CHAPTER THREE

Dramatic Dialogue in The Homecoming

The Homecoming was presented by the Royal Shakespeare Co. at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on the 3rd June, 1965, directed by Peter Hall. Though not a commercial success, the play received a very wide critical acclaim. Once again Pinter's use of language — his words, rhythms, veiled innuendo, non-sequitur, use of long pauses creating the sense of suppressed violence beneath the banal utterance, with every line sharply pointed as a billiard stick, every silence charged with cryptic meaning, opened up a new vista for conceptualising a drama entirely from the standpoint of dramatic dialogue. Here Pinter's language assumes a striking dimension, concentrating on new areas and speech patterns. Other theatrical ventures almost paled into insignificance beside the "monstrously effective theatre"\(^1\) of The Homecoming, a modern classic.

This "new enigmatic parable"\(^2\) has been apparently shocking owing to the moral vacuum it maintained all along, earning notoriety for its explicit depiction of an amoral claustrophobic family, and also for its delineation of the female character Ruth who gets absurdly transformed into a professional whore. The reaction of the characters to one another is often strangely and inexplicably casual. The play has unexpected, uncanny
turns and abrupt surprises bearing affinity with the subconscious thoughts and dreams tunnelling into suppressed desires and fears. Even the generous Harold Hobson found Pinter "misleadingly clever" and was "troubled by the complete absence... of any moral comment whatsoever." Ironically, however, Hobson's prophecy, made in 1958 after the initial disaster of *The Birthday Party*, was again proved to be correct because *The Homecoming* also showed Pinter as possessing "the most original, disturbing and arresting talent" in the field of theatre.

Dramatic dialogue of *The Homecoming* rivets the audience to the play, making them try to explore the cryptic meanings and overt suggestions, lurking behind the words and insinuations of all its six characters. Each character has some such resources which the others cannot emulate. All the characters like to stay behind the smokescreen of deliberate lies, falsifications and ambiguities disguising their true intentions. This aspect of Pinter's stage language has caused Nelson to observe that "exposition, development, and resolution have been driven underground through a healthy distrust of language."* The *Homecoming* is set in an old house in North London, inhabited by Max, a retired butcher, his brother Sam, his two sons Lenny and Joey. They are unexpectedly visited by Max's eldest son Teddy, a professor of philosophy in an American University, accompanied by his wife Ruth. Lenny makes autobiographical references with unnerving precision
and menacing coolness. Joey refers to his boxing activities. Max wields a stick, does the cooking for the family and talks about the past which has great relevance to the present. Sam has his life outside as a successful cab driver and speaks sparingly. Teddy's talks are rather rationally clear and direct, showing his disconcertingly independent mind. Ruth attracts everybody's attention, knowing how to retain her own initiative and use her beguiling power over others.

Each of the characters wants to be believed, tries to be assertive. Ruth emerges as victorious by finding a new potentiality and ease by submitting, on her own terms, to an unlikely, uncertain future planned by four other members of the family. Sam collapses, and Teddy returns to his American academic life. The Homecoming can be deciphered and appreciated only through a very careful examination of what and how the characters speak. Here too there is a strong centrality of Pinter's use of language. The playwright knows that in the theatre he has our ears, and as such much of his appeal rests upon our apprehension of the feeling of the characters expressed through their conversations. As an actor Pinter knows it well that in the human voice the dramatist always finds an optimum flexibility and modulation capable of wielding desired pressure, pace, power and pitch often preceded or followed by a pause. A certain degree of
"non-speech" a Pinterian speciality, accompanies the words spoken by a Pinter character at a given moment, and a pause requiring intense realization precedes or follows those words.

Emotions and feelings which are important for the theme are expressed through a subtle dialogue. Nightingale significantly observes that "The words may be terse, inconsequential, flat: there are always great fissures of feeling somewhere just beneath." In order to get at the full thrust of The Homecoming, it is necessary to analyse the language deployment by the playwright. Pinter has shown his mastery in this play in transmuting small and slight conversational bits into fine dramatic dialogue quivering with ambiguous, half-caught meanings, establishing subtle relationship between the characters. The audience is to measure and fathom these fissures, in their correct perspective.

Pinter knows that as a playwright he has to keep his dramatic dialogue under control, making it mean what he alone wishes the dialogue to convey to the audience. The spectators can, to the degree that they are alert, measure the quality of Pinter's words to the extent the author controls their resonance. With an eye to this Esslin remarks that "Pinter's theatre is a theatre of language; it is from the words and their rhythm that the suspense, dramatic tension, laughter and tragedy springs."
The Homecoming, through its dialogue, achieves psychological depth of a sub-text beneath many shifts, evasions and silences.

Before Pinter wrote The Homecoming he had sufficiently demonstrated his skill in writing a special kind of dramatic dialogue in his The Caretaker (1960) and some experimental and highly successful work in both television and cinema, such as The Servant (1962), screenplay by Pinter adapted from Robin Maugham's novel of the same name and The Pumpkin Eater (1965), screenplay by Pinter adapted from Penelope Mortimer's novel of the same name. The list includes such short pieces as A Slight Ache (1959), A Night Out (1960), Night School and The Dwarfs (1960), The Collection (1961), The Lover (1963) and some other Revue Sketches written in 1959, such as Trouble in the Works, The Black and White, Request Stop, Last to Go, Special offer, That's Your Trouble, That's All, Applicant, Interview and Dialogue for Three. Even The Hothouse, performed in 1980, was written in 1958. The word "Pintersque" or "Pinterish", already in vogue, denoted elliptical, pseudo-humorous stretches of dialogue in Pinter's Plays.

With The Homecoming Pinter brought to the theatre world a cool correctness and a deliberation of style which made every on-stage movement, every slight gesture, each intonation and each "pause" part of a total dramatic
pattern. The play also affirms how in Pinter's drama the ordinary and realistic are inextricably intertwined with the irrational and the absurd through an apt dialogue. Esslin refers to this subtlety of dialogue when he says that we are confronted by "images of the real world which are raised to metaphors of the human condition. by the mysteriousness inherent in the difficulties of drawing a line between the real, the imagined and the dream." Many critics and reviewers have considered The Homecoming as an extreme metaphor for some common generalised truth. For example, Anthony Seymour wrote in the The Yorkshire Post (4 June 1965): "We are soon lost in his labyrinth of dead ends, unmade roads and confusing signposts.... On its face value, it is callous and empty enough."

Pinter's absurdist plays tend to be often metaphoric. The Homecoming unfolds a metaphor through the gradual convergence of two separate logics - animal and human. The word "metaphor" is derived from the Greek "metaphora" meaning transference. In Pinter it is often the lingual application of a name or a descriptive term to an object to which it may not be literally applicable.

In an absurd play dialogic implications are highly significant, and one has to heavily cut into the hard crust of the absurd theme through words. In The Homecoming dramatic dialogue plays a crucial role in promoting a proper understanding of the play. The story line of The
Homecoming "blithely plumbs the depths of human degradation," and is quite disturbing. Teddy, the academician son of a north London family settled in America, comes home on a short visit to meet his old family consisting of father Max, uncle Sam, two younger brothers, Lenny and Joey, on his way back from a trip to Italy. The reaction of Teddy's family to his homecoming gets complicated, bordering on the absurd. Teddy still has with him the front door key:

Well, the key worked (pause)
They haven't changed the lock (III, pp.35-6).

"Homecoming" does not indicate a return of a person to a house; it indicates a return to a state of being, to a set of relationships, values, and attitudes that are almost ineluctable conditions of Max's life on earth, as he has to live it. "Nothing's changed. Still the same" (III, p.38) expresses the existential agony of the modern man. Between birth and death, trapped within a fragile, physical frame, having the faculty of reason, we can hardly change anything, but we move forward through the flux of time. The more we try for definitions and permanent distinctions, the more absurd we become. As Beckett says in Waiting for Godot: "One day we were born, one day we'll die, the same day, the same second.... They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more." Teddy is able to enter
without having anyone to admit them inside. He is accompanied by Ruth, an ex-photographic model of British origin, surreptitiously married to him six years ago. She has never before been introduced to Teddy's London family consisting of four male members.

Apparently, Ruth is an ideal wife of an educated and cultivated husband. She is cool, attractive, well-dressed, well-poised and a mature, experienced mother of three off-stage children. Initially the impact of the couple on the family is what is normally expected from the contact of quiet, civilized people with their rough and woolly near-relatives they have got away from for a considerably lengthy period of time. On the whole, the general level of reserve maintains a straight course.

Just then there occurs Pinterian legerdemain. Pinter's dialogic magic wand comes to life to bring about the "perepeteia" or the turning point. The all-male family is exposed to all its confused sexuality and utter precariousness when a woman turns up. Her presence has threatened the individual identity of every other member. There is fine dramatic irony when Ruth says: "I'm not making any noise" and Teddy promptly agrees: "I know you're not" (III, p.39). Her presence indeed creates a stir in the stationary waterfront of this north London family. For Lenny comments later: "Then you come here... and start to make trouble" (III, p. 50). Ruth
symbolises the turning point in the family set-up. Any interpretation of *The Homecoming*, from any angle, has to absorb her in its fold. The dialogue involving Ruth deserves a careful examination. As Kelly Morris says, "it is not the discursive connotations of the dialogue which matter ("the words which come through") but the fact and pattern of speech - how it sounds, and how it is made, and the response it provokes."\(^{16}\) Ruth dances with Lenny and at once they slip into an amorous clinch, while Teddy impassively watches on. Joey comes after Lenny to have his stint with Ruth and the two seek the seclusion of Joey's room for two hours. Bryden rightly says that "One of the young bulls makes a mating display to the female: when she responds, the younger and stronger mounts her."\(^{17}\) The animal instinct gets revealed through an apt dialogue.

In the last scene of *The Homecoming* we see the family at a group meeting where the characters discuss their plan seeking to install Ruth in one of Lenny's Greek street red-light let-out apartments, and share her additional favours in terms of the flesh-and-the-devil when she is free and not entertaining her customers. The plan gets approved by a consensus. After having remained a complete blank all through, Teddy makes off for America unperturbed, without a whimper of protest. When the play ends Ruth "continues to touch Joey's head, lightly"
(III, p. 98), his head being on her lap. Max crawls like an old beast and thrusting his head at her, cajoles for a kiss. "Lenny stands, watching" (III, p. 98). As Bryden observes, "what these actors ... are unfurling is... recognisably described in the language of a zoologist reporting the mating customs of fighting seals on the beaches of Sakhalin." 18

In this last scene, at the very last section of this pantomime every line is pointed, every silence charged, every movement vocal. This shows that in Pinter the visual permeates the verbal to create a unique dramatic language of its own. The scene records the onrushing sexual urge for copulation. This shows how phantasy overpowers rationality in the Freudian psycho-analysis when a woman arrives in a sex-starved male-orbit. The play is written in the subtle Pinterian dramatic rhythm: in order to enable the audience to become attuned to its uncanny style of presentation. The audience is required to think deeply and with a sense of shocking wonder to rediscover the basis of a family. The audience has to decode the latent dramatic message of an absurdist as to the dangers of isolation and stark fear operating within the ambit of our daily life. The playwright dares in his drama to see what his audience shy away from and fear to express. What he sees in his own way is a sort of truth, about people, about their milieu, about what hurts or terrifies
them. Pinter's dramatic dialogue, as we find in The Homecoming tries to say the unsayable, and thus not only releases the tension of the human mind but also liberates the will and the desire from the confines of the sub-conscious.

The first three sections of The Homecoming throw light on the nature of this particular family. Max dwells on Jessie, his deceased wife and MacGregor, the dead friend:

I used to knock about with a man called MacGregor.... We were two of the worst hated men in the West End of London.... I still got the scars. We'd walk into a place, the whole room'd stand up, they'd make way to let us pass.... he was a big man, he was over six foot tall....

(Pause)

He was very fond of your mother, Mac was. Very fond. He always had a good word for her(III, pp.24-25).

The passage is appropriate enough to display the strength of Pinter's dramatic dialogue in communicating subtle shades of meaning to the audience, conveying at the same time suppressed menace. It shows that Max and MacGregor were a pair of evil guys of London West End. The suggestive words "knock about", "scars", "the whole room'd stand up", "they'd make way", "big man", "over six foot tall" are all meaningful words where the verbal fabric cuts into the visual. The background of the family may be
estimated through the dialogue. In Lenny's later reference, while talking to Ruth, to the importunating lady's driver who saw Lenny "down by the docks" (III, p.46) assaulting her because she was "very insistent and started taking liberties" (III, p.46) with him, the nickel drops prominently: "Everything was in my favour, for a killing.... The chauffeur would never have spoken. He was an old friend of the family" (III, p.47).

The irony in the "old friend of the family" is too obvious to miss. The dialogue again contains an unmistakable hint that MacGregor, the fearful "lousy stinking rotten loudmouth" and "a bastard uncouth sodding runt" (III, p.34), had a lustful fascination for the junior gangster partner's attractive wife, Jessie. MacGregor exploited the situation in full by taking liberties with her. Later Sam confirms it by saying that "MacGregor had Jessie in the back of his cab" as he "drove them along" (III, p.94). Her affair with the crook compelled Max to nurse a suppressed grudge and aversion against the unfaithful, flirtatious wife. Max's dialogue is loaded with meaningful insinuations laying bare his inner, embedded apathy towards Jessie's frivolous immorality: "She wasn't such a bad woman. Even though it made me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bad bitch. I gave her the best bleeding years of my life, anyway" (III, p.25). In Act II Max's disdain becomes manifest: "A crippled family, three
"bastard sons, a slutbitch of a wife" (III, p.63). A "slutbitch of a wife" demonstrates Max's deeply embedded animosity towards Jessie, though infatuated as he was with the wife he had. Max could not tear away from her. He was always pricked by this gnawing psychological apathy. Max's utterances in this regard require subtextual readings to appreciate the inner voice in the Tchekhovian sense, to get at the inner stream of images to know what the character feels inwardly.

As Stanislavsky points out, "It is the subtext that makes us say the words we do in a play... the spoken word, the text of a play is not valuable in and of itself, but is made so by the inner content of the subtext and what it contained in it."19 Having been an actor himself and having had some RAD A London background, Pinter used this Stanislavskian method in composing his dramatic dialogue so as to achieve an amazing theatrical subtlety. Russell Brown pertinently observes that Pinter's reliance on multiple and conflicting subtexts "poses the main problem for understanding his dialogue, especially in reading the mere words of the printed text."20

Pinter's dialogue moves from an explicit statement to highly suggestive implications. This leads to his minimal dialogue that has become highly effective in the late twentieth century theatre world. Max's words reveal that the playwright does not in the least intend to
obscure the message. He brings the dramatic message home by expecting his audience to work out the latent message. The audience is required to unfold and stretch out the meaning by grasping the implication, filling in the hinted gaps and paving the way through symbolic disguise of speech, gesture and movement. Pinter's dialogue demands that the words be very carefully listened to so that the audience is well aware as to how things are being given out.

Thus the level of audience-impact is raised or lowered through the working out of words concerned in reference to the image of the character they are tied to. As words are exchanged between Max and Lenny during the opening dialogue, it becomes clear that the father is not treated respectfully at all. Lenny looks down upon him: "Why don't you shut up, you daft prat? ... Plug it, will you, you stupid sod, I'm trying to read the paper" (III, pp.23,25). The dialogue at once reveals a viciousness of the son towards the sire. The opening conversation between Max and Lenny (III, pp.23-27) is plastered with mockery, threat and blatant ignominy that Lenny heaps on his father by such expressions as "daft prat" (III, p.23), "stupid sod" (III, p.25), "demented" (III, p.25) and "dog cook" (III, p.25). The exchange of dialogue between father and son explicitly establishes Lenny's confirmed hostility to Max. Max's "he talks to me about horses"
(III, p.25) and much of his subsequent talk displays his indignant indifference to Lenny’s views. Lenny, too, jeeringly rejects Max’s opinion about the performance of “Second Wind” in the “three-thirty” horse race, saying: “Don’t stand a chance” (III, p.25).

As the play opens Lenny is shown reading a newspaper when Max calls for scissors and cigarette:

Max: What have you done with the scissors?

(Pause)
I said I’m looking for the scissors. What have you done with them?

(Pause)
Did you hear me? ...
Do you hear what I’m saying? I’m talking to you! Where’s the scissors? (III, p.23).

What is important for us to notice in the dialogue is that it is not that Max urgently requires the things he is asking for. On the contrary, his words underline his overt demand for attention and acknowledgement. Lenny’s subsequent dialogue, quoted above, registers his glowing indifference indicating clearly Max’s slighted position in the household. The dialogue establishes Lenny’s superior status and dominant role. Whenever Lenny speaks he asserts himself. Initiating the subject of horse-race, he contradicts Max only to maintain his superior status and knowledge in this regard. Max, losing his temper, threatens to lay his walking stick on Lenny who cuts a practical joke on his father by talking in a childlike
Through the dialogue Max and Lenny struggle for power, seeking recognition of status and self. Besides, we should also note that when Pinter's characters offer verbal violence to each other, as Max and Lenny do, the purpose of such exchanges is to extend the imagery implicit in the play.

However, the important point made through the dialogue in the very opening scene is that in spite of Lenny's hostility and Max's indifference there is some sort of a compromise with the existing situation. Hostility is subdued, indifference is tolerable. The rough note of confrontation existing between Max and Lenny is not dramatically quite significant as a clue to a possible key-note of the play. What is of utmost importance is how the dialogue is able to rouse a definite curiosity in the minds of the audience about the point of origin and the contributing cause of this stern confrontation. This is exactly where Pinter's dialogue scores in achieving the power to express the inexpressible, in transcending the scope of communication in conveying what the language cannot explicitly say. It upholds the Norwegian Nobel Laureate Knut Hamsun's observation that "one must know and recognise not merely the direct but the secret power of the word." 21

Max's words, with the undertone of a monologue, amply reveal the basic inconsistency and ambivalence of
his character. He seems to have walked halfway both in his role as a homemaker and his role in his professional life outside the homecircle. Max could ill-afford to consolidate these two different ends. This explains Max's self-justification. Max's dialogue also reveals that he feels some jealousy for Lenny's successful image in the outside world which he could not possess though he wanted to. He refers to his youthful prowess: "You ask your uncle Sam what I was ... I used to knock about with a man called MacGregor..." (III, p.24). But he admits that he "always had a kind heart. Always" (III, p.24). Here the repetition of the word "always" tells more than what meets the eye. If there were just one "always" Max could have meant, casually, his better sobriety than his partner's. But the second "always" shows how edgy Max is. By implication the second "always" makes the point that Max was too tame for the racket to stand up to the glaring notoriety of MacGregor, and hence unsuccessful. This sort of subtlety of language charged with emotion is manifested all over the play. Then again in view of Lenny's confident understanding of a horse-race, Max claims his expertise in the area. Though he "had a gift" (III, p.26), yet he could not come up to be any useful or successful horse-trainer. The issue at the level of dialogue is quite the same — Max oscillated between his external and home life, having failed to strike a bargain between the two: "I should have been a trainer. Many times I was offered the job.... But I
had family obligations, my family needed me at home" (III, p.26).

The question arises as to what type of need this had been. Had it been that Jessie had no time for the family, for looking after the kids and home? If so, why so? The Homecoming through its dialogue continues to raise doubt about Jessie's role and her character. Max's words have very clear implications that his wife's domestic role and performances had been far from adequate, and that Max had to fill the vacuum of her domestic duties for most of his life. His words are: "I gave her the best bleeding years of my life, anyway" (III, p.25). "Anyway" has a string of implications attached to it, for in Pinter's drama no word is used without an import. S.I. Hayakawa in his study Language in Thought and Action rightly says that "in addition to tone of voice and rhythm, another extremely important ... element in language is the aura of feelings, pleasant or unpleasant, that surrounds practically all words." In the light of this statement we may say that on the evidence of Max's utterances the informative connotations of a word "anyway" or words "bleeding years" stand for impersonal meanings, as far as communication is concerned in the absence of an extensional meaning.

Accordingly, Jessie, by implication, had her own interest over and above the demarcated domestic routine.
She could have played fast and loose with the rough and tough MacGregor, moving out beyond the home limit, thereby requiring Max to attend the family obligations. Max's wife clung to the other man in apposition to her lawful husband. Max's bitterness towards his wife establishes the position that since MacGregor was the formidable London-underworld gangster, Max could neither chop the bully's spine off nor could he snatch the mother of his children out of his clutches. It may be pointed out that Sam's words "He's her lawful husband, she's his lawful wife" (III, p.85), spoken about Teddy and Ruth, are a fine example of dramatic irony as Teddy's father and mother had also been similarly lawfully married. Esslin's remark in this context is pertinent: "A great mystery seems to surround the personality of the now dead mother of the family, Jessie." Max says that "it makes the bile come up" in his mouth, when he reminisces before Sam about those "bleeding" days, saying how he "worked as a butcher" for his family all his life, "using the chopper and the slab." He had to look after two families - his "bedridden" mother and brothers who were all "invalids" and the other "crippled family, three bastard sons, a slutbitch of a wife." Max strained every nerve to run the family: "when I give a little cough my back collapses" (III, p.63). As shown above, Pinter's dialogue implies Jessie's lopsided role at home front.
It is also quite interesting to note that Max uses the words "slutbitch of a wife" along with the words "bastard sons". Here, as elsewhere in The Homecoming, "the words are of the utmost importance; not through their surface meaning, but through the colour and texture of their sound and their associations of meaning."26 These words suggest the possibility of Jessie's being involved in the flesh trade. If we take into consideration the scattered pieces of dialogue exchanged between characters, the jigsaw puzzle tends to get solved. Here "bastard sons" creates its own ripple cutting across the latent meaning at the level of informative connotation. Sam's words also are quite meaningful. Sam took to driving motor vehicles long ago at the age of nineteen, and he has still been pursuing the same profession. Sam does not speak much in the play. In Act I when Max asks unmarried Sam to "find the right girl" (III, p.31) and marry her, Sam wistfully reminisces:

I haven't got a bride.... Never get a bride like you had, anyway. Nothing like your bride... going about these days. Like Jessie.

(Pause)

After all, I escorted her once or twice, didn't I? Drove her round once or twice in my cab. She was charming woman.

(Pause)

All the same, she was your wife. But still... they were some of the most delightful evenings I've ever had. Used to just drive her about. It was my pleasure (III, pp.31-32).
The dialogue has manifold informative connotations and stratified implications. Sam remained with the family all through, though he was a bachelor and, as such, a carefree being with no holds barred. He never married; never showed any waywardness.

As his words suggest, he remains an ardent admirer of Jessie. Esslin rightly points out that "Jessie herself might have been one of the prostitutes involved." She could be on the London underworld call-girl racket which was run, understandably, by MacGregor. Sam in his younger days could have very well worked for this outfit as a driver for transporting the prostitutes. Sam's words provide a cue in this regard: "When I took her out in the cab, round the town, .... I was showing her the West End" (III, p.34). This "showing" at the connotational level may suggest that being a London taxi-cab driver, Sam is supposed to thoroughly know the curves and contours of the metropolis. He might have been entrusted with acquainting Jessie, the newly inducted call-girl, with the necessary points and joints of the prosperous West End. Sam and Jessie could, in all probability, have an affair between them, or they could as well be lovers as shown by a close analysis of the dialogue.

Max's uncalled-for harshness, antagonism and apathy towards Sam reinforce this point. Sam does not mince matters, and comes out with a straight confession that he
did not marry because he could never get a bride as his brother had: "Never get a bride like you had anyway. Nothing like your bride" (III, p.32). Thus, indications are there in the dialogue of the play for the audience to believe that Sam was emotionally attached to Jessie. Sam's words, such as "all the same, she was your wife" (III, p.32) underline his passionate desire for Jessie. His words contain a wistful sigh of helplessness. As soon as these words are uttered by Sam, the audience gets curious as to why Max utters "Christ" (III, p.32). Is it that his memory torments him momentarily ruminating over his frivolous wife's involvement with his brother who, out of pleasure, "used to just drive her about." For Sam "she was a charming woman .... She was a very nice companion to be with" (III, p.32).

Considering the issue from the dialogic perspective, we may perhaps account for Max's rather strange, undefined hostility towards Sam at whom he often lashes out without even the slightest provocation. Lenny, on the other hand, does provide immediate provocation due to his sarcastic remarks and explicit indignation against Max to react with filthy utterances and violent gestures. Sam, on the contrary, hardly does anything on the surface to excite Max's rage. Hence Max's suppressed anger over Sam-Jessie relationship points to a situation embedded in his mind. Max cannot put up even with Sam's innocuous presence around him when Sam tries with all good intention to help
his brother in the kitchen by washing up the place or tidying things there:

... you bang round the kitchen like that, scraping the frying-pan, scraping all the leavings into the bin, scraping all the plates, scraping all the tea out of the teapot... that's why you do that, every single stinking morning (III, p.55).

Sam's attempt to make himself useful in the kitchen may be interpreted, in view of Max's antagonism, as a "territorial invasion" from Max's standpoint. Max's above-quoted words show that at the psychological level Max has a suppressed aversion to Sam who in all probability pawed his precious possession, Jessie. Here brilliance of Pinter's dialogue is noteworthy: "I want you", says Max, "to get rid of these feelings of resentment you've got towards me. I wish I could understand them.... So try to get rid of these feelings of resentment, Sam" (III, pp.55-56).

There is a sarcastic irony in Max's words, for what Max tells Sam is, in fact, applicable to Max, and not to Sam. It is Max who has "these feelings of resentment" towards Sam according to what the audience has been given to understand through dialogue between Max and Sam. Earlier Max wanted to drive Sam away from the family: "... I mean when you are too old to pay your way, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to give you the boot" (III, p.35).

There are also various other occasions when Max ridicules or humiliates Sam who says, "He's insulting me. He's insulting his brother" (III, p.64). Max sarcastically
talks to Sam: "What you been doing, banging away at your lady customers, have you.... in the back of the snipe? Been having a few crafty reefs in a layby, have you? .... On the back seat? What about the armrest, was it up or down?" (III, pp.30-31).

In the Freudian analysis these words connote Max's suspicion concerning Sam and Jessie in the days of the dimly distant past when Sam took extra care to look after his wife:

Sam: I want to make something clear about Jessie, Max. I want to. I do. When I took her out in the cab, round the town, I was taking care of her, for you. I was looking after her for you, when you were busy, wasn't I? (III, p.34).

Such off-beat dialogues quite convincingly show how Max in the very backyard of his sub-conscious mind connects Sam and Jessie with a discreetly covered affair.

McGregor, as it is later revealed by Sam himself, was sexually involved with Max's wife, and on that count Sam does bear a grudge against that woolly rogue:

Sam: .... Old Mac died a few years ago, didn't he? Isn't he dead? (Pause) He was a lousy stinking rotten loudmouth. A bastard uncouth sodding runt. Mind you, he was a good friend of yours (III, p.34).

It is not difficult to understand from Max's words that MacGregor was Sam's eye-sore due to his intimacy with Jessie and Max deliberately calls MacGregor Sam's "friend" for this
reason. Then again when Max alleges that Sam takes liberties with his lady passengers, Sam makes an indirect reference to MacGregor in a sly manner:

Max: Above having a good bang on the back seat, are you?
Sam: Yes, I leave that to others.
Max: You leave it to others? What others? You paralysed, prat.
Sam: I don't mess up my car. Or my ... my boss's car. Like other people.
Max: Other people: What other people? (Pause)
What other people? (Pause)
Sam: Other people (III, p.31).

Here the repetition of "others" and "other people" is an effective lingual dramatic device adopted by Pinter. In the dark, closed and silent auditorium these words make for a dramatic language of direct verbal expression of the feelings of the speaker. Considering the impact of language on the audience, such an expressive use of an echoing repetitive dialogue affects us considerably. By repeating "other people" at regular intervals with effective use of two meaningful pauses, Pinter produces a verbal rhythm, drawing our attention and interest, and sharpening our sense of receiving subtle dramatic message. This repetition of "other people" is quite suggestive of the identity of the person involved. Then Sam blurts out suddenly that "McGregor had Jessie in the back of my cab as I drove them along" (III, p.94), confirming that Max's
late wife committed adultery with MacGregor.

Max's bitterness of feeling against Sam is explicit when he says: "What do you want, you bitch? You spend all the day sitting on your arse at London Airport, buy yourself a jamroll" (III, p.32). And again: "... Why do I keep you here? You're just an old grub", "You're a maggot" (III, pp.34,35). Max belittles Sam's capacity for work: "What kind of a son were you, you wet wick? You spent half your time doing crossword puzzles. We took you into the butcher's shop, you couldn't even sweep the dust off the floor" (III, p.35). And again: "... here I've got a lazy idle bugger of a brother won't even get to work on time.... This man doesn't know his gearbox from his arse" (III, p.63).

Max's utterances establish that Max looks down upon Sam. The following dialogue once again brings into the open Max's obsession with the Sam-and-Jessie affair:

Max: What do the other drivers do, sleep all day?

Sam: I can only drive one car. They can't all have me at the same time.

Max: Anyone could have you at the same time. You'd bend over for half a dollar on Blackfriar's bridge (III, p.64).

Max's garrulous irascibility conjures up images of an adoring Sam and obliging Jessie in his mind. Max hits out at Sam: "He didn't even fight in the war. This man didn't even fight in the bloody war" (III, p.64). This is a false
charge as the audience have already learnt in Act I that Sam did take part in World War II: "For instance", says Sam, "I told this man today I was in the second World War. Not the first.... I was too young for the first.... I fought in the second" (III, p.30).

We may, therefore, conclude that Max bears a grudge against his brother Sam who is successful outside the home. Even though Sam, from time to time, may act, as Esslin sees, as "the family's conscience, its super-ego," we can hardly take his "Collapse" (III, p.94) as signifying his death, for Pinter has explicitly said that Sam does not die: "He doesn't die. Actually, he's in fine form." Following the text closely we find this justified. Sam on his part, has disliked Max's manipulation of a married woman having the responsibility of rearing her children:

Sam : Don't be silly....
Max : What's silly?
Sam : You're talking rubbish.
Max : Me?
Sam : She's got three children (III, p.86).

Even then he does not have the nerve to fight the case outright. He opts out, as does Teddy. Therefore, Sam's "collapse" may be considered, not as an annihilation, but as an indication of his weak moral fibre. For Sam is incapable of countering any possible smack from his elder brother. Sam's fall has a surreal touch in Pinter's
theatre. Sam's "collapse" may be seen as a deft move on Pinter's part, if this melodramatic action is looked at symbolically. Max's falling down, his ineffectiveness in asserting himself, is quite effectively highlighted by his inability to stand upright on the stage. Sam's action-oriented dramatic dialogue achieves a telling theatrical effect in The Homecoming.

Similarly, towards the very end of Pinter's A Slight Ache, Edward falls to the floor. He, however, continues talking lying down, expatiating on past successes and present insecurities. He says: "I've caught a cold. A germ. In my eyes. It was this morning. In my eyes. My eyes" (III, p.198). His words are followed by a pause, and then Edward falls. Though it appears to be as melodramatic as Sam's fall, Edward's falling on the floor, indicating his physical collapse, is a Pinterian theatrical device which shows a gradual weakening of the concerned character. That this physical action is followed by an ominous silence, creates its own ripples to arouse more fear in Edward who gets "becoming weaker" (III, p.199). Thus, Sam's fall in The Homecoming, like Edward's in A Slight Ache, stresses the importance of the dramatic dialogue.

The events of The Homecoming become credible, on a realistic plane, only when the audience intently listens
to the dramatic dialogue in order to follow the implications behind the words exchanged between the characters. Consequently, mystery dissipates and the apparent so-called absurdity gradually fits into avowal and acceptability of the action of the play. It is important to note in this context that the theatre of the absurd is really relevant only when it delves deep down in the subconscious of the audience. In Pinter this process runs through his unique dramatic dialogue, accounting for the powerful impact of *The Homecoming*, though it was initially rejected on the grounds of multi-layered incomprehensibility and surface implausibility.

Pinter's dramatic dialogue reminds us of the view expressed by Pirandello while discussing Ibsen's dramatic dialogue: "Spoken action, living words that move, immediate expressions inseparable from action, unique phrases that cannot be changed to any other and belong to a definite character in a definite situation; in short, words, expressions, phrases impossible to invent but born when the author has identified himself with his creature to the point of seeing it only as it sees itself."[31] In *The Homecoming* Pinter has achieved the unique economy where word and situation blend perfectly into one another, opening up a new dimension of stage dialogue where realism fuses with the absurd.[32]
The inconsistencies in Max's words refer to the basic unreconciled duality in his character. Even with all his self references to his domestic and extra-domestic achievements, Max fails to impress Lenny who deliberately scoffs also at his father's efficiency within the home-frame: "Why don't you buy a dog? You're a dog cook. Honest" (III, p.27). Max reacts to this pungently, as it hits him where it hurts, for he does lack any functional expertise in the extra-domestic field. This has also made Max oversensitive about himself. The dramatic dialogue used in the earlier episode involving Max, Sam and Lenny exposes Max's psychologically vulnerable position. Even while functioning as the make-believe head of the family, he maintains some sort of a self-importance which he cannot gain anywhere else for the remaining period of his old life. Any threat to his head-of-the-family role makes him jittery and throws him off balance. The patterning of the hostile words against Max, shows that while Lenny is self-established and quite independent of any family succour, Max in his subconscious mind does not want Lenny to slip out of his grip as a son.

Pinter has focused on this psycho-analytical aspect through Lenny's apparently absurd, almost nonsensical, words:

Oh, Daddy, you're not going to use your stick on me, are you? Eh? Don't use your stick on me Daddy. No, please. It wasn't my fault, it was one of the others. I haven't done anything wrong, Dad. Honest. Don't clout me with that stick, Dad (III, p.27).
The language shows a dream sequence in a flashback in Pinter's absurd drama. This also reminds us immediately of Pinter's stressing the doubleness of drama, as he believes in "tying the words to the image of the character standing on the stage." In order to achieve the dual stress, the verbal intersects the visual. Lenny's words refer to the demarcated, contested territory between the father and the son with indefinable words. At the same time the words multiply their echo devastatingly to the extent that the past is recreated in order to magnify the intensity of the present. The above passage highlights the "absurd" potentiality of Pinter's drama reached through such mannered verbal games.

In the passage four words have been very meaningfully used for the dream sequence: the word "Daddy" has been used twice with a capital D; and the word "Dad" has also been used twice with a capital D. Max subconsciously wishes Lenny to behave as he has done many a time in his childhood, being brought up under the direct control of his father. "Daddy" and "Dad" with a capital D in this sequence underlines befittingly Max's robust father-image. Now, however, the wheel has turned full circle, and Max's image has been shattered. Lenny's words also act as a corollary to support the point at issue. A little later, under joint-attack by Sam, Joey and Lenny, Max realises that his father-image canopy, under which he likes to live,
is no more than an airy nothing. In a psychological moment of reckoning Max wants to slip out of his Dad-complex deeply embedded in his sub-conscious, as the word "Dad" mocks at his present plight:

Lenny: What the boys want, Dad, is your own special brand of cooking, Dad... .

Max: Stop calling me Dad. Just stop all that calling me Dad, do you understand? (III, p. 33).

This dramatic dialogue shows clearly Pinter's leap towards a new realism, aiming at the expression of deep human problems through a "metaphor of human desires and aspirations, a myth, a dream image, a projection of archetypal fears and wishes." Considered from this angle, the dialogue in The Homecoming is by no means a meaningless babble; it rather proves its potentiality in enlarging the frontiers of the twentieth century absurd drama from the standpoint of compression and precision. It alerts the audience to the harshness of the existential reality.

Such dialogue, reflecting Pinter's new realism in The Homecoming, reminds us of what Grant says on this subject:

The coherence theory of realism, on the other hand, is the consciousness of literature: its self-awareness, its realization of its own ontological status. Here realism is achieved not by imitation, but by creation; a creation which, working with the materials of life, absolves these by the intercession of the imagination from mere factuality and translates them to a higher order.
It has been discussed by Grant in detail that the inter-relation between reality and imagination is the major groundwork of a character of literature. This has also been endorsed by Wallace Stevens (1879-1955) who says: "Reality is not what it is. It consists of the many realities which it can be made into." The dialogue and characterization in The Homecoming make the audience aware of this new realism.

Max’s words make for a deeper, connotationally suggestive dramatic meaning: "All boys? Isn't that funny, eh? You've got three, I've got three" (III, p.66). There seems to exist a point of convergence between the living Ruth and the dead Jessie. Max’s wife begot three sons who are called "three bastard sons" (III, p.63) by their mother’s lawful husband. Ruth, who carries the implicit sticker of a prostitute, too, ironically, begot three sons. Max has already expressed his naive suspicion about their real parentage:

Max: You a mother?
Ruth: Yes.
Max: How many you got?
Ruth: three. (He turns to Teddy)
Max: All yours, Ted? (III, p.59).

The gestural meaning expressed by Max’s turning to Teddy deliberately drives the insinuated meaning home. Here dramatic dialogue is charged with highly potential meaning.
Ruth does not lose her calm. The alarm is there, but well masked. The tension created by the words is felt underneath the calm surface. Ruth is upset, but the playwright does not allow her to slip her protective mask. If Max is throwing her the challenge, she stands up to accept it. This is where Pinter's dramatic dialogue scores in achieving its end. For what moves the audience is neither the mask nor the self-control exerted by Ruth, but what is contained underneath the words expressed is what makes an impact on them. In this sense Pinter's is an entirely new form of theatre which taps the submerged ground of life. Eric Shorter rightly says about The Homecoming that its author has "never put his art to more absorbing... or stylish purpose." Indeed the quality of its dialogue, its tension and the reassurance with which the play unfurls its theme are a major source of pleasure.

Lenny's highly significant cross-examination of Max points again to the same absurd situation, casting doubts on his own legitimacy:

I'll ask you a question... I've been meaning to ask you for some time. That night... you know... the night you got me... that night with mum, what was it like? Eh? When I was just a glint in your eye. What was it like? What was the background to it...? I want to know the real facts about my background (III, p.52).
Lenny enlarges on this issue about his birth — the moment he was conceived, the actual moment when a male spermatozoa interacts with a female ova or egg. Could Max call that particular moment to mind? The dialogue contains several echoes of meaning at the inferential level. The question probes with an impetuosity the existential agony of the modern man expressed excruciatingly in O'Neill's words: "Why the devil was I born at all?" Was Max the butcher the man who had fathered Lenny? For Jessie, as far as the play profusely insinuates, used to participate in lascivious wassails. At least she was not the wife on whom Max could build his trust. With reference to his sons Max ironically says that it was Jessie who "taught them all the morality they know.... Every single bit of the moral code they live by — was taught to them by their mother" (III, p.62). And what is the morality they know, after all? Lenny is an active successful pimp with connections in the London underworld; Joey is a rapist and womaniser. Lenny informs Teddy about Joey's exploits with girls: "He's had more dolly than you've had cream cakes. He's irresistible" (III, p.82). Joey confesses that both he and Lenny raped the two girls the previous week on a bombsite "up over by the Scrubs": "... and we told the ... two escorts ... to go away ... which they did ... and then we ... got the girls out of the car ... well ... you know ... then we had them" (III, p.83).
What is noteworthy here is the highly sensitive, meaningful dialogue with obvious pointed references. They told the two escorts to go away, and this telling does imply that the escorts were badly threatened to piss off. Besides, as Lenny narrates, Joey did not care a fig for the girl's request for a contraceptive protection, but forced her to be sexually assaulted there and then:

Lenny (to Teddy):

His bird says to him ... I've got to have some contraceptive protection. I haven't got any contraceptive protection, old Joey says to her. In that case I won't do it, she says. Yes you will, says Joey, never mind about the contraceptive protection (III, pp.83-84).

Such, therefore, was the moral code they were actually living by, and this could have very legitimately been taught by someone like Jessie who walked the streets. Max shouts as soon as he spots Ruth in the house: "I haven't seen the bitch for six years.... I've never had a whore under this roof before. Ever since your mother died" (III, p.58). Was the mother a whore then? The sub-textual suggestion is positive.

The dramatic dialogue of The Homecoming shows that Pinter gives us a new realistic theatre. It is here that Pinter's absurd achieves its objective in the post-Beckettian theatre world, affirming Albee's belief that "if the theatre must bring us only what we can immediately
apprehend or comfortably relate to, let us stop going to the theatre entirely."38 Pinter's plays, from this standpoint, become puzzling, defying a clear comprehension or interpretation. This feature of Pinter's dialogue makes the audience try hard to get at the submerged level of meaning. As Russell Brown observes "The audience, expecting to be puzzled, ceases to be truly puzzled."39 Indeed, Pinter broke the barrier of the rule of necessity for a logically meaningful dialogue, and created the evocative irregularity of the meaningless and the illogical.

The Homecoming is disturbing and embarrassing, perplexing and challenging, asking various questions, turning moral premises turtle, inviting opprobrium for being obscene. But the secret of the play's success lay in the non-emotional deliberate style of the dramatic dialogue through which it is presented. Ruth, the central character of the play, does not choose to settle comfortably into a conventional wedded life, to be a respectable wife and loving mother, tied to a rather commonplace intellectual on a small typical campus of an academy in distant America which she describes as: "all rock. And sand... And there's lots of insects there. (Pause) And there's lots of insects there" (III, p.69). Ruth's description is in direct contrast with Teddy's: "It's a great life, at the University... it's a very good life.... It's a very stimulating environment" (III, p.66).
The word "insects", used by Ruth, has been repeated twice in identical sentences, quoted above. This repetition suggests the implicit meaning of this word with directly affective connotational overtone. "Insects" used twice refers to the speaker's individual strong feelings, and it is the existence of these feelings that enables men and women to use words, under a given situation, only for their affective connotations irrespective of the informative connotations. So we may say that Ruth's verbal expression of her strong feeling comes out through the use of the word "insects" which does have an affective character, in the sense that this special use of an appropriate dramatic metaphor brings in the obvious context, when both her past and future are hinted with an overtone of her personal association with immoral callings. Ruth, before she left for America with Teddy, "was a model for the body. A photographic model for the body" (III, p.73). Critics consider that she was a nude photographic model which is almost a pass-word for prostitution.

We may cite the passage where Ruth recalls with nostalgic adoration the country house where she used to go for her modelling in the nude:

Once or twice we went to a place in the country, by train. Oh, six or seven times... We used to change and walk down towards the lake ... when we changed in the house we had a drink. There was a cold buffet.

( Pause )

Sometimes we stayed in the house but ... most often ... we walked down to the lake ... and did our modelling there (III, p.73).
This country house for nude posings, provided with drinks and a cold buffet, sounds like the scene of orgies rather than a place for advertising photography. As such prior to her marriage with Teddy, Ruth had been as the dramatic dialogue suggests, a woman of easy virtue, or a near-whore. Again, the dialogue becomes highly suggestive of the fact that Ruth had to take a crucial decision to marry, after a debate with her own self, before abandoning her free and easy-going life. As Ruth says: "Just before we went to America I went down there. I walked from the station to the gate and then I walked up the drive. There were lights on ... I stood in the drive ... the house was very light" (III, p.73).

Ruth nostalgically visited the country house which identified itself with many of her past memories, walked up the drive in silence, stood there in silence, and then cast a long, lingering wistful glance at the lighted country house squatting in the midst of quietness. This connotes that Ruth was to win over herself in tearing away from her professional free life. Ruth's words quoted above are a projection of human desire at a cross-road, presented as a metaphor of archetypal wishes and longings. It is quite clear that Ruth has not been able to reconcile herself to the life of an academician's wife on a campus. She might also have found to her dismay — and here
Pinter's dialogue is subtly suggestive — that even people supposed to be most dignified, educated and highly civilized, were no better than insects in their sneaky, loathsome way of morbid sexual approaches.

Teddy's words about Ruth's sociability in America are equivocal: "She is a very popular woman. She's got lots of friends" (III, p.66). These friends could have easily been her admirers. Like Alexander Pope's Belinda, she now exudes her charm and glamour which she had wielded over men earlier in London. As she says, "I was ... different ... when I met Teddy ... first" (III, p.66). The use of three dots three times by Pinter in a sentence having eight words, clearly shows a halting hesitation of the speaker whose mind at the moment goes back to the bygone days. Here the verbal superbly cuts into the visual and the audience discerns its silhouette in the murky backdrop of her past. Again, her reference to America as an arid zone infested by insects, unmistakably shows her boredom with her life there with her husband.

Here it may be added that it is difficult to encapsulate the theme of a Pinter play unlike that of a discursive drama. Like Anton Tchekhov (1860-1904) and Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), Pinter employs no spokesman who figures so prominently in Shavian drama. Pinter always desires his characters to reveal themselves: Says Pinter:
I've ... never envisaged my own characters as messengers of death, doom, heaven or the milky way .... Between my lack of biographical data about them and the ambiguity of what they say lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration but which it is compulsory to explore.40

As regards Ruth, she possesses a momentum of her own, and her words help the audience to gather the intended dramatic message. While moving on her own axis, she also rotates round the rest of the characters.

All references Ruth makes to her past are hazy and as such open to several interpretations. In this respect the statement that Pinter's plays fail to communicate has a point. The characters, such as Ruth, do little to facilitate communication. She is unwilling or afraid to reveal herself. Her memory is rather having edges of foam. We should also remember that unreliability of memory is a major theme of Pinter's plays, such as Old Times (1970), No Man's Land (1974) and Betrayal (1978). Ruth's references to her past point to what Pinter considers "a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished smokescreen which keeps the other in its place."41 Here the "other" is of course the other meaning which is "locked beneath it", to quote Pinter's happy phrase.

Ruth's country-house dialogue exemplifies that "other" silence, included in Pinterian "two silences,"42 which falls on the audience. This happens when "a torrent of language is being employed"43 by Ruth. The failure
of Ruth to communicate despite her "torrent of language" suggests that perhaps "we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid." For words move between the poles of the concrete and of the abstract, between proximity to the sensuous impression and remoteness from it in conceptual thinking. Even "what remains unsaid" stands for this abstract language and preserves a link with sensuous perception. We should remember that one of the ambiguities of language points to the fact that it works also as a sign of mental processes establishing independence in the midst of dependence on concrete reference or sensuous imagery.

Ruth's utterances are marked by equivocation, creating ripples of suggestions, characteristic of the Theatre of the Absurd. In this context, one is inclined to agree with Andrew Kennedy: "For Beckett 'the meaning of meaning' is ontological, a left over quest for essence; for Pinter it is linguistic, word-clues crossing word-clues." These word-clues are spreading the net of informative connotational meaning over the country-house speech of Ruth. *The Homecoming* has been structured on a half-submerged, yet forward-moving, dramatic action which relies heavily on the dialogic content. In Pinter, the real-life dialogue gets mingled up with an obvious elicitation technique.

The texture of Ruth's country house dialogue is
The strategy of pause, three dots or silence has been used by Pinter within the subtext. They are part and parcel of Pinter's dramatic dialogue. These devices control the spatial and visual dimension of the play over and above the written text.

The right note, right accent at the right moment are of great importance in rendering the dialogue of a Pinter play as recognised by the great director, Sir Peter Hall. In Pinter, there is a difference between a pause and three dots. Whereas the latter denote a slight hesitation, the former holds the dramatic moment and then releases it. A Pinter pause is quite alarming. It works as a gap that needs to be filled in. "Silence" in a Pinter play has a deep significance; when the inter-character conflict gets tense nothing can be said till the intensity of the tension is lessened. Mostly, after such a silence, the dialogue moves towards a different episode, not related to what immediately precedes it.
Dramatic dialogue in *The Homecoming* is often convoluted, giving the play a disoriented edge wherein we notice deliberate falsifications and misleadings. A housewife acts as a whore; a professional London taxi driver is feeble and a weakling; a professor of philosophy shuns talking about philosophy; a successful pimp takes order from the whore having failed to push her around; and a well-built young boxer cannot go "the whole hog" with an experienced woman in having sex with her. All these disorientations make the play funny through the device of repetition:

Lenny: How'd you get on?
Joey: Er... not bad.
Lenny: What do you mean? (Pause) What do you mean?
Joey: Not bad.
Lenny: I want to know what you mean by not bad ...,.
Joey: I didn't get all the way.
Lenny: You didn't get all the way? (Pause)  
(With emphasis) You didn't get all the way?....
But you've had her up there for two hours.
Joey: Well?
Lenny: You didn't get all the way and you've had her up there for two hours (III, p.82).

Here comedy arises from the incongruity of the dramatic situation bolstered by repetitions. Pinter's plays become quite successful because of his special gift for composing comic dialogue, as exemplified by *The Homecoming*.

When the audience has been already introduced to all the three members of the north London family, Teddy
appears with Ruth at night and says, "They're all snoring up there" (III, p.37). Describing Max to Ruth, who has not yet seen any member of the family, Teddy says: "The old man. I think you'll like him very much. Honestly" (III, p.38). Teddy's false words have a disconcerting effect on the audience which is already familiar with Max's true standing in the family. This impression gets reinforced by many non-sequiturs. Teddy describes his family thus: "They're very warm people, really. Very warm. They're my family. They're not ogres" (III, p.39).

Here the dialogue has a very powerful implication. It is interesting to note how such non-sequiturs build up the dramatic tension. Teddy's statement here is imprecise, if not incongruous, and at the same time strongly ironical. There is an irony in the word "Warm". As it transpires in the course of the play, the members of Teddy's London family have been far from "warm". Teddy's suggestion is therefore misleading. "Very warm" immediately followed by over-emphatic "really" has been repeated, emphasising a deliberate falsification of facts. In "they're my family" the emphasis is clearly on the word "my". Then, the statement "they're not ogres" gives the audience a negative sense. Teddy's emphatic "my" refers to his desperate effort to equate the temperament of his family members with his own.
In *The Homecoming*, Pinter creates his comedy of menace through a deft dialogue. Right from the moment Teddy enters the scene with Ruth, he is evidently ill at ease. His restlessness and somewhat subdued worry are apparent. He "walks about the room" (III, p. 38), noses around the silent house, goes upstairs:

Teddy: ..... shall I go up?
He goes into the hall, looks up the stairs, comes back.... (Pause) "I'll just go up ... have a look." He goes upstairs, stealthily

(III, pp.36-37).

It is evident that Teddy is reluctant, undecided, even a little timid in either going upstairs or awaking others. When Ruth expects him to wake up the members of his family and announce quite normally their arrival, he flinches at the idea and ducks under his feeble plea:

Ruth : Shouldn't you wake someone up? Tell them you're here?
Teddy: Not at this time of night. It's too late

(III, p.36).

Even when Teddy goes upstairs, he does so after second thought. He "comes back" after looking, uneasily, up the stairs in the first instance. Then he climbs the stairs "stealthily". He tries rather awkwardly to make Ruth comfortable in his London house — offering sometime to get bed sheets, sometime to "make something to drink ... something hot" (III, p.37). Sometime Teddy is trying to demonstrate his intimate knowledge of the house in various ways: "Actually there was a wall, across there ... with a
door. We knocked it down ... years ago ... to make an open living area" (III, p.37). Again: "Look, it's just up there. It's the first door on the landing. The bathroom's right next door" (III, p.38). Restless and undecided Teddy sometime just wants to "walk about for a few minutes" (III, p.39).

Thus, it is not difficult for a vigilant and cautious audience to learn from the dialogue, that Teddy is ill at ease, lacking calm. There is also a lurking fear in the niche of his mind and as such he is uneasy about visiting his family after six years of separation. While he married Ruth, he either could not, or did not introduce her to his "very warm" family. From Max's words at a later stage it becomes clear that the family knew Ruth as she was but were ignorant of her marriage.

Max: I haven't seen the bitch for six years, he comes home without a word, he brings a filthy scrubber off the street (III, p.58).

What Teddy says just after this reveals Ruth's past. Cornered by his father, Teddy speaks out: "She's my wife! We're married!" (III, p.58).

These two short sentences are followed by a note of exclamation; and when one says "my wife" introducing a lady to someone, one doesn't have to use the tautology that we are married. The word "wife" denotes a lady married to a particular person through religious or legal
means. Why then does Teddy reiterate? To this question an obvious answer is that Ruth had been a lady of easy virtue, known to the family and that Teddy married her without the approval or even knowledge of his family. The moment Max eyes Ruth for the first time he blurts out:

Max : Who asked you to bring tarts in here?
Teddy : Tarts?
Max : Who asked you to bring dirty tarts into this house? (III, p.57).

Here the repetition of "tarts" signifies prior knowledge of Ruth's past. This helps us to know how things went and why Teddy kept his marriage secret.

On his arrival, Teddy's nervousness is unmistakable. That he appears to console Ruth is rather ridiculous, as it was he, not she, who got nervous.

Teddy: Look, it's all right, really. I'm here. I mean ... I'm with you. There's no need to be nervous. Are you nervous? (III, p.39).

The dialogue here is quite meaningful. Three dots register Teddy's hesitation, and the question "are you nervous?" at once applies to the speaker himself. This is an example of Pinter's brilliant stage dialogue which brings out Teddy's sub-conscious fear. Teddy's statements are stratagems to cover nakedness. The words he uses are a smokescreen for his own suppressed fears.
Let us try to look at the other aspect of Pinter's dramatic dialogue in this respect. Being quite alert to Teddy's linguistic strategies, Ruth confines and curtails her replies. She senses right that Teddy's statements are merely an extended monologue through which the academician is tabulating his course of action vis-a-vis his ensuing encounter with the family.

Ruth's encounter with Lenny (III, pp.43-51), culminating in the much talked of glass-of-water episode, brings to the forefront a clear struggle for domination and control. Lenny gets defeated, Ruth comes out superbly victorious. Her victory is very closely associated with her proficiency in dealing with verbal utterances. Right from the moment Ruth faces Lenny, she shows that she, not Lenny, must be in total control in the theatrical dynamics of this ambiguous play. Lenny's earlier ego-conscious dominance over old Max evaporates at this point. Pinter deftly creates the essential dramatic atmosphere through well-knit dialogue which jerks the audience into attentive comprehension of the Pinterian plot construction. The discordant note is struck at the exchange of the very first dialogue between Lenny and Ruth:

Lenny : Good evening.
Ruth : Morning, I think (III, p.43).

Here we find an excellent specimen of dramatic dialogue which establishes Ruth's status vis-a-vis Lenny,
striking a key-note to the episode which immediately follows. Ruth pricks her sharply pointed verbal needle into Lenny's inflated ego. She sits, puts her coat collar around her and her action causes obvious question from Lenny: "Cold"? Her crisp "no" brushing aside Lenny's question again shows her determination to get the upper hand. Next to this, Ruth coldly declines Lenny's courteous offer of "refreshment of some kind", saying "No, thanks" (III, p.44). At this point Lenny starts getting worked up against Ruth's deliberate hostility. He retorts that they "haven't got a drink in the house" (III, p.44). She doesn't reply to this sly insult, refusing to fall into his trap of inciting her into some outburst. She keeps her cool. Lenny, baffled in his maiden attempt, tries once again to score by changing method. His verbal weapon strikes again: "You must be connected with my brother in some way. The one who's been abroad"(III, p.44).

Here Ruth asserts her noble status: "I'm his wife" (III, p.44). Lenny changes the subject forthwith, brushing past her reply — another sly insult to which, as before, she doesn't answer. Moreover, she refuses to react to Lenny's sexual provocation, which belittles her dignified status. Lenny's words again assume a symbolic sexual overtone, aimed at embarrassing Ruth. He calls in question her integrity by disapproving of her abrupt entry in the middle of the night: "In the night any given one of
a number of them is liable to start letting out a bit of a tick .... They're quite as mice during the daytime" (III, p.44). These words also have a Freudian touch because the manner in which this encounter takes place between Lenny and Ruth bears resemblance with the manner in which dream-sequences are formed from a consciousness of lying in bed and imagining what one would earnestly desire to happen. Esslin suggests that the play be seen as a "dreamlike myth." Lenny continues to treat Ruth derisively, speaking as if she were his brother's mistress: "What, you sort of live with him over there, do you?" (III, p.45). This, however, has a veiled innuendo like Max's outburst, clarifying that Lenny too knew about Ruth's earlier London-life of a call-girl.

On the other hand, dramatic dialogue involving Ruth serves a definite purpose. She does not respond at all to the underlying mockery of Lenny's words, but also to their surface meaning, taking them at their face value. By so doing Ruth explicitly denies Lenny any feeling of a dominance. As Lenny seeks twice to hold her hand, Ruth dodges him:

    Lenny : Do you mind if I hold your hand?
    Ruth : Why?
    Lenny : Just a touch .... Just a tickle.
The twice repeated "why" puts a clear challenge to Lenny's superior role and establishes Ruth as a formidable antagonist in the struggle for power and territory. By refusing to reply in terms of Lenny's edicts, the unruffled Ruth comes to gain complete control over the dramatic situation. Pinter does it through a deft manipulation of rhythm and words. Santayana has aptly observed in his Life of Reason that "Even the sound and rhythm of words, in a sensitive language, have some congruity with the nature of the things signified."

This applies to the above dialogue between Ruth and Lenny, which largely contributes to the perception of the audience. This dialogue significantly demonstrates the gradual destruction of man's supremacy and slow but sure emergence of woman's dominace. It may here be worthwhile to note Dukore's observation: "Verbal or silent thrusts and parries, and piss-taking or donning masks, are not mutually exclusive. Piss-taking may employ or underlie verbal or silent tactics. Masks may conceal them." In their struggle for power, the characters in The Homecoming adopt most of these methods. As a result, the audience not only finds that shadows between Ruth and Lenny have lengthened, but also that these shadows continue to lengthen by and by.

Lenny then tells Ruth how ruthlessly he once handled the woman who "was falling apart with the pox"
His purpose must be to shock her with his vicious cruelty: "I clumped her one .... I just gave her another belt in the nose and a couple of turns of the boot" (III, p.47). Ruth does not show any kind of shock whatever. On the contrary, she asks Lenny how he knew that the woman was diseased. Ruth is not at all intimidated by his reference to his violence. Lenny, outwitted by her smart question, almost babbles out: "How did I know? (pause) I decided she was" (III, p.47). Similarly the other story about Lenny's Christmas snow-clearing episode where he brags of just giving an old lady "a short-arm jab to the belly" (III, p.49) and jumping on a bus outside, cuts no ice with Ruth. She indeed emerges as a clear winner. Here the dialogue has been handled expertly to show that Lenny is mean and cowardly in his assaults on a diseased and an old woman. All his moves, calculated to establish dominance, are at once nullified by Ruth's terse, short, quick-witted reply:

Lenny : Shall I take this ashtray out of your way? 
Ruth : It's not in my way (III, p.49).

Then comes the oft-quoted dialogue over the glass-of-water episode. When Lenny offers some water in a glass to Ruth, who has already refused any refreshment or a drink, she takes the glass and sips. This again is a sly Pinterian hint that Ruth does not shun but accepts Lenny's challenge. An alert audience can hardly miss the signals
of such expository devices in Pinter's theatre language. Reading or listening to Pinter's dialogue demands concentration. This has been corroborated by Haigh who acted as James in *The Collection* (1962): "The thing is, Harold's plays take such bloody concentration."

Every suggestive detail needs to be scrutinized in order to get at what it means subtextually. In this respect, the pertinent observation of Russell Brown may be cited: "the originality of Pinter and other dramatists writing today lies in their belief that gesture can be as eloquent as words."

Pinter's dialogue contains gesture along with words. This requires to be seen as well as heard. In Pinter's dialogue verbal and visual are very intricately telescoped. The gesture of Ruth taking the glass and sipping from it easily helps the audience to understand her dominance. Pinter knows, from his first hand acting experience, how exactly to blend gestures and movements of characters with their dramatic dialogue in order to make a great impact on the audience.

Now at the end of her first encounter with Lenny, she bullies him with the same object with which he attempted to bully her. It is the same glass of water that Lenny, unasked for, offered her. Now when Lenny wants to take it back, she stubbornly refuses to surrender
by handing the glass to Lenny:

Lenny: And now perhaps I'll relieve you of your glass.
Ruth: I haven't quite finished.
Lenny: You've consumed quite enough....
Ruth: No, I haven't.
Lenny: Quite sufficient in my own opinion.

In this dialogue, Lenny's "in my own opinion" happens to be his last resistance which Ruth dismantles with her forceful "Not in mine", followed by "Leonard" — which is how Lenny was called by his mother. By using the name Ruth intends to put him demeaningly in the position of an immature lad, rather than a grown-up mature person. It is evident that Lenny is acutely touchy about the name his mother used to call him by:

Lenny: Don't call me that please.
Ruth: Why not?
Lenny: That's the name my mother gave me (III, p.49).

The word "please" in this dialogue shows to what extent he has been hurt. It is clear from the dialogue that Lenny yields under Ruth's verbal stratagems. He is shaken to a considerable extent with his hurt pride, and the word "please" is the verbalisation of his wounded ego.

When Lenny threatens to take from her the glass by force, she remains unperturbed and expresses her
indomitable nature by her quiet yet intimidating words marked by psychological complexity. This reminds us of the inner pattern of a dramatic language. As Stainslavsky observes, "Beneath the words of the text, giving them life and a basis for existing (there are) ... a web of innumerable, varied inner patterns ... all sorts of figments of the imagination, inner movements ... and other similar elements."^51

Ruth's calculated words, quoted above, bear testimony to this "inner movement" in Pinter's dramatic dialogue. This is again clear from Ruth's words: "If you take the glass ... I'll take you." (III, p.50). Lenny thus has been reduced to a position of insignificance. This is followed by a very original absurd scene with a deep symbolic significance. Lenny knows that he has been cut to size. His sneering smile and calm evaporates. He blurts out: "You've had a secret liaison with another man. His family didn't even know. Then you come here without a word of warning and start to make trouble (III, p.50). Ruth, therefore, as the dialogue reveals, has been able to trouble Lenny. She disregards Lenny with a noticeable indifference. "She picks up the glass and lifts it towards him" (III, p.50) and by so doing she sets her seal of victory over Lenny. Lenny's hurt pride is further bruised as he is reduced to the level of a pranky child: ;
Ruth: Have a sip. Go on. Have a sip from my glass (III, p.50). Then she pats her lap, saying, "Sit on my lap. Take a long cool sip" (III, p.50). She stands and moves to Lenny with the glass:

   Ruth: Put your head back and open your mouth.
   Lenny: Take that glass away from me.
   Ruth: Lie on the floor. Go on. I'll pour it down your throat (III, p.50).

The episode comes to an end when "she laughs shortly, drains the glass" (III, p.50) and triumphantly makes her exit. Then Ruth slams the door on Lenny's face from a position of dominance. In the struggle for territory and power, her hegemony is established. Lenny in vain "follows into the hall and shouts up the stairs" (III, p.51).

Pinter's dramatic dialogue, as manifested in this episode, points to a new realism. A language or any conventional linguistic design can never get quite on level terms with the imaginative ideas or concepts of the playwright. Lingual idioms cannot render them absolutely and completely intelligible. Pinter's stage dialogue shows that true representation of such ideas or concepts is a persistent effort to strain after the thing which lies beyond the confines of common experience. Kant supports this view in his Critique of
Aesthetic Judgement (1790): "In the creation of a work of art there takes place a process whereby the artist, 'transgressing the limits of experience', attempts with the aid of imagination to body forth ideas to sense with a completeness of which nature affords no parallel."

Pinter's plays such as The Homecoming exemplify his quest for such an original language. It is a dramatic dialogue that tries hard to "body forth" with as much precision as possible the Pinterian idea, transgressing the limits of the prevailing theatrical practice. The dialogue at Lenny's first encounter with Ruth reveals the major purpose of the playwright to go beyond the conventional dialogue. Pinter felt the need for finding out the most appropriate dramatic idiom to express the changed feelings, transformed psyche and inexpressible existential experiences of man. Dialogue exchanged between Lenny and Ruth goes beyond the commonplace in order to penetrate the modern life shot through with the tension of absurdity or meaninglessness.

The Homecoming is a play where battles remain restricted to a purely verbal level. Actual or physical violence is only hinted at in Lenny's threatening speeches. It is resorted to in moments of sheer desperation by Max, the weakest of the four struggling
and straggling fighters. Sam remains out of the fighting ring. The play shows that the adoption of violent means indicates defeat. Max gets defeated, so does Lenny. Ruth wins by remaining calm. This shows that in Pinter's theatre social control, in an ultimate analysis, lies in the power to impose one's language upon another. Even in Pinter's *The Caretaker*, Mick imposes his language on Davies and thus defeats him. In his *A Slight Ache* also Edward attempts to impose his elite and erudite language on the match-seller. But he fails miserably in his efforts, having dashed headlong against the barrier put up by the match-seller's stupefying silence right from the moment of his entry (III, p. 194). In several passages of these plays silence assumes great significance in making the required impact on the audience.

In *The Homecoming* Ruth's linguistic control lends intensity to the action through verbal mechanics. The verbal tangle between Ruth and Lenny ultimately makes Ruth the winner in the game of supremacy. Teddy's words about America that "It's so clean there" (III, p. 70) are at once dismissed by Ruth who contradicts Teddy in order not to allow him to impose his grand vision of America: "It's all rock. And Sand" (III, p. 69).
Ruth's low estimation runs counter to Teddy's inflated idea about America. Her dialogue sharply cuts Teddy's, and she gains her ground through her better linguistic stratagems. In Pinter's drama circumstantial social control lies ultimately in the power to impose unerringly one's language upon another. Considered from this angle The Homecoming poignantly shows that both Max and Teddy fail to score where Lenny and Ruth succeed. However, in the long run, Ruth defeats her cheeky brother-in-law through her calculated and excelling conversational stratagems.

It is noteworthy that while Max is presented as an aged, fragile character of dwindling physical stature, he nonetheless makes efforts, though in vain, to impose himself on his north London family by falling back upon a hybrid language of physical vigour and carnal brutality. Max's vain-glorious dialogue establishes at once to an alert audience the sorry state of affairs for Max, who performs his solo only before an empty bandstand. Max brags, for example, about his past expertise: "I had a ... I had an instinctive understanding of animals ... I always had the smell of a good horse. I could smell him"(III, p.26). But his bragging dialogue ends in smoke as it is clearly revealed a little earlier by Max,
that he had been ignorant of the race-course stadia:
"I worked as a butcher all my life, using the chopper and the slab, the slab, you know what I mean, the chopper and the slab. To keep my family in the luxury" (III, p.63).

Here again we are reminded of Pinter's observation that so often below the word spoken, lies the things unspoken. For the hard-working butcher who toiled from dawn to dusk he could hardly spare the time to become an expert turf-man. The dramatic dialogue aptly projects this idea: "My mother was bed-ridden, my brothers were all invalids. I had to earn the money for the leading psychiatrists. I had to read books. I had to study the disease ..." (III, p.63). The man who utters these words had to work rigorously to "earn the money" needed for fulfilling these responsibilities: "I was busy working twentyfour hours a day in the shop, I was going all over the country to find meat, I was making my way in the world" (III, p.62).

At the level of language, Max fails to achieve dominance. Max resorts to an idiom of lies. He blows hot and cold in the same breath. For example, he showers praise on Jessie: "That woman was the backbone to the family .... I left a woman at home with a will of iron, a heart of gold and a mind" (III, p.62). But a little later he damages her character thus: "A crippled family,
three bastard sons, a slutbitch of a wife" (III, p.63).
And again: "She taught them all the morality they know....
Every single bit of the moral code they live by — was
taught to them by their mother" (III, pp.61-62). This
dialogue is highly significant in the light of the
antecedents of the sons, already revealed to the
audience.

Thus, The Homecoming reveals the dark, sub-conscious
male attitude towards female as "mother whore" and the
suppressed female desire to play this double role. Verbal
exchanges, subtle nuances of meaning, suggestiveness of
the dramatic idiom — with connotations, denotations,
ripples and echoes of the words — give strength to this
play. The verbal gets superbly blended with the visual.
Talks, supported by meaningful gestures between Lenny,
Ruth and Joey, show how phantasy overcomes rationality
in the human sub-conscious. The sub-textual reading
becomes necessary to get at the inner feeling of the
characters.

In The Homecoming Pinter has deftly provided
effective word-clues for the audience by means of which
it can follow the dramatic action. The audience is
required to understand the layers of meaning from the
implications of the dramatic language. Pinter's dialogic
methods such as repetitions, pauses and silences help us to get at the under-surface meaning. In *The Homecoming* the struggles between the characters for dominance are also effectively manifested through the dialogue by means of an appropriate verbal compression and depth.
Notes and References

All the references to *The Homecoming* are to *Pinter Plays: Three* (London: Methuen, 1986). Page numbers have been cited parenthetically in the text.


4. Ibid., p.31.


15. The Freudian angle in *The Homecoming* has been critically examined by M.W. Rowe in his essay, "Pinter's Freudian Homecoming", *Essays in Criticism*, 41, No.3 (July 1991), 189-207.


18. Ibid.


22. Ibid., p.62.


25. Ibid.


42. Ibid., p.14.

43. Ibid., p.14.

44. Ibid., p.15.


Quoted in *Current Literary Terms*, comp. A.F. Scott (London: Macmillan, 1974), p.178. George Santayana in his *Life of Reason* (1905-6) holds that the human mind is an effect of physical growth, whereas our ideas stand on a higher and non-material plane. He believes that the true function of reason consists not in idealistic dreams but in a logical activity, taking account of facts. He distinguishes the ideal element from its material embodiment.


The *Collection* opened at the Aldwych Theatre, London on May 11, 1961. Kenneth Haigh acted in the role of James. The production was jointly directed by Peter Hall and Pinter.

