



# MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL DEPRAVATION IN MODERN SOCIETIES: A READING OF HAROLD PINTER'S *THE LOVER*

Paméssou WALLA  
[wallapamessou@yahoo.fr](mailto:wallapamessou@yahoo.fr)  
Université de Lomé, Togo

## ABSTRACT

Through the critical grid of Judeo-Christian ethical perspectives, this paper makes an assessment of the incompatibility between marriage and sexual depravation in modern societies through the reading of Harold Pinter's *The Lover*. In fact, Pinter's play *The Lover*, puts at play the licentious and permissive life of a married couple which disparages the sacrosanct nature of marriage. Therefore, this article seeks to show in this vein, the reality of sexual depravation in modern day marriages and call for the necessity to return to traditional Judeo-Christian values that preserve the sacrosanct nature of marriage and the harmony within the married couple life.

**Key Words:** marriage, husband, wife, sexual depravation, sanctity.

## RESUME

A travers les perspectives éthiques judéo-chrétiennes, cet article explore l'incompatibilité entre mariage et dépravation sexuelle dans les sociétés modernes à travers la lecture de la pièce théâtrale *The Lover* d'Harold Pinter. En fait, la pièce théâtrale *The Lover* d'Harold Pinter met en scène la vie licencieuse et permissive d'un couple marié qui renonce au caractère sacro-saint du mariage. Par conséquent, cet article cherche à montrer dans la même veine, la réalité de la dépravation sexuelle dans les mariages modernes et appelle à la nécessité de revenir à nos valeurs traditionnelles judéo-chrétiennes qui préservent la nature sacro-sainte du mariage et l'harmonie dans la vie de couple des personnes mariées.

**Mots clés :** mariage, mari, femme, dépravation sexuelle, inviolabilité.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, marriage was sacrosanct in terms of Christian moral values, meaning that marriage was unalterable, inviolable and religiously enshrined in supernatural powers or unseen forces ready to punish the trespassers or breachers of the sacred marriage bond through adultery or any sexual deviation. In those days, people were quite aware that once one is married, the immoral sexual life was over, playing with the other sex outside marriage realms was sinful and therefore, forbidden.

But this sacrosanct nature of marriage is no more to be seen in modern societies today. Married people live as if there were single and free from any tie or bond. This deviation of marriage perspective though full of individual freedom, threatens the harmony of married couple life. This is what Harold Pinter tries to portray in his play titled *The Lover*. Actually, *The Lover* is a play that dramatizes a married couple life which does not reflect the standards of married people meant to be faithful to

each other to preserve the harmony and the survival of their marriage. Instead of sticking to each other, both the husband and the wife entertain feigned extra conjugal love relationships that make both of them uneasy.

This article seeks to show in this vein the reality of sexual depravation in modern day marriages and call for the necessity to return to our traditional values that preserve the sacrosanct nature of marriage and the harmony within the married couple life. This work is explored through the Judeo-Christian ethical perspectives.

The work is structured in three main parts. The first part focuses on the woman's depravation while the second part highlights the man's infidelity, the two people being consciously entangled by the same moral dilemma. The third and last part aims at sensitizing the two wayward and licentious married people to the traditional commonsense of marriage chastity and survival.

### **1. The Woman's Sexual Depravation in the Play**

Woman's depravation in the play consists of woman's moral corruption in terms of sexuality. Within a married couple, sexuality is restricted to husband and wife according to Christian norms. Therefore, the sexuality outside the married couple is sinful and denotes of sexual depravation. Sexual act outside a married couple is known as adultery. Adultery, in its literal sense, has been defined as a consensual physical association between two individuals who are not married to each other and either or both are married to someone else having a living spouse.

Adultery, also known as infidelity or extra-marital affair, is certainly a moral crime and is thought-out a sin by almost all religions. There is however, difference in the literal, social and legal definitions.

Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery.

In India, adultery should be treated as breach of trust and treated as civil offence, according to a recommendation made by the National Commission for Women (NCW).

Blow and Hartnett (2005: 230) define extra-marital involvement (EMI) as a sexual and/or emotional act engaged in by one person within a committed relationship, where such an act occurs outside of the primary relationship and constitutes a breach of trust and/or violation of agreed upon norms, overt and covert, by one or both individuals in that relationship.

Again, depravation refers to the change of a situation for the worse. In the context of this work, sexual depravation is used to denote sexual immorality outside

marriage bond willingly and consciously accepted and practiced by a married couple which finds no real pleasure in it and decides to give up a modern style of life devoid of the real freedom it longs for.

This first part focuses on the demonstration of Sarah's sexual freedom despite her status of married woman living in a household with a man she calls her husband. Sarah lives with Richard as her husband, yet, she brings her lover into the house with the permission of the latter. Richard allows Max, his wife's lover, to come in his absence and make love to his wife:

RICHARD (amiably). Is your lover coming today?

SARAH. Mmmn.

RICHARD. What time?

SARAH. Three. (Pinter, 1977: 161)

Imagine being at home with your wife and sensing that very soon her lover will join her into your home to make love to her. How embarrassing will it be! What an abomination! What a depravation! This is a sign that moral values of modern days are really perverted and corrupt. Richard lives with his wife in the same home and is conscious that she has a lover outside the home who comes from time to time to have sex with her in his absence; what a perversion! This kind of freedom cannot be seen in traditional England; but today, these obscene things are fully rampant in modern-day England and all over the world in urban and rural areas as well due to the so-called civilization and modernization. Look at Richard's real inner feelings instead of his hypocrisy in letting his wife bring her lover into his house:

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. What a funny question. (Pinter, 1977: 165)

The picture of a lover coming for his wife pushes Richard to ask his wife whether she can think of him while she is with her lover. He wants to know if the woman could fathom in her mind the fact that when her husband is working hard to win the bread for her she is busy with her lover on his own bed enjoying sexual pleasure. The idea of her husband making all sorts of sacrifices and going through all kinds of trouble in his job for her does not deter her from the pleasure she is having by the side of a lover being a married woman. This state of things denotes her advanced level of sexual depravation, which is the image of some modern women. Let the reader consider Sarah's reaction to her husband worry:

RICHARD. You mean while you're with him ... you actually have a picture of me, sitting at my desk going through balance sheets?

SARAH. Only at ... certain times. (Pinter, 1977: 165)

Richard is really wondering and worrying whether his wife is not sensitive to his sacrifices as an accountant for the sake of their couple. The playwright uses Richard as a character to awaken his wife's dead senses. For Richard, if the woman really has a picture of him suffering, toiling, working hard for her, she could not continue

staying with a stranger to have sexual pleasure. But despite her advanced level of insensitivity, the woman feigns a bit of consciousness:

SARAH. How could I forget you?  
RICHARD. Quite easily, I should think.  
SARAH. But I'm in your house.  
RICHARD. With another. (Pinter, 1977: 166)

The woman's reaction to her husband's worries is that she is quite aware of her husband's challenges and sacrifices for her when she is with her lover. If so, the situation becomes paradoxical then! She claims she cannot forget her husband while she is in his house. If this is true, then something goes wrong with her. To live with your husband in his house and yet welcome a lover there is quite unthinkable in a traditional context where this behavior would have been a serious crime, a criminal offence. But, the husband creates a situation and starts complaining thereafter; what a pity! What a contradiction! Traditionally, it is the man who is allowed to have extra conjugal sexual relationship, but the case is different here whereby the woman is free to entertain a love relationship outside her marital home. What a breach of order! The structure of the traditional society is completely down.

According to Smith's anthropological research, for married men, extramarital sex is socially tolerated in Nigeria as an African setting, and in many respects it is even socially rewarded. (Smith, 2010: 146)

Moreover, the man is the one who allows his wife to bring home her lover, yet he complains; what a weakness, what a depravation! What an absurd drama! In fact, absurd drama is absurd in the sense that it focuses not on logical acts or traditional character development but on human beings trapped in an incomprehensible world. Whatever be the absurd presentation of any situation by the playwright, behind these absurdities there is the realistic tone which imparts meaning to the absurd play. The aim of the absurd drama is to enable its viewers to make their own conclusions and decisions. According to Martin Esslin, the theatre of most previous epochs reflected an accepted moral order, a world whose aims and objectives were clearly present to the minds of all its public, whether it was the audience of the medieval mystery plays with their solidly accepted faith in the Christian world order or the audience of the drama of Ibsen, Shaw, or Hauptmann with their unquestioned belief in evolution and progress. To such audiences, right and wrong were never in doubt, nor did they question the then accepted goals of human endeavour. Our own time, at least in the Western world, wholly lacks such a generally accepted and completely integrated world picture. (Esslin, 1968: 192)  
In this absurdity Richard the husband, would like to know the mind and feelings of his wife's lover coming to a married woman's house to make love to her:

RICHARD. ... What does he think about your husband? Slight pause.  
SARAH. He respects you. Pause. (Pinter, 1977: 172)

Indeed, the husband wants to grasp the mood and the psychology of his wife's lover while with her in his house. In fact, the husband fails to understand that his sort of character weakness is general, the whole world is polluted with sexual depravation. Sex is no more a taboo, let alone a sacred matter. Provided it is available people no more enquire about the sanctity of the sex; they are ready to take it once it is given; whether it is legal or not, legitimate or not, people worry less about that. As a matter of fact, the lover does not worry about the wife's husband, what matters to him is the woman's sex. Nowadays people are controlled by fleshly pleasure or hedonism, they care less about moral values, let alone marriage sanctity or marital fidelity. In this vein, Sarah does not hide her sinful pleasure to her husband:

RICHARD. ... I think I can understand why you like him so much.

SARAH. He's terribly sweet.

RICHARD. Mmn-hmmnn. (Pinter, 1977: 172)

Imagine Sarah sustaining that her lover is terribly sweet. It means that, for her, pleasure is essential, moral values are secondary. For Sarah, hedonism overrides marriage sanctity. Her lover is so sweet that she sticks to him on the expenses of her own husband who toils day and night to provide for her and make her happy. See the way her husband responds to her affirmation, he just simply exclaims "Mmn-hmmnn", meaning that he is overwhelmed by her wife's attitude, which must be worrying and questionable. His interjection means that what his wife is doing is wordless and speechless. But the woman keeps on wallowing indifferently in her freedom and pleasure:

SARAH. But I must say he's very loving. His whole body emanates love.

RICHARD. How nauseating. (Pinter, 1977: 172)

The lady keeps on hurting her husband's wound she has caused to be. Being face to face with her husband, she continues approving the sensual and sexual pleasure her lover procures her when they are together, which is an expression of modern absolute and unlimited taste of freedom. This is the result of the modern man's yearning for freedom and licentious pleasure, which brings him at a level lower than that of animals in the jungle which respect some principles at times. The modern man's nature is becoming baser and baser, and this is visible in all the characters of this play:

RICHARD. ... He's married, isn't he?

SARAH. Mmmmn.

RICHARD. Happily?

SARAH. Mmmmn. ... You're not in a way jealous? (Pinter, 1977: 173)

What is worse with Sarah's sexual depravation is that she is just having a married man as a sexual partner. Her lover is truly a married man who leaves his wife and children for a married woman's home whose sacredness or sanctity he violates joyfully. In fact, he leaves his home safe to go and create trouble in another man's

home which he troubles physically and psychologically. Richard is going through psychological disturbances because of his wife's lover's intrusion into his marital home.

## 2. The Husband's Sexual Depravation in the Play

As it is shown in the case of the woman, the man too is guilty of sexual depravation in the play. In their yearning for modern freedom in marriage, both husband and wife have yielded to sexual depravation against the sanctity of marital union in Christian sense. The man while sexually wayward, has given in the sexual waywardness of his wife. The following conversation between husband and wife is much telling about the man's depraved life:

SARAH. Because I knew you weren't there. I knew you were with your mistress.  
Pause.

...  
RICHARD. But I haven't got a mistress. I'm very well acquainted with a whore, but I haven't got a mistress. There's a world of difference.

SARAH. A whore? (Pinter, 1977: 167)

It transpires from the conversation above that Richard, just like his wife, entertains an extramarital love relationship. Both of them are unfaithful to each other. Marital infidelity is gnawing their couple life. Nevertheless, Richard lets his wife understand that his case is different from hers. His wife has a specific lover besides her real husband; but, Richard the husband does not have a specific lover outside his marital home. He just has occasional sex with whores which is different from keeping a lover which is like having a second wife or concubine.

For Richard, his own case is tolerable compared to that of his wife's. Even, traditionally, men are tolerated for keeping sugar babies outside their marital homes. One African anthropological account suggests that in southeast Nigeria, while both men and women enjoy premarital intercourse, women, but not men, are constrained by marriage to be monogamous, which means that a woman should stick to one man. But, older married men commonly have sugar baby relationships with younger, unmarried women; and it is said that this philandering behavior for material gain is tacitly tolerated by the wives. (Smith, 2010: 145) As a result, Smith's survey in Nigeria suggests that marital infidelity is tacitly allowed to men only; men can be polygamous which is forbidden to women. Women are meant to be monogamous, attached to one man only. However, Sarah is not indifferent when her husband tries to make love to other women outside the marital home:

SARAH. Do you ever think about me at all ... when you're with her?

RICHARD. Oh, a little. Not much. Pause.  
We talk about you.

SARAH. You talk about me with her?

RICHARD. Occasionally. It amuses her.

SARAH. Amuses her? (Pinter, 1977: 170)

The text above makes it clear that Sarah tries to show the same feeling of jealousy to her husband which she accused him of towards her lover. The same question comes back 'do you think about me while you are with your lover'? This means that love is meant to be sensitive not egoistic or selfish. True love abhors marital infidelity. A normal person cannot tolerate his partner for life, that is, wife or husband, for developing another love relationship with a third person. Likewise, Sarah cannot stand her husband making love to another woman: "SARAH. I can't pretend the picture gives me great pleasure." (Pinter, 1977: 170) Indeed, Sarah testifies that the picture of her husband making love to another woman does not give her any great pleasure, meaning that she cannot stand her husband being in the hands of another woman, let alone, a whore: "SARAH. How's your whore? /RICHARD. Splendid." (Pinter, 1977: 188)

The audience should know that Sarah, enquiring about her husband's whore is quite ironic, it is not sincere because the idea of her husband coming from a whore deeply disturbs her and makes her jealous. The husband's reaction also is not sincere, both of them act out of disguise. They hiding their true sentiments, their real feelings to each other because both are guilty creatures living side by side.

Ganz will argue about all the characters in the play that, what we do know beyond question is that each character has been tormented by the possibility of the relationship, that each character has used the occasion to torment another, to threaten, to rouse jealousy, to exert power. With perfect clarity Pinter has portrayed in both the homosexual and the heterosexual households the lurking presence of pride, fear, hostility, of love turning to boredom or to imprisonment. (Ganz, 1972: 5)

The play presents a struggle for domination manifested in dialogues in which controlling the conversation means dominating. What is apparent from the dialogues is a permanent conflict between banter versus seduction, and respectability versus sexuality.

The two people, husband and wife, are guilty of sexual depravation, which gets them uneasy to each other. One can sense a danger if the situation lasts longer. As the play approaches its ending, there are several clues and indications that Richard, perhaps having an insight into the growing danger of loss of their own identities, attempts to change the situation. First it is Max, Sarah's lover, who declares that it must stop, and she fails to seduce him. Then, Richard himself does it and she is distraught, but manages to seduce him. There is a difference this time though; she seduces her husband as a whore, thus manipulating him into the role of lover, and making him regard her as a whore in the final scene.

From one point of view, Sarah has just managed to save from destruction "the game" which means so much to her, just managed to divert Richard from smashing their

fantasy to pieces. What however of tomorrow or the day after? What will happen to their relationship if the fantasy does break down? (Sykes, 1970: 109)

According to Duggal1, Agrawal and Shah, the disclosure of infidelity by a partner may cause feelings of deep pain, hurt, anger and resentment in the non-offending partner and feelings of guilt, shame and loss in the involved partner. (Duggal1, Agrawal and Shah, 2011: 2)

On his side, Brinig thinks that, it is with the failing of trust that marriages begin to crumble. (Brinig, 2003: 471)

Besides, Pinter's absurd drama, drama of mask, drama of depravation, borrows a lot from modernism of the World War II. Because, during the Second World War, the faith of man in civilization was shaken and the chief concern of creative thinkers was the futility of life; life becomes meaningless, liable to all sorts of absurdities and abnormalities even in marital life. The marital life which was sanctioned and restricted before, becomes a setting where sexual freedom and hedonistic liberty can be deployed in an unpunished manner. Such moments which stirred the soul of man about marriage sanctity in the past many a time, become this time quite indifferent: not only life itself looked absurd but all devices used by man to make life manageable also looked purposeless and ridiculous. The major problem that gazed straight in the eyes of people now was how to spend time between the two stages in life, birth and death.

Moreover, drama of absurdity implies the use of mask to hide the true identities of mankind, which is abiding by true love in discipline. Therefore, all Pinter's characters have masks, says Peter Hall. Katherine Worth points out that Pinter uses false voices and phony performances to suggest a "terrible sense of non-identity the way that O'Neill used masks.

Characters like Richard and Sarah in *The Lover* change their clothes and their behaviour when they take on an alternate identity. Otherwise, language is the ruse frequently used by Pinter's creations to mask their real selves. Wesker's Ronnie may have spoken of words as bridges. (Wesker, 1970: 90) But, in Pinter's world, words are more like barbs to protect the wired enclosure of the self. (Almansi & Henderson, 1983: 11) Through his immoral life, man becomes a stranger to himself; he loses his original nature of order, discipline and true love to become fake, absurd, hidden through the process of disguise, a determined masking of real feelings and thoughts. Billington speaking about Pinter, argues that in his work, Pinter has always been aware that his characters tend to use words not to express what they think or feel but to disguise what they think or feel, to mask their own intentions, so that the words are acting as a masquerade, a veil, a web, or used as weapons to undermine or to terrorize. But these modes of operation are hardly confined to characters in plays. (Billington, 1996: 371)



Pinter's characters or dramatis personae are completely "untrustworthy" since they are even seen to be lying during the course of the action.

### **3. Marriage as a Sacred Union: Wise Decision-making**

As the play approaches its end there are several indications that Richard, perhaps having an insight into the growing danger of loss of their own human and marital identities, attempts to change the situation. First it is Max who declares that it must stop, and she fails to seduce him. Max wants the wanton life of marital infidelity to stop. He wants his filthy relationship with Sarah, Richard's wife, to come to an end. It is high time the boring and filthy game came to an end. Then, Richard himself does the same and his wife is distraught, and she manages to seduce him. There is a difference this time though; she seduces her husband as a whore, thus manipulating him into the role of lover, and making him regard her as a whore in the final scene.

It stands to reason that during 19<sup>th</sup> century, the social and legal context to regulate the sexual relationship and marriage was strongly influenced by the social values.

The social values were strongly against adulterous behavior. Even the widow marriage was not allowed. It was the general practice to keep the wife of poor and subordinate person as a security and surety, and this was the general mode of exploitation of dominant class.

However, the state of affairs is not the same in the present context as it was in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when the penal provision for adultery had been drafted in the Infidelity Penal Code. At present, the society has become much liberal with changed social values on sexual relationship. The sexual restriction of marital life has been lessening down across cultures for many decades.

Civilization of past, present and future inevitably needs social bonding. Society, being social or having a concern for social issues is a core characteristic of human being.

This link extends to the theoretical proposition that, adultery eventually will destroy social human being. To be social is one of the basic, innate needs of human beings. Other than being social, sex is also a basic innate need of human. Inadvertent focus on either social or sex-related issues, basic needs can create imbalance in individual and social structure. In fact, being social and basic want of sex, fulfilled through marriage could be viewed as two essential components of civilization or social structure. Any civilization remains vibrant and evolves as civilization as long as its components are entwined properly, kept in balance. When norms and rules are followed by optimum number of people exercising optimum restrains only then can civilization be maintained and kept in balance.

As a matter of fact, marriage is a basic civil right which is fundamental to our very existence and survival as social human beings.

Law in any modern civilized society is a necessary outcome of social necessity. As marriage is an important social institution, law must protect, promote and preserve this institution. Therefore, adultery which is primarily used to disturb the marriage institution, the law dealing with such felonious acts must adopt the 'healing up' approach and 'make up' attitude to this institution.

According to Mathadil and Sandhu, infidelity in marriages is one of the most damaging relationship events. Disclosure or discovery of infidelity in one or both partners usually precipitates an emotional crisis that leads couples to seek therapeutic help. (Mathadil & Sandhu, 2008: 340).

Marriage, as opposed to cohabitation, can be characterized by its relative permanence, its unconditional love, and its status as an institution, receiving of public and private support. (Brinig, 2000)

Brinig thus, argues that, it is with the failing of trust that marriages begin to crumble. Consequently, Richard and Sarah's marriage receives a heavy blow when both started yielding to sexual depravation which destroys mutual trust necessary for marriage survival:

SARAH. Why look ... elsewhere ... at all?  
RICHARD. But my dear, you looked. Why shouldn't I look? Pause.  
SARAH. Who looked first?  
RICHARD. You. (Pinter, 1977: 169)

The interaction between husband and wife above denotes the embarrassment which the depraved couple faces when husband and wife meet after their extra-conjugal sexual intercourse with their respective lovers. They have difficulties looking at each other when they come together after making love to their outside sexual partners. They are really ashamed, there is a mutual guilt on their mind that makes them uneasy when facing each other. The initial mutual indifference of Sarah's lover to sexual depravation or marital infidelity is giving way to full consciousness and self-reproach:

SARAH. I can't pretend the picture gives me great pleasure. (Pinter, 1977, 170)  
MAX. Now look, I'm married.  
She takes his hand and puts it on her knee.  
SARAH. You're so sweet, you mustn't worry.  
MAX (snatching his hand away). No, I really am. My wife's waiting for me.  
SARAH. Can't you speak to strange girls?  
MAX. No. (Pinter, 1977, 172)

The conversation above between Sarah and her lover Max, shows that even the lover who was initially insensitive and indifferent to his filthy relationship with another man's wife, starts showing signs of remorse and repentance. His worry is

noticeable from his reactions to his lover's sensual and charming language. Instead of normal reciprocal admiration, the man starts telling his lover, a married woman, that he is a married man, meaning he is not supposed to be running after women, especially married ones while he has his wife at home. The playwright who has been ripping the mask of sexual depravation off Max, will extend his operation to Max's lover Sarah to allow both of them experience their true identity of married people supposed to faithful to their partners for the sake of marriage sanctity and survival:

MAX. You can't get out, darling. The hut's locked. We're alone. You're trapped.  
SARAH. Trapped! I'm a married woman. You can't treat me like this.  
MAX (moving to her). It's teatime, Mary. (Pinter, 1977: 179)

Here, the adulterous woman also starts feeling guilty of her sinful relationship with Max, a married man while being a married woman herself. She even wants to leave the man while both are gathered together to have sex. Unfortunately, she is trapped, there is no way out, the door is locked. Let us consider their conversation:

MAX. I'm beginning to mind. Slight pause.  
It's got to stop. It can't go on.  
SARAH. Are you serious?  
Silence.  
MAX. It can't go on.  
SARAH. You're joking.  
MAX. No, I'm not.  
SARAH. Why? Because of my husband? Not because of my husband, I hope. ...  
Max. ... It's because of my wife.  
SARAH. Your wife?  
MAX. I can't deceive her any longer. (Pinter, 1977: 181)

Notice that Max becomes now fully conscious of the wrong path he is taking, he is fully aware of the risk he is taking, jeopardizing not only his own couple but also that of his lover, a married woman. The conversation shows that Max is making up his mind to give up his adulterous relationship with Sarah. He thinks it is high time he stopped cheating on his wife and deceiving her with other women, especially married ones. In fact, he is sensing a danger ahead; if he does not give up this immoral life, his marriage will be in trouble soon:

MAX. I've played my last game.  
SARAH. Why?  
Slight pause.  
MAX. The children.  
SARAH. What?  
MAX. The children. I've got to think of the children.  
SARAH. What children?  
MAX. My children. My wife's children. Any minute now they'll be out of boarding school. I've got to think of them. (Pinter, 1977: 183)

The conversation above shows that Max's consciousness is growing more and more. At the beginning he said he was going to stop his love affair with Sarah for his wife's

sake; now, he has added up another reason which pushes him to break up with Sarah. The crucial reason is that Max has children whom he has to mind. First of all, he needs to stay at home to help them instead of wasting time on other people's wives. His children need him for care and education, which is vital for the family growth and survival. Children's upbringing is vital to have sane and healthy individuals in the society. The audience will surely approve his decision which is quite wise and advisable.

My own reluctance to disengage marriage and sexual depravation, stems from the seriousness of marriage and the danger of its destruction. First, the destruction of trust that sexual depravation both signals and produces, does considerable damage to marriage. Second, in case of sexual depravation in marriage, one can certainly notice that the injured spouse has a beef against the adulterous one, and one can also consider the harm done to children under various divorces caused by adultery scenarios. I strongly believe that Richard who was initially permissive to sexual depravation becomes conscious of this misbehavior to avoid all the troubles that a broken marriage can have on both parents and children:

RICHARD. [...] I came to a decision. Pause.  
SARAH. Oh? What?  
RICHARD. That it has to stop.  
SARAH. What?  
RICHARD. Your debauchery.  
Pause.  
Your life of depravity. Your path of illegitimate lust.  
SARAH. Really?  
RICHARD. Yes, I've come to an irrevocable decision on that point.  
[...]  
RICHARD. [...] From today, I forbid you to entertain your lover on these premises. This applies to any time of the day. Is that understood? (Pinter, 1977: 189)

The dialogue here above testifies that Richard who was initially a permissive husband who allows his wife to entertain extramarital love relationship has come to a recommendable wise decision. The game between him and his wife is over; it is now time to put an end to a life of depravity based on illegitimate lust. Both of them must sort their mind home to live as normal husband and wife without compromising Christian like marriage sanctity through sexual depravation. Indeed, marriage is a divine institution which is supposed to be taken seriously and not to be played with. Marriage is a sacred union that husband and wife should honour and revere for the welfare of all members of the family, parents and children included. Infidelity or sexual depravation stands as a big threat to marriage survival. Marriage vows constitute the evidence that the legal union of husband and wife is sacred.

The Hindu groom for instance, makes the sixth vow to his wife, and promises that he will keep her happy forever. He also tells her that he promises to make her joyful

and provide her with peace, time and time again, meaning that he will abstain from anything that could compromise the welfare of his marriage, be it sexual depravation, ill-treatment of the wife or whatever abuse. Through the Hindu groom's seventh and last vow, he tells his wife while walking around the fire that their relationship is firm and they are inseparable. He also tells his wife that now he is hers and she is his forever and they will live happily together. All these connections are to show that marriage is vital for human life and survival, and therefore marriage institution must be preserved through a life of discipline on the part of the marital partners who should avoid sexual depravation at all costs.

## CONCLUSION

Through Judeo-Christian ethical perspectives, this article sought out to explore the incompatibility between marriage and sexual depravation in modern societies through the reading of Harold Pinter's *The Lover* showing the reality of sexual depravation in modern day marriages and call for the necessity to return to our traditional values that preserve the sacrosanct nature of marriage and the harmony within the married couple life. Therefore, the article has shown that Max and Sarah who embody married people of our modern day societies, have really yielded to the temptation of modern sexual freedom outside the marriage circle, belittling the standards of traditional marriages. As a result, they have suffered the pangs of a guilty conscience leading them towards spontaneous repentance. Thus, the article has shown that modern values based on individual freedom, literally compromise traditional marriage values that ensure order, harmony and long life for married couples.

## References

- Almansi, Guido and Simon Henderson, 1983. *Harold Pinter*. London: Methuen.
- Billington, Michael, 1996. *The Life and Works of Pinter*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Blow, A. & Hartnett, K., 2005. *Infidelity in committed relationships II: A substantive review*. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 31, 217-234.
- Brinig, Margaret F. & Steven L. Nock, 2003. "I Only Want Trust": Norms, Trust, and Autonomy, 32 J. SOCIO-ECON. 471, 473.
- Duggal1, Chetna & Jyotsna Agrawal2 & Anisha Shah3, 2011. *Marriage after Infidelity: A Case Analysis*. Indian journal of social psychiatry.
- Esslin, Martin. 1968. 'The Theatre of the Absurd' in *Perspectives of Drama*, James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (eds.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ganz, Arthur, 1972. "Introduction," in *Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

- Katherine Worth, "Pinter and the Realist Tradition", *Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party*. *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*, ed. Michael Scott 37."
- Mathadil, J. & Sandhu, D.S., 2008. *Infidelity in Asian Indian Marriages: Implications for Counseling and Psychotherapy*. *The Family Journal*, 16, 338-343.
- Pinter, Harold, 1977. *Complete Works: Two*. New York: Grove Press.
- Smith, Jordan Daniel, 2010. *Promiscuous Girls, Good Wives, and Cheating Husbands: Gender Inequality, Transitions to Marriage, and Infidelity in Southeastern Nigeria*, 83 *Anthropological Q.* 123, 132, 145-46.
- Sykes, Alrene, 1970. *Harold Pinter*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Wesker, Arnold, 1970. "Roots", *The Wesker Trilogy* 2nd. ed. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.