

## The Unrelinquished Metaphysical Desire in Pinter's *The Lover* and Stoppard's *The Real Thing*

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### Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to employ René Girard's concept of "metaphysical desire" in a comparative study of Pinter's *The Lover* and Stoppard's *The Real Thing*. René Girard has investigated the idea of imitative desire in a rather distinguished way. He contends that the nature of desires is neither innate nor autonomous, but rather we borrow them from the others. He argues for the idea that human beings are always looking for stronger mediators to gratify their desires. The imitative desire itself, once satisfied, is not gratified and the search for stronger impulses or mediators always continues in a never-ending process that Gerard refers to as "metaphysical desire". The present research intends to look for metaphysical desire in the lives of the characters, wherewith they can examine the role of the mediator in the characters' lives as well. Since metaphysical desire, as Gerard argues, leads individuals either to perfection or destruction and alienation, the characters are shown to imitate their metaphysical desire leading them to experience destructive consequences and family corruption. Consequently, the characters who have pursued their metaphysical desire on the verge of a negative sideline all fail to enjoy a life they long for, and are subject to alienation and misfortunes within which they constantly experience great pains. The characters also turn into obstacle-addicts who, metamorphosed into masochists and losing their lives for good, find no chances to change life as they long for.

### Keywords

Imitative Desire; *The Lover*; *The Real Thing*; Mediator; Metaphysical Desire.

### 1. Introduction

What the researchers are to demonstrate in the present paper is to argue for the representation of metaphysical desire in the lives of the characters of both Harold Pinter's *The Lover* and Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* in terms of Rene Girard's

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critical concepts. The characters either male or female never stop following their basic inclinations concerning their desires. These are not taken from instincts, but rather they are borrowed from others doing or showing some inclinations towards other things. The characters never stop from desiring different things and others. This seems to be unstoppable for the characters. One might think that the characters only attempt to acquire the things they require, but this is shown that they follow their borrowed desires one after the other.

Harold Pinter mostly wrote his plays to be performed on the stage for theatrical purposes, radio, television and the film scripts. He also had a financial and commercial intention behind writing his plays. *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter* and *The Birthday Party* were Pinter's plays written in 1957 and 1958. Pinter's plays were overwhelmed with the sense of nothingness and the futility in life. In this regard, Lee A. Jacobus argues that "The critic Martin Esslin who coined the term "theater of the absurd" saw in Pinter's work as absurdist strain, especially in the nihilism-the belief in nothing-that sometimes shows up in his work" (1338). In most of the plays, Pinter has portrayed characters that are cruel in their relations with one another and there is no sign of sympathy among them. An example is *Caretaker* (1960) in which the main character Aston shows no mercy and understanding towards Davies, the guest he has invited to the house.

*The Lover* is a play about a couple written in 1962 by Pinter with a serious and critical tone. The couples change roles as a lover and a prostitute in the afternoons. Since the male character frequently switches between the husband and the lover, and the female character wavers between the wife and the whore, the play gains its importance. The researchers intend to acknowledge the reason for such a change in their behavior. It is contemplated as a Meta drama. The play has gained ample warrant for some issues, such as divided selves, role-playing, identity crisis and fantasies. The imaginary Max and a slut who changes her outfits in the afternoons are the major issues discussed in this paper. Another major question at hand in this play is why the male character begins cross questioning the female character after their role playing. Why does he like to be treated in an unfriendly way by his own wife? The researchers also look for any metaphysical desire or masochistic behavior in the characters of this play.

*The Real Thing* written by Tom Stoppard in 1982 is a two-act play with two couples playing the main roles. In spite of the fact that the couple in *The Lover* never get involved in any extra-marital sexual relationship outside their family life, the characters in *The Real Thing* do. The male characters are busy at the game of swapping their spouses, and the researcher want to discover why! Moreover, betraying their spouses does not confine to the husbands and wives they are acquainted with. It goes beyond that by the intervention of some other male

characters, and the researchers want to discover why such betrayal acts and the intervention of the other male characters in the play do not infuriate the male members. Are they looking for the gratification of a certain desire in themselves? Why the characters escape monogamy is the major concern of this study.

By looking through the history of psychology, it is argued that every psychological disorder was attributed to some abnormalities within the psyche of man. Freud stated that the reason for the majority of the health problems went back to sexual problems and the lack of satiation in man. There he defined id, ego and superego, and he attributed the human malfunctioning behavior to the sexual problems. Jung, too, referred to human abnormality and he related that to shadow which is the inferior side of our personality suppressed by society or the self to avoid probable harms from outside. Like Freud, he did not address the source of man's desire. However, Rene Girard spotted the source of desire by making a difference between our instincts/appetites and desires. Despite our instincts which are ingrained in our souls and nature, the source of desire is not autonomous. Instead, he mentioned that our desires are rooted in the desires of others. Since man is imitative by nature, we would like to imitate others in their behavior. What the researchers are willing to assert is that the source of some behaviors performed by the major characters of the selected works are imitative, and that they are always prone to look for greater and more powerful obstacles or love objects in their lives in order to get excited to continue their monotonous life.

The characters, especially the male, in both *The Lover* and *The Real Thing* look for another life through pursuing their desires, but fail to achieve any real satisfaction in their lives since they have gone awry by looking for stronger and stronger mediators. They have paced in the wrong path: they do not respect the social norms, and they even do not respect their own wives. The wife swapping is an example of such disrespect. Terror, infuriation and alienation are the outcome of their obedience to the negative side of the metaphysical desire. Since metaphysical desires have two side either the positive or the negative side, and if they were pursuing derives and metaphysical desires from a positive side, they would have achieved calmness, brotherhood and stability in their lives. However, all the positive aspects of life are withheld from them, and the more they jeopardize their fortunes in negative things, the deeper they go into the abyss of misfortune, pain and suffering. This arguably is the characters' conflict they cannot find a definite resolution for that.

## **2. Literature Review**

In *The Lover*, the same deficiency of the relationship between men and women are depicted. Both men and women behave in a way that shows they are

unsatisfied by their marital position and they would like to change it though they may endanger themselves. Burkman in *The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter* wrote, within the dramatic world of Pinter, women play the role of wife and whore because her husband wishes to see her like this, and the same thing happens for the men in the play. The men struggle to keep both their wives and be lustful to whores separately (114). There seems to be a psychological trauma between husband and wife in *The Lover*. Bora in "Reading Harold Pinter's "The Lover" as a Schizophrenia play" argues that one can witness the splitting of the psychic functions in *The lover*. It makes the play more like a sexual comedy. The change of role between Richard and his wife is something deliberately done in the play. It is argued that the appearances, costumes, and names are changed to create personalities separate from their real ones for they intend to get rid of the monotony of monogamy. The couple's afternoon is intentionally filled with some illicit affairs by having schizophrenic roles. They also act as lover and mistress besides their real roles as husband and wife. The couple spice up their life by some adulterous affairs. Finally, when Richard is at the brink of sexual breakdown, he makes up his mind to stop the affair (66-7).

Saevarsdottir in "The Portrayal of Women in Harold Pinter's Plays Night School, The Lover and Homecoming" discusses the weird marital relationship between Richard and Sarah. He never respects his wife and calls her a slut and this is what he both loves and hates. He does not know why his mistreatment of the wife ignites his lust for Sarah. He talks about his extramarital relationship with a whore, who is nobody but Sarah. Sarah is said to be like the girl every merchant in the classical tales were waiting to spend their afternoon with. Richard tries to refresh his mind by asking Sarah act the whore of his life (18-9). Alabdullah in "Home as a Battlefield: Power and Gender in Harold Pinter's The Collection, The Lover and Old Times" expresses his attitude about *The Lover* arguing that it is a play about a husband and a wife whose marriage has gone flat and their attempts at making it alive. From a psychological point of view they like to find a motivation for the continuation of their affair. Elsewhere, he mentions that the play can be related to Freud's concept of a dream where Sarah hides herself behind Richard's mother and he turns into a child with oedipal desires. They both resort to the erotic world taking distance from the reality. Since they cannot continue their life, they play the roles of the lover and the mistress (32-3).

Stoppard's plays are also discussed from a variety of perspectives. Jenkins in *The Theatre of Tom Stoppard* writes about the nature of sexual fidelity. Stoppard argues how the middle classes enshroud love and sex. For the Middle class sex means fidelity. He also questions the issue of forbidden sex, mostly experienced

by the female characters in school. Stoppard puts words in the female characters' mouths that even commitment is an on-going bargain. He also calls that commitment a private knowledge between two people. On one hand, the male characters do not care enough to care their relationships, and on the other hand; the female characters argue how men have been able to pass at her (169). Baker and Smothers in *The Real Thing: Essays on Tom Stoppard in Celebration of his 75th Birthday* argue that some of the concerns observed in *The Real Thing* are about the nature of love, fidelity, infidelity, and commitment (6).

Upon comparing these two plays, one can come to this conclusion that they are on many aspects symmetrical in terms of infidelity, false love and commitment though there seems to be no deviation in *The Lover*. In these two plays, the researchers are willing to show how Girard's metaphysical desire can be found. In each of the papers mentioned above, the researchers identified a problem, but none of them looked for any reason. The whyness of such behavior is to be studied in this paper. All the prior studies showed the consequences of such infidelity, but here we go deep into the heart of the problem, and then we can come to a certain conclusion on finding the root of metaphysical desire and the results of such a discovery.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Rene Girard's work mostly belongs to the area of anthropological philosophy. By mimetic desire, he means our desires are not autonomous, but that we borrow our desires from others. He argued that religion is an instrument through which the mimetic rivalry is controlled; otherwise, the human beings would harm one another. What Girard wanted to mention is that there is not a direct relationship between the subject and object. There is always a triangular relationship among the subject, model and the object. By Model he means the desire for another person.

Girard begins his theory with mimetic desire and he dichotomizes between appetite and desire to develop his theory on mimetic desire. Girard in *Evolution and Conversion* gives some examples, such as man or animal's appetite for food, shelter, etc., which are all biologically based; and he states that they are necessarily connected with desire, but we should not forget that they can be contaminated with mimetic desire when there exists a model. The presence of the model is very influential in his theory without which he cannot prove his claim on mimetic desire. He continues his argument that if desire is mimetic, then the same object is possessed by someone else, namely a mediator, here. Both the subject and the mediator are then in the same relational domain to the object of desire or he can be in a different model. If the subject is in a different domain, he

cannot have the mediator's object and what happens in the external mediation (56).

Despite the fact that many thinkers might think that desire is instinctual, it is mimetic in Girard's view. If it were instinctual, there would be some fixed desires among individuals, but the point is that it is learned because we begin to show our desires towards things and people when we see them having some certain tendencies and desires. Girard in *Violence and The Sacred* argues, "in desiring an object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object. The rival, then, serves as a model for the subject, not only in regard to such secondary matters as style and opinions but also, and more essentially, in regard to desires" (145). Desire as described by Girard seems not to be biological, but something imitative that people are attracted towards. In this regard, Grande in "The Mimetic Nature of Desire" asserts that "Desire can be described as the drives which emerge from a non-biological source, the victimage mechanism, and is, according to its nature, interdividual" (2).

Competing with the rivals is a psychological issue, which will either lead man to his downfall or prevents from his/her going awry. Man is instinctively inclined to imitate others, especially the models in each aspect of the life. Human beings imitate the models to climb the ladders of success. Girard in *Resurrection from the Underground Feodor Dostoevsky* seems to certify my words by declaring his idea on man's role models in the society. For this he refers to the youngsters, and he states that when they grow up, they imitate the best possible models. These also happen for the elder people in the society. If they imitate the models which are good and acceptable, they will not go astray (76). Therefore, desire is related to man.

Human desire is a concept which is only attributed to human beings and there is a clear-cut dichotomy between human interests and desires and that of the animals. Man desires because others desire and animals like to possess things because they need them. Girard in *Violence and The Sacred* argues, "Two desires converging on the same object are bound to clash. Thus, mimesis coupled with desire leads automatically to conflict (146). Pisk in "Mimetic Desire and Scapegoat Mechanism in Sport" asserts that things human beings desire have to be a non-natural object of desire. Hegel refers to that as the only possible candidate for such an object of desire. It is human to desire what others desire because they just desire it, therefore a useless biological entity, such as an enemy's flag or a medal becomes important for man because it is the object of others' desire. It is not only a human desire, but it can also be conceived of as human reality, which is different from animal reality. The action that satisfies such desires becomes meaningful for man. Man feeds on desire as animal feeds

on real things; therefore, if one wants to become a human being in fullness, one must risk his life to satisfy human desire (10).

Girard seems to violate all the old psychological learning the scholars used to employ in their researches. He addresses history of the field and borrows his mimetic theory from different literary works he has studied with great care. There is an example in Girard's theory that shows his insistence on the very value of mimetic desire: he questions Freud's idea on the nature of Oedipus complex. While Freud thought that sexual drive is the source of our desire, Girard related desire to mimetic desire. Girard in *Violence and The Sacred* gives an example of the importance of mimetic desire by referring to a little boy who identifies himself with his father. His idea has nothing to be passive or feminine towards the father, but it typically masculine. There is a resemblance between the identification with the father and mimetic desire. The child can select as any man as his model (170).

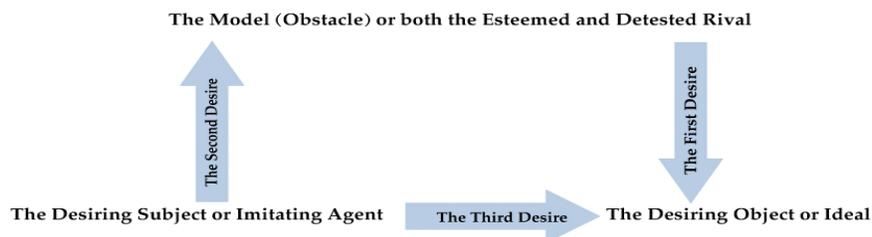
Although Freud related every human behavior to sexuality and the suppressed desires of man, Girard meant the contrary, and he wanted to show that our desires and drives for our activities is closely connected to mimetic desire because man by nature enjoys imitation and like to imitate other, particularly those who are close to him. Fleming in *Rene Girard, Violence and Mimesis* has referred to Girard's argument by asserting that Freud is mistaken in his belief that libido is the sole motor and basis of psychic processes. Freud mentions that the conflict between father and son is because of his identification with his father; however, Girard argues that the relationship between father and son can be constructed like any form of conflictual mimesis. For Girard, it is the imitated desire or the model-obstacle relationship between father and son (32-3).

Intensification of imitative desire can lead to the emergence of rivals as monsters. Sometimes, these monsters are physically emerged, and sometimes they emerge in a character's personality. Since rivalry lead to violence, the rivals become the monsters, but it is inevitable to have rivals. Girard in *Violence and The Sacred* argues that Violence is the divine force that everyone tries to use for his own purposes and that ends by using everyone for its own" (144). Palaver in *Rene Girard's Mimetic Theory* argues that the more mimetic crisis intensifies, the quicker violence is exchanged between the rivals. The high frequency of violence makes it clear that the rivals are faced off in reciprocal confrontation. It can be found among the enemy brothers, and between the rivals themselves. This rapid sequence of reciprocation can end in a hallucinatory state. In short, rivals in a competition face each other as monsters (1595-1596).

The source of every desire for Girard begins with a competition for an object and there is not any rationality and logicity for that to refer that to the mind

and consciousness. Mostly, the individuals are not concerned with that. This is the desire which is directed towards the other as Girard talks about. Desire has no reality peculiar in itself. Desires and drives are one and the same thing for the subject as a motivating factor. The imitative desire has no rationality, rules, and the individual may not be conscious of that. Girard gives some examples for such rivalrous behavior. Girard in *Resurrection from the Underground Feodor Dostoevsky* argues that by giving an example of children when they are left to play together. Even if they have a mountain of toys, their togetherness does not last a long time. When one of them chooses one toy, the other tries to take it away from him/her. This is an act of imitation that the second child tries to imitate the first child. The fact here is that the first child does not know anything better than the second, and the latter's interference reinforces the retaking of the object. Each child imitates the desire of the other as the model whom s/he has to imitate. Adults think and claim that their desires are only theirs, but they are imitating the desires of others, and they imitate each other more fiercely than children (76-77).

Girard in *Violence and The Sacred* argues that we have already been misunderstood because desire itself is essentially mimetic directed toward the object desired by the model (146). Girard refers to the human nature and relates that to the importance of mimesis in human desire. Pisk in "Mimetic Desire and Scapegoat Mechanism in Sport" certifies that human beings learn from one another what they should desire. This mimeticism does not only lie in their copying language, gesture and other external attributes, but it is also in what they do desire. Girard calls the autonomous willingness of man for copying the desires of others 'a romantic lie'. For this Girard refers to two kinds of mimetic desire: one of them is acquisitive mimesis, which is only man's desire to possess things, such a toys children play with, and the other one is a desire directed towards things other than object in a state of quasi-transcendent existence, also known as metaphysical desire. Forgetting about the autonomous nature of desires, our desire for a certain object is provoked by another's desire or the model in a triangular structure consisting of three elements. A desires B because C desires it (11). The following figure depicts the whole theory of Girard's mimesis: The following figure depicts the whole theory of Girard's mimesis:



Human beings have a personality trait very similar to animal behavior. They imitate each other enviously in order to show their ability in different things and fields of knowledge. They also compete for the possession of the objects. Cowdell in *Rene Girard and Secular Modernity, Christ, Culture and Crisis* attests that it seems Girard has made the term 'mimesis' very close to the concept of envy. Out of some envious acts, the subject and mediator become rivals who would like to foil each other to prove their superiority. This act has two sides: external and internal mediation. What goes between an adult and a child is external mediation, but the conflict among children is internal mediation which is equal to rivalry and envy. Internal mediation with its rivalrous act can engender itself as double mediation. Imitative desire as an envious act can have its negative consequences as thwarting the rival and forgetting the original object of rivalry (23).

In the present paper, attempt is made to demonstrate how the object of desire is something imitative as it happens for the main characters of the selected plays. The metaphysical desire is to desire to get what is out of reach, and here in both Pinter's *The Lover* and Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, the researchers are willing to show how the characters either male or female ones endeavor to acquire what is forbidden and taboo in the society. They endanger and jeopardize themselves only to gratify their metaphysical desire for some materialistic and physical possessions. The characters show too much inclination to consummate their sexual drives rather than to give up their desires. Between a subject and an object there is not a direct relationship, and there is always a mediator between these two. Therefore, linearity of the relationship between subject and object is clean forgotten in Girard's theory and autonomy of desire is an impossibility that is to be forgotten in his theory. No constraints and limitations can prevent the characters from manipulating and abusing each other for their own benefits. Once the characters expose themselves to the negative consequences of imitative desire, nothing can help them from establishing a safe society. The solution to this problem is to stick to the positive effects of imitative desire which leads man to safety, human value and integration of family and society.

#### **4. Practical Reading and Discussion**

In Pinter's *The Lover*, there appears to be a metaphysical desire unsatisfied. This desire is first represented as a fantasy in the life of this couple. Gradually, the course of the love life of Richard and Sarah does not develop as passionate as it was, and they try to find a way out of that boredom. They begin role-playing. One of them becomes the new lover and the other becomes a mistress, a whore more or less acting as a woman of low moral character. Nanda in *An Analysis of the Unsatisfactory Male-Female Relationship in the Plays of Harold Pinter* argues

that when the novelty of a marital relationship wears out, and when love ceases to excite people, and sex turns into habit, couples often indulge in wild sexual habits. They resort to a more erotic and desirable world (24). In fact, these two characters do not experience extra-marital relationships, but they phantasize how they should experience it. Both Richard and Sarah do not intent to repress their erotic feelings. Pinter shows how the two lovers are inclined to keep the flames of their love ignited by their role-playing in *The Lover*:

He opens the front door and goes out. She continues dusting. The lights fade. Fade up. Early morning. Sarah comes into room from kitchen. She wears the same dress, but is now wearing a pair of very high-heeled shoes. She pours a drink and sits on chaise longue with magazine. There are six chimes of the clock. Richard comes in the front door. He wears a sober suit, as in the morning. He puts his briefcase down in the hall and goes into the room. She smiles at him and pours him a whisky. (150)

In *The Lover*, the couple does not find satisfaction in their marital life though they were very passionate at the beginning of their relationship. They look for things which are lost from their life: passionate love and excitement. They both search for a stronger mediator to give validity to their monotonous life. If they are looking for fantasy, it is just because of the fact that they really require a mediator to give their lives a meaning. The play begins with Richard asking his wife, Sarah, in a friendly way if she was visiting her friend that day! Later that evening he asks her if she had a pleasant afternoon, etc. They talk about some unreal relationship which seem moral and perfect for a married couple. Nanda in *An Analysis of the Unsatisfactory Male-Female Relationship in the Plays of Harold Pinter* asserts that Richard and Sarah discuss her lover and hollyhocks as if they are not unnatural and immoral for a married woman to entertain a lover (29). The surprising thing is that Richard is not so calm and easy-going about this. Gradually he gets irritated in a way that the reader feels he needs to be infuriated in order to be emotionally surprised, and this is what gives his life a meaning to tolerate the boredom. Pinter shows Richard's resentment indirectly in the following excerpt from *The Lover*:

Richard: Does it ever occur to you that while you're spending the afternoon being unfaithful to me I'm sitting at a desk going through balance sheets and graphs?

Sarah: Well, of course it occurs to me.

Richard: What's your attitude to that, then?

Sarah: It makes it all the more piquant. (153)

Richard and Sarah want to escape the monotony of monogamy in their marital relationship. Richard is the sometimes Max and Sarah is the sometimes Mary. They want to be two different individuals in their tedious life which has become unbearable sometimes. Bora in "Reading Harold Pinter's "The Lover" as a Schizophrenia play" states that there seems to be a psychological illness

controlling the lives of these two characters. The schizophrenia is present in the play as a game to derive more sexual pleasure. The play is dark and devoid of hope. In order to gain more sexual pleasure Richard addresses his wife, "You lovely whore!" (67). They are trying to dig out some truth in their meaningless lives. There is no reason for Richard to destroy his relationship with Sarah because he states that he has not seen any woman as respectful as Sarah, therefore they try to find a way out in order to stabilize their long-held marital life. It seems as if they are looking for some metaphysical entity in themselves which is out of their reach. They have found it in creating variety in their lives.

The more out of reach the mediator is, the more exciting it is for the couple in *The Lover*. Richard and Sarah are willing to experience a love life hitherto undone by them. To Max, Richard is a powerful mediator and to Mary, Sarah is a serious mediator. Max inquires Mary if she is married, and when she says 'yes' to him, his lustful desire is more ignited. Saevarsdottir in "The Portrayal of Women in Harold Pinter's Plays Night School, The Lover and Homecoming" argues that the play explores the married couple's dual relationship as respectable, suburban husband/wife, and passionate, lustful mistress/lover. Richard shows he's getting a little bit uneasy about the games they play. His discourse changes when he is playing the lover game. He treats Sarah the way a slut is treated. It seems that he plays this game only to ignite his lust which has been calmed through their habitual and routine life (18-9). This is the essence of the metaphysical desire they look for in their lives. The following lines from Pinter's *The Lover* show how he really feels when he questions Sarah:

Sarah: It's wonderful to live out here, so far away from the main road, so secluded.  
 Richard: Yes, I do agree.  
 They go back into the room. They get into the bed. He picks up his book and looks at it. He closes it and puts it down.  
 This isn't much good.  
 He switches off his bedside lamp. She does the same.  
 Moonlight.  
 He isn't married, isn't he?  
 Sarah. Mmmmn.  
 Pause.  
 And you are happy, aren't you? You are not in any way jealous? (161)

The researchers believe that Richard is in search of what he cannot achieve. He wants excessive joy from a mediator unknown to him. He searches the unidentified and the unknown. That is, he is under the pressure of his metaphysical desire to achieve the impossible through imagining a fanciful mediator. It can lead to annihilation of Richard. He wants to achieve the unattainable, so he is converted to a masochist. Sarah titillates him to get the

energy he needs for a newly bond relationship. Max tells her that she needn't deceive her husband any longer. When Sarah asks Richard whether his wife knows about her, he states that his wife knows about 'a spare-time whore' he occasionally meets. Alabdullah in "Home as a Battlefield" argues that from a psychological point of view, they have the craving for stimulation which is so often the feature of the love of adults. *The Lover* is an escape from reality into an erotic world, in which every partner tries to create a role for the other. They cannot continue their life; therefore, they have to create another world to reinforce their relationship (32-3). To enliven such a relationship, both Richard and Sarah suffer the pain of love as masochists. Consequently, the metaphysical desire is accompanied by pain and suffering, but they do love such a painstaking ordeal.

Richard enjoys suffering the pain of betraying his own wife, and sometimes he grows bad-tempered. His desire is redirected towards violence. He knows that by bringing the afternoon games into their home, Sarah will react and she might be infuriated by his insults because she will be devaluated and condemned as a woman of low moral character, but he insists on his game, and it seems he enjoys such and such as a masochist. Milne in "Pinter's Sexual politics" argues that Sarah in *The Lover* resists Richard's attempts to introduce afternoon games into their evening life by insisting unsuccessfully upon their formal status: 'You've no right to question me. ... It was our arrangement. No questions of this kind.' (15). Nonetheless, the psychological equilibrium of their life is disturbed. He is willing to suffer more and more because he enjoys it. Pinter demonstrates this in the following excerpt from *The Lover*:

Richard: Do you both play it? Mmmnn? Do you both play it? Together?

She moves away swiftly, then turns, hissing.

Sarah: You stupid . . . ! (She looks at him coolly.) Do you think he's the only one who comes! Do you? Do you think he's the only one I entertain? Mmmnn? Don't be silly. I have other visitors, other visitors, all the time, I receive all the time. Other afternoons, all the time. When neither of you know, neither of you. I give them strawberries in season. With cream. Strangers, total strangers. But not to me, not while they're here. They come to see the hollyhocks. And then they stay for tea. Always. Always.

Richard: Is that so?

He moves towards her, tapping the drum gently. He faces her, tapping, then grasps her hand and scratches it across the drum. (181)

Though some critics believe in ambiguous meanings, such as misogyny hidden in the word 'whore' used by Pinter, the researchers believe that there is something beyond Pinter's dramatic trope of the 'whore'. Surprisingly, Richard who is the outcome of the male-dominated society enjoys escaping from the monotony of his monogamous life with Sarah. He is thinking of a way out

because he cherishes his violation of marital bond. That is, he wants to go beyond that. Stokes in "Pinter and the 1950s" suggests that at the end of *The Lover*, the husband calls his wife 'you lovely whore', and it signifies that sex has become more interesting for him when it is more transgressive, which is an enlivening counterpoint to the conventional monogamy (37). Transgression equals one's suffering because it needs one to go against the current stream, but Richard makes an endeavor to transgress the mundane and homely love by creating a polygamous relationship full of fantasy. He suffers from insulting his wife by calling his wife bad names, but he enjoys this name-calling as well.

By the same token, Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* is abound with characters whose roles as mediators are significant and that their metaphysical desires are proved unsatisfied. It is not always the case that only the male characters look for some unsatisfied desire in their lives. In this play, the female characters of the play get involved in a variety of activities just to cover up their real intentions. They just want to acquire things and people beyond their reach at any cost even by participating in some political activities. Kruger in *The Actual versus the Fictional* asserts that Annie, whose praises have been sung for her involvement in the Brodie case, is finally discredited in her political involvement when it is revealed at the end of the scene that she is using the committee meetings as an alibi to cover up her affair with Henry (115). When Henry asks her about Brodie, she confesses that he is not important to her, but the readers know that she disguises her character by her false words. Stoppard in *The Real Thing* shows how she really ignores the political matters and values her desire to get what she had already been forbidden from because Henry does belong to Charlotte:

Max: I'm sorry, Charlotte.

Charlotte: Well done, Henry.

(Max leaves towards the front door, Charlotte, with a glance at Henry, rolling her eyes in rebuke, follows him out of the room, Annie stands up. For the rest of the scene she is moving, hardly looking at Henry, perhaps fetching her handbag.)

Henry: It was just so I could look at you without it looking funny.

Annie: What time are you going for Debbie?

Henry: Four o'clock. Why?

Annie: Three o'clock. Look for my car.

Henry: What about Brodie?

Annie: Let him rot. (35)

Brodie, as a political writer imprisoned, is not important for Henry. His importance is because of the fact that he wants a new mediator to help him to be stimulated enough to continue his love life. Henry argues with Annie and he intends to downgrade Brodie as a writer. He tells Annie that he has two personality failures: firstly, he is bigoted and secondly, he is not able to write. He

complains about Brodie's writings repeatedly until Annie calls him a pig. Henry's argument with Annie proves how masochistic he is in his behavior. He is involved in severe arguments with Annie just to prove himself, and this has caused him great anxiety and sufferings. What gives meaning to his life is his enmity with other men to revitalize his life with Annie. One might question himself why Henry is repeatedly asking questions from Annie and puts himself in troublesome situations. Why he continues defending himself and condemning Brodie are some reasons for Henry to look for more powerful mediators in life. There are also some implications in the play suggesting his lust for a stronger mediator in the life. He desires something metaphysical he cannot satiate at all. Stoppard in *The Real Thing* shows how Henry enjoys suffering the pain of having a stronger mediator in his life:

Annie: You pig.

Henry: I'm a pig, and he can't.

Annie: I'll smash you one. It's you who's bigoted. You're bigoted about what writing is supposed to be like. You judge everything as though everyone starts off from the same place, aiming at the same prize. Eng. Lit. Shakespeare out in front by a mile, and the rest of the field strung out behind trying to close the gap. You all write for people who would like to write like you if only they could write. Well, sod you, and sod Eng. sodding Lit.!

Henry: Right.

Annie: Brodie isn't writing to compete like you. He's writing to be heard.

Henry: Right.

Annie: And he's done it on his own.

Henry: Yes. Yes ... I can see he's done a lot of reading.

Annie: You can't expect it to be Eng. Lit.

Henry: No.

Annie: He's a prisoner shouting over the wall. (49-50)

The search for a stronger mediator does not stop for many characters in *The Real Thing*. When Annie informs Henry that she has promised to see Billy again on his new show, Henry does not let her go there alone, but he resolves to accompany her because he is more tantalized to see Annie wooed by another man. He is ready to see the rival. To Henry, Annie is a metaphysical desire who cannot wholeheartedly be possessed. He does not want to put Billy aside; rather he requires Billy's presence to give meaning to his own life. He is growing more masochist than before for he does not allow Annie to go there alone, and he likes to be suffered by Billy, and he enjoys it. Henry does know that Annie will have her own affairs with other men, but his love for her does not end. Krüger in *The Actual versus the Fictional in Betrayal, The Real Thing and Closer* asserts that "Annie has an affair with her co-actor in Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore'* (1633), named Billy. Annie finally ends this affair and returns to Henry. Meanwhile,

Annie is involved in the cause of Brodie, a political prisoner who is serving a sentence for setting a cenotaph on fire during an anti-missile demonstration (107). Henry's incessant desire to have another male rival never stops during all his life. This is to cherish the metaphysical desire that he seeks in Annie through the active and enforceable presence of varied men.

The subjects, including the male and the female ones seek metaphysical desires, and hence they are more inclined to suffer great pains rather than to experience a calm life. When Annie is about to go out to see Billy, she tells Henry that she loves him, and Henry knows that she loves him, but she loves other men, including Billy and Brodie, the political prisoner. Surprisingly, Annie lets Henry know where she is dating, and he calls it dignified cuckoldry and modern marriage. Annie herself admits to the affair, but she frankly wants Henry to give her the opportunity to let it run its way without putting an end to their marital life. Henry seems not to be a biased man, and he does not get angry by what Annie admits. It seems that Henry is deaf and blind to what he sees and hears. However, he continues his damned marital life with Annie in that he likes suffering the pain of having another man in his love life. He is a masochist who enjoys being cuckolded. Stoppard shows Henry's suffering in the following lines of *The Real Thing*:

Henry: Not for me. I won't be the person who stopped you. I can't be that. When I got upset you said you'd stop so I try not to get upset. I don't get pathetic because when I got pathetic I could feel how tedious it was, how unattractive. Like Max, your ex. Remember Max? Love me because I'm in pain. No good. Not in very good taste. So. Dignified cuckoldry is a difficult trick, but it can be done. Think of it as modern marriage. We have got beyond hypocrisy, you and I. Exclusive rights isn't love, it's colonization.

Annie: Stop it—please stop it. (Pause). (76-7)

The masochist Henry keeps on cross questioning Annie for her relationships with other men, including Roger who is on the committee in Brodie's trial. He suffers a great pain when he discusses the political matters with Annie. He does it to prove himself to Annie. He has to resort to historical stories to show how politicians are liars and create violence in the society. He questions politics, property, parliament, etc. to say that he is the only truthful and right person for Annie. Roger, the judge, is a metaphysical desire for Henry whom he wants to surpass. Once one of the mediators loses his value, he hurriedly goes to another mediator. The stronger the mediator, the stronger his metaphysical desire would be. This is a process with not termination for Henry. That is to say, if it is terminated, Henry's desire to continue his love life will no longer last. Henry's life is only guaranteed if there are repetitive mediators in order for him to ignite his metaphysical desire repeatedly.

There are many instances of parallel comparison between *The Lover* and *The Real Thing*. Imitating the metaphysical desire has negative outcomes for the main characters of both of the plays. In the same way that the characters grow a bit uneasy, lost and alienated for what they cannot achieve in their lives in *The Lover*, the same thing happens in *The Real Thing*. The male and the female characters lose their psychological balance, and who belongs to who becomes a puzzle for them. In *The Lover*, the characters escape the reality the reality by resorting to the erotic world. Similarly, the characters in *The Real Thing* never stick to the reality of their marital life, and would like to find solace through the intervention of some other characters. In *The Lover*, the character phantasize having partners outside their marital circle to achieve maximum pleasure, and In *The Real Thing*, the characters really swap their spouses to seek pleasure in their monotonous lives. In both of the plays, the characters turn into masochists who enjoy the polygamy of their spouses. No longer do they enjoy the monogamy of their marriage. They do imitate their metaphysical desire on the negative side. Hence they are condemned to an emptied life, loss, alienation, lack if intimacy and discourage.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The major focus of this paper was particularly directed towards a metaphysical desire that the main characters of the selected plays are involved in. They want to get what is out of their reach. The metaphysical desire is conceived to be an impossible act. In Pinter's *The Lover*, we can see that the play abounds with metaphysical desires unsatisfied. Richard and Sarah are loyal to each other, but they play some fantasy sexual games. They are wife and husband during night and in the afternoons they are lover and beloved under the false names of Max and a whore. The monotony of monogamy opens a way to the couple to experience though momentarily the metaphysical desire. The married couple's dual relationship wavers between husband/wife and lustful mistress/lover. Such a fantasy play happens between these two because they like to have some extramarital relationships. Once their desires for possessing each other is fulfilled, they need to get more, and they endeavor to acquire the forbidden through some fantasy plays.

The insatiable metaphysical desire can also be viewed in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*. Stoppard shows a little more complicated relationship compared to what one witnesses in Pinter's *The Lover*. There is a great variety of love and lust exchange among the characters in the former. The female characters sometimes surpass the male characters in his plays. They seek frequently sexual partners/mediators. In *The Real Thing*, Henry never stops insulting Annie to the extent he is called a pig, but he knows that Annie has always enjoyed the company of some other men, Brodie, the political prisoner, and Roger who is in

the committee to judge Brodie. The characters are insulted, but they never give up finding more powerful mediators because the satiation of the metaphysical desire continues unstoppably in everyman's life. Therefore, they continue their postmarital relationship to gratify their needs for this insatiable metaphysical desire.

The major questions posed here could be summarized as the characters in both plays look for the gratification of a certain desire in themselves, the metaphysical desire, and the desire of the forbidden. However, they cease to be gratified since there is a never-ending process for their unrelinquished metaphysical desire. They pursue their metaphysical desires to acquire more and stronger mediators/obstacle in their lives, and that is why they escape monogamy in their marital relationships. Since what they achieve cannot satisfy their insatiable needs they always crave for stronger impulses. This lack of satisfaction also have some other consequences turning the characters to masochists who enjoy suffering by letting other characters entering their marital life at the expense of losing faith, satisfaction, solace and stability in the life. If the characters imitated their metaphysical desires for some positive aspects of life, including helping others and constructing intimate relationships with others, they would definitely find solace, stability and psychological balance in their lives.

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