violence and oppression. Pinter's performance investigates an engagement with how bodies are gendered and racialized by state power while also showing how silence can be used for oppression, yet can also be understood as a means of resistance, paradoxically. Methodologically, the study employs close reading and textual analysis in order to examine the gender dynamics at play within Pinter's dramatic style. It discusses the play's spare language and disconnected dialogue in order to demonstrate how linguistic disempowerment operates on stage, highlighting the invisibility of women's suffering within a patriarchal, militarized context. In the end, this study ultimately argues that Mountain Language is not simply a representation of authoritarianism: it is a performance of it. By silencing its characters, especially the women, the play places the audience in a position of complicity in this act of erasure, compelling them to acknowledge their role in systems that line themselves up with the silencing of others.

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1. Introduction

Few playwrights in literary history have used silence as skillfully as Harold Pinter. His plays, while often bleak, sparse, and rich in ambiguity, convey political messages as much through absence as through presence what is left unsaid. Pinter's politically charged masterworks feature a sustained confrontation with power. Mountain Language brutally illustrates the denial of a people's right to speak their native language under a repressive regime. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Mountain Language is the manner in which it reveals the gendered nature of such suppression—the silencing of women as a metaphor for systemic violence. This dissertation analyzes the feminist and intersectional aspects of Mountain Language, paying particular attention to violence intertwined with language, silence, and state control. The changing focus of Harold Pinter's works can be traced to the 1980s; prior to this period, his plays centered around personal and domestic concerns, later transformed into more political narratives. First performed in 1988, 'Mountain Language' depicts the disheartening vision of authoritarian power which entails a military regime banning the language of a certain ethnic group, thus eliminating one of the core constituents of the group's identity. Women within this framework of brutality, and particularly women depicted as "Old Woman", are not only oppressed but also symbolically undergo erasure. Despite appearing stark and short, the play is thematically rich and contains a sharp critique on a patriarchal framework dominated by political violence. This study argues that Mountain Language, while certainly not designed with feminist principles

in mind, can be understood through feminist and intersectional lenses which reveal the layers of oppression that is linguistic, cultural, bodily, and gendered.

The intersectional feminist reading, guided by theorists like bell hooks and Kimberlé Crenshaw, makes it possible to comprehend the ways in which identities are not constructed alone but in conjunction with other power systems — class, race, language, and nation. *Mountain Language* does so. While the play eschews clear national or ethnic identification, its universalism is not to be confused with neutrality. Conversely, Pinter's calculated withholding of place names and identities heightens the play's relevance to international patterns of political violence and gendered oppression. Structural and symbolic violence is used to dehumanize the characters. This burden disproportionately burdens women. The physical body of the female character in the play is not only literally but also symbolically dedicated to the possibility of the big event. Metaphorically raped, has been interrogated, and has been robbed of the freedom to express herself in the image of her mother tongue. The issues of this research are shown in this chapter. It gives the background and theory so that we can go forth and study how *Mountain Language* works on the problematics of voice, visibility, etc, Violence through a feminist lens of intersection. Geographically locating the play in the literary world today. It is based on socio-political contexts that this introduction preconditions a more profound analysis of the way in introduction preconditions a more thorough analysis of how Theatrical silence, which is used by Pinter, exposes and invades deep-rooted gendered violence.

1.1. Statement of the problem

This research looks at the overlooked gendered issues of Harold Pinter's play *Mountain Language*. Critics have noted the political aspects of the play such as censorship and totalitarianism, yet they have largely overlooked the ways that violence is enacted on and against the women in the play. This gap matters, not simply because of the political tensions surrounding gender and violence, but also because it follows a trend within literary criticism that overlooks women's experiences in situations of political violence and conflict. With a feminist, intersectional framework, this study addresses this gap and explores how the economy of language used in *Mountain Language* is a means to discipline, silence, and erase women. The findings of this project will provide new perspectives on Pinter and political theatre, and will be useful to scholars working in feminist theory, drama, and Pinter, as well as students and educators who want to think critically about literary study.

1.2. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions.

1. How does *Mountain Language* symbolize silence and gendered violence under a totalitarian regime, particularly through its female characters and their literal and symbolic silencing?
2. In what ways does Pinter use language—through manipulation, repression, or absence—to construct gendered subjectivities and represent power dynamics within the play?
3. How can intersectional feminist theory illuminate the play's portrayal of resistance, power structures, and sociopolitical control mechanisms, especially in relation to women's experiences?

1.3. Significance of the Study

There are various reasons why this research is important. By applying gender-focused theories to a work that is not typically studied in this manner, it first advances the field of feminist literary criticism. Second, by exploring the roles played by female characters in Pinter's politically charged drama, it fills a vacuum in Pinter scholarship. A mixture of psychological realism, ambiguity, menace, and silence makes the style. His previous work, similar to the showings in *The Homecoming* and *The Birthday Party*, revolves around existential fear and human relationship dynamics. Come the 1980s, however, his literary works had started taking direct jabs at politics. In this latter *Corpus*, *Mountain Language* is a concentrated criticism of dictatorship. The action occurs in a prison where the prison inmates are not allowed to speak in their native mountain language, used as a metaphor of any kind of linguistic and cultural oppression under authoritarian governments. Erasure, destruction of language, memory, identity, and resistance are allegorically depicted as the theme of the story. The skimpy dialogue and bleak stage directions of the play. *The Old Woman*, *the Prisoner*, *the Officer*. All the characters: *the Sergeant*, *the Major*, and the rest are not individuals, but archetypes.

2. Review of literature

The intellectual core of any academic investigation is provided by literature reviews, which lay the groundwork for previous studies, point out knowledge gaps, and place the current investigation within a larger body of scholarly discourse. Academic discourse of Harold Pinter. Markedly, *Mountain Language* has concentrated on matters that relate to censorship, political suppression, and authoritarianism. However, when it comes to the consideration of feminist and intersectional elements in the case of Pinter and the case of *Mountain Language* in particular, there is a definite gap in the literature. The objective of this chapter is to conduct a critical analysis of the literature that is currently available and pertinent to this research. A review of pertinent feminist literary theory, intersectionality, and political theater scholarship follows an analysis of critical reactions to *Mountain Language* within Pinter studies. After that, it delves into more general conversations about gender, silence, and language in theater and literature. In order to establish the current study as a pertinent and essential intervention, the review will emphasize the play's notable lack of gender-focused and intersectional analyses throughout.

2.1. Existing Critical Literature on Harold Pinter's *Mountain Language*

Harold Pinter's "*Mountain Language*" has been analyzed through several critical frameworks. The play is considered to be a critique of colonial ideology and shows the processes of othering that look closely at the atrocities against native people (Kateb, 2025). It enforces language oppression as a political entrapment and shows the refusal to allow the "mountain language" of the prisoners to speak as a universal metaphor of oppression (Goodspeed, 2019). Other scholars analyze the theatrical use of silence utilized by Pinter especially through the Elderly Woman character; highlight the dangers of marginalizing and silencing representation of certain people (2019, أماني محمود الصاوي). The play also examines relations of power through speech strategies and the use of tactics suggestive of power, control, and even domination, such as generative tactics used when interrogated by police and correctional authorities (Čirić-Fazlija & Kalajdžisalihović, 2023). The aforementioned analyses highlight the key components of Pinter's portrayals of an understanding of language and describes language as important as a medium of oppression and important for resisting, thus situating its concept in larger spheres of power, identity, and human rights issues. Scholars regularly debate Harold Pinter's writings' political turn, and his body of work has garnered a wide range of critical attention. The mysterious and ridiculous aspects of Pinter's plays were highlighted in early criticisms, which frequently concentrated on power dynamics in domestic settings, silence, and menace. However, critics started to notice a more overt political engagement in his later plays with the rise of pieces like *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988), and *Ashes to Ashes* (1996).

The majority of research on *Mountain Language* has examined it as a political allegory. According to Charles Grimes (2005), the play is a critique of totalitarian governments and the dehumanizing effects of censorship on entire populations. Similar to this, Pinter's biographer Billington (2007) contends that the play expresses Pinter's anger at linguistic repression and state-sponsored violence, drawing comparisons to Turkish state policies toward Kurdish minorities. These readings frequently draw attention to the widespread violence committed by authoritarian governments, but they do not address the gendered nature of this violence. Although the play's use of silence and fragmented language as a dramatic device has been noted by numerous critics, such as Esslin (1992), Diamond (2003), and Raby (2009), few have examined the significance of these silences in terms of gender. Though this act is rarely seen as a feminist issue, the symbolic weight of denying the Old Woman the ability to speak in her native tongue is frequently discussed in terms of cultural erasure. The marginalization of gender as an analytical lens, especially in Pinter's politically charged works, is a broader trend in his criticism that is highlighted by this absence. Intersectional reading, which explores how characters in *Mountain Language* are positioned at the intersection of language, ethnicity, gender, and state violence, is also lacking. Therefore, even though the body of existing literature offers a solid basis for political interpretations of the play, it is still lacking in its examination of the ways in which these political mechanisms affect women and other marginalized identities differently (Dhivya et al., 2023; Ragmoun, 2023).

2.2. Feminist Literary Criticism: Key Concepts and Relevance

Feminist literary criticism began because of resistance to male representations of women's identity and experience (Goel, 2010). It resisted the social, political, and cultural relegation of women to lower status as a way of exposing where gender contingencies exist (Goel, 2010).

Feminist literary criticism has developed over three waves, and each wave began to shape discourse in literature and portray women in gender roles (Vyas & Gupta Aggarwal, 2024). Some important ideas in feminist literary criticism include how literature represents women, especially focus on female authorship, and the necessity to use intersectionality in considering aspects of gender, race, sexual orientation, and class (Alós, 2021). Feminist criticism is distinct in that it analyzes literary texts using feminist theory and other ideological discourses to consider aspects such as language, structure, and narrative (Guo, 2019). The criticism focuses on the economic, social, political and psychological forces present in literature that impose male domination (Guo, 2019). Feminism continues to matter with the context of contemporary literature, fighting against new sources of oppression like globalization and digitalization, and opening brand new horizons of women's experience to the possible stories we will never know (Vyas & Gupta Aggarwal, 2024).

Feminist literary criticism has always aimed at exposing how patriarchal the world around us is. Structures act in society and literature. The fact that gender is a socially constructed knowledge is as follows. It is embedded into language, representation, and power structures, so central is feminist critique. In a feminist way of thinking, feminists appreciate de-centering texts; they often re-center them in feminine approaches. Disorder in subjectivity and body experience can challenge the marginalization, distortion, or absence of The experience of women in literature. Such significant feminist scholars as Toril Moi, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Guar, and Elaine Showalter have emphasized repossessing the voice of women in literary history. The concept of gender as performance is affected by social and linguistic considerations other than a fixed the theory of gender performativity introduced by Judith Butler was the first theory that presented identity. That is outlined in *Gender Trouble* (1990). Where theatrical, such theories are particularly effective In contexts in which gender roles are played, challenged, or gagged on stage. Intersectional feminism, as developed by Bell Hooks, censures mainstream (white) feminism by criticizing the white aspects of feminism. Middle-class women without due concern for race, class, and other axes of oppression, especially in publications such as the 1984 *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. In *Mountain Language*, we find that it is not just that women are silenced in this way, but that they are also silenced in gendered, ethnically, and linguistically tense ways, Hooks notes. Demand a more radical and representative feminism to recognize the way oppression works, on indifferent to the social histories of its subjects (Ahmed, Azhar, & Mohammad, 2024; Mohammad, 2015a, 2015b).

There are several interrelated lines thus resonating. In her critical piece of work, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, she published her most famous essay. Spivak (2023) introduces the concept of thinking about vulgarity as a way to have a dominant ideology. The subaltern women are silenced by both the patriarchal conventions and the colonial setup. Her work provides something. Important perspective using which we can look upon the *Old Woman of Mountain Language*: a character twice: Canceled out both through gender and cultural marginalization as opposed to being simply a victim of state repression. Political plays of Harold Pinter that are often regarded as masculine political writings, very much unlike gendered, embodied performances, have seldom incurred such vigorous feminist scrutiny frameworks. Such a treatment, according to this study, limits our understanding of the scope and meaning of the killings he describes.

2.3. Intersectionality in Literary Studies

Recent publications focused on intersectionality in the field of. These studies suggest that intersectionality is vital for understanding the complexity of identity in conjunction with power dynamics. MacDonald (2023) advocates for an intersectional approach to literary criticism, and employs key elements from intersectionality theory to look at cross-identity representations in literature. Eliseeva (2022) applies forms of intersectionality to literature and film, and was able to demonstrate the benefits of moving away from mono-national, androcentric methodologies. Armengol (2019) outlined the trajectory of literary masculinity studies, arguing for an intersectional lens into the study of both white and non-white masculinities in literature. Together, these studies illustrate the increasing importance of intersectionality in literary studies and provide new frameworks for understanding complex identities and social locations in text (Eliseeva, 2022; MacDonald, 2023). The application of intersectionality in literary studies is continuously developing, ushering in deeper consideration for the representation of diverse lived experiences alongside power structures in literature.

The term intersectionality is a term coined by Crenshaw (1991), and it involves a combination of two or more factors that are connected. The theoretical framework describes how

various forms of oppression, such as racism or sexism, work. And classism cannot be separated from studies. It originated despite its roots being in Intersectionality has become one of the formidable instruments in literary studies based on black feminist theory and law. Criticism, especially in the analysis of literature, addresses issues of complicated identities and prestige dynamics. Intersectional studies how the cumulative sets of identities amalgamate and interact. As well as unusual analysis which is not in binary categories, such as male/female or oppressor/oppressed? The Female characters in *Mountain Language* have not been made up only of women or victims. Belong to an intricate net of political, linguistic, and ethnic identities that shape the way they perceive violence. Intersectionality is used in literary theory in order to re-read canonical works and expose the truth. Meanings that had been ignored in previous times. As an instance, *Under the Western Eyes* by Chandra Talpade Mohanty criticizes the tendency of Western feminists to generality women's experience and focuses not on social structure, but rather on the distinctive political and cultural surroundings that contribute to gender. The racialized and gendered anonymous bodies existing on the landscape of the play have to be closely looked at to apply this reasoning to *Mountain Language*. The use of structural violence in the play written by Pinter can be better understood by the use of Crenshaw. The state prohibition of the term, the mountain language, unjustly affects women. Especially the individuals who rely on it to express emotion, care, and heritage. This restriction is not just a politicking action. The deprivation of language on behalf of the Old Woman is intimate. It was not just abstract tragedy.

2.4. Gender, Silence, and Language in Theatre Studies

Studies describe three approaches to examining the relationship among gender, language, and silence: Mills (2006) and Alker (2008) explore women's relationship to silence in respect to language, and Kitch (1987) examines attitudes toward gender, dialect, silence and discourse. Mills (2006) discusses how multilingual women are shaped by the cultural expectations of either spoken or silent speech acts, and in doing so are performing gendered identities through their use of language. Kitch (1987) looks at the intersection of gender, dialect and silence. Alker (2008) considers the success of silence as a language, within the feminist performance artist Deb Margolin performed in silence, in looking at how silence disrupts patriarchal language norms as it engages the limitations of language. Hall and Bucholtz (2012) edited a collection of essays that challenges essentialist understandings of language and gender positions, through these works and moving beyond essentialist notions, we examine language use in different cultures and contexts, rather than monolingual, Anglo-North American culture, which is often assumed to be universal. Mills (2006) and Alker (2008) most clearly highlights that silence can be either an oppressor, or an empowering position, Alker shows how silence is a relative, yet powerful, component of feminist artists' performance. Hall and Bucholtz (2012) and Mills (2006) demonstrate that people are still gendering identities through language (some silence) in any culture or context, an element of performance that has wider implications in achieving agency (I use agency to reference the premise of limited gentility when considering educational contexts, rather than my earlier use to synonymize with power). These examples remind us to about the sociocultural contexts surrounding gender, silence, and language use.

The theatrical genre is especially appropriate in order to look into the speech-silence relationships. In a live event, silence is not nothing; it is a sign of performance, politically weighted, tense, and meaningful. The scholars, such as Susan Carlson, Elin Diamond, etc. The concept of silence in theatre (especially that of women) has been explored by Jill Dolan about what they can act as. Reaction to oppression and a way of repressing. In *Mountain Language*, silence is not passive. It is forceful, aggressive, and obligatory. Pinter introduced the element of silence to cause psychological tension in his previous plays, and this is the reason why he has done so. It is often called either pregnant or charged. But silence becomes more overtly political in *Mountain Language*. It represents both the institutional denial of whole identities and histories as well as the individual repression of expression. The way that women's voices are routinely marginalized or delegitimized on stage is examined by feminist theater criticism. Carlson (1991) talks about how female characters in plays written by men are frequently spoken for, interrupted, or reduced to symbols. This relates to *Mountain Language*, where the Young Woman is humiliated and her body is transformed into a site of state dominance, while the Old Woman is denied the opportunity to speak with her son. The influence of language on subjectivity has also been noted by theater scholars. According to Michel Foucault, language is a major site of power because it both constructs and reflects reality. Women in *Mountain Language* are essentially deprived of subjecthood when they are prohibited from using their mother tongue, as they are deprived of

the very medium that allows them to express their identity, resistance, and feelings. This is a significant act of symbolic annihilation from a feminist and poststructuralist perspective. Silence in political theater can be interpreted as both complicity and critique. To hide violence, the state characters—the Officer, the Sergeant, and the Guards—use euphemisms, bureaucratic terminology, and directives. Their words are strong but hollow. In the meantime, a system that requires submission silences the characters who are silenced, particularly the women. However, the act of performing this silence in front of a crowd implicates the audience, causing discomfort and contemplation.

2.5. Postcolonial and Political Readings of Mountain Language

Although state violence and censorship are the main topics of discussion in most readings of Mountain Language, some academics have started looking into the play's connection to postcolonial themes. Pinter admitted that actual cases of linguistic oppression, particularly the Turkish government's prohibition of the Kurdish language, served as inspiration for the play. But because Pinter purposefully leaves out allusions to location or ethnicity, the play can speak to a variety of geopolitical settings, such as South Africa during the apartheid era, military-ruled Latin America, and postcolonial nations that repress ethnic minorities. Language and identity are essential to the colonial project, as postcolonial critics like Edward Said, Spivak, and Homi Bhabha have examined. In Mountain Language, the prohibition of the "mountain" language and the imposition of the "official" language replicate colonial dominance tactics. In addition to controlling speech, the state also monitors people's bodies, shatters family ties, and destroys cultural heritage. Women are frequently the main carriers of language and culture in colonized communities, according to feminist postcolonial theory. Therefore, their silence has two purposes: it destroys both intergenerational continuity and individual agency. The Old Woman's forced silence comes to represent the erasure of the history and memory of a whole people. Although Mountain Language has a wealth of potential for postcolonial feminist analysis, few studies have done so. This disparity highlights the need for studies that integrate postcolonial, gendered, and political readings of the play. By examining Mountain Language as a text that not only challenges authoritarianism but also does so in ways that are strongly gendered and culturally coded, this study aims to meet that need.

2.6. Literature Gaps

This review highlights significant gaps in existing scholarship on Mountain Language. Much of the existing scholarship can be characterized as gender blind, neglecting how gender constructs repression/violence. Additionally, prior analyses have not applied an intersectional lens to further investigate the complexities of gender, language, and ethnicity. The explicit use of silence, which can be viewed as a form of gendered violence, is also under-explored, as are the mobility of female characters who go from being prominent at first then relegated to supporting roles. In this study, I will address these gaps from a feminist and intersectional perspective, reframing the sidelined women to explore them as primary actors in order to provide greater political and cultural critique.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Rationale

This study, Harold Pinter's Mountain Language, engages an interpretive-qualitative research design. It is important to emphasize an interpretive-qualitative design since the research will analyze the socio-political and gendered messages in the play, rather than measuring phenomena. The interpretive-qualitative research design relies on frameworks from feminist theory, intersectional analysis, and cultural criticism. Qualitative approaches like feminist theory and cultural criticism recognize the subjective approach to language, symbolism, silence, and subtext which exposes how patriarchal ideologies and relations of power underpin the university text. As academic criticism suggests, one primary reason for selecting Harold Pinter's Mountain Language is due to its poignant portrayal of linguistic oppression. The interpretive-qualitative research design is often used to analyze how women's identities, bodies, and voices are both affected and erased in the play.

3.2. Qualitative Research Paradigm

This study is supported by the constructivist paradigm, according to which reality is socially constructed. Made, formable, and situational. Speaking by this paradigm is used to describe language as A place of ideological struggle and a quotient of power, as well as a medium

of communication. The feminist and post-structuralist theories, which advocate the approach of being reflexive and interpreting critically Constructivism is closely related to positivist objectivity. This research is particularly applicable to the qualitative paradigm because it allows the researcher to consider the numerous levels of meaning, ambiguity, and contradiction of the text. Additionally, it appreciates that the researcher does not act as a mere observer but as an interpreter. Instead of a weakness, it is this subjectivity that offers insight into feminist research, especially in the following manner: Considering the problems of gender, power, and silencing.

3.3. Feminist Research Approach

In feminist research, the lives of women and other marginalized groups are given priority, which also strives to explore patriarchal systems and produce knowledge as well. Facilitates social justice. The focus of feminist work in literary studies is heavy about the destruction of traditional gender patterns, the recovery of the marginalized voice, and the Analysis of gender language. The study adopts a critical and reconstructive methodology of feminism. Besides that, it critiques the *Way Mountain Language* displays gendered oppression and violence, but it intends to make a statement about the effects of war in society. Take back the power of voice and action by being subversive and silent. The intersectional characteristic of the feminist approach acknowledges that gendered experiences cannot be decoupled from other axes of oppression such as political status, classes, and ethnicity.

3.4. Textual and Discourse Analysis

The two commonly used analytical methods are textual analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Which are used in this study:

3.4.1. Textual Analysis

The researcher can study the language, form, and symbolism of the *Mountain* in detail. Textual analysis of language. This includes character action, stage directions, and words. And the silence analysis. Power structures, violence in the institutions, and the image of women are they are given special consideration. The bleak environment and limited use of language in the play are also discussed. Disclosure devices that exaggerate the themes of control and dehumanization.

3.4.2. Analysis of Critical Discourse (CDA)

CDA focuses on how language creates and preserves power, particularly as it is expressed by academics such as Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk. Within the framework of this study, CDA is employed to examine how institutional discourse—embodied by the officials and guards—works to silence, discipline, and marginalize the characters, especially the female ones. By exposing the socio-political structures buried in language that appears neutral or minimal, CDA allows for a multi-layered reading of the text.

3.5. Selection of Text: Why *Mountain Language*?

A particularly powerful play for examining intersectional and gendered violence is *Mountain Language*. The play, which was written in 1988 during a period of intense political upheaval around the world, examines state violence, linguistic repression, and the erasure of cultural and personal identity. *Mountain Language* is a rich site for feminist interrogation because it is explicitly political and minimalistic, in contrast to Pinter's other works, which frequently conceal political critique in interpersonal dynamics. With few characters and little dialogue, the text is succinct but deeply layered. Its power, however, is in its sparsity; it dramatizes, without sensationalism, the cruelty of systemic violence and the horror of erasure. Because of their experiences with physical and verbal abuse, the female characters—especially the Old Woman and the Young Woman—serve as metaphors for the larger feminist issues of resistance, gendered suffering, and silence. Additionally, there hasn't been much feminist scholarship on *Mountain Language*, which puts this study in a position to significantly advance feminist literary discourse as well as Pinter criticism.

3.6. Analytical Tools and Theoretical Integration

The study's theoretical instruments have strong roots in post-structuralist and feminist traditions.

To improve the depth of analysis, every theoretical viewpoint is incorporated into the methodology.

- Judith Butler's performativity theory offers a framework for examining the play's enactment, resistance, and subversion of gender and silence.
- Bell Hooks' intersectional feminism makes it possible to examine the ways in which various oppressions—race, gender, and class—interact in the lives of the characters.
- Gayatri Spivak's idea of the subaltern is crucial to comprehending how colonial and patriarchal silencing is reflected in the characters' lack of voice, particularly that of the Old Woman.
- The intersectionality framework developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw offers a methodological framework for examining how overlapping oppressive structures influence the experiences of women in Mountain Language.

By incorporating these viewpoints, the analysis stays cognizant of the text's complexity and steers clear of dogmatic interpretations.

3.7. Ethical Considerations in Feminist Textual Research

Even though literary analysis does not use human subjects, ethical issues are still very important, particularly for feminist studies. It is important to approach the portrayal of trauma, violence, and silence with tact and honesty. This study focuses on how voyeuristic depictions of female suffering can function as critiques of power, rejecting such portrayals. Furthermore, the researcher must continue to be conscious of their own positionality and the power dynamics at play in interpretation in order to adhere to feminist ethics. The goal is to listen to the silences of the silenced with critical empathy and intellectual rigor, not to speak for them.

4. Textual Analysis

4.1. Textual Analysis

This chapter closely reads Harold Pinter's *Mountain Language* through an intersectional feminist lens, specifically, through the work of Judith Butler (gendered performativity and legibility), bell hooks (patriarchal surveillance and control), Gayatri Spivak (the silencing of the subaltern), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (structural intersectionality).

This chapter contends that the play must also be viewed through a feminist and intersectional lens, even though it has historically been interpreted as a political critique of censorship and totalitarianism. Gender, ethnicity, and the power dynamics ingrained in language all influence the characters' suffering, which is not consistent. This analysis reveals the gendered layers of violence within the play's political machinery by concentrating on the two women who were silenced: the Old Woman and the Young Woman. In order to demonstrate how Pinter stages silence as a gendered and racialized act of systemic oppression, rather than merely as a theatrical device, this chapter closely examines *Mountain Language* using the theories covered in Chapter 3, especially those of Judith Butler, Bell Hooks, Gayatri Spivak, and Kimberlé Crenshaw.

4.2. The Environment as a State Power Symbol

A prison serves as both the actual and symbolic location of state power in *Mountain Language*. There is a sharp contrast between the strength of the guards and the vulnerability of the inmates and their guests in the prison, which has "interior offices" and "walls of barbed wire." The area is militarized and dominated by men. Uniformed men have complete control over language and space, and their speech is clipped and bureaucratic. This environment serves as a site of patriarchal governance, where women are watched, questioned, and punished, in addition to serving as a symbol of authoritarian control. The prison's design perpetuates hierarchical divisions: women are kept outside the walls, excluded from the realm of political discourse or resistance, while men are housed inside as inmates or enforcers. Women are physically restrained and symbolically silenced even when they are permitted to enter the visitation space. The production of intelligible subjects—those who are allowed visibility and speech, and those who are denied both—is reflected in this spatial exclusion, according to Judith Butler. In *Mountain Language*, female visitors are restricted to the periphery; they are permitted to observe but not to speak, to feel but not to act, and to be present but not to participate.

4.3. The Silencing of the Old Woman: Gendered Violence and Cultural Erasure

Perhaps the play's most moving character is the Old Woman in *Mountain Language*. She travels to the prison to see her son, who is imprisoned for unspecified reasons. She speaks the "mountain language," which the state has banned, rather than the "official" language. She is forced to remain silent because "you cannot speak your mountain language in this place." This

ban is an act of cultural annihilation that aims to eradicate not only the individual but also the community to which she belongs. It is more than just a bureaucratic regulation. By remaining silent, the Old Woman becomes a living representation of the oppression of a whole people. She transmits language, memory, and cultural identity in addition to being a mother. Thus, the violent disruption of intergenerational continuity is symbolized by her silence. The Old Woman represents the subaltern female subject that Spivak describes, who is doubly silenced by patriarchal structures and state power, according to feminist theory. Even her attempts to demonstrate her basic humanity are met with rejection: she is ignored, threatened, or corrected when she tries to speak or make gestures. She is the perfect example of a woman who, according to Crenshaw, resides at the nexus of several oppressive systems, including class, language, ethnicity, and gender. Butler's concept of drivability helps explain the decision to outlaw the mountain language. The regime does not acknowledge the Old Woman's suffering; her motherhood, her loss, and even her language are all rendered incomprehensible. In the context of the state, her identity is meaningless. She transcends the bounds of political recognition and turns into a "ungrievable" body.

4.4. The Young Woman: Resistance, Sexual Threat, and Surveillance

Another important female figure, the Young Woman, is subjected to a distinct but no less brutal kind of silencing. She tries to follow the state's regulations and speaks its language, unlike the Old Woman. However, sexualized control is imposed on her body. When she visits her husband in prison, the guards question her harshly, threaten her, and eventually treat her in a degrading manner. She takes off her coat. Men are looking at her body. When addressing her, the Sergeant in particular uses a taunting and sexually suggestive tone:

SERGEANT: "Do you feel self-conscious about your appearance? You ought not to be. Here, we are all friends.

This interaction is about patriarchal surveillance, not just state power. The Young Woman's dignity is taken away from her as she is coerced into a performance of compliance and passivity. Her womanhood turns into a vulnerability, and her identity as a wife is used against her. This interaction is about patriarchal surveillance, not just state power, demonstrating how gendered violence is a tool of authoritarian regimes (Goodspeed, 2019).

Bell Hooks' examination of the ways in which representational systems control women is relevant in this context. The Young Woman's story illustrates how gendered violence is frequently justified as an administrative requirement. Her humiliation is a systemic feature rather than an anomaly. Her body has been transformed into a text that can be written on by state power, and she is not only linguistically silenced but also symbolically violated.

Her silence does, however, contain a hint of resistance. Her silence turns into a form of rejection when she declines to respond to the Sergeant's demeaning inquiries. According to Spivak, when oppressive power structures co-opt or distort speech, silence can be an act of resistance. The Young Woman briefly upends the regime's narrative of control, but she does not escape its brutality.

4.5. The Bureaucratic Machine of Oppression and the Guards

The anonymous machinery of state violence is embodied by the Guards and Officers. They uphold order, enforce regulations, and follow procedures rather than acting maliciously. They use dehumanizing, clipped, and technical language: "You must not speak your mountain language," said the officer. "Orders are orders," said the sergeant.

They lack empathy and feeling in their speech. Language is an instrument, not a means of communication; it is a tool for control rather than for connection. This language bureaucratizes and normalizes violence. Onstage, the guards document, regulate, and forbid; they do not beat, question, or kill. Their ability to control who speaks and who doesn't is what gives them power. According to Butler, the guards uphold the linguistic norms. They decide which forms of speech are punishable and which are allowed. By erasing linguistic and cultural differences, they serve to maintain the appearance of a stable political order. This situation also involves Crenshaw's concept of structural intersectionality. Women are disproportionately affected by the state's suppression of the mountain language, especially older, rural, and illiterate women like the Old

Woman who depend on their native tongue for social survival as well as for expression. The Guards are tools of a system that is profoundly discriminatory despite its seeming neutrality.

4.6. The Gendered Politics of Speech, Language, and Power

In *Mountain Language*, language serves as a tool for both control and resistance. While the oppressed fight to preserve their native tongue, the state uses language to exert dominance. This linguistic conflict primarily affects women. Although their silence is taken as a sign of submission, it also suggests survival tactics.

By naming the play *Mountain Language*, Pinter makes the prohibited language the main target of violence. He universalizes the experience of linguistic repression for many colonized and marginalized groups, from Indigenous communities to Kurdish women, by referring to it solely as "mountain language." It's crucial to remember that the play's language is gendered, with male characters using the language of power and female characters being completely silenced. This illustrates how patriarchal cultures have traditionally restricted women's speech, according to feminist theory. Public speech has historically been coded as male, and female voices are considered disruptive or illegitimate, as Beard (2017) argues in *Women & Power*. This legacy is dramatized in *Mountain Language*. Women lose their right to be heard as human beings, in addition to their right to speak.

4.7. Silence as a Site of Contestation for Feminism

Despite being enforced, silence can also be a form of resistance, according to *Mountain Language*. There is no resolution at the play's conclusion. The women still have no voice, the prisoners are still imprisoned, and the regime is still in power. However, the Young Woman's and the Old Woman's perseverance suggests a kind of radical rejection. Spivak cautions that in situations where her voice is misinterpreted or appropriated, "the subaltern cannot speak." In this way, it is possible to interpret the women's *Mountain Language* silence as a rejection of a discourse that dehumanizes them. They refrain from speaking not because they lack strength but rather because, according to the logic of the regime, their words would be meaningless. Their silence turns into a critique of that reasoning. Hooks sees this as a feminist rupture. The play provides visibility rather than hope or catharsis. Pinter makes the audience face the effects of systematic erasure by centering silenced women on stage. The theater turns into a place of reckoning rather than escape.

Using a feminist research approach, the analysis of *Mountain Language* serves as an example of applying fundamental feminist theorists. By focusing primarily on the experiences of the Old Woman and the Young Woman, the analysis employs a feminist framework to address the OLD MAN and the Young Woman's interactions and the systemic societal responses (or consequences) to these interactions, revealing the implications of existing patriarchal structures of power, as well as the capacity of those structures to perpetuate gendered violence, both in context to the action of the play and the political nature of the play. Using Judith Butler, Bell Hooks Gorham, Gayatri Spivak, and Kimberlé Crenshaw all demonstrates how the authors are using intersectionality to examine the intersection of gender, ethnic background, and class to examine the suffering of the two women. In addition, the analysis of silence as a form of oppression and as a form of resistance shows that the researchers positioned theatrical devices not just as aesthetic choices, but as a way to understand the marginalized, and often unheard, voices or experiences, which also promotes the agenda of a feminist research approach to provide visibility to the experiences of silenced women.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

The analysis of Harold Pinter's play *Mountain Language* captures an intersectional feminist reading of the text, stepping away from politically-minded readings of censorship and totalitarianism. The analysis illustrates how the suffering experienced by the characters is not the same, and is textured in many ways, using the lenses of the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and language. The dominant contention that silence is a gendered and racialized act of systemic oppression is abundantly developed throughout the text. Centering on only the two female characters of the Old Woman and the Young Woman provides particular analytic attention to how the state's power operates differently on male and female bodies. If the Old Woman's silence represents a considerable cultural and linguistic erasure—akin to a form of violent colonization of a subjugated community—then her status as a mother, along with being a keeper of the

mountain language equalizes her claim as Spivak's "subaltern female subject," since her body is colonized in both gendered and gendered forms through patriarchal power and state sovereignty. The analytic attention the authors provided for her character was clearly not wrongfully using Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality by showing, as much as possible, how her oppression is compounded by the intersection of her gender identity, age, language, and ethnicity.

The Young Woman's silencing is distinct in that it is based in a sexualized oppression of control and surveillance: while she is sanctioned by the language of the state, there is one patriarchal moment where the guards use degrading language that strips the Young Woman of her humanity not just by the language but through threats. The way the analysis deploys Bell Hooks' theories of representation and systems of control to talk about tropical violence is very persuasive in this case because it exposes the ways that people denied power are very much still subject to the elements of violence in that regime that are on display and because the Young Woman's silence is also apparently a type of resistance to the enforcement of the sovereign earth, and in proper terms, it is called, if I may, a "momentary upending of the narrative of her regime." Again, there are multiple facets of an arguments that could be drawn upon: that silence is a suite of strategies in the regimes of control of Ralph Ellison and Edward Said and/or also as a method of surviving critique and of resistance. To an equally important note, the section on the guards and the 'bureaucratic machine of oppression' is crucial to this analysis. In presenting their actions as procedural rather than malicious, the analysis illustrates clearly the dehumanizing features of the system. The guards have purposely adopted a 'clipped and bureaucratic' language, showing how language is also a method of control, aimed at eliminating 'difference' to preserve 'stable political order,' according to Butler's theory. The reflection on how this system disproportionately affects marginalized groups, namely women in particular, is a meaningful application of Crenshaw's note on structural intersectionality. The concluding discussions around the gendered politics of speech, language and power, really seals the argument overall. The reference to Mary Beard situates Pinter's play within a much larger historical narrative about women's voices being construed as intrusive or inappropriate. The significance of naming the play *Mountain Language*, is that it represents a larger set of experiences of linguistic repression across marginalized groups 'all over the world'.

5.2. Conclusion

In conclusion, the textual analysis provides an exciting and original read of *Mountain Language* by suggesting that it offers a feminist and intersectional critique of power. More than offering a protest against censorship, the text illustrates how power operates on various bodies with specific attention to the unique and multifaceted violence exercised against women. If the central thesis of the play is that the act of silencing - and we can see that is exactly what is happening - is not a neutral act but an act which is gendered, racialized, and class-based oppression, then the analysis of the Old Woman and the Young Woman indicates that silence is not a passive and neutral act but a complex and contested site of power. For the Old Woman, silence is indicative of cultural annihilation and marks her status of losing her subjectivity in the un-drivability afforded by the state. For the Young Woman, it represents the sexualized vulnerability, but also something small and significant in resilience. By indicating that the male characters of the play - the Guards' - use language to exercise bureaucratic control in the activity of the state, we reinforce the argument that the state is patriarchal. In the end, *Mountain Language* does not offer an easy resolution or catharsis; as this analysis articulates, it offers visibility. Pinter forces the audience to confront the consequences of systematic erasure by prioritizing the experiences of the silenced - women. As a play, it challenges us to see deeper than a political critique that ignores the gendered violence that exists within systemic violence. The women's silence in the play is not simply a lack of voice but rather a profound comment on a system that suppresses their words from meaning anything at all. Their silence is a form of resistance; a rupture of the oppressive system, exposing the regime's moral and structural bankruptcy.

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