**Harold Pinter’s *Minor* Theater**

**A Close Reading of *Landscape* through the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari**

[…] there are at least twenty-four possible aspects of any single statement, depending on where you're standing at the time and on what the weather's like. A categorical statement, I find, will never stay where it is and be finite. It will immediately be subject to modification by the other twenty-three possibilities of it. No statement I make, therefore, should be interpreted as final and definitive […]. I suggest there can be no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false.

–Harold Pinter, *Writing for the Theater[[1]](#footnote-1)*

How can we enter Harold Pinter’s work? The two philosophers Gilles Deleuze[[2]](#footnote-2) and Félix Guattari asked a similar question about Kafka’s work in their book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature.[[3]](#footnote-3)* In their study, Deleuze and Guattari read not only Kafka, but also literary works by other writers, such as Herman Melville, Samuel Beckett, and Lewis Caroll. Their reading of literary texts constitutes an inseparable part of their philosophical arguments as well as the processes by which they are presented. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari do not present a regular system for analyzing literary texts, and the pair’s interest in these texts is not interpretative in nature. In other words, Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical treatment of literary texts strives to answer not the question, “What does the work say?”, but rather, “How does the work function?” While the former question is fundamentally semantic, focusing on the representative and referential qualities of language, the latter question addresses the materials that comprise the work, and examines the various usages of language effected within.

It is in this dimension that the relevance of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical conception of language becomes clear for a theatrical medium focusing on language’s modes of action, as well as on its performative, structural, and formal layers. Because the theatre – in which the written dramatic text is rendered into a performance – constitutes a meeting point between various languages (spoken, physical, spatial, and visual), the question “how does it function?” becomes deeper and more complex, turning into a central problem of the genre (for the theatrical genre is inherently bound up in the movement from dramatic text to staged performance, to something that “functions”).

The literary text (both written and staged), Deleuze and Guattari argue, is a medium that makes it possible to pierce the ordinary dimension of language. This dimension expresses itself through commonplace, uniform, and limited usage of language, cultivating and emphasizing its homogeneity, stability, and conformity. Deleuze and Guattari call the language obtained by this linguistic outlook **major language**. Such a language determines standardized, integrative, and consistent channels for expression, syntax, and semantics, striving for maximal clarity and seeking to establish an immediate and univalent relationship between signifiers and signified.[[4]](#footnote-4) Beside this major language, Deleuze and Guattari juxtapose the notion of a minor use of language, one which seeks to subvert the rigidity of the major language, to undermine the tight bond between language and the world it represents, and to carry it beyond the boundaries of ordinary usage.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Great literature, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is that which succeeds in using language to transcend language; it invents a new language within the existing one, a foreign tongue. In other words, it effects an alternative usage of language, which causes language to stutter, to diverge, and, in particular, to reveal the heterogeneity that precedes all homogeneous and regular usage of it.[[6]](#footnote-6) It is important to emphasize that major language and minor language do not constitute two separate and distinct languages, but rather different usages of the same language.[[7]](#footnote-7) For this reason, an author can make minor use of major language, becoming a stranger in his own tongue – even his mother tongue.[[8]](#footnote-8) We can thus see that even though Deleuze and Guattari did not suggest methods of reading and interpretation based on minor, rather than major, usages of language, the point of departure for reading literary texts in the spirit of their thought would be the location of those places in which divergent usages of language occur, undermining clear and familiar borders, and exposing the semantic multiplicity threatening every attempt to make monolithic and homogeneous use of language.

Interestingly, it appears that scholars of Pinter’s work have arrived at a similar conclusion to that reached by scholars of Deleuze and Guattari: the proper question should be “how does the work function?”, or more precisely, “how does the language in the work function?”. A significant insight that arose in the context of studying Pinter’s work is that there can be no examination of the language of his plays through the conventional perspective that holds referentiality as its primary purpose.[[9]](#footnote-9) Rather, the language in Pinter’s plays should be examined as a manipulative means of controlling and repressing the other. The systems of relationships between the characters in Pinter’s plays are first and foremost linguistic, and the purpose of language is to aid in the creation of a defined system of power relations between characters, and to allow them to impose their desired state of affairs on other characters.[[10]](#footnote-10) What is important is not necessarily contained in that which is spoken, but rather in the way in which things are said, and in the characters who say them. Thus to fully focus on what is said, that is on the referential dimension of language, is to miss out on the complex dynamic woven between the characters in Pinter’s plays.[[11]](#footnote-11) Scholarly literature’s focus on the linguistic layer of Pinter’s plays has directed attention to the strangeness of the language, which, even if it accords to the accepted rules of grammar and syntax, sometimes manifests as an unusual and foreign tongue. This strangeness is connected to the fact that the language in his plays constitutes a kind of weapon – defensive or offensive – whose purpose is to aid in the creation of a defined system of power relations and control between characters. Thus the strange and unusual manifestations of language in his plays take part in this aggressive strategy, and aid in turning language into an aggressive arena in which characters struggle against one another. It seems that what has been written in literary criticism about Pinter’s language conducts a kind of covert dialogue (consciously or otherwise) with Deleuze and Guattari’s comments on the minor usage of language. This dialogue attests to the potentially fruitful connection between their thought and Pinter’s work. The problem, however, is that the concept of unusual usage of language as an act whose purpose is necessarily aggressive, and thus bound up in issues of confrontation, authority, and control, does not fully accord with the manner in which Deleuze and Guattari define the concept of Minority.

Deleuze and Guattari explain that minor usage of language is not divorced from political issues and questions of relationships of power and oppression. Extricating the minor dimension of language constitutes, on one level or another, a political stance that seeks to stand in opposition to the major order and subvert the power, authority, and violence this order creates. According to Deleuze and Guattari, someone who adopts a minor practice seeks to neutralize, to a certain extent, the violence exerted upon him and others by norms and authority, as well as the violent power he himself exerts upon his fellow man.[[12]](#footnote-12) Someone who acts in a minor fashion does not clash with the major order, nor count himself among its opponents, as such an attitude still relies on adherence to the major order’s rules of play and the limited range of positions its allows. Minority is therefore expressed through the location of a line of flight, which constitutes a point of departure from the belligerent dialectic of confrontation and rule that characterized the major order. This is a movement that avoids the major desire to establish a unifying and governing center, turning towards realms of multiplicity and simultaneity which are neither based on opposition nor subject to rule. Because this avoidance of the major order is largely carried out via minor usage of language, Deleuze and Guattari see this usage as an ethical mission: one must extricate minor language from language as a whole, and lead it down a revolutionary and sober-minded path – that is, a path of escape. This being the case, it is apparent that literary criticism of Pinter’s works tends to (in Deleuze and Guattari’s terminology) look at his plays as an arena of major struggles revolving around control of elements such as territory and power relations – and thus unusual usage of language is understood by this criticism as a means of reinforcing these struggles’ belligerent nature. In this essay, which centers on a discussion of the play *Landscape*, I wish to suggest an alternative perspective on Pinter’s unusual language, and examine it as part of a minor movement striving to depart from the violent and domineering dimension of the major order.

*Landscape* was first published as a BBC radio play in 1968, and first staged in July 1969 at the Aldwych Theatre, after having previously been censored and barred from performance. The play is structured as a single act based on two monologues by a couple, Duff and Beth, who detail past memories. The couple’s monologues are delivered in an integrated fashion, and apparently have nothing to do with one another. Beth muses over a pleasant summer’s day she spent on the beach in the company of a lover, whose identity remains unrevealed throughout the play. Duff describes a quotidian and trivial experience from the prior day, beginning with a walk in the park, continuing on to a stopover in the local pub, and concluding with an event, perhaps true and perhaps imagined, in which he describes how he forced himself on Beth in the hallway of their house. Furthermore, Duff also recounts his unfaithfulness to Beth, an event he describes as one-time and devoid of meaning, though it is apparent from his words that this is not the first time he has told Beth of such an occurrence. Unlike Duff, Beth spends the entirety of the play enwrapped in memory, and Duff’s attempts to secure her attention are unsuccessful, leaving her disconnected from the events of the present.[[13]](#footnote-13)

*Landscape* is considered as one of Pinter’s “memory plays,” at whose center stands the question of the nature of the relationship between memory, the past, and language, and of the behavior of consciousness in seeking, through language, to restore that which was and is no longer. One of the central problems confronting those who seek to document or recount the past is connected to the concept of time and its characteristics. Twentieth century philosophical thought perceived the concept of time as a modern invention; an arbitrary category, imagined and empty. This perception exacerbated the tension between the aspiration to create a narrative which sought to describe and revive the events of the past, and linear time (whether that of the stage performance, in which activities are presented in sequential and linear order, or that of the written dramatic narrative itself), which presents obstacles to the act of documentation by the very fact of its steady progression. Because of this, linear time does not fittingly serve memory, as it fixes the historic event in a place beyond the reach of those living in the present, establishing it as a closed and remote category subject to processes of deterioration and erosion. These problems are an inseparable part of the “memory plays,” in which Pinter repeatedly casts doubt on memory’s level of authenticity, illuminating not only the inherent arbitrariness of the act of memory, but also the opinion that memory is nothing more than fabrication.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Pinter’s play, built on the constant and simultaneous encounter between different temporal registers, is based on the existence of a rift between the onstage presence of the actors in the present and the dramatic narrative largely devoted to the past, manifested onstage via the act of retrospective reporting. This characteristic is opposed to Aristotle’s classical division between the epic – the lengthy heroic tales told in a past and post-facto language (such as the Iliad and Odyssey) – and the drama, which occurs in the present and focuses on the activity of the protagonist. As Peter Szondi writes in his book *The Theory of Modern Drama* (1965):[[15]](#footnote-15)

[The Drama's] internal time is always the present. […] the present passes and becomes the past and, as such, can no longer be present on stage. As the present passes away, it produces change, a new present springs from its antithesis. In the Drama, time unfolds as an absolute, linear sequence in the present. […]. Because of this, every moment must contain within it the seeds of the future. It must be 'pregnant with futurity.'

With his comments, Szondi reveals one of the difficulties of the theatrical medium confronting modern dramaturges, one adopted by Pinter as the point of departure for his play: the attempt to dramatize past events and situations, in a retrospective manner, without sacrificing the relevance and dramatic tension of the present stage performance. Unlike classical drama, as described by Szondi, the staged present in Pinter’s play produces not the continuation of this present, but rather its past, and all progression in the staged present carries with it a backwards temporal motion, while the future continuously recedes from view beyond the horizon. This temporal structure creates tension between the singularity of past events, which the present re-presents and partially recreates, and the singularity of the event of re-creation itself, which offers the viewing audience (unlike the characters) their first encounter with the recreated content. Even though the dependence of the audience on the actors recreating past events forestalls the potential for dramatic irony – that is, the audience’s advantage over the characters in terms of knowledge – the play’s structure encourages them to cultivate a suspicious and critical attitude towards the characters and their ability to serve as credible witnesses to past events.

My reading of the play will present it as a web of minor and major movements, with the minor seeking to subvert the desire to establish a clear, unified, and coherent memory – a desire that will be presented as essentially major. I shall likewise demonstrate that the character of Duff adopts tactics intended to subjugate memory, as well as language as a whole, into a rigid category of linearity, referentiality, and clarity, an action accompanied by his constant struggle with Beth over the establishment of a mutual couples’ memory by which he might fashion their present life as he sees fit. Beth, on the other hand, is a character with minor potential. For her, this minority constitutes a means of evading the tyranny of subjugating past events into a coherent, linear, and orderly narrative, as well as Duff’s aggressiveness in their mutual relationship.

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Major language, Deleuze and Guattari argue, follows a single vector running directly from content to expression,[[16]](#footnote-16) as this is a language that strives to establish a (seemingly) direct relationship between form and content and between signifier and signified. The desire to make language lucid and univalent is of a piece with the attempt to create unified and defined semantic networks that support and sustain the major order.[[17]](#footnote-17) One means by which to effect this is the establishment of “Common Sense,”[[18]](#footnote-18) meaning the possibility for speakers of the major language to represent the world through a repository of preconceived notions that assume a direct connection between the linguistic phrase and those things the linguistic phrase indicates and relates to – objects, subjects, and concepts.[[19]](#footnote-19) Awareness of this common sense promises to those who take part in the major order a stable and clearly delineated identity, as well as clear and lucid communication through language. Yet inherent in this promise is the oppressive character of common sense as well, its status as a tool of the major order allowing for the signification of a stable and hierarchical system of relationships and meanings, which has a source and movement in one direction only, both in space and in time.[[20]](#footnote-20) In light of the aforementioned, Duff’s linguistic conduct can be explained as an effort, fundamentally major in character, to create and establish a common sense between him and Beth. In other words, Duff’s language is directed by the desire to establish a collection of suppositions and insights as firm mutual certainties between him and Beth, which exposes the major quality of his linguistic conduct. In doing so, an additional desire of Duff’s comes to light: control and formulation of the system of spousal relations with Beth by means of the creation of a unified and homogeneous narrative that documents supposedly mutual memories of the past.

While Beth describes her past experiences without directly relating to Duff, Duff attempts to integrate Beth into his memories and restore her place in them. He perhaps invites, or perhaps compels, her to join him in the creation of a network of shared understandings when he repeatedly addresses her and asks her to validate some memory of their past: “Do you remember when I took him on that trip to the north?”[[21]](#footnote-21) Duff, as it becomes clear, does not only fail to wait for Beth’s reply, he adds a decisive statement defining her emotions: “You’d missed me.”[[22]](#footnote-22) In doing so, he forestalls any alternative option for recounting the series of events, and denies Beth the opportunity to formulate her own memories and emotions. An additional example can be found in his statement: “You didn’t cry. We had a few hours off. We walked up to the pond, with the dog. We stood under the trees for a bit.”[[23]](#footnote-23) It is not only that Duff creates a common memory between himself and Beth, but that implicit in his confident relationship to the past is the assumption that the level of his language’s referentiality is so high that there is no need to cast doubt on his ability to describe what has occurred in a clear and unambiguous manner. It is not only that Duff expresses the past memories he shares with Beth as established fact, but also that he uses memory to create a subjective attitude and specific identity for Beth: “You were a first-rate housekeeper when you were young.”[[24]](#footnote-24) This statement reflects the argument of Deleuze and Guattari, according to which common sense constitutes not only a means for the creation of shared and unidimensional communication, but also functions as a tool for the allocation of identities, for creating and – especially – governing subjects.[[25]](#footnote-25) The gap between Beth’s identity in Duff’s homogeneous and unifying narrative framework as a diligent and well-trained housewife, and the eroticism and romanticism characterizing her in her own memories, attests to the gendered and patriarchal power dynamics involved in the establishment of Beth’s subjectivity, which in turn allow for the establishment of the subjectivity of Duff himself.

The major dynamic is expressed not only through Duff’s usage of language, but also through his repeated attempts to shatter and refute Beth’s memories in favor of a shared spousal memory of his own invention – as a common agreement on past events constitutes, for him, a means of establishing a common perception of their spousal relationship in the present.[[26]](#footnote-26) Duff’s aggressiveness and his efforts to force Beth’s memories into the framework of a unified narrative are expressed through harsh language that seeks to sully and shatter the pleasurable and comfortable state of being these memories describe. After Beth describes her pleasant experience at the beach in the play’s opening, Duff begins describing his walk with the dog in the park: “Mind you, there was a lot of shit all over the place, all along the paths, by the pond. Dogshit, duckshit…all kinds of shit…all over the paths.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

His over-naturalistic description and word choice lends a vulgar aspect to Duff’s language, one amplified by its juxtaposition against Beth’s more delicate vocabulary. Thus, even if Duff’s statements and their content are not a direct response to those of Beth, it appears that the words he uses are neither random nor coincidental, and they serve as an aggressive means by which to shatter the state of being recreated by Beth’s words.[[28]](#footnote-28) Duff’s verbal belligerence begins with a homogeneous and monolithic usage of language, continues with his tyrannical attempts at narrative appropriation – or defiling the pristine beach of Beth’s memories with vulgar word choice – and, by the end of the play, culminates in Duff’s direct threat of physical violence against Beth: “I would have had you in front of the dog, like a man, in the hall […] mind you don’t get the scissors up sour arse […].”[[29]](#footnote-29)

Duff’s repeated attempts to address Beth throughout the play express his efforts to create a common sense not with the intention of fostering dialogue, but rather in order to reinforce his monological tyranny. Over the course of the play, Duff addresses Beth with an array of questions and considerations, but she does not respond. In one such instance, Duff asks Beth: “Do you like me to talk to you? *Pause*. Do you like me to tell you about all the things I've been thinking? *Pause*. Mmmnn? *Pause*.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Duff seems to invite Beth to converse with him. But this is a most dubious invitation, exemplifying the assumptions of the major language as they relate to the limited existence of defined channels of communication through which meaning and sense can be created. Assenting to Duff’s entreaties can also be perceived as assenting to the system of spousal power dynamics and their inherent violence, and thus Beth chooses to remain silent. In this instance, Duff once again reveals his linguistic tyranny, choosing to answer his questions for her in a manner according to his own perceptions and desires: “I think you do.”[[31]](#footnote-31) Duff takes possession of the verbal space created by Beth’s silence and fills it as he likes. The meaning of Beth’s silence and her relegation by Duff to a signifying system exemplifies the major impulse to restore the connection between signifiers and their signified, and establish this connection as self-evident, much like the assumption that Beth’s silence clearly signifies an unambiguous intent behind it.

Literary studies of Pinter’s work have more than once turned their attention to the problem of silence in his plays.[[32]](#footnote-32) Despite the fact that the status of silence depends on the individual play, interpretive readings tend to attribute meaning to silence in various ways, including as an expression of the character’s loss of autonomy,[[33]](#footnote-33) an attempt to protect the self and prevent its exposure to the other,[[34]](#footnote-34) or a response equal in value and influence to a verbal one, even reinforcing it in light of its mute and therefore unusual mode of expression.[[35]](#footnote-35) It is interesting to note that a significant portion of these interpretations diverge, whether directly or otherwise, from the assumption that silence is necessarily opposed to speech, or attests to a failure of verbal interaction,[[36]](#footnote-36) and rather maintain that silence expresses that which routine language cannot, a fact which moves them closer to Deleuze and Guattari’s view of silence. Silence, Deleuze argues, is a testament to the utter exhaustion of the modes of expression and representation, as well as of standard channels of communication, allowed and delineated by the major language.[[37]](#footnote-37) Silence does not thus constitute a binary alternative to the act of speech; rather, it is an act of speech that removes the signifiers of language from the vocal dimension that accompanies them and transports language outside itself.[[38]](#footnote-38) For this reason, silence exposes both the potential for the multiplicity of meanings inherent to any expression and the semantic limiting at work in the communicative dimension of standard language. From this perspective, which sees silence as a minor usage of major language that seeks to avoid its aggressive aspects, Beth’s silence can be understood as a means of escape from an oppressive dialogue meant to fortify Duff’s aggressiveness towards her. Beth’s silence, therefore, does not attest to any defeat or weakness – as defeat and weakness are the results of a major struggle fed by states of confrontation and rule. Beth’s decision prevents language from becoming, for her, a battlefield, and allows her to avoid the conversational conventions that reinforce her signification as a repressed subject under the authority of another.

But silence in the play is not the exclusive domain of Beth; Duff’s words too are replete with silences that interrupt and hinder the smooth flow of his language. Likewise, it is not only silences that interrupt the characters’ speech, but also cessations that are not attributed to silence (marked with “silence” or “long silence”), and are rather described as a “pause.” These pauses in speech render the play’s language as a whole interrupted and fragmentary, or “stammered,” to use Deleuze and Guattari’s term. For this reason, the stammering of the play’s language thwarts not only Duff’s attempts to establish a common sense with Beth, but also the reader or viewer’s efforts to establish a common sense with the text or play before him, thus forcing him to surrender himself to the movement of narrative multiplicity and disorder – linguistic, semantic, and interpretive – that characterizes every attempted recreation of a bygone moment.

The routine and standard dimension of language is free of all ambiguity, and it is precisely this ambiguity which Duff attempts to eradicate. Even though he refers to past moments from various points of time in the past, he does it in a manner that allows for continuous supervision of the recreating consciousness, as well as of the recreated narrative itself. His words as a whole are delivered in a rational, comprehensible, and clear manner. Duff’s dominant linguistic referentiality, and his regimentation of his memories into a coherent course of events, are expressed in the petty and wearying detail with which he describes past events. An example of this is his description of his conversation with a man he met in the pub on the topic of preparing beer: “This chap in the pub said he was surprised to hear it. He said he was surprised to hear about hosing the cellar floor. He said he thought most cellars had a thermostatically controlled cooling system. He said he thought keg beer was fed with oxygen through a cylinder. I said I wasn’t talking about keg beer, I was talking about normal draught beer. He said he thought they piped the beer from a tanker into metal containers. I said they may do, but he wasn’t talking about the quality of beer I was. He accepted that point.”[[39]](#footnote-39) The intensive repetition of “I said” and “he said” create a sensation that the past is being staged before our eyes in its most authentic form, without omitting even a single detail. But this leads to the question of whether Duff, in his exhaustive detail, leads his language, as Beth does hers, to a point where a strange usage of language is created, one of which subverts its own transparency and level of referentiality. The apparent intensiveness of Duff’s statements, marked by his repetition of certain words, magnifies their materiality[[40]](#footnote-40) at the expense of their meaning or referential potential. The repetition of the word “he” (which echoes and duplicates Beth’s frequent usage of the same word) subverts, behind Duff’s back, his desire for clarity and common sense, and creates within the major language a foreign, garbled, and singular new tongue (I shall elaborate on an additional use of the pronoun “he” and its purpose later in this essay).[[41]](#footnote-41)

Through the insights of Shoshana Felman, Duff’s aforementioned monologue can be seen as performative speech, that is, an act of verbal speech that dramatizes an event that cannot be straightforwardly expressed through the semantic dimension of language. Felman defines performative speech as speech which gives away – by dint of its delivery, not its content – that which lies beyond the speaker’s conscious control; those scraps of memory and experiences that do not accord with the subject’s framework of understanding and precede his arrival at a fully coherent state of organization.[[42]](#footnote-42) Duff’s excessive speech, as well as his forced repetition of words, his overemphasis on details, and his obsessively pedantic recounting, reveal his desire to preserve and rule over memory, and constitute a testament to that which his language does not succeed in capturing during the attempt to recreate the past. Duff’s performative speech, which makes the form of his words’ delivery no less important than their explicit and revealed content, exposes the failure of his referential language to capture the past and the experiences bound up within it, and to create a direct path to realm of memory. The verbal excess apparent in his speech ironically serves to reveal that which is absent, missing, lost beyond the reach of those living in the present, and emphasizes that the past is a closed and remote category.

In their thought, Deleuze and Guattari make use of the terms *rhizome* and *tree* as metaphors for describing two different modes of thought. A rhizome is a stem that sends off shoots horizontally rather than vertically (grass, for example, has a rhizome).[[43]](#footnote-43) The metaphorical rhizome describes a non-linear mode of thought that expresses coincidence and non-regularity; a horizontal relationship of decentralized networks, in contradistinction to the branching, hierarchical and one-way relationship between a tree and its roots. At the heart of Deleuze and Guattari’s thought stands their opposition to wooden thought, which imposes binary, hierarchical, and essentialist structures on the world of phenomena. In its place, they seek to view the world “rhizomatically,” as an abundance of potential movements and connections not constrained within defined and unidirectional paths. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the tree signifies logical causality, order, integration, and authority, which are indeed conveyed in the majority of Duff’s linguistic expressions and attest to his efforts to create a unified and homogeneous common sense with Beth. The rhizome, unlike the tree, is based on spontaneous and irregular movement, characterized by heterogeneous, unstable, and anti-hierarchical connectivity without beginning, middle, or end.[[44]](#footnote-44) The “wooden” logic revealed by assenting to the major constituents of language forces the events of reality into patterns of coherence and order. Such a way of thought is characterized by the assumption that movement between the past, present, and future is progressive and one-way, a notion based on seeing these dimensions of time as firm and separate categories. This is what makes possible the genesis of a linear model of events within reality, whether past, present, or future, which was a beginning, middle, and end. Deleuze and Guattari are opposed to such a “wooden” style of thought, which imposes on reality and various associated phenomena a regularity and hierarchy foreign to them. Reality, Deleuze and Guattari contend, is rhizomatic: overflowing with potential movements and connections not constrained within defined and unidirectional paths. These two modes of thought – wooden and rhizomatic – are expressed through Duff and Beth’s usage of language, and in the way in which they recreate their past experiences.

Duff adopts “wooden” logic and recreates the events of the past out of a desire to fit them into a linear framework in which there exists a clear relationship between objects of description and their constituent elements. His assertions are lucid, univalent, and assent to clearly logical relationships of cause and effect. The memories of Duff (the experiencing I) are subject to processes of organization carried out by his voice in the present (the recounting I) and conscious of this present, which invests them with sense and meaning (unlike Beth, who barely deals with the past from the perspective of the present, and thus gives the impression that she is firmly rooted in it). This finds expression in Duff’s remarks, which provide an explanation for his past behavior and lead to the formation of conclusions about his common present with Beth. For example, he appends to his description of his betrayal of Beth (“the girl herself I considered unimportant. I didn’t think it necessary to go into details. I decided against it”[[45]](#footnote-45)) the explanation that “anyway…luck was on my side for a change”[[46]](#footnote-46) and the decree that “that’s what matters anyway. We’re together. That’s what matters.”[[47]](#footnote-47) Duff’s repetition of the word “matter” fittingly represents the entirety of the narrative process he fashions – a process defined by hierarchical distinctions of what is and is not important that frequently effect a manipulation of past events so that they might define his spousal relationship in the present as he sees fit. Duff’s words thus reveal how the effort to establish a certain memory of the past is dependent on the imposition of a series of value distinctions, whose purpose is to foster a single and unified narrative of memory that excludes other potential narratives.

Beth’s relationship to the past tends to be rhizomatic in character, and is thus quite different from that of Duff. An example is the manner in which Beth describes the time she spent with the company of a lover at the seashore: “I would like to stand by the sea. It is there. *Pause*. I have. Many times. It's something I cared for. I've done it. *Pause*. I'll stand on the beach […].”[[48]](#footnote-48) Beth’s words mix the various tenses of the verb (“I loved,” “I have,” “I would like”), a phenomenon which transforms the past, present, and future into a kind of single super-temporal unity[[49]](#footnote-49) that includes within itself all temporal continuities, and accedes to synchronicity rather than diachronicity. To the impossibility of organizing Beth’s impressions along a single chronological continuity is appended the difficulty in deciphering the semantic layer of her words, since the sentences she uses are connected to one another only loosely and associatively, while the generalizations she makes (“People move so easily. Men, men move”[[50]](#footnote-50)) leave a cryptic and puzzling impression. If one looks at Beth’s statements over the entirety of the play, it becomes clear that the uneven and confused movement apparent in her sentences characterizes her patterns of speech and descriptions of her memories. She begins her remarks with a description of a day spent at the seashore in the company of an unidentified man,[[51]](#footnote-51) moves on to descriptions of watering and arranging flowers as the same man watches,[[52]](#footnote-52) returns to a description of the beach, continues with a description of the bus trip that led to her re-encountering the same anonymous man with whom she traveled to the beach, and finally describes her memories of the time she spent in the home of Mr. Sykes.[[53]](#footnote-53) The resulting impression is one of unexplained passages between collections of images from Beth’s past, and it is unclear whether she is repeatedly describing the same occurrence, each time from a different perspective, or whether she is withdrawing to different points of time in her past. Unlike Duff, whose withdrawals into the past are accompanied by explanatory comments which make it possible to understand the temporal relationship between events, Beth’s withdrawals into the events of her past do not allow for a true distinction to be made between the experiencing I and the recounting I, which makes it difficult to exert any sort of temporal organization on these memories, or unify them into a single narrative.

The absence of linearity and regularity characterizing Beth’s memories is amplified by her strange usage of cause and effect relationships. An example of this can be readily found in the following passage: “Could have drawn him, he didn’t want it. He laughed. *Pause*. I laughed, with him. *Pause*. I waited for him to laugh, then I would smile, turn away, he would touch my back, turn me, to him. My nose… creased. I would laugh with him, a little. *Pause*. He laughed. I'm sure of it. So I didn’t draw him. *Silence.*”[[54]](#footnote-54) The connection between laughter, the creasing nose, or the touch on the back with “so I didn’t draw him” seems quite arbitrary, and the logic motivating such a connection remains unclear.[[55]](#footnote-55) One can see in this phenomenon a direct continuation of the process that deconstructs chronological continuity, in which a cause necessarily precedes and leads to its effect. In this context, attention should be paid to the fact that the sentence, like other sentences spoken by Beth throughout the play, contains additional elements that suspend the linear flow not of the described sequence of events, but rather of the process of reading itself – the integration of multiple silences or ellipses stalls the progressive movement from word to word and hinders the transition between the signifier and its respective signified. To this is added the usage Beth makes of a world of poetic and idiosyncratic imagery – “trees like feathers”[[56]](#footnote-56) – which also aid in hindering the transition from signifier to signified and from word to meaning.

Deleuze and Guattari, as previously indicated, explain that the minor usage of language brings it to its own boundary line; a situation in which the stable connection between signifier and signified breaks down, in its place arising a new linguistic structure based on doubt and a lack of confidence in the accepted boundaries of language.[[57]](#footnote-57) One of the strategies for minor usage of the major language is to use it to create such abundance that it thwarts any possibility of arriving at a final and unified meaning. This strategy exposes loci of referential indecision in language, that is, a host of additional alternatives for realizing and understanding a word, without one having any precedence over another.[[58]](#footnote-58) One of the central examples of this in *Landscape* is the usage of the word “he,” whose referential focus does not appear in the play in any certain and unambiguous manner. It should be noted that Duff’s usage of the pronoun “he” tends to be defined in contrast to the usage Beth makes of it. In most instances, when Duff says “he,” he refers to Mr. Sykes, while in the remaining instances, “he” refers to the man Duff met in the pub, or its owners. In Beth’s language, on the other hand, the term’s referentiality is more hazy, and does not allow for the clear identification of the subject it signifies. Interpretive readings of the play have suggested a variety of possibilities for the identity of “he” (Duff in his youth, Mr. Sykes, or the anonymous lover). At the same time, some of the interpretive readings of the play have staked a claim to the importance of the character’s identity remaining undetermined. It seems that this indeterminacy suits not just Beth’s minor usage of the major language, but also Pinter’s general treatment of the problem of memory, and of the connection between it and language. The word “he” becomes what Deleuze and Guattari call a “suitcase word”[[59]](#footnote-59) – a word whose contents, like those of a suitcase, are “spilled” out, characterized as they are by an abundance of connectivity and a referential surplus, stemming from its ability to simultaneously relate to several potential referents (like the number of characters that might respond to the pronoun). At the same time, the word “he,” by dint of its nature as a “suitcase word,” can be seen as utterly devoid of true connectivity, since there is no character in the play that can be certainly linked to it. Thus, in Pinter’s play the word “he” becomes an important semantic junction at which several potential narratives meet, as every character that might be chosen to fill the role of “he” casts a different light on the play as a whole, and creates an alternative interpretation of the course of events it depicts. It thus becomes clear that the play’s power lies in the fact that these possibilities exist alongside one another, without any chance to decide between them. This indeterminacy is joined by another related to the validity of Beth’s memory, as it may be that the absence of an unambiguous referent for the word “he” indicates that Beth has invented her described memory, or created it as a fantasy fueled by her hearts’ desires. Thus arises a possibility not only for a multiplicity of narratives, but also for casting doubt on their validity. Every narrative constitutes a one-time combination or actualization of virtual narrative powers, and because none of them exhaust the full extent of the virtual powers they bring to the work, it can be understood as part of a multitude, or alternately, as one among many interconnected possibilities.

An additional strategy for minor usage of the major language is disconnection of the word from its regular functions,[[60]](#footnote-60) that is, emptying it of its common and immediate meaning. An example of this is Beth’s usage of the word “but,” whose familiar meaning indicates reservation – a word that expresses reservations about what was said before it. Yet in a number of instances throughout the play, Beth’s use of the word “but” does not accord to its accepted meaning. For example, when describing her former lover on the beach, Beth says: “Snoozing hoe lovely I said to him. But I wasn’t a Fool, on that occasion […].”[[61]](#footnote-61) The use of the word “but” is supposed to expressed opposition between the portions of a sentence, but it is unclear how Beth’s comment in the first part of the sentence, which appears to refer to her lover, connects to the latter part, in which she claims that she lay beside him in silence. Thus the addition of the word “but” creates a contradiction between the portions of the sentences, and the usage of it does not accord to the logical rules of argument and counterargument. In another instance, the word “but” begins a sentence without contradicting or expressing reservation about anything that preceded it. Thus, for example, Beth’s comment “but then I thought perhaps the hotel bar will be open”[[62]](#footnote-62) begins her remarks without having anything to do with what was said beforehand. In its common meaning, the word “but” creates a dualistic array of positions, one of argument and opposition, rule and exception, statement and reservation. This linguistic relationship includes a dynamic of confrontation and determination between two arguments or states of affairs not in keeping with one another, motivated by the assumption that it is possible to decide in favor of one over the other. This stable movement from one argument to another, part of the dynamic of confrontation and determination, is a major one, for it relies on the perception that there is one central and clear understanding against which arguments can be levelled. For this reason, the disconnection of the word “but” from its regular meaning, aggressive and negative as it is, is a minor act that seeks to avoid the usage of language as a tool for the creation of a defined array of options and arguments perceived as logical and thus necessary. In other words, through her minor usage of language, Beth frees herself from the need to verify her statements through opposition with or accordance to those of Duff, and in so doing also neutralizes the belligerence inherent to the type of dialogue that prevails between them.

The play’s setting is the kitchen of a country house. The house constitutes a defined territorial unit, which collects within itself a series of functions and agreements founded on dynamics of mastery, control, and authority, which for the most part reproduce the broader social order. The status of the house as a major space is further expressed by the manner in which the sense of belonging to the house, with its varied contents, constitutes a means of establishing an identity whose boundaries are as clear as those of the house in which it comes into being. The major features of the domestic space are a fundamental constituent of Pinter’s plays, in which the domestic arena becomes a kind of battlefield in which characters form coalitions and oppositions, confront one another, subdue one another, and solidify their control, both of the space and of the other characters with whom they share it. A minor practice that seeks to dismantle the major order will undermine the violent potential inherent to the domestic sphere by virtue of its status as a major space, and strive to throw off the chain of aggression bolstered by the immediate dynamics of mastery and identification between subjects and this space. The minor powers at work in the play *Landscape* are further expressed by the problematization created in the issue of the characters’ ownership of the house in which they reside. The characters’ house was not always under their ownership; it once belonged to Mr. Sykes, and Beth and Duff, who served as housekeepers, inherited it following Mr. Sykes’ death. Even though the couple are the current owners of the house, their attitude towards the house is one of neither ruler nor patron (that is, their attitude is not explicitly major), and throughout the entirety of the play, they sit in the kitchen, a room identified with servants and not with the masters of the house. Even though they own the house, they maintain a non-patronizing attitude towards it. In certain senses, this can be seen as an additional testament to the absence of linearity that characterizes human experience – Beth and Duff, who in the staged present are the owners of the house, still conduct themselves within it as they did in the past, and live in the shadow of the deceased former owner, Mr. Sykes.[[63]](#footnote-63) Likewise, throughout the entirety of the play, no true affinity between the characters and the space they inhabit is detailed – they neither take advantage of nor use it in accordance with their needs, but rather remain seated in their chairs. This stasis creates a constant fissure between the characters’ temporal motion – who detail past events and vacillate between events of the recent and distant past – and their lack of spatial movement onstage. If movement through space is meant to interpreted as an act of territorial signification, then the character’s stasis subverts such a signification, and their lack of movement through space can be understood as a lack of control over it.

The kitchen, as a representative of domestic space, plays an important role in Pinter’s attempt to undermine the conventional structures of time that create clear distinctions between past and present; structures which aid, among other things, in perpetuating the asymmetrical power dynamics between Duff and Beth. Theoreticians such as Judith Halberstam and Lee Edelman argue that heteronormativity is related to a certain archetype of time, one perceived as chronological and progressive, and composed of regular milestones and ever-accumulating life experience. [[64]](#footnote-64) Such a conception of time, which includes a constant gaze towards the future, relates to the past and as present as if they occupied a place on a sequential linear axis, and thus serves as a mechanism that organizes and directs subjects towards a unified center of family life and spousal relations perceived as “proper” and “normative.” But the domestic sphere highlighted in the description of the play’s set creates a system of cultural expectations related to the existence of a spatial and temporal dynamic of the described “heteronormative” type, identified with the daily life of the family and couple. But these expectations are suspended over the course of the play, as the characters’ onstage stasis and the non-chronological temporality displayed by their monologues subverts the temporal frameworks associated with the domestic sphere. In other words, the domestic set, charged with cultural expectations of adherence to the family unit and its common movement through space and time, is violated by the onstage presence of the actors, who share the space but remain imprisoned in separate spheres of existence, and disconnectedly recreate the events of their past. The rift between the expectations engendered by the play’s set and the onstage performance creates a defamiliarization not only of the category of “home” as a safe family-oriented space, but also of the notion of the home as an equivalent place in a person’s biography, one that serves as a repository of memory and identity. If the house is supposed contain an assortment of memories, experiences, and personal desires that “convey” a sequential and coherent life story, then the domestic sphere in the play does not aid in the creation of a common spousal memory composed of sequential and chronological experiences shared by the couple. Pinter’s effort to collapse the concept of the house as a safe and organized space, identified with the existential norms of heteronormativity, is expressed by the fact that the domestic sphere does not encourage the creation of a “normative” composition of a life story; rather, it is structured as a place in which the defined and measured, linear and chronological frameworks of time are violated. Duff’s attempt to enforce linear mechanisms of control on Beth can be understood, in light of the aforementioned, as an attempt to implement gendered mechanisms of control that serve to perpetuate the asymmetry and “normative” hierarchy inherent to the relationship between man and woman in the domestic sphere.

Unlike Pinter’s other plays, which are full of ceaseless movement in and out of the house and its rooms, *Landscape* contains no mention of a door, nor does it feature any instance of the two-way movement a door creates.[[65]](#footnote-65) As a result, the play fosters a covert meta-theatrical conversation about the realistic functions meant to encourage the play’s viewers to assume that the limited staged reality is, in fact, a fragment or section of a broader canvas of life that is not directly displayed. The onstage space in *Landscape* thus appears as a disconnected “bubble”: the characters remain trapped in the staged present; they neither entry or leave the house, and no “dialogue” is created between the house and the other spaces that adjoin it. This characteristic of the characters’ conduct in the onstage space constitutes an additional example of the rift the play creates between performance and dramatic narrative, or being narrative temporality and the onstage space: the characters’ stasis and inability to foster connections to the space beyond the stage (that is, to leave the kitchen for some external space, or even another room in the house) magnify the sense of disconnection they experience, and stands in direct opposition to their desire to foster, by recreating events from their past, connections between the present in which they find themselves and what preceded it.

The absence of a door blurs the clear boundaries of the domestic territory. The door is an object that regulates entrance to and departure from the house, and thus distinguishes between the interior and exterior of the house. In this context, it is interesting to examine the set as described in the stage directions:

The kitchen of a country house. A long kitchen table. Beth sits in an armchair, which stands away from the table, to its left. Duff sits in a chair at the right corner of the table. The background, of a sink, stove, etc., and a window, is dim.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Instead of using the set as means of creating an impression of realistic fullness that would aid in locating the characters within a concrete context, Pinter chooses to dim the set, blurring the tangibility of the furniture and housewares and thus undermining the establishing of an intimate, direct, and tangible connection (which might establish subjectivity) between the characters and the territory in which they find themselves. Because the set (the kitchen set in this instance) constitutes a system of non-linguistic signifiers, it is possible to draw a parallel between the characteristics of this system of signifiers and the minor processes that occur in the play’s linguistic system of signifiers. Just as minor language avoids the major attempt to create a common sense or homogeneous semantic territory, and thus a unified sense of reality, so too does the play’s set undermine the creation of a common territory that delineates itself through a clear and defined array of objects. Just as Beth’s minor language garbles and blurs the direct and univalent referential relationship between word and object, between signifier and signified, so too does the play’s set lose its transparent referentiality, its ability to signify something concrete with a clear outline and function. In this sense, the play’s set and memory itself have common characteristics – like memory, the set creates an abstract and fluid sense of being unanchored in physical reality, and prevents the formation of a direct link between description or signifying category and their subjects. Instead of the house (through the set decoration) being designed as a stronghold for the establishment of subjectivity and territory, it means a kind of no-place, a generalized space bereft of all capacity for signification, and thus identification with any concrete context.

Criticism written about *Landscape* tends to frequently point out the many differences between the landscapes described in Beth and Duff’s memories, as well as the manner in which these landscapes, with the many significant divergences in their characteristics, serve as a means for a comprehensive, metonymic description of each of the characters. The differences between the park, as described by Duff, and the seashore, as described by Beth, transform in this view into a distillation of spousal conflict, perpetuating the covert struggle between the characters, which also constitutes a gender struggle [a struggle which obeys the major dynamic of relations of confrontation and determination, and contains an array of fixed and predefined functions] between the “feminine” landscape (the warm and pristine seashore) and the “masculine” landscape (the wet and filthy park).[[67]](#footnote-67) In the framework of these interpretations, the descriptions of the landscapes in each of the characters’ memories attest to the existence of a distinct and separate subjectivity, as well as to the unbridgeable rifts in the character’s personalities and emotional experiences. The lack of accordance between the described landscapes is of a piece with the lack of communication displayed by the couple, and aids in the creation of the play’s dramatic tension.[[68]](#footnote-68) Even though these interpretive distinctions are rooted in the representative dimension of language, they can be integrated into the framework of reading the play as a dynamic tapestry of minor and major movements, as it is apparent that the type of landscapes described and their manner of description accords to each character’s usage of language, as well as to the manner in which they express a major or minor attitude towards this language.

The seashore, the central location referenced by Beth, is a liminal space whose boundaries are fluid and ever-changing. As a liminal space, the seashore serves as a seamline separating land – which constitutes organized and delineated territory, arranged and conducted according to the laws of the cultural order’s norms – and sea – which constitutes an oceanic realm devoid of boundaries and distinctions, identified with primeval drives and the rejection of the cultural order and total human control made possible on dry land. The landscape described by Duff – the park – is an essentially human one, as it is both manmade and a delineated and enclosed territory. This distinct territoriality – whether linguistic, subjective, or geological[[69]](#footnote-69) – characterizes the major order and its desire to organize and define. Thus it emerges that Duff’s major “treatment” of language is of a piece with not only the activity of the regimental narrative he displays throughout the play (as expressed by his attempts to create a unified and mutual couples’ story for himself and Beth), but also with the earthly and rough landscape he describes, which is endowed with clear and prominent outlines. The majority of the view described by Duff is sharpened by the park’s status as a kind of enclave of greenery in an urban region, one which perpetuates the manner by which man conquers nature, displays his master over it, civilizes it, and adapts it to his needs.

If majority is based on defined and stable identities located within a distinct territory, and conducted according to fixed and stationary patterns, then minority avoids all this via a dynamic and de-territorial movement that dismantles and blurs the outlines of any territory whatsoever. This is apparent in the landscape described by Beth – the seashore – a liminal space simultaneously within and without he social order, characterized by the movement and constant change of the shoreline, which comes into being through the endless and irregular flow of the water. The seashore thus constitutes a kind of aterritorial or exterritorial territory whose boundaries cannot be hermetically delineated, and thus it avoids the possibility of being fully integrated into human civilization.[[70]](#footnote-70) Moreover, if the park, the landscape described by Duff, is an essentially human creation, the seashore is not at all manmade, and thus reduces the human factor’s level of influence, undermining the hierarchy devoted to maintaining its supremacy. Beth’s description of the seashore entirely fits what has been said about her herself thus far.

The fluidity and unbidden flow between word and sense that characterizes Beth’s language is of a piece with the sand’s constant diffusion of the outlines she attempts to draw in it:

“I drew a face in the sand, then a body. The body of a woman. Then a body of a man, close to her, not touching. But they didn’t look like anything. They didn’t look like human figures. The sand kept on slipping, mixing the contours.”[[71]](#footnote-71)

As Beth’s comments reveal, it is not only that the sand works against every attempt to define explicit outlines and borders – it is that the inability to carry out such a definition undermines the territoriality of the subject, whose characteristics as a human entity are taken away.[[72]](#footnote-72) Because subjectivity is by definition major, stemming as it does from a territorial concept of man as having borders that ontologically distinguish him from his surroundings, the sand in which Beth draws human figures robs them of their stable outlines and creates a diffusive dynamic of non-distinction between the human and non-human, or between one human and another. This minor movement subverts the major attempt to transform the encounter between man and his surroundings into one free of distinction, distance, opposition, or confrontation, and is further expressed in Beth’s concluding statement: “I let the water billow me.”[[73]](#footnote-73) Thus the space described by Beth becomes, much like the past time in her memories, borderless and open to an infinity of ever-changing connections and combinations.

Looking at the play as a whole reveals that it is a complex composition lacking defined by a linear non-continuity. This characterizes not only Beth’s words alone, but also the nature of the relationship between both members of the central couple. One of the ways in which this is emphasized in the constant repetition of themes and objects appearing in the couple’s memories, whether Beth’s repetition of her own words, or one member of the couple’s repetition of an element drawn from the memories of the other. In this way, it is apparent that the couple’s words do not only intersect at common points, but also at times constitute one member’s variations on another’s words. Both Duff and Beth mention sources of water of different types[[74]](#footnote-74) (sea and pond); Beth describes the man sleeping on the sand[[75]](#footnote-75) while Duff describes the slumbering dog,[[76]](#footnote-76) which Beth herself later mentions;[[77]](#footnote-77) Beth describes watering flowers[[78]](#footnote-78) while Duff describes how he placed flowers in the house;[[79]](#footnote-79) Duff describes his visit to the pub while Beth describes the time she spent in the hotel bar.[[80]](#footnote-80) To this should be added Beth’s triple repetition of the sentence “there wasn’t a soul on the beach,”[[81]](#footnote-81) stated in an almost identical manner by Duff: “Suddenly I realized there wasn’t a soul in the park.”[[82]](#footnote-82)

The similarity between these phrasings creates an impression that the characters are echoing one another, emphasizes the iterability at the basis of the play, and presents the character’s statements as part of a series of variations that “quote” the events of the past in various ways. This iterability unravels the hierarchy between the past event and the recollection thereof, and undermines the perception of past experiences as a source whose identity is unified and consistent, and to which memory is secondary. Iterability, as Derrida argues, is the unavoidable product of the paradigmatic structure of the sign, as copying, representation and repetition are that which is essential to the linguistic sign, and not its original state: “When in fact I effectively use words, and whether or not I do it for communicative ends […], I must from the outset operate (within) a structure of repetition whose basic element can only be representative. […]. A sign which would take place but "once" would not be a sign […].”[[83]](#footnote-83) Derrida’s remarks thus illustrate the play’s treatment of questions of memory and the possibility of accessing it – questions based on the dynamic between source and copy – and demonstrate that the attempt to recreate past events is doomed to failure, because the past does not contain a “source,” that is, an authentic and pure memory that can be recreated in the present in a full and satisfying manner. Every iteration of the past and any speech related to it are necessarily quotation, which invariably includes elements of imagination and difference, which serve to drive the speaker ever further from the singular event he attempts to recreate. In other words, Pinter’s play demonstrates that the only possible appearance the past can make in the present is one of iteration – through variation, quotation, duplication – and that the act of recollection is not the perpetuation of a “source” or a renewed and direct act of accessing a singular event, but rather a creative mechanism which structures the past out of the material of the present.

From a formal perspective, the semantic and verbal iterability appearing in the couple’s words endows the play with a musical aspect, akin to a kind of rhapsody,[[84]](#footnote-84) composed of asymmetric rhythms, as well as iterations and variations on elements appearing in each of the play’s two distinct melodies. Thus the entire play takes on an irregular form, in which the characters’ memories appear not as two parallel and distinct stories, but as two stories that intersect with and echo one another. Every attempt to follow a fixed or preconceived aspect of musical rhythm is in vain. The movement between the characters’ words is not carried out in fixed spaces, and it is suffused with silences, pauses, and repetitions, which themselves are to be found in non-identical spaces. As a result, there arises a heterogeneous rhythmic movement – between voices, between times, between objects – which does not correspond to a unified pattern of regular metrical spaces, and it is this that prevents the play as whole from moving in a progressive and unidirectional manner, in a straight line from one point to the next. The abundance of pauses, particularly in Beth’s speech, which constitutes an act of opposition to the linear movement of time, are a sort of stubborn and material illustration of the staged present. The interruption of monological continuity, the alterations of the rhythm of speech through punctuation or repetition of words that do not provide any new information, the movement between a hurried excess of words and a slow and stammered transmission – all these serve to illustrate the various aspects of the staged present and the multiplicity of subjective experiences of time in contains. The unrestrained and asymmetrical rhythm constituted for Deleuze and Guattari an example of rhizomatic movement – formless and replete with connectivity – that creates multiple and random connections between apparently closed territories and spaces.[[85]](#footnote-85) The rhythm created by the play accords to the rhizomatic logic that characterizes Deleuze and Guattari’s thought, and thus undermines the impression of the distinctiveness of Duff and Beth’s memories. This rhythm creates a simultaneous a-linear movement that subverts every attempt to establish a distinct and stable narrative, and hinders the possibility of deciding between the different (and yet at the same time similar) memories of the couple.

Pinter’s non-linear dramaturgy transforms the staged performance into a homologue of human memory, and of the cognitive movement inherent to the act of recollection. The rhythmic nature of the composition exposes human memory as a territory situated within a rhizomatic tangle of countless connections and associations, which prevent its consolidation and the possibility of turning it into a closed narrative unit, something stable and beyond change. Because the performative dimension of the play is composed of characters who, in their struggle to recreate their past, offer only partial and incoherent images of it, the staged present itself, the temporal continuation of this past, becomes murky, puzzling, and indecipherable. In the face of the dramatic medium’s common assumption of the existence of a past that precedes and leads to the present depicted onstage, the inability of the characters in *Landscape* to suggest a single authoritative and coherent version of their past disrupts the stable ontological status of the staged present. Here too, as in other parts of the play, Pinter creates an internal metatheatrical discourse on the importance of the speaking authority in creating a realistic impression, and on his conception of the play as part of a clear historical and temporal continuity. As a result, it seems that *Landscape* is a play that concerns itself in no small way with questions inherent to the theatrical medium; with laying bare the system of genre conventions as they relate to the immediate and self-evident relationships between what preceded the staged present and the staged present itself, and to the importance of the rifts created between different semantic systems (performative, visual, linguistic, and spatial). Thus the play exemplifies not just the irresolvable dependence of the onstage performance on the narrative function of the actors’ transmission of information, but also the subversive potential latent in the tense and disharmonic staged encounter between the performance and the written dramatic text.

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1. Pinter, Harold. "Writing for the Theatre." English Dramatic Theories: 20th Century. Editor: P. Goetsch,

   Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1972, 118-120. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gilles Deleuze, 1925-1995, French philosopher; Félix Guattari, 1930-1992, French psychiatrist and philosopher. Together the two wrote four books: *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), and *What is Philosophy?* (1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Deleuze, Gilles & Felix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a minor literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 (1975), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Zehavi, Ohad. A Logical Novel: Gilles Deleuze In-Between Philosophy and Literature. Tel Aviv: Resling, 2005, 63 (in Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Boundas, Constantin V. The Deleuze Reader. New York: University of Columbia Press, 1993, 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Quigley, Austin E. The Pinter Problem. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid., 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Zehavi, 2005, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. It is interesting to note that the combination of the consonants constituting the name “Duff” with the phonetic vowels that constitute the name “Beth” creates the word “deaf,” which is highly appropriate to the play’s theatrical performance, which is marked by deafness and an absence of a communicative structure based on a direct relationship between addresser and addressee: the characters speaker, but the communication between them is disrupted and even failed, whether because they do not listen to one another or because they do not respond to one another. As the stage directions note: “Duff refers normally to Beth, but does not appear to hear her voice. Beth never looks as Duff, and does not appear to hear his voice. Both characters are relaxed, in no sense rigid.” [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Scolnicov, Hanna. The Experimental Plays of Harold Pinter. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2012, 77; Hall, Peter. "Directing the plays of Harold Pinter." The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter. Editor: Peter Raby. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Szondi, Peter. Theory of the Modern Drama. Trans. Michael Hays. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987 (1965), 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Zehavi, 2005, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid., 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid., 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ariella Azoulay, and Adi Ophir. “We Are Not Asking What It Means but How Does It Work.” *Theoria uVikoret* (Theory and Criticism), Vol 17, 2000, 125 (in Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Pinter, Harold. *Landscape* in *Landscape & Silence*. London: Cox & Wyman LTD, 1969, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ibid., ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid., 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid., 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Zehavi, 2005, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Quigley, 1975, 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Pinter, 1969, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. A similar phenomenon occurs in response to Beth’s description of “a beautiful autumn morning” when Duff describes the process of pouring a beer: “Pull off. Pull off. Stop pulling just before you get to the dregs. The dregs’ll give you the shit” (Ibid., 26). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid., 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid., 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid., ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See, for example: Hollis, James R. *Harold Pinter: The poetics of silence*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970; Grimes, Charles. *Harold Pinter's politics: a silence beyond echo*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Luckhurst, Marry. "Speaking out: Harold Pinter and the freedom of expression." *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*. Editor: Peter Raby. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Quigley, 1975, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid., 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Ibid., ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Deleuze, Gilles. “Bartleby; or, the Formula." *Essays critical and clinical*, 1997, 68-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Zehavi, 2005, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibid., 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid., 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. When Deleuze and Guattari examine Kafka’s writing, they find a similar characteristic in his minor language – the marginalization of the linguistic system of signification and resulting magnification of the material aspect of language in its place. This occurs, among other reasons, because of the repetition of certain words, which invests these words with a dimension of senselessness, which takes over their ability to bear a distinct meaning. Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Taylor & Francis, 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Boundas, 1993, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Ibid., 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Pinter, 1969, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Ibid., 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ibid., 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid., 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Quigley, 1975, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Pinter, 1969, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid., ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Ibid., 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ibid., 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid., 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Towards the end of the play, Beth refers to the rules of drawing in a way meant to explain why she does not see cause and effect relationships as obligatory and univalent. Beth remarks: “I remembered always, in drawing, the basic principles of shadow and light. Objects intercepting the light cast shadows. Shadow is deprivation of light. The shape of the shadow is determined by that of the object. But not always. Not always directly. Sometimes it is only indirectly affected by it. Sometimes the cause of the shadow cannot be found” (Ibid., 28). Beth’s words attest to the abundant connectivity between the events of the present, which cannot be reduced and narrowed into a single connection between two events or, as she puts it, between the shape of the object and the shape of the shadow. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Ibid., 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Zehavi, 2005, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibid., 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid., 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Pinter, 1969, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid., 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Scolnicov, 2012, 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Halberstam, Judith. *In a queer time and place: Transgender bodies, subcultural lives*. NYU Press, 2005; Edelman, Lee. *No future: Queer theory and the death drive*. Duke University Press, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. On the back cover of the first edition of the plays *Landscape* and *Silence* there appears a quote by Pinter: “I felt that after the *Homecoming* I couldn't any longer stay in the room with this bunch of people who opened doors and came in and went out. *Landscape* and *Silence* are a very different form. There isn’t any menace at all.” (Pinter, 1969). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Scolnicov, 2012, 66; Quigley, 1975, 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Scolnicov, 2012, 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. In postmodernist thought based on “surface philosophy,” especially that of Deleuze and Guattari, the status of terrestrial or geological territory is akin to that of the territory of identity, psychic territory, and so on – all constitute different applications of the concept of territory, and all are inclined towards dynamism and instability. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Agam-Dali, Avivit. *The Place That Lacks Locality – Iconology of Advertising*, Tel Aviv: Resling, 2010, 89 (in Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Pinter, 1969, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Beth’s drawing in the sand can be seen as a metaphor for the failure awaiting every attempt to force the events of the past into a fixed narrative mold. If so, the slippery and unstable outlines in the sand expose the mechanism of memory and the fact that every willful and conscious act of recollection denies the dialectic of recollection and forgetting in which this mechanism operates. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Pinter, 1969, 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Ibid., 9; 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ibid., 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Ibid., 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Ibid., 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Ibid., 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Ibid., 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ibid., 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ibid., 12; 17; 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Ibid., 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Derrida, Jacques. Speech and Phenomena: and Other Essays on Husserel’s Theory of Signs. Trans. David Allison, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. A rhapsody is a musical work in one movement, with a free structure, whose subject matter is extra-musical, such as landscape and emotions; Allison, Ralph & Charles Wellborn. Rhapsody in an Anechoic Chamber: Pinter's Landscape. *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2, May 1973, 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Deleuze, Gilles & Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Translator: Brian Massumi. Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)