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The New World Order and the Unmasking of the Neo-Colonial Present

Summary

In his dramatic sketch *The New World Order* Pinter exposes practices of psychological and physical abuse targeted at local people who resist neo-colonial advancements in territories directly occupied or indirectly controlled by Western hegemonic powers. Through the deployment of Pinteresque double-layered meanings conveyed through seemingly ordinary, everyday language, the drama unveils the ideological premises and operating principles of neo-colonial discourse. The paper discusses the way Pinter blasts apart a seemingly neutral Western rhetoric of humanitarian militarism, focusing on the discursive strategies by means of which neo-imperial violence, torture and massive dispossession of local populations are justified and naturalized.

Key words: neo-colonialism, cultural racism, economic dominance, torture, Chile

Novi svetovni red (The New World Order): razpiranje pogleda na neokolonialno sedanost

Povzetek

V svojem dramskem skeču *Novi svetovni red* Pinter razgali psihološke in fizične prakse ustrahovanja lokalnega prebivalstva, ki se zoperstavlja neokolonialnim posegom, in sicer na področjih neposredno pod okupacijo zahodnoevropskih hegemonov, ali pa pod njihovo posredno kontrolo. Večslojnost pomenov, ki jih Pinter vgrajuje v navidezno nevtralno, vsakdanjo govorico slehernika služi kot odskočna deska za razkrivanje ideoloških podstat in operativnih tehnik, na katerih temelji neokolonialni diskurz. Prispevek obravnava načine, na katere Pinterjeva drama razpre navidezno nevtralno retoriko zahodnoevropskih imperialističnih velesil, in pokaže, kako poteka zagovor in naturalizacija neoimperialnega nasilja, mučenja in masovne razlastitve lokalnega prebivalstva pod krinko domnevno humanitarnega militarizma.

Ključne besede: neokolonializem, kulturni rasizem, ekonomska dominantnost, mučenje, Čile

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“Since trade ignores national boundaries and the manufacturer insists on having the world as a market, the flag of his nation must follow him, and the doors of the nations which are closed must be battered down ... Concessions obtained by financiers must be safeguarded by ministers of state, even if the sovereignty of unwilling nations be outraged in the process. Colonies must be obtained or planted, in order that no useful corner of the world may be overlooked or left unused.” Woodrow Wilson, 1907¹

1. Introduction

Pinter’s dramatic oeuvre has been marked by his commitment to the analysis and understanding of power relationships, with a heavy focus placed on the function of language in creating and securing positions of usurped authority, dominance and control. Critics unanimously agree that, while Pinter’s dramatic output has always referenced political issues, it has also undergone a major change with regard to its definition of the political, thus contributing primarily to the “deepening and enlarging of the field of political” (Aragay 2009, 185). His earlier works of the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s are confined to the exploration of micropolitics within seemingly self-sufficient inter-personal relationships, which are therefore still treated in isolation from the broader socio-political context and symbolic order that in fact informs their structuration. His later works that emerged with the onset of the 1980s, such as *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988), *Party Time* (1991) and *Ashes to Ashes* (1996), break out of this confinement. These works thus traverse the path from being mere “metaphorical explorations of power” to becoming works that “broaden their focus to include an understanding of politics as the world of state power, torture, repression and violence”, thus also pointing to the “absolute interdependence of the private and the public”, while reinstating the need for a constant production of a “social, shared sense of subjectivity” (Aragay 2009, 289). It is to this second stage of Pinter’s oeuvre that *The New World Order* belongs.

Pinter’s dramatic sketch *The New World Order* premiered in 1991 as a prelude to *Death and the Maiden* written by Ariel Dorfman, a well-known political activist² who was exiled by the Pinochet regime as a result of his sustained critique of US imperial policies in Latin America. While *Death and the Maiden* deals with the reappearance of a woman seeking revenge against her former torturer in post-Pinochet Chile, Pinter’s *The New World Order* takes us to the very

¹ Quoted in Noam Chomsky: “Modern-Day American Imperialism: The Middle East and Beyond.” Noam Chomsky’s Zspace Page, December 23, 2009.

² Dorfman’s most influential work, *How to Read Donald Duck: A Manual of Decolonization*, was co-authored with Armand Matterat and published in 1971 during the Allende presidency. The book was later burned in Pinochet Chile and taken out of circulation in the US by the Ford administration (McClennen 2010, 176). *How to Read Donald Duck* draws attention to the imperial propaganda found in the Disney comics. As one critic has pointed out, it “dismantles the seemingly innocuous characters of Donald Duck and his pals and demonstrates how they serve to colonize Latin America through a repeated litany of tales favouring capitalism, U.S. imperialism, [and] the infantilization of the reader” (McClennen 2010, 175).

heart of the Pinochet regime, backed and sponsored by the US (Livingstone 2009; Harvey 2005; Chomsky 2003). Its single act unravels in a torture chamber presided over by two interrogators who have English names, Lionel and Des. The two interrogators continually flex their muscle in the presence of the blindfolded prisoner, openly and repeatedly boasting that the victim “hasn’t got any idea at all about any one of the number of things that we [“are about to do”] to him” (Pinter 2005, 271, 272). The blindfolded man turns out to be the target of their intimidation and impending torture for being a disturbance in the socio-political landscape. It is in this respect that Lionel first wonders ironically about the identity and true preoccupation of the speechless victim, oscillating between two options: “Who is this cunt anyway! What is he, some kind of peasant – or a lecturer in theology?” (Pinter 2005, 273). This crucial remark, which at first sight seems to merely belittle the victim, is immediately followed by Des’s precision-driven observation that foregrounds and undercuts the significance of the victim’s political cause. It merges the two labels into a single description, finally announcing an alarming truth, which in turn seals the victim’s fate: “He is a lecturer in fucking peasant theology” (Pinter 2005, 273).

The significance of this compound phrase is twofold: first, the *peasant* in the “peasant theology” invokes and makes visible the otherwise spectral existence of all those Latin American peasants and by extension the rest of the masses of ordinary citizens who have been dispossessed and impoverished through ongoing privatisation schemes in Latin America. These have always been the staple of imperial pursuits on the part of the US and other Western corporations, who have worked in cahoots with local elites, demanding free access to and control of land, natural resources, markets and unprotected, low-wage labour. Secondly, the reference to “theology” and thereby to “peasant theology” in particular, acknowledges and foregrounds the existence of swelling social and guerrilla resistance movements organised primarily by the dispossessed, that is, peasants as well as by trade unionists, journalists and intellectuals (Burbach 2001). All of these, of course, are spreading the theology, or in other words the gospel of social justice, demanding a redistribution of wealth and an end to the exploitation and violence that accompany the Western-led expansion of capitalist modes of international production and accumulation of private corporate wealth. It is to this kind of potential resistance movement that the two torturers refer derisively as “peasant theology”. The two torturers – who, as suggested by their English names, obviously work in the employ of a Western imperial force and serve as its extended hand – boast that the infliction of pain on those who will not succumb makes the two of them “feel so pure” (Pinter 2005, 277). For they believe it is their sacred duty to suppress the dangerous theology of social justice and annihilate its local spokespeople in order, as they proudly proclaim, to “keep the world clean for [the spread of Western] democracy” (Pinter 2005, 277). It is for this reason that the blindfolded victim is tortured and mutilated in order to be subdued and finally rendered speechless, keeping the socio-political landscape “clean” for the advancement of Western economic interests.

Pinter’s political play is a critique of Western neo-colonial practices and imperial structural violence masquerading as democracy and human-rights discourse. The torture room alerts us to the neo-colonial present that can no longer be concealed, nor can its uncomfortable truths of socio-economic subjugation and devastation be evaded. Far from being just an enclosed box, the torture room is thus a “symbolic place” that stands for the whole of Chile and by extension Latin America and beyond. As a symbolic place, the torture room thus also functions

as a veritable Pandora's box for Western audiences, whose world is in fact by no means separate from the world and the fates of those directly exposed to the US-led neo-imperial policies. Once its lid is pried open and its visceral contents are finally allowed to spill over, the sketch and its torture room come to feature as a "speck of [stirring] consciousness" on the part of an audience that needs to be awakened from its mainstream-media induced slumber (Worth qtd. in Inan 2005, 38).

With the torture chamber functioning as a symbolic place, the anonymous blindfolded prisoner who is to be vanquished for spreading the gospel of social justice can therefore be taken both literally and figuratively. He can be understood both as somebody plucked from a critical crowd of local inhabitants demanding social justice and as an allegorical stand-in for those Latin American leaders who have dared defy the US's designation of Latin America as its *backyard*. In this sense, Pinter's political sketch draws a direct analogy between the "peasant theology" of a seemingly anonymous prisoner and the anti-colonial and socialist agenda pursued by the ousted Chilean President Allende. This agenda was made most explicit in part of the speech Allende delivered upon his election victory, which deserves to be quoted in full:

"We shall abolish monopolies which grant control of the economy to a few dozen families. We shall abolish a tax system which favours profiteering and which has always put a greater burden on the poor than the rich. ... We shall abolish the large estates which condemn thousands of peasants to serfdom. We shall put an end to foreign ownership of our industry and our sources of unemployment. The road to socialism lies through democracy, pluralism and freedom." (qtd. in Livingstone 2009, 58).

Pinter's sketch inadvertently draws attention to a broader socio-political context in which the torturers, as allegorical figures of Western powers, operate and their victims are embedded. Salvador Allende and his government introduced progressive policies, the aim of which was a redistribution of wealth. This rested on agrarian reform and nationalisation of industries, the most important among which was copper extraction, in which private American firms prior to the nationalisation had a 79 percent ownership stake (Livingstone 2009, 59). Semi-declassified US government documents reveal that the CIA, operating under close scrutiny by top Washington administrators and working in close alliance with private American corporations like Pepsi, ITT and Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank, tried to prevent Allende's ascendancy to power well before his election in 1970. The CIA poured in millions of dollars to fund the campaigns of Allende's right-wing and Christian Democrat opponents, thus influencing the election results in 1964. The same tactics, however, fell through in the 1970 election (Livingstone 2009, 51-5). The Nixon administration, among other actions, immediately resorted to measures to cripple the Chilean economy and spread dissatisfaction among Allende's own supporters. The US cut financial aid and reached an agreement with other financial agencies, including Western private banks, to withdraw or no longer grant loans, as a result of which whole sectors of Chile's vital economy, such as copper, steel, petrol, electricity and transport, eventually ground to a halt, due to a severe shortage of spare parts the Allende government could no longer afford to buy (Livingstone 2009, 56). The gravity of the situation was further compounded by Nixon's direct order

instructing “his officials to sell copper from the US stockpile in order to reduce the world copper price and slash Chile’s export earnings” (Livingstone 2009, 56). While the Nixon administration deliberately made the Chilean “economy scream” (Livingstone 2009, 55), virtually incapacitating Allende’s government in implementation of its reforms, it also continued to pour money into the coffers of Chile’s opposition parties, making it possible for them to establish or buy private radio and television stations that were to spread anti-Allende, that is anti-socialist propaganda. All along, the Nixon government supported and funded the preparations for the coup, which the CIA engineered in collaboration with anti-constitutionalist military officers, opting in the end for Pinochet. After the coup and under the close supervision of the US government, the Pinochet regime was one of the first to launch a series of neoliberal economic policies which included privatisation of state industries that were to be sold off at rock-bottom prices, the privatisation of the education, social security and health systems, the abolition of labour laws and outlawing of trade unions, and the opening of the economy, including natural resources such as energy resources, timber and fisheries, to foreign private investment, financial speculation and “unregulated exploitation”, with minimum concession payments and only symbolic corporate taxes placed on foreign companies (Livingstone 2009, 64; Harvey 2005, 7-9).

This pattern of contemporary neo-colonialism, which is premised on financial instruments under Western control and marked by a new cycle of appropriation of natural resources and control of labour, is not unique to South America. It can be traced all over the world. The most recent example is the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, which the Western hegemonic powers sold to the public under the false claims of Iraq being an imminent security threat for possessing weapons of mass destruction. Here, under the slogan of bestowing American freedom and democracy on the Iraqi people, the US – with the help of the new Iraqi government which it had itself installed – has passed a number of laws that have prohibited strikes and annulled the right of the Iraqi people to trade unions, while also putting into effect: “the full privatisation of public enterprises, full ownership rights by foreign firms of Iraqi businesses, full repatriation of foreign profits ... the opening of the Iraqi banks to foreign control, national treatment for foreign companies and ... the elimination of nearly all trade barriers” (Harvey 2005, 6). In all instances, be it Latin America, the Middle East or some other place of geo-strategic importance, we can observe a familiar process at work that underlines the expansionist activities of Western hegemonic powers geared towards accumulation of private capital: this is the draining of resources from newly constituted peripheries, including the former European socialist countries, to the reconstructed imperial centres, most effectively achieved through shock therapy as evident in instances of direct military occupation or carefully staged coups (Klein 2007). These kinds of interventions fall under the rubric of neo-colonialism – a new world order – whereby a “sovereign state (i. e. Iraq) is held under political, economic, and military control by a hegemonic power (i. e. the USA)” whose troops may not necessarily be present on the territory under occupation (Welch 2010, 124).

Being a symbolic space, Pinter’s torture room epitomises this broader geo-political context. The escalating torrent of threats unleashed against the blindfolded victim in the torture chamber cannot therefore but be understood in a double and yet complementary sense. As the nature of

the threats moves from the merely descriptive level, “He hasn’t got any idea at all of what we’re going to do to him”, to a more detailed explanation stating explicitly that the victim “hasn’t got any idea at all about *any one of the number of things* that we might do to him” (271, italics added), a more nuanced vista of multi-layered meanings unfolds. For these threats no longer bear only direct reference to bodily pain, which is to be inflicted on the victim through application of various torture techniques for his refusal to conform. They also carry an equally sinister Pinteresque undertone which is to be understood in broader socio-economic terms, hinting at a seemingly abstract but in reality very concrete form of torture linked to the new economic world order. The introduction of neoliberal economic agendas promoted by hegemonic powers always leads to the complete rupture and devastation of local communities, and hence to the reduction of human lives to mere labouring bodies that are not only held captive under an imposed socio-economic order but also inevitably riddled with the pain of systemic deprivation. Since economic threats sooner or later always acquire a very concrete physical manifestation, they eventually become one with physical threats. Direct physical and implicit economic threats are thus not at all separate from one another but in fact mutually reinforcing to the point that they merge into one another.

In Pinter’s *The New World Order*, the torturers are mouthpieces announcing a clear agenda on behalf of the imperial master they serve. The message they impart to the victim is that those who preach social justice have no clue about what we can do to them. And we can do this by tearing apart your communities and your countries, reconstituting them in our image as operative economies tied to our private gain of profit, making your lives in the process disposable, reducing you to mere flesh or “bare life” (Singh 2006, 76) that festers with unacknowledged but systematically inflicted wounds. Yet our conscience is clear and our hearts pure, for our excuse, although unfounded, is that we are doing all this for the sake of spreading freedom and democracy. The political significance of Pinter’s sketch thus also lies in laying bare the discursive mechanisms by means of which a hegemonic power comes to portray itself as a seat of benevolent colonialism and claims for itself the fake status of indisputable moral authority.

2. *The New World Order and the Neo-Racism of Western Democracies*

The torturers’ evocation of the word democracy, under whose banner the executioners of Western hegemonic projects march to other countries, draws attention to ideological discourses Western hegemonic powers use to obscure their exploitative economic practices and to naturalise their imperial violence. To justify the exploitation and mistreatment of neo-colonial subjects, contemporary hegemonic powers produce official narratives about themselves that put them, as Pinter’s play foregrounds, in a position of fabricated moral superiority. These narratives of Western supremacy are based on the re-activation and intensification of old Eurocentric, racialised binaries, which once again construct societies along the axis of modernity and traditionalism, which are euphemistic expressions for progress and regressiveness.

In liberal democracies, as noted by an array of social scientists, contemporary processes of racialisation no longer rely upon discredited and imploded biological racism. The focus has instead shifted to the endless production of cultural racism. As explained by Balibar, this is

“racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences” (Balibar 1991, 21). In this context culture is used as a selective and racialised marker, since it is used to reference and hence define only non-western peoples as well as immigrant/minority groups residing at the heart of imperial centres (Gunew 2004, 6; Bannerji 2000, 78). Within cultural racism, the destiny of non-western others is interpreted as no longer sealed by their genes but imposed by the supposedly restrictive traditions and habits of their culture, which is conceptualised as static and ahistoric (Balibar 1991). This discursive manoeuvre makes it possible for the members of racialised groups to be re-positioned as prisoners of their culture, which in turn is posited as a totalising and deterministic force. This rhetorical operation leads to a re-configuration of non-western others as subjects lacking agency and individuality: their thinking and behaviour are presented as entirely governed by the dictates and traditions of their supposedly one-dimensional cultures. In this way formerly biological constructs of hierarchically arranged difference and otherness morph into those of cultural stereotypes. The essentialised notion of culture becomes an explanatory tool for interpreting the behaviour and actions of non-western others. While racialised others are thus rendered culture-specific and culture-bound, liberal subjects of western democracies are presented as free of the determinants of their culture, in terms of its “constructive and repressive powers” (Brown 2006, 22). How is this ideological trick made possible?

In this game of binary constructs, the Western subject is featured as a rational and autonomous individual, who in his/her rationality appears to be abstracted and therefore supposedly disembodied from the material determinants and constraints of his/her culture. In other words, the so called liberal individual is *artificially divested of any associations with culture* through a discursive strategy that abstracts the individual from her/his concrete social context, so that the “powers that produce and reproduce subjects’ relations and practices, beliefs and rationalities, and [which] do so without the [subject’s] express choice or consent” are disavowed and removed from view (Brown 2006, 22).³ The conceit at work here, as demonstrated by Wendy Brown, is that the Western subject is re-conceptualised as though s/he existed “prior to culture”, so that culture through this rhetorical strategy is “rendered extrinsic to rather than constitutive of the subject” (Brown 2006, 153). Culture is thus re-formulated and positioned as a mere “background” which a liberal subject, unlike its subaltern other, can freely “enter or exit” (Brown 2006, 153). In this way, the understanding of “culture as power and especially as rule is replaced by culture as a mere way of life”, so that we no longer deal with interpellative ideological processes and subject positions but rather with a mere assortment of consumer choices revolving around food, music, and other sources of comfort (Brown 2006, 153). In this way the Western subject is re-constituted as somebody whom culture neither defines nor regulates. The Western liberal subject is understood to choose culture and “have culture”, but unlike its racialised other, it is not seen as

³ The construction of the Western subject as an autonomous and self-made individual existing outside the constitutive constraints of their culture leads, for example, to the misconception that patriarchy, its norms and gender subordination are inherent only to other cultures. The outcome of this dualism is the construction of a homogenised image of all non-western women as victims and prisoners of their oppressive and religiously driven patriarchal cultures, and the construction of the myth of Western women as “secular, liberated and having control over their own lives” (Mohanty, 2002, 42). The construct of a free western woman rests upon the ascription of cultural constraints exclusively onto the “Other” racialised woman, which in turn serves to mask the existence of patriarchy and processes of gender subordination in Western capitalist states, where women continue to be construed as a deviation from the masculine norm.

the embodiment of culture. Rather, as pointed out by Wendy Brown, culture is something that Westerners have, unlike the racialised others who “*are* a culture” (Brown 2006, 151). Hence the slogan “‘we’ have culture while culture has ‘them’” (Brown 2006, 151).

The construction of racialised others as prisoners of their atavistically reconstrued culture and of Western subjects as enlightened, free individuals who supposedly simply choose what to think and how to behave is indicative of the re-activation of the old colonial discourse: open and modern societies in the West and traditional and regressive societies in the rest of the world. Or, as exemplified by Balibar in his seminal essay “Is there a neo-racism?”, these constructs once again point to “barely reworked variants of the idea [in the Western orientalist imaginary] that historical cultures and humanity can be divided into two main groups: the one assumed to be universalistic and progressive, the other supposed irremediably particularistic and primitive” (Balibar 1991, 25). All of this plays directly into the hands of Western supremacy. Pinter’s play discloses the duplicity of this game precisely at the peak of the action when the torturers are finally ready to use force. As one of the torturers begins to cry in ecstasy, feeling the urge to confess to the fellow torturer that “he loves it”, that he loves what he is doing because it makes him “feel so pure”, the other torturer legitimises the feelings of his workmate by stating, “You are right to feel pure. You know why? ... Because you are keeping the world clean for democracy” (Pinter 2005, 277). This justification is premised on a particular kind of cultivated blindness motivated by updated cultural racism.

Here representatives of hegemonic power are cast as military missionaries on a civilising mission in a country where locals, according to the torturers, supposedly need to be instructed on principles of democracy, even though the lesson, strangely, is steeped in torture and blood. The evocation of democracy and the need to keep the host country ready for its unconditional uptake implies the lack of any kind of democratic organisation or other trace of self-governing capacity among the locals, thus signalling a traditional society driven by lack of rationality, which therefore needs to be enlightened by a modern and progressive one. Violence is justified in the form of a neo-colonial speak that figures Western subjects as carriers of universal laws and seemingly disembodied principles of humanity to be imparted to the colonised others. Pinter’s political sketch completely unveils the ideological machinations that inform the construction of the hegemon’s fake moral superiority, bringing to the surface logical contradictions that make this position untenable and unsustainable. For the military missionaries who appear to stand on a higher moral ground can parade as such only when the constitutive forces of their own authoritarian, racist and patriarchal culture are disavowed and removed from view. Theirs is indeed a culture marked by discriminatory and exclusionary practices, including, for example, repressive immigration policies, blatant racism, ghettos, and a huge sprawl of profit-run prison-industrial complexes where people’s subjectivities are indeed constituted in pain. The ascription of a lack of democratic principles of governance to non-European countries – a lack that only Western hegemonic powers can redress – signifies the construction of the colonised subjects as mired in an anterior time and place, and marked by a particular kind of imaginary cultural incommensurability with the West.

Pinter’s play thus makes visible the way in which the very mobilisation of the discourse of modernity and tradition now premised on cultural racism is strategically applied by Western powers to other seemingly far-flung corners of the world, where it becomes directly tied to

the justification of the Western forces' invasive foreign policy agendas and the enforcement of their geo-political interests under the pretext of humanitarian intervention and rescue missions. This can be witnessed in the re-conceptualisation of non-western countries as inadequate and deficit cultures incapable of governing themselves and in need of financial and military "stabilisation", thus inevitably inviting upon themselves the services of western powers. These are benevolently extended in the form of structural adjustment programs and humanitarian military interventions, which in the neo-colonial speak, as pointed out by a number of critics, are euphemistic expressions for economic and military occupation (Chomsky 1993). All this goes to show that the way cultural racism is re-mobilised at the heart of the so called Western democracies has direct consequences for the way the constructs of race and socio-economic power hierarchies are circulated and applied globally to keep in check "the material and symbolic boundaries" between the West and its Others.

3. Exporting Freedom, Exporting Torture

"They tell us they are teaching democracy. We say 'How do you teach democracy through the barrel of a gun?'" (Father Roy Bourgeois in Taylor 2007, 1)

US-led imperialism rests on benign claims of installing democracy and bestowing freedom on the colonised peoples it takes into its custody, supposedly for the sake of their own security and protection. The image of the US imperial force as a beacon of democracy, the seat of reason and source of benevolence is, however, betrayed by the systematic and indiscriminate deployment of widespread, carefully coordinated torture, which Pinter's sketch uncompromisingly brings to the surface. The US has taken every measure to exempt itself from the Geneva conventions, to which it no longer subscribes. At the same time it has loosened up definitions of torture, allowing for reinterpretation of a number of torture techniques as no longer falling under the category of pain-inducing or life-threatening procedures, even though the end result might be organ failure or even death. It has also adopted measures that protect US interrogators against war crimes prosecution or charges of homicide, while creating new categories of non-persons and war-prisoners out of colonised people with no recourse to legal protection. These are people stripped of their humanity and reduced to mere "bodies that can be tortured or killed with impunity" (Singh 2006, 74).

The real aim of widespread, indiscriminately used torture is not to extract significant confession or intelligence information, on the basis of which the tortured could be incriminated. Research shows that (Iraqi) detainees are required to sign "prepared confessions" before their torture even commences or just to "give false information", which the subcontracting torture agencies simply file away. As pointed out by a number of human rights activists and lawyers, "information gathering is not the goal" (Philipose 2007, 70). The point of the torture that is part of systematic imperial violence is not to incite people to talk but to make them go silent, a point succinctly driven home in Pinter's play by one of the torturers:

"Before he came in here he was a big shot, he never stopped shooting his mouth off, he **never stopped questioning received ideas**. Now – because he's apprehensive about what's about to happen to him – **he's stopped all that**, he's got nothing more to say, he's more or

less called it a day. I mean once – not too long ago – **this man was a man of conviction, wasn't he, a man of principle. Now he's just a prick.**" (Pinter 276, bold italics added)

As Pinter demonstrates, under the New World Order the aim of using torture is not to loosen the victim's tongue by whatever means possible but to debase and shatter the victim into smithereens, thus immobilising his/her tongue and turning the victim into a submissive observer of occupation who no longer "questions received ideas" (Pinter 2005, 276). Or, as stated by Spencer, the objective of torture under a hegemonic power is "the reduction of a thinking, vigorous and insubordinate human being to 'no more than a pile of blood, bone and meat that is unhappy', a gibbering and helpless body focused now not on resistance or triumph but on the endurance or alleviation of suffering" (2008, 183). The point of deliberate, systematic infliction of pain is to break people in, which in turn prevents the articulation of a fully-fledged critique of their subjugation and consolidation of critical consciousness that might lead to meaningful political opposition. To torture, then, is to "send [colonised subjects] beyond language, outside of the political", thus effectively "shutting down dissent" (Koopman 2008, 829) and eradicating or at least containing resistance.

Evidence shows that the US has apprehended and detained tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians (26,000) that it has swept literally off the streets in random raids. These civilians are held inside a network of large prison-like camps without charges and for extended periods of time. Even though they are officially not considered criminals or terrorists, they are labelled and treated as an "imperative security risk" (Welch 2010, 128). In these prisons Iraqi civilians are subjected not only to harsh and degrading, abusive treatment but also to "re-training" programmes. The purpose of these is to inculcate the prisoners into accepting or at least adapting to the new socio-economic order, turning them into compliant and even active supporters of the occupation and "the new regime of authority". Some of these re-formed detainees are then "hire[d] back" by the US military "to confront [that is, infiltrate and incapacitate] the insurgency" (Welch 2010, 129, 135). This is the issue that Pinter's play raises at its very end, resulting in its culmination. When one of the torturers admits feeling so pure in what he is doing to supposedly "keep the world clean for democracy", the other torturer shakes him by the hand, motioning at the victim, saying, "And so will he ... [that is, shake you by the hand] ... in about thirty-five minutes" (Pinter 2005, 278). The point of the torture, then, is not only to break the prisoner who is believed to be "a lecturer in peasant theology" and therefore a "man of conviction", a "man of principle", so that his vociferous critique can thereafter be forever silenced. The purpose is also to force the weakened victim to bury his convictions and replace them with their opposite. The victim must not only give up his principles but also endorse his own enslavement. The underlying goal is therefore to reset his mind frame so that he will become an ardent supporter of his own subjugation, somebody whose self-definition from now on will always be derived from and conditioned by the terms set by the not so invisible hand of the imperial master.

At this point, the significance of the torturers' English first names finally comes full circle. On the one hand, their English names point to the immediate, direct ground engagement of Western troops in a country placed under direct Western occupation. On the other, the torturers' English names signify the hegemonic power's indirect presence, yet unrestricted involvement in the

interior affairs of seemingly sovereign countries whose proxy governments in the new world order have been in fact installed by the US or its Western allies. In short, their English names suggest that the torturers might themselves be the direct representatives of a Western occupying force or they might be local militias trained and put in service by a Western hegemonic power as its extended hand. Figuratively, the torture chamber stands for any country of strategic interest to and directly targeted by US-led Western neo-colonial forces, while literally speaking it returns us to Chile and Latin America. The English names of the torturers in this latter case thus invoke the US Army School of the Americas, which the US established in Panama in 1946 and relocated to Fort Benning, Georgia in 1984, giving it a new name but, of course, not a new purpose (WHINSEC – the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation).⁴ Ever since its inception, this school has been concerned with the training of Latin American military personnel in counterinsurgency warfare and the use of various torture techniques that the CIA developed in the 1950s as part of a new psychological torture paradigm based on sensory deprivation, sexual humiliation and exposure to extreme stress positions (Koopman 2008, 829). The training manuals extensively used in the school instruct specifically that, for domestic insurgency to be quelled, the targets should be “union organizers, and those who say the government is not meeting the basic needs of the people” (Koopman 2008, 828).

4. Conclusion

The English names of the torturers throughout the play thus serve as a sinister reminder of the doublespeak of neo-colonial powers whose self-promoted benevolence and concern for the well-being of the colonised is proven a sheer travesty of truth and a propaganda piece at its worst.⁵ At the same time, the dark side of the Western-sponsored or directly exported brutality in seemingly far away places ceases to be the “fantasy world of abroad”, but becomes instead our immanent, “massive and historically important objective reality” (Inan 2005, 42), which can no longer be swept aside and ignored. Pinter’s torture chamber thus defamiliarises us to the reality of our own world reconstructed along the axis of neo-imperial centres and newly created or refurbished peripheries. It is the new world order that is steeped in blood and mired in violence for the sake of holding in place the old, but refurbished socio-economic hierarchies and accompanying modes of exploitation that affect those on the periphery as well as those in the centre. *The New World Order* makes a political statement by holding a mirror to these practices that affect us all directly. They make us all captives of a globally restructured torture chamber, which upon closer inspection turns out to be nothing but the latest stage in a massive schema of private wealth accumulation designed to enrich a few and further impoverish the rest.

⁴ The most notorious graduates have included Manuel Noriega and an array of former dictators and death squad leaders operating in Latin American states (Livingstone 2009, Koopman 2008).

⁵ I recently discovered that the two English names, Des and Lionel, are today considered obsolete and that in the minds of the English they would be instantly recognised as names associated with stand-up comedians and public-hall entertainers back in the 1960s and the 1970s. The names thus carry another ominous Pinteresque note, as they draw attention to the way violence, torture and death inflicted on neo-colonial subjects are rendered palatable and acceptable to the Western audience once they are strategically translated into a form of mere entertainment, as witnessed, for example, in video-game-like presentations of Western-led bombing raids in the mainstream media. At the same time, the horrific effect of neo-colonial discourses and practices propped up by torture and violence becomes lost on the executioners themselves. Their humanity is irredeemably lost once their internalised discourses of otherness and the infliction of pain on others come to serve as a source of entertainment.

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