CHAPTER TWO

STRUGGLE FOR “ROOM” OR TERRITORIAL STRUGGLE

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a tremendous struggle for territory—a place which may be safe, a place which is an indicator of dominance or a place which is an indicator of self-respect. This struggle for territory started before World War I when Germany tried to expand its political territory. Due to the industrial revolution Germany was looking for a market or territory where it could sell its products. But when Germany started to look for territorial expansion everywhere it faced the opposition of either the British, the American or the French. This struggle for territory resulted in the outbreak of World War I and eventually ended with the holocaust of World War II. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century people have been looking for a safe place to escape from the cruelty unleashed in the external world. During World War II the pogrom of the Jews by the Nazis has added a new chapter in the history of horror and cruelty. People, especially the Jews were constantly in search of a new hiding to save their lives whereas other common people were looking for a safe place to save themselves from the cruelty of war. Harold Pinter, himself a Jew, experienced this horror and terror of slaughtering the common man by the war in general and by the Nazis towards their community in particular in his early life and was forced to move into hiding places to escape from the torture of the Nazis. He has experienced this struggle for a safe place or territory amidst the hostile world since his early childhood.

Even after World War II, this quest for a safe place continues in the period of the Cold War. The whole world seemed to turn hostile to mankind when the developed countries continued to pile up the nuclear weapons after witnessing the destructive nature of the Atom bomb which at that time only America possessed. Naturally, Pinter who was born in the
disturbing 1930s, grew up in the horrifying 1940s and matured in the sceptical and distrustful 1950s knew more about the contemporary scenario of doubt and hatred first hand. He certainly felt the necessity of a safe place which was rare to find at that time. This struggle for a safe place has become a prime motif in his early plays.

Pinter has given a new dimension to this struggle for a room or safe place in this hostile world. He has neither espoused any theory about a room or safe territory nor has he shown this struggle through political propaganda or conflict among the countries. Rather he has taken this struggle to the microcosmic level of a human being’s life. He has portrayed his characters as victims of this struggle. His characters are living under the illusion of being safe in a room which ultimately proves to be otherwise. The quest or struggle to occupy an apparently safe room or place finally leads them to their destruction. This destruction does not always mean physical death but sometimes it becomes a symbolic death like mental breakdown or destruction of their selves.

A room normally symbolizes a safe place which is impervious to the cruelty and hostility of the external world. Like the mother’s womb, a room promises security to the occupant from the outer world. A room also becomes a symbol of pride to the occupant who can boast about his/her material existence in this world. But Pinter feels otherwise. It is obvious that after having first hand experiences of this struggle the image of room has become a prominent thought to him. Talking about the source of his plays, he admits:

The germs of my plays? I’ll be as accurate as I can about that. I went into a room and saw one person standing up and one person sitting down, and a few weeks later I wrote The Room. I went into another room and saw two people sitting down, and a few years later I wrote The Birthday Party. I looked
through a door into a third room, and saw two people standing up and I wrote

*The Caretaker.* (Pinter, *Plays 2*)

In his early days Pinter is preoccupied with the image of room and two persons inside the room. In other words, Pinter is concerned with the safety and security of common people in the hostile world and thus two people inside a room becomes the basic situation in his plays and their adjustment becomes a crucial problem. These two characters are constantly in an effort to establish an equation or a pattern to fit themselves into or to preserve their precarious relationship. In this situation, the arrival of a third character in the room makes the situation more complex and new equations or new strategies emerge to maintain that balance. Pinter says:

Given a man in a room and he will sooner or later receive a visitor. A visitor entering the room will enter with interest. If two people inhabit the room the visitor will not be the same man for both. A man in a room who receives a visitor is likely to be illuminated or horrified by it. The visitor himself as easily be horrified or illuminated. (qtd. in Esslin, *The People Wound 40*)

In an interview with Sherwood Pinter’s own comment on the play *The Room* throws light on this motif:

This old woman is living in a room which she is convinced, is the best in the house, and she refuses to know anything about the basement downstairs. She says it’s damp and nasty and the world outside is cold and icy and that in her warm comfortable room her security is complete. But of course it is not an intruder comes to upset of everything, in other words points to the delusion on which she is basing her life. (qtd in Esslin, *The Peopled Wound 35-36*)
When Pinter was asked by a critic what his two people in his room are afraid of, he replied, “Obviously they are scared of what is outside the room. Outside the room there is a world bearing upon them which is frightening. I am sure it is frightening to you and me as well” (qtd. in Esslin, *Theatre of the Absurd* 235).

Pinter’s first play *The Room* certainly presents a struggle for the room or a safe place though this struggle is not physical like in *The Caretaker*. Here the struggle takes the form of fear of being evicted out of the room and the whole play presents the expression of this fear which puts the main character under immense psychological pressure.

*The Room* was first staged at Bristol University under the direction of Henry Woolf, and professionally in a double-bill with *The Dumbwaiter* at the Hampstead Theatre Club on January 21, 1960. Pinter introduces the room with a door and two persons inside the room as the basic situation. A room is a place where one feels secure, lives in privacy, thinks freely and communicates with his intimate ones. Outside the room is a cold, hostile world which is ghastly apathetic and strange. Here it is important to mention that Pinter has used the word ‘home’ only a few time. The use of word ‘home’ emphasizes the stark difference from the concept of ‘room’. A room can never be a home but a home can become a room. Whether Pinter has used the term ‘room’ in the sense of home is debatable but it is obvious that he never indulges in this type of dialogue in his life. Can a room become a home which provides a man the complete security, respectability and ownership as well as comfort of familial life? In Pinter’s world a room is devoid of all those things and comfort a man feels in his own home; a room is a place which provides an apparent security. A room is a temporary place for a man whereas a home provides a sense of permanence. In the world of Pinter’s plays his characters cling to this temporary place considering it as permanent, a home, and channelize their whole efforts and energy in keeping this temporary place. Here Pinter has added a new
spatial dimension to the minds of his characters or perhaps that is the reality in the 1950s when in the absence of home people cling to that temporary space with their self-illusory logic to believe it as home. They struggle and put up a futile resistance to keep that room in their own possession.

The protagonist of the play *The Room* is Rose who is a woman of sixty. The struggle for a room takes place in her mind in two ways—firstly she tries to keep the room in her own possession at any cost and secondly she struggles to make her room a home. The first kind of struggle consciously takes place in her mind as she repeatedly denies communicating with the cold icy external world and considers her own room the safest place. The second kind of struggle is rather implicit in the play as she continuously tries to break the ice between herself and Bert who does not reciprocate her emotions and does not respond to her words. Obviously Rose tries to establish a communication to bring the warmth of familial life in the room by continuously talking to Bert. These two kinds of struggle are not different from one another, but one type of struggle overlaps with the other from the beginning of the play and goes on simultaneously in the play. The only difference is that the first kind of struggle is visible and explicit whereas the latter one is implicit and implied in the situations and dialogues of the play.

The play starts on a chilly winter evening inside a room where Rose lives with her husband Bert Hudd who is a man of fifty, ten years younger than his wife. Rose is a garrulous woman, yet a devoted kind of wife who is very much possessive about her room and concerned about Bert’s health and food. She continuously talks to avoid silence in the room but Bert never answers. She casts him in the role of one dependent on her motherly supervision but he simply refuses to participate in a conversation which also defines their relationship. She knows that Bert will not answer to her questions yet she asks him questions
and moves from one topic or question to another only to answer herself sometimes. From the very beginning of the play it is understood that there must be a tension undergoing in their relationship.

The central irony of Pinter’s plays is that a character can only substantiate his sense of his individuality by operating in relationships which acknowledge and affirm that individuality; yet as soon as he enters into a relationship he is confronted with the complementary demands of his companion. The resulting compromise is negotiated in the dialogue, and if the conflicting demands are excessive the compromise can be one of dangerously balanced, rather than resolved, tensions. In The Room, the opening scene denotes the relationship of Rose and Bert in the latter form. Bert is so indifferent towards Rose’s demand that even when he is addressed directly by his name he remains silent leaving Rose on the verge of preserving a precarious relationship solely by herself. This shows that Rose is also unwilling to accept the silence of Bert by continuing the one-sided conversation as if Bert were participating in the conversation. Throughout the first scene there is no explicit or physical violence or verbal conflict between them. But the opening scene presents a situation that is proof enough that their relationship reaches a fixed point of discord. Though neither of them accepts any kind of discord in their relationship but it is manifested in every aspect of their relationship.

In the absence of her husband’s interaction Rose is preoccupied with the thought of her room about which she is very possessive. In fact the room becomes the symbol of her desire to reiterate and reshape her existence in this cold relationship. She repeatedly points out the warmth of the room to record her existence in the chilly winter of an apathetic world. Her very third sentence in the opening scene points out the difference of the external world
and the room: “[… ] You can feel it [cold] in here. Still, the room keeps warm. It’s better than the basement, anyway” (Pinter, *Plays 1 85*).

She is obsessed with her own safety and security inside the room. She feels her room to be the safest place in the world and wonders how someone can live in the basement: “I don’t know how they live down there. It’s asking for trouble” (Pinter, *Plays 1 85*). She compares the cozy, warm room with cold external world and gradually becomes very much obsessed with the basement, the condition of the basement and whosoever is living there. At the same time she refuses to learn anything about the external world. She says, “I’ve never seen who it is. Who is it? Who lives down there? I’ll have to ask, I mean, you might as well know, Bert. But whoever it is, it can’t be too cosy” (Pinter, *Plays 1 86*).

She dwells on the condition of the basement and declares that “I wouldn’t like to live in that basement. Did you ever see the walls? They were running. This is all right for me” (Pinter, *Plays 1 86*). Later she tells Bert that “Those walls would have finished you off” (Pinter, *Plays 1 87*). And also she assures herself once she says that she is all right in the room and insists on it. She declares, “No, this room’s all right for me. I mean you know where you are. When it’s cold, for instance” (Pinter, *Plays 1 86*).

She completely cuts herself out from the external world and lives in that room without any disturbance. She makes the room her own world as if she were living in an island—detached and isolated. She builds her own illusory world believing it to be the best. Completely detached with the reality, she counts on the advantages of the room and disadvantages of the basement:

This is a good room. You’ve got a chance in a place like this. I look after you, don’t I, Bert? Like when they offered us the basement here I said no straight
off. I knew that’d be no good. The ceiling right on top of you. No, you’ve got a window here, you can move yourself, you can come home at night, if you have to go out, you can do your job, you can come home, you’re all right. And I’m here. You stand a chance. (Pinter, Plays 1 89)

Amidst the silence of Bert she continuously talks about the basement and compares it with her own room. She tries to convince Bert as well as herself about the superiority of her own illusory world about which she has lots of doubts in her own unconscious mind. She needs someone to tell her something good about her own world but in the absence of any complimentary statement her inner doubts strengthen more. So she herself tries to invalidate her own doubt. Earlier she says to Bert, “If they ever ask you, Bert, I’m quite happy where I am. We’re quiet, we’re all right. You’re happy up here, it’s not far up either, when you come in from outside. And we’re not bothered. And nobody bothers us” (Pinter, Plays 1 87).

But her growing inner doubts make her conscious about her own condition in the room. She desperately wants someone to reiterate her belief. So when Mr. Kidd arrives in the room she asks him:

Rose: Well, Mr. Kidd, I must say this is a very nice room. It’s a very comfortable room.

Mr. Kidd: Best room in the house.

Rose: It must get a bit damp downstairs.

Mr. Kidd: Not as bad as upstairs.

Rose: What about downstairs?

Mr. Kidd: Eh?

Rose: What about downstairs?

Mr. Kidd: What about it?
Rose: Must get a bit damp.

Mr. Kidd: A bit. Not as bad as upstairs though.

Rose: Why’s that?

Mr. Kidd: The rain comes in. (Pinter, *Plays 192*)

The above conversation is very important as what Rose wants to hear about her own room is uttered by Mr. Kidd who casually says that the room is the best. But Rose is not satisfied only with that much and she wants to hear much about the downstairs and the basement. So when she asks about the downstairs room she herself adds the information what she wants to hear from him—‘damp’. But for Mr. Kidd, the downstairs is better than the upstairs which obviously upsets Rose a bit as she wants to hear the downstairs as the worst. Rose wants to project her own self in Mr. Kidd but is unable to do so as Kidd’s replies are not as clear cut as she would like. Obviously there is a breakdown of communication here which gives rise to a comic atmosphere but at the same time an underlying threat lies in the suspense in avoiding the communication.

The interaction between Mr. Kidd and Rose is a kind of evasion of each other but Rose’ domineering attitude compels her to ask more and more questions. Rose’ preoccupation with the external world and its activities comes from her sense of insecurity inside the room. She wants to know more and more about the external world, about the basement and about the activities of Mr. Kidd whereas Mr. Kidd, to avoid her domineering attitude, constantly evades her question and changes the topic which finally becomes a kind of senseless rambling to Rose.

The confrontation between Rose and Mr. Kidd starts with whether Mr. Kidd was having a female help. But very soon Mr. Kidd turns this to a rocking chair which is in the room. According to Rose, the chair belongs to her as she has brought it in but Kidd claims
that he has seen it earlier. From this point, a psychological conflict starts between Rose and Kidd over the possession of the room and each one tries to dominate over the other. Rose asks him directly about his bedroom which she thinks is at the backside. But Kidd counters her by saying that the very room in which she is staying now was once his bedroom. The declaration of Kidd that this room was his bedroom once is to remind her that she is a tenant and actually he is the owner of the room. In terms of the psychological conflict, this is a shocking and lethal remark for Rose and Kidd seems very perceptive in pinpointing the vulnerable area of Rose. This obviously makes her nervous momentarily but she again counterattacks him by asking when this room was his bedroom. But every time she asks, Kidd avoids answering the question. At first, he again brings the chair into the conversation upon which a nervous and fearful Rose declares that this chair was there when she came in as a tenant, thus contradicting her previous statement that she brought the chair. But again she asks Kidd when this room was his bedroom to which he only replies that “A good while back” (Pinter, *Plays I* 92). Later for the third time she asks Kidd, “Where’s your bedroom now then, Mr. Kidd?” (Pinter, *Plays I* 93), to which Kidd only says: “Me? I can take my pick” (Pinter, *Plays I* 94).

The whole conversation between Kidd and Rose is a kind of a psychological battle over the possession of the room which innocently starts from how Kidd could have heard her husband drive off in the morning when his bedroom is at the back. The bedroom becomes the focus of conflict in their conversation but he is well-tuned in the nature of the attack and his final remark about the whereabouts of his bedroom is a neat evasion. Hence, the conversation between Kidd and Rose represents the psychological conflict between the past owner and the present owner of the room whereas the conversation between Sands and Rose underlines the deeper fear and conflict between the present owner and the future owner of the room.
Despite her initial shock on finding them in front of her door, she doesn’t hesitate much at inviting them inside the room. This shows that Rose is not just clinging to her room as a safe haven and escape from the outside but she is also trying to reconcile her fear and insecurities to the persistent curiosity that she feels toward people of the external world. The invitation to Sands shows her indomitable urge to know the people outside from whom she has cut herself off, her obsession with the people in the basement and her curiosity towards Mr. Kidd’s activities.

The conversation between Rose and Sands starts with confusion over the name of the landlord who, Sands assert, is not called Kidd. This revelation obviously threatens the security of Rose as it is Mr. Kidd who has given her authority over the room. Torn between fear and curiosity, she becomes evasive when she is asked direct questions. Unnerved at first by Mr. Sand’s demand for information about the whereabouts of the landlord, she begins to build a verbal barrier, that she feels will protect her. To defend her situation, she becomes evasive like Mr. Kidd in the earlier section and even denies knowing him. She reinforces her position by saying, “As a matter of fact, I don’t know him at all. We’re very quiet. We keep ourselves to ourselves. I never interfere. I mean, why should I? We’ve got our room. We don’t bother anyone else. That’s the way it should be” (Pinter, Plays I 99).

But when she learns that they have been to the basement before coming up, her curiosity impels her to continue the conversation to know more about the basement. Earlier she was a bit defensive and also evasive but on hearing that they have gone to the basement she quickly switches on to persistent questioning:

Rose. You were in the basement?

Mrs. Sands. Yes, we went down there when we come in.
Rose. Why?

Mrs. Sands. We were looking for the landlord.

Rose. What was it like down there?

Mrs. Sands. Couldn’t see a thing.

Rose. Why not?

Mrs. Sands. There wasn’t any light.

Rose. But what was—you said it was damp?

Mrs. Sands. I felt a bit, didn’t you, Tod? (Pinter, Plays I 99)

Rose’s fantasy about the dark damp alien world and the basement is concretized by the fact provided by Mrs. Sands. Her projection of fantasy is thwarted by Mr. Sands’ normal enquiry whether she has seen the basement, upon which she tells a lie to corroborate her own vision of reality. Her fantasy has gained a concrete link in the form of reality. Furthermore, when Mrs. Sands mentions a man in the basement she cannot stop herself to ask about the people living in the basement. She is so obsessed by this that she is not even distracted by the argument between Mr. and Mrs. Sands at this point over the seating or perching of Mr. Sands. Her confusion and suspicion whether the couple are going upstairs or coming downstairs quickly switches to her curiosity to know more about the basement. Her rapid overcoming of these suspicions and distractions indicates the level of her curiosity and fascination for the downstairs as well as her internal conflict and fear of the world deep rooted in her psyche.
After avoiding Mr. Sands’ question whether she has been living there for a long time, Rose expresses her internal desire to know more about the basement. She asks, “I was just wondering whether anyone was living down there now? (Pinter, *Plays 1* 100)

What has started as an innocuous statement of comparison between the room and the basement in the opening section has by now developed as a sinister and threatening bit by bit information provided at first by Mr. Kidd and then by the Sands. After the apparent confirmation of a bit of light and comparatively warmer inside the room in comparison to the outside and especially the basement Rose is eager to know more about the basement despite the contradictory statement of Mr. Sands who declares dubiously: “No darker than in.” and “It’s darker in than out, for my money” (Pinter, *Plays 1* 97). But Mrs. Sands politely mentions: “Do you know, this is the first bit of light we’ve seen since we came in?” (Pinter, *Plays 1* 97).

The next confirmation by Mrs. Sands is in accordance with the mental image of Rose about the basement:

Rose. What was it like down there?

Mrs. Sands. Couldn’t see a thing.

Rose. Why not?

Mrs. Sands. There wasn’t any light. (Pinter, *Plays 1* 99)

The darkness and dampness of the basement is stressed repeatedly by Mrs. Sand when she gives a longer account of their visit to the basement but that account confirms yet another fantasy of Rose—that someone is living in the basement:
Well, when we got here we walked in the front door and it was very dark in the hall and there wasn’t anyone about. So we went down to the basement. Well, we got down there only due to Toddy having such good eyesight really. Between you and me, I didn’t like the look of it much, I mean the feel, we couldn’t make much out, it smelt damp to me. Anyway, we went through a kind of partition, then there was another partition, and we couldn’t see where we were going, well, it seemed to me it got darker the more went, the further we went in, I thought we must have come to the wrong house. So I stopped. And Toddy stopped. And then this voice said, this voice come—it said—well, it gave me a bit of a fright, I don’t know about Tod, but someone asked if he could do anything for us. So Tod said were looking for the landlord and this man said the landlord would be upstairs. Then Tod asked was there a room vacant. And this man, this voice really, I think he was behind the partition, said yes there was a room vacant. He was very polite, I thought, but we never saw him, I don’t know why they never put a light on. (Pinter, Plays 1 101)

This sinister account of the Sands journey to the basement not only provides a circumstantial link to the dark and threatening external world but it also unnerves Rose as her fantasies of the external world and the basement are seemingly becoming true. To dispel fear of this unnerving account, Rose quickly says that there is no vacancy in the apartment. But Mr. Sands’ startling revelation to this disturbs Rose. Mr. Sands reveals: “The man in the basement said there was one. One room. Number seven he said” (Pinter, Plays 1 102). Obviously, on hearing this Rose is surprised and shocked. She meekly tries to protest: “That’s this room” (Pinter, Plays 1 102). But the Sands do not pay any attention to her and they leave that room.
The startling revelation makes her agitated and shocked and after their departure Rose is not able to understand what to do as this is the room for which she has been struggling a lot to keep it in her own possession. Throughout the conversation with the Sands, Rose’ prior belief has been altered—firstly, she has come to know that Mr. Kidd is not the owner of the house and secondly, her room is vacant. She constantly tries to reconcile her prior belief with the newly gained information given by the Sands but fails every time. Even at the end she tries to resist them by saying: “This room is occupied” (Pinter, Plays 1 102). But the Sands by then have made up their mind to leave the place. Obviously, this makes her helpless and the stage direction at this point shows the mental agony of Rose in the following words:

Rose watches the door closed, starts towards it, and stops. She takes the chair back to the table, picks up the magazine, looks at it, and puts it down. She goes to the rocking-chair, sits, rocks, stops, and sits still. There is a sharp knock at the door, which opens. Enter Mr. Kidd. (Pinter, Plays 1 102)

The relationship between Rose and Riley cannot be guessed from the text as Pinter has not given the slightest hint. But the question whether they have any past connection can be guessed from the fact when Riley declares that her father wants her to come home and in the next dialogue he says, “Come home, Sal” (Pinter, Plays 1 108). This obviously suggests that they may have had some connection in the distant past and Riley may be a messenger from his father. Riley cannot be her father that is true from the text. Critics have given different interpretation on the distant past relationship of Riley and Rose but those interpretations are mostly out of the text, based on the anticipations. Rose’s decision to see Riley in her room is almost inexplicable as she wants to avoid him first but later after being threatened by Mr. Kidd that if she doesn’t see the man then he may come anytime even in the presence of Bert. Here Rose fears Bert’s jealousy and wrath if she meets Riley in his presence. On the one hand
Bert is expected to arrive any moment and on the other hand she is forced to see a stranger which her husband, if he comes to know, may not tolerate. Why does she want to see Riley? Is it a simple curiosity or is it because he has been staying in the basement for few days and he may be the person who has told the Sands about her safe haven going to be vacant? It is evident that Rose has had a relationship with that blind man in the past otherwise he would have not chased her at this old age at an alien place. Nobody knows about her whereabouts but the blind Negro has been hunting for her leaving no choice to her:

If she invites the man in, she runs the risk of having Bert return and discover them. If she refuses to invite him, she runs the risk of having him call when Bert is present. That both situations seems threatening to her is a function of her inner betrayal of Bert and the possibility that this betrayal might become evident in the presence of the visitor. (Quigley, *The Pinter Problem* 101)

Whatever be the reason but one thing is clearly comprehensible that her cold relationship with Bert and her intense curiosity about the basement drives her to see Riley in the absence of her husband. For her Riley is not the agent of the external world from which she has kept herself willingly aloof but he is a person who has been staying in the basement. She asks Mr. Kidd to “fetch him. Quick. Quick!” (Pinter, *Plays I* 106).

Rose till now has given the impression that she has been leading a chaste life with her husband without having an ugly past. But amidst all these pretensions she tries to hide herself from her past thinking that no one knows anything about her in a new place. After the arrival of Riley in the room she becomes tremendously agitated and nervous. To overcome her nervousness and to place herself in a dominant position, as an occupant of the room, she starts talking vehemently and tries to overpower Riley by scolding him even without listening to what he has come for.
Still when Riley tells her that his name is Riley she counters him: “That’s not your name. That’s not your name” This situation makes us wonder whether she knows a person named Riley. She starts scolding him for disturbing her evening, for insulting her by forcing himself in the room and calls him “deaf and dumb and blind” and “A bunch of cripples” (Pinter, *Plays 1* 107). When Riley mentions about the room and says he wants to see her, she becomes terribly upset at this and says:

[…] as for you saying you know me, what liberty is that? Telling my landlord too. Upsetting my landlord. What do you think you’re up to? We’re settled down here, cosy quiet, and our landlord thinks the world of us, we’re his favourite tenants, and you come in and drive him up the wall, and drag my name into it! What did you mean by dragging my name into it, and my husband’s name? How did you know what our name was? (Pinter, *Plays 1* 107)

She also warns him that she is not a little girl to dominate over and tries to give him the impression that it is not easy for him to carry her out or drag her from the room as she is a “a grown-up woman in this room” (Pinter, *Plays 1* 106) which means that it is impossible for him even to convince her. Finally when Riley says that he has brought a message for her, she vehemently retorts:

You’ve got what? How could you have a message for me, Mister Riley, when I don’t know you and nobody knows I’m here and I don’t know anybody anyway. You think I’m an easy touch, don’t you? Well, why don’t you give it up as bad job? Get off out of it. I’ve had enough of this. You’re not only a nut, you’re a blind nut and you can get out the way you came. (Pinter, *Plays 1* 108)
But the next moment her curiosity forces her to ask Riley: “What message? Who have you got a message from? Who?” (Pinter, Plays 1 108). Riley calmly says that her father wants her to come home. The moment she gets the message she is shocked and shouts at Riley: “Home? Go now. Come on. It’s late. It’s late” (Pinter, Plays 1 108).

Till now Rose is not ready to accept anything and has not responded to Riley directly. But after hearing the message her attitude suddenly changes as she is afraid of the external world. Her memories of her own home have been receded into the background and she refuses to return home. One part of her refuses to acknowledge the existence of the external world as she feels comfortable inside the room and wants to insult and dominate over Riley but another part of her is curious to know more. Reminding her about her own home enhances the conflict between the efficacy of the room and the need of a home in one’s life. To Rose, till now, her room is her own home where she lives with her husband ignoring all the problems of conjugal life and overlooking the disadvantages of the room which she considers a safe haven from external threat. But the utterance of the word ‘home’ breaks her down momentarily. When Riley again asks her to come home she replies, “Stop it. I can’t take it. What do you want? What do you want?” (Pinter, Plays 1 108)

Her existence is further shattered when Riley calls her by another name ‘Sal’ which she doesn’t want to hear as it obviously reminds her of some distant memories from which she has been escaping throughout her life. For her, Riley is a messenger from her past. But when Riley neither does nor says anything sinister or horrible she responds to him a bit warmly. The following conversation between Rose and Riley shows how Rose gradually calms down after her vehement denial of being called Sal:

Riley: Come home Sal.
Rose: Don’t call me that.

Riley: Come, now.

Rose: Don’t call me that.

Riley: So now you’re here.

Rose: Not Sal.

Riley: Now I touch you.

Rose: Don’t touch me.

Riley: Sal.

Rose: I can’t.

Riley: I want you to come home.

Rose: No.

Riley: With me.

Rose: I can’t.

Riley: I waited to see you.

Rose: Yes.

Riley: Now I see you.

Rose: Yes.
Riley: Sal.

Rose: Not that.

Riley: So, now.

Pause.

So, now.

Rose: I’ve been here.

Riley: Yes.

Rose: Long.

Riley: Yes. (Pinter, Plays I 108—109).

Now Rose acquiesces in being called Sal and her room which has been described and defined till now in contrast to other things, especially in contrast to the basement, has lost its haven like characteristics after having put it in contrast to ‘home’. The room now becomes only ‘here’. Referring to the above conversation Austin E. Quigley says:

We have here the verbal reinforcement of a shared reality that Bert has long denied Rose. Riley’s monosyllabic responses are crucial statements for Rose who finds in this relationship the common ground of “reality” which her previous life in the room significantly lacked. The virtues of that life crumble as one verbal illusion is substitute for another. (“The Room” 68)

Finally the momentary human warmth that Riley offers exposes Rose’s fear of losing the room as a lie, a lie which she conceals to live her life by attaching an enormous value and
importance to the room. When Riley asks her to come she admits the truth that her life in the room is repugnant: “The day is a hump. I never go out” (Pinter, *Plays I* 109).

When she touches his eyes, the back of his head and his temples, it seems that she is actually trying to seek a way to escape from the room, but her hands already employ the gestures of the blind. Here she finds out her own self which has been repressed for a long time in the relationship with Bert. She appears to have been persuaded to believe in the authenticity of the appeal which is reflected in a momentary softening. This is in contrast to her earlier rejection when she does not allow him to touch her but finally she herself ends in touching him.

At this moment Bert enters the room and without noticing them he goes on to narrate his experiences of driving in the chilly evening. Bert’s description is focused on controlling the car in the external world but here he refers to the van as ‘she’ as if driving a car is akin to a sexual experience. Astonishingly, Bert emerges as a character full of vigor and energy in contrast to the opening scene where Bert remains silent amidst the constant chattering of Rose. It seems that Rose is trying to dominate over him. Even her liking for strong tea in comparison to Bert’s preference of weak tea also denotes that Rose is perhaps domineering in her attitude whereas Bert is dependent upon the care of Rose and submissive in front of her. But in the final scene Bert is totally different. His manner of describing the driving experiences and his choice of words fully suggest that Bert is actually not what the opening scene suggests of him. Rather he is fully in control of the room. His silence is his power whereas constant talking is Rose’s weakness. Her chattering is a nervous attempt to fill a vacuum in the room and to maintain a relationship with the person on whom she is dependent for food and shelter. The last scene obviously brings their subtly off balance relationship on the surface.
His references to the van parallel Rose’s earlier domineering attitude towards him. Their insatiable urges to dominate are clearly expressed in this speech. At the same time this speech also shows Bert’s attempt to find an alternative means beyond their disturbing conjugal relationship to manifest his inner desire which he has suppressed within himself:

Bert: I drove her down, hard. They got it dark out.

Rose: Yes.

Bert: Then I drove her back, hard. They got it very icy out.

Rose: Yes.

Bert: But I drove her.

Pause.

I sped her.

I caned her along. (Pinter, Plays 1 110)

Rose wants to respond but Bert’s insistence on his power over the feminine van makes her recoil into silence. In this context Austin E. Quigley mentions:

It is now Bert, not Rose, who is creating a verbal world that conforms to his needs, and it is now Rose, not Bert, who is required to give confirmation of this world. But Rose, like Bert earlier, lapses instead into silence. Bert’s loss of Rose becomes manifest in the dialogue as she ceases to provide verbal reinforcement to his statement... As Rose’s response cease, he is left to face the isolation of his needs. (“The Room” 69—70)
As Rose is dependent on Bert for her food and shelter, Bert is also dependent in the same way on Rose. She takes care of his food, clothes and health from which she derives her own sense of worth. He cannot afford to lose her as much as she wants to stay in the room. Before his departure she seems to be happy to stay in the protective walls of the room and she also says three times that after his return she will make cocoa for him. But on his return what Bert finds is rather shocking for him—Rose standing with her hands on Riley. Bert’s outburst of violence may be motivated by the feelings of jealousy but his delayed action also suggested some other motives. Though Bert expresses no anger at first on seeing them in that situation but he manifests his suppressed sexual energy and desire to dominate over her through his narrative of driving his van:

She was good. Then I got back. I could see the road all right. There was no cars. One there was. He wouldn’t move. I bumped him. I got my road. I had all my way. There again and back. They shoved out of it. I kept on the straight. There was no mixing it. Not with her. She was good. She went with me. She don’t mix it with me. I use my hand. Like that. I get hold of her. I go where I go. She took me there. She brought me back. (Pinter, Plays 1 110)

Bert is a visitor to the outside world and before Riley he must be the only agent who is constantly in touch with hostile external world. But he knows how to deal with the cruelty of the unsympathetic world. Being the only link between the external and the internal world, Bert perhaps has already admitted the ways of the both world. But the arrival of Riley, the second agent of the external world, disturbs both the way of the world as it threatens the balance maintained in the internal world of the room. Bert’s discovery of uncanny things in the room upon his arrival makes him aware of this sudden change inside the room which he obviously does not want. But before taking any action, he wants to be sure whether there is
any change or not and when Rose fails to respond to his communication, which is contradictory to her character, he senses the change that has taken place upon the arrival of the agent of the external world. Rose not only fails to respond to him but also she does not explain the situation to him nor does she give any reason for Riley’s presence in the room.

Rose’s silence in this critical situation forces Bert to express his inner desire which he has kept suppressed for a long time. His description of the journey in this chilly evening is actually a sort of warning for both Rose and Riley. He expresses his own emotion vehemently. The very first line, “She was good.” is a comparison between Rose and his own van which is more honest and faithful to him than Rose as “She (the van) don’t mix it with me” (Pinter, *Plays 1* 110) and “There was no mixing it” (Pinter, *Plays 1* 110). But he knows how to control the situation and he hints at it by assigning masculine gender to another car standing on the road. Thus he draws a comparison between Riley and another car which may become an obstacle in his journey on the road. He says that he bumped the other car as it wouldn’t move and found his way with full control over his van. In other words he emphasizes on the fact that he has a full dominance over the room and nothing external can change the balance inside the room. And finally, Riley also meets with the same fate. Perhaps Riley realizes this veiled threat of Bert and when he tries to give an explanation or say something about his wife, he is not given a single chance. Bert suddenly attacks him and brutally beats him to death. Before attacking Riley, Bert utters “Lice” which is very symbolical. For Bert, Riley is just like lice which survive by sucking other’s blood. In other words for Bert, Riley’s existence in this world would have been dangerous for him and Rose as he would have continued sucking their blood till death. The use of the word ‘Lice’ is obviously a derogatory remark and from this it is easily understood how Bert hates the interference of any external agency in his room.
When Bert walks away after murdering Riley, Rose screams clutching her own eyes: “Can’t see. I can’t see. I can’t see” (Pinter, *Plays I 110*). The blindness of Rose is symbolic as it not only suggests the death of her own self or existence but also it suggests the completion of the cycle of violence. The violence of the external world of which she is so afraid comes full circle inside her own room in the hands of her own husband whom she has been trying to dominate since they have been together. But finally it has been proved that it is her husband in fact who dominates over her through his silence. Her illusion of safety inside the room no longer exists now. The moment of epiphany is when she realizes the truth about her unhappy conjugal life, about her frugal existence inside the room and her desire to escape from the room with Riley. Ironically, the room which she earlier considers to be safe haven from the cruelty of the external world has finally become a prison for her from which she no longer hopes to escape.

Rose’s physical blindness also suggests her earlier metaphorical blindness and ignorance to the reality of the world and her own existence. Earlier she had cut herself off from the external world totally or in other words she was actually blind to the happenings of the external world, so much so that she was ignorant about the basement and its occupants in her own building. Symbolically, the basement is the crucial part of a building as it is the foundation of the building. Her ignorance of the basement suggests her denial of the existence of that foundation on which she is actually leading her own life. Our existence is dependent to the knowledge of our own surroundings. Ironically when she gains the knowledge of her own existence by coming into contact with the occupant of the basement or in other words by coming into contact with the reality of the external world she becomes physically blind. When she has eyes she is metaphorically blind but at the end despite her physical blindness she is able to see the reality but is not able to face that now. She thus takes a regressive step by crouching into the physical blindness and life fulfills its own cycle here.
Rose has been struggling for keeping the room from the very beginning as it is the most coveted thing for her. The room has been associated with her existence. To save her existence from the cruelty of the external world she not only has been struggling to keep it in her possession but also she has been considering it the best place to live. At the end of the play, she retains the room but her existence has been dissociated from the room by the knowledge she has gained. Her blindness is thus the redemption to her earlier ignorance of the world. Penelope Prentice aptly says:

What *The Room* ironically dramatizes is that the rigid or obsessive desire to maintain the sine qua non of existence—shelter—may be the very attitude which produces the action to destroy it when that attitude is attended by a belief that there is no other choice, no way out. Thus Riley’s arrival reveals a deeper truth than the one Rose expresses. Though she tries to maintain her shelter this is not what she wants; she truly seeks something no less important—love or affection. Love will, only much later in Pinter’s work, inform justice on larger scale. But here characters dramatize the dishonesty of stated desire, and the irony that they cling to what they do not want, implying perhaps they might do well to hold with a loose rein what is truly desired. But first they must know what that is. If human relationship, love, some reciprocity of communication is wanted, it remains unarticulated even while it is dramatized. Here justice remains in the shadow as the self-administered iron fist delivered by Bert, whose power is equaled only by his fear. (54-55)

*The Caretaker*

Pinter’s first critically acclaimed play *The Caretaker* has, since its theatrical enactment, been puzzling the critics for its diverse themes as well as its novelty. The play
bears the stamp of Pinter's special treatment and also bewilders the audience in the climax. The title itself bears the dual meaning in original sense. In a conversation with Terrence Rattigan Pinter clarifies that the caretaker in the title is actually Davies who is offered the job by Aston and Mick but Davies fails to acknowledge the job because of his whining nature. Yet, Aston is the actual caretaker of Mick's flat as he has been appointed to take care and to decorate the house properly. On the other hand Mick is Aston's caretaker as he has been taking care of his mentally unstable brother. Thus the title *The Caretaker* may appear simple but is multidimensional in its meaning and function in reality.

The play is about friendship, loneliness, isolation and to some extent also about love. The play also reflects on the human relationship as these characters in the play come so close to forming human alliances, but when they fail to form human bonds, their loss becomes a portrayal of universal failure of human beings.

The apparent failure of the characters in the play to form a human connection is due to the fact that they struggle to keep the possession of the room, a shelter that may provide them a refuge from the chaotic and threatening external world. Though Mick is apparently the owner of the room with Aston being the caretaker, Davies, a tramp, who has just lost his job and has no place to stay, tries to act as a usurper in the play by playing one brother against the other. The whole action in the play is focused on one motive which is Pinter's prime motive in his earlier plays—dominance and subservience. The room indeed becomes a battle ground for the characters to exercise their dominance over the others. Here the room itself has become a symbol as only the dominant person can stay in the room. Physically, the room serves as the shelter for their existence in the cruel world, especially for Davies who is homeless at the outset of the play and struggles to occupy a place for himself by hook or crook.
The play is not about a caretaker but about a man, Davies, who might have become a caretaker only he has been less greedy. The play has both humour and pathos because the central character is both an object of pity and humour. Davies fails to acknowledge the kindness shown to him and consequently becomes what he has always been, a tramp. Opinionated, narrow minded, prejudiced, racist, talkative, greedy and irascible he pays very dearly for his shrewdness in playing one brother against the other. Unlike other plays, which end in violence, this play has a poignant ending. Pinter himself admitted to this change. He said:

At the end of *The Caretaker*, there are two people alone in one room, and one of them must go in such a way as to produce a sense of complete separation and finality. I thought originally that the play must end with the violent death of one at the hands of the other. But then I realized, when I got to the point, that the characters as they had grown could never act in this way. (Hinchliffe 89)

In another explicit statement on *The Caretaker* Pinter stated:

The original idea was to end the play with the violent death of the tramp. It suddenly struck me that it was not necessary. And I think that in this play I have developed, that I have no need to use cabaret turns and blackouts in screams in the dark to the extent that I enjoyed using them before. I feel that I can deal, without resorting to that kind of thing, with a human situation. I do see this play as merely a particular human situation, concerning three particular people, and not incidentally symbols. (Hinchliffe 89)
In comparison to the other play *The Room*, *The Caretaker* presents a more explicit struggle for the possession of the room. Here the struggle between the characters is in the form of a game against one another through which they try to wield their power over the other. While Mick, the owner of the room, resorts to physical violence on Davies at first and then starts a psychological game with him after realizing his ulterior motive, Davies also resorts to a game with both brothers. When Davies realizes that the actual owner of the room is Mick, he then tries to convince him by shoving him against Aston. He plans to push Aston outside the room to occupy his place permanently, and thereby to bring an end to his vagabond life. On the other hand, Aston, who is comparatively reticent, extends his humanitarian help in every situation towards Davies but later realizes his ulterior motive and decides to keep him off to save his own haven. Though Aston's character is a little more complex than the other two, it is quite incomprehensible whether what Aston does for Davies is out of his extreme sympathy or is just a way to break the ice between him and Mick.

The play from the beginning till the climax shows that there is a possibility of an underlying tension between the brothers as they speak very little with each other. So Davies becomes an instrument for them to vent their feelings to break the ice and it is reflected from the faint smile of both brothers at the end of the play. What is the real purpose of bringing Davies to the room is not known but the way Pinter gives the stage direction and the description of the room which is full of junk objects picked up by Aston from here and there, it seems that Davis is another junk object picked up by him. So the stature of Davies as a junk item means that he has been used for the channelization of the brothers’ whimsical fancy as well as to restore the broken communication between them. Obviously Davies plays an important role in restoring the broken communication between the two brothers but it is contrary to his own desires.
Davies has become jobless and homeless because of a fight in a bar where he worked. The intervention of Aston saves him from some serious injury and he brings him in his own room. Sympathetic Aston, not only provides him a shelter, but tries to make him feel comfortable as far as possible. He offers him complete hospitality, a bed to sleep (even exchanges bed for his comfort), offers him money, and a shoe but Davies however is not satisfied with Aston’s hospitality and even refuses to acknowledge it. In fact Davies starts finding fault at almost everything and anything that is offered to him.

In all of Pinter's plays, the external world is threatening and dangerous. An intruder in a room or an agent from the external world always creates a new balance among the inhabitants of the room which may disturb the old equation or may give a new turn in the equation that exists among the inhabitants. Thus the arrival of Davies in the room creates a sense of menace from the very beginning of the play as nothing is known about Davies. He is a total stranger in this setup. He is afraid of the external world which, for him, is more threatening. Davies talks about the threatening external world:

Davies: Ten minutes of for a tea break in the middle of the night in that place and I couldn't find a seat, not one. All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them, all them aliens had me working there ... they had me working... [...] All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, the lot of them, that's what, doing me out of a seat; treating me like a dirt. (Pinter, *Plays 2 6*)

So Davies, despite being an agent of an external world, is himself afraid of the cruel external world and according to him these Blacks, Greeks, Poles and many ‘aliens’ like them make this world an impossible place to live and work. Davies’ irrational fear is one of the principal reasons why he turns down the job of the caretaker initially. As a caretaker, he would have to open the door and perhaps let in the outsiders. He would also have to wear a uniform, which
is a badge of recognition, and also means conformity. Davies would be at the mercy of Aston and Mick, as his employers. In other words, Davies is exposed to all the hazards of the occupations he chooses. Man, in order to exist and to earn his living through a legitimate occupation, must make himself vulnerable. Ironically, Davies has made himself vulnerable the moment he steps into Aston’s house. For his own jobless and homeless condition he plainly accuses the threatening external world full of ‘aliens’ who are bossing around in the workplace and he doesn't want to be bossed by them. Describing the commotion in the bar, he says:

Davies: Comes up to me, parks a bucket of rubbish at me tells me to take it out the back. It's not my job to take out the bucket! They got a boy there for taking out the bucket. I wasn't engaged to take out buckets. My job’s cleaning the floor, clearing up the tables, doing a bit of washing-up, nothing to do with taking out buckets!

Aston: Uh.

_He crosses down right, to get the electric toaster._

Davies: (following). Yes, well say I had! Even if I had! Even if I was supposed to take out the bucket, who was this git to come up and give me orders? We got the same standing. He’s not my boss. He’s nothing superior to me.

Aston. What was he, a Greek?

Davies: Not him, he was a Scotch. He was a Scotchman. (Pinter, _Plays 2 7-8_)
The above conversation also reflects one important trait of Davies’s character that he doesn’t want to do any work that is assigned to someone else in the workplace. On the other hand, it is Davies’ essential humanity that Pinter is describing. Davies is Pinter’s symbol of the universal human need for love, companionship, food, shelter and clothing; at the same time, he is the symbol of man’s journey through life—cold, pain, loneliness, despair, death.

Davies never blames himself for anything and always tries to shift the blame on to someone else. Though he considers this room as a potential refuge from the threatening external world but here in this room he is himself the alien and vulnerable to attack for that very reason. His unwillingness to admit his own origin suggests that he is anxious not to be labeled as any kind of outsider. The two names—Bernard Jenkins and MacDavies—that he admits are a blend of Scottish, Irish and Welsh; which is rather a weak attempt to become all of them but still considered to be alien by Mick and Aston. Davies is outsider not only in the social sense, as a tramp, but also with regard to the relationship between the two brothers, Mick and Aston, who despite their lack of communication and a probable underlying tension between them, still share a kind of bond of sympathetic understanding. They are the unified centre of the play’s entire action. This emerges, for an example, in a brief scene between Mick and Davies, when they are discussing about the sort of improvement can be made in the room:

Davies: Who would live there?

Mick: I would … My brother and me.

Pause.

Davies: What about me?
Mick: (Quietly.) All this junk here. It's no good to anyone.... (Pinter, Plays 2 59)

Mick's last statement in response to Davies's question here puts Davies in the category of junk kept in the room which is useless to Mick and so is Davies. Although the brothers have given him a shelter but he is never accepted by them. By unspoken rejection Davies is always made to feel his isolation. Mick is consciously suspicious of him and Aston despite his naïveté, is quietly determined to expel the threat to his own achieved existence.

After arriving in the room Davies, being a stranger to Aston, needs to show himself up in a manner that may help him to win what he desires the most at that moment. And obviously he gets what he wants. A little later Aston offers him a bed to sleep in the room. Moreover Aston offers him to stay in the room till Davies can sort out his all problems. Davies reveals his basically defensive nature during the loosening up routine. He wants to be ready to counter any threat of aggressiveness against him. Aston defines himself by association with the tobacco can, the electric plug, and the toaster which he is constantly repairing, as also the shed he is building behind the house. Each of the characters possesses objects which can either be identified with him or occupies an area that is uniquely his own. It is when one character intrudes into the area of another or tries to possess or destroy an object belonging to someone else, that conflict is aroused. When Aston gives Davies Mick’s bed, the tramp becomes a trespasser in Mick’s territory. Davies has the general run of the house, since he is Aston’s guest, but so close is the confinement that Davies, no matter what he does, cannot help infringing on another’s territory.

But the Hamletian dilemma that is rooted in Davies’ character compels him not to sort out his problems soon so that he may not lose his refuge and be a tramp again. His major problem as he has accepted is to go to Sidcup where he has kept his original papers with a
man a very long time ago. Davies’ task in the play is to try and establish his identity, which is equivalent to survival, in a sense. He wants a pair of shoes from Aston to go to Sidcup and get his identity papers which can prove his real identity. However, consciously or unconsciously, he knows he will never get to Sidcup. Things will never be exactly right, to enable him to make the journey. Davies admires the shoes Aston gives him, but says they do not fit. In a moment that shoe turns from “Good shoe this” to “They’d cripple me in a week” (Pinter, *Plays 2* 13-14). He has mentioned that the shoe is a matter of life and death to him. Earlier he had narrated an incident to prove his desperation as well as his choosy nature for a good shoe. The incident that describes his journey to Luton monastery for a pair of shoes is interesting. It shows some important traits of his character but more importantly the way he narrates the incident proves that he wants to seek sympathy from others. He describes:

Davies: […] Can’t wear shoes that don’t fit. Nothing worse. I said to this monk, here, I said, look here, mister, he opened the door, big door, he opened it, look here, mister, I said, I come all the way down here, look, I said, I showed him these, I said, you haven’t got a pair of shoes, have you, a pair of shoes, I said, enough to keep me on my way. Look at these, they’re nearly out, I said, they’re no good to me. I heard you got a stock of shoes here. Piss off, he said to me. Now look here, I said, I’m an old man, you can’t talk to me like that. I don’t care who you are. If you don’t piss off, he says, I’ll kick you all the way to the gate. Now look here, I said, now wait a minute, all I’m asking for a pair of shoes, you don’t want to start taking liberties with me, it’s taken me three days to get here, I said to him, three days without a bite, I’m worth a bite to eat, en I? […] Meal? I said, what do you think I am, a dog? Nothing better than a dog. What do you think I am, a wild animal? What about them shoes I come all the way here to get I heard you was giving away? I’ve a good
mind to report you to your mother superior. [...] Lucky I had my old ones wrapped up, still carrying them, otherwise I’d have been finished, man. So I’ve had to stay with these, you see, they’re gone, they’re no good, all the good’s gone out of them. (Pinter, Plays 2 12-13)

The whole incident of Luton monastery is hard to believe. If what he says is true then his motive is seeking sympathy for being an old man and for the treatment he had endured in the monastery. But Davies’ attitude towards the shoe is never clear. What he is actually trying to do by pointing out those shortcomings in shoes and turning down the favours is to dominate over Aston psychologically by making him realize that he is far more sophisticated and superior than Aston. He cannot wear shoes which Aston considers good as according to him they are actually worthless. When Aston gives him shoes in the Third Act, he accepts the shoe finally but not without expressing his grudge against that. Procrastination is one of the important characteristics of Davies. In fact, it is the tragic flaw of his character for which his downfall or expulsion from the room becomes inevitable.

The entire shoe episode from First Act to Third Act is related to Davies’ problem of going to Sidcup. Besides shoe he places another condition; he will go to Sidcup if the weather is good. When he gets to Sidcup, the possibility is that the man he left the papers with may be dead. Sidcup is actually a mythical destination for Davies. A room provides him warmth, shelter, food, and companionship. The shoe actually represent a threat to this security, since if he accepts them, Davies will have to go out in the cold alien world. The Sidcup destination and the identity papers constitute a technique Davies has formulated for enlisting sympathy from other people and manipulating them. The Sidcup stratagem breaks down at the end, with Davies pleading to be allowed to stay in the room. In the Third Act, the relationship between Aston and Davies has turned into bitter one as Aston by then has realized the real motive of
Davies and he wants to get rid of him anyhow. So he does not show any more interest when Davies accepts the shoe.

Aston also offers him the job of the caretaker in his room, knowing the fact that he is not the real owner. But as usual Davies cannot acknowledge the job wholeheartedly. Thus Aston, who tries to establish a human bond from the beginning of the relationship by offering what he can do for Davies, fails to initiate any proper bond with Davies for which Davies himself is responsible. Martin Esslin in his book _Pinter: The Playwright_ observes about Davies:

[…] the old tramp emerges in the first minutes of the play as an epitome of the worst traits of the British workmen: prone to get involved in quarrels about who should do what job, xenophobic, lazy and ill-tempered. Moreover he is bitter, weak and constantly deceiving others as well as himself. He tells Aston that he is not really called Davies, for example. His name is Jenkins. At least he has got an insurance card under the name of Jenkins. Yet, when he further questioned, he reverts to Davies. Davies is his real name. (89)

In the Second Act Mick cross-examines and counter attacks Davies, rapidly alternating between brutality and politeness. He seizes Davies' trousers in a threatening manner. But the next moment he becomes friendly, even friendlier than Aston and tries to establish a close relationship with Davies by saying that he bears a resemblance to his uncle's brother, “You remind me one of my uncle's brother. He was always on the move, that man. […] Your spitting image he was. Married a Chinaman and went to Jamaica” (Pinter, _Plays 2_ 29). A few moments later he again says that Davies reminds him of a man whom he knew in Shroeditch: “You know, believe it or not, you've got a funny kind of resemblance to a bloke I
once knew in Shroeditch. [.....] Dead spit of you he was. Bit bigger round the nose but there was nothing in it” (Pinter, *Plays 2* 30).

Mick is aggressively extrovert, constantly determined to be seen as a pillar of the social and business communities—a pose always rather at odds with his leather jacketed appearance. His conversation seems calculated to make Davies aware of how much an outsider he is; these speeches portray Mick as a man with extensive family and social connections; gregarious, with an intimate knowledge of London and its colorful characters. There is a doubt about the genuineness of his words. “My uncle's brother” strikes a wrong note from the start, since it represents logically either his father or another uncle of Mick's. Why use this odd periphrasis unless he is just making up things as he goes along or striving too hard for effect, falsely implying a wider web of family than actually exist? Much of what Mick says has this hollow ring to it.

Through a constant and rapidly changing tone Mick asks more questions to Davies to elicit information from him so that he may able to understand his real motive of his arrival. It is obvious that unlike Aston, Mick is able to asses more about the character of Davies. To attack Davies and to keep him off guard, Mick within a short span of time asks repeatedly his name and whether he slept the previous night there:

Mick: What bed you sleep in?

Davies: Now look here—

Mick: Eh?

Davies: That one.

Mick: Not the other one?
Davies: No.

Mick: Choosy. (Pinter, Plays 2 29)

And after his second long speech Mick again asks the same question to pressurize on Davies:

Mick: (A Shout.) Sleep here last night?

Davies: Yes. . .

Mick: (Continuing at great pace.) How'd you sleep?

Davies: I slept—

Mick: Sleep well?

Davies: Now look—

Mick: What bed?

Davies: That—

Mick: Not the other?

Davies: No!

Mick: Choosy.

Pause. (Quietly) Choosy. (Pinter, Plays 2 31)

Here Mick not only tries to dominate over Davies but also constantly keeps him under pressure. He repeatedly asks the same question without paying heed to what Davies says. What Mick summarizes about the nature and character of Davies is reflected in his one
utterance, “Choosy.” Between his two long speeches Mick declares to the astonishment of Davies that this room belongs to him and Davies slept in his bed the previous night. On realizing the real motive of Davies, Mick asks him suddenly and even without paying attention to the angry and wary Davies, “You intending to settle down here?” (Pinter, *Plays 2*) 32. Indeed, this is what Davies' real motive is, but to keep it hidden he asks for his trousers and says that he wants to go to Sidcup. Furthermore, Mick vehemently attacks Davies:

You're stinking the place out. You're an old robber, there's no getting away from it. You're an old skate. You don't belong in a nice place like this. You’re an old barbarian. Honest. You got no business wandering about in an unfurnished flat. (Pinter, *Plays 2* 33)

Mick's calculated statement about Davies' character is quite true but rather harsh for an old man. And the purpose of these attacks is to remind Davies that he does not belong to their place. He is an outsider and he has to leave the place at the end. Davies does not understand Mick's shrewdness and when Mick goes out of the room, Davies asks Aston:

Davies: Who was that feller?

Aston: He's my brother.

Davies: Is he? He's a bit of a joker, en he? (Pinter, *Plays 2* 37)

Considering Mick as a joker is the biggest mistake Davies commits reflecting his inability to assess the situation. In the confrontation between Davies and Mick, Davies reveals himself a lot to Mick whereas Mick emerges as an enigmatic figure to Davies. His desire for dominance in the room is subdued momentarily before Mick's charismatic figure but later on
realizing this truth, he wants to get close to Mick and plans to play off the brothers against each other.

Before Mick goes out of the room, there is another small incident which, for Mick, is a sort of game played between them in which Aston gives a bag to Davies and Mick grabs the bag from Davies:

Aston: Here you are. *(Aston offers the bag to Davies.)*

*Mick grabs it. Aston takes it. [...] Aston gives it to Mick. Mick gives it to Davies.* *(Pinter, Plays 2 37)*

This game is very important to understand the motives of the brothers, especially of Aston. Obviously, the purpose of this game is to tease Davies but there is also an ulterior motive that is reflected in the final line of the above quoted passage in which it comes across that Aston gives the bag to Mick and finally Mick gives the bag to Davies. Then the game stops. Aston, who has been seen as a kind hearted, slow witted gentleman and generous towards Davies from the very beginning of the play, is seen in a different light now. Here when Mick tries to tease as well as dominate over Davies, why does Aston give the bag to Mick finally? This one incident in the play questions the whole motive of Aston, including bringing Davies in the room. This line and the whole game indicates that the brothers are on one side in the game and Davies is on the other side where his situation depends on the mercy of the brothers. Or the brothers are using Davies as a springboard to keep away the tension that exists between them. Or for Mick, Davies is nothing but an object of amusement to play with few days more. After this incident Mick goes out silently and Davies and Aston remain in the room. His silent exit may imply his realization that Aston is happy to have this man to take care of, so he keeps them as Aston wants to be. On the other hand, this game also implies the
dominant character in the play. Initially Mick’s grabbing the bag from Davies and finally he himself offers the bag to Davies underlies the dominance of Mick in the room as he can do whatever he wants in his room or he can wish what to give and who to give. Power lies on the action of Mick as it is he who decides the course of the action. No wonder, Davies is stunned and surprised by the way Mick confronts him.

This bag incident also reflects one more important aspect of Davies. The Sidcup paper represents an imaginary identity; Davies’ real identity is expressed by what he says and does and by what he carries with him—his ragged clothes, for example. His name may be Bernard Jenkins or Mac Davies but he is, quite simply and naturally a tramp. And this bag tends to identify Davies. He says: “[…] I left all my belongings in that place, in the back room there. All of them, the lot there was, you see, in this bag. Every lousy bit of all my bleeding belongings I left down there now” (Pinter, Plays 2 8). Davies is tormented and victimized here because the bag that Aston has brought is actually not his bag. This bag possibly belonged to Mick as he has already mentioned that this bag is very much familiar to him. Aston is evasive here but it can be inferred from the whole game that the brothers are playing a game against the old man.

In the same evening the Electrolux incident takes place when Davies returns in the room. This incident leaves him in a state of panic. Davies has been under the threat of an abject terror and he is trying to keep himself guarding against any attack. The scene is one of the principle scenes of victimization and expression of cruelty in the play. This scene provides a complex image of man—weak, cowardly, defensive, facing darkness, an unseen menace, perhaps death. Each man goes the route of Davies because the tramp represents all men and everywhere there is a Mick who is a shrewd manipulator, who inflicts the cruelty which is the condition of existence. Mick is the conscious manipulator of the old man,
destroying him slowly, seeming to enjoy the experience. Mick torments Davies beyond endurance until the old man, with a knife in hand, stands screaming in terror at the unknown thing that is coming at him in the dark.

After terrorizing Davies with the Electrolux, suave and quick-witted Mick proceeds to allay his fears, offering him a sandwich, leading him into a conversation. He uses a familiar brainwashing technique—break the subject down while pretending to be his friend. Mick proceeds to trap Davies into making a derogatory statement about Aston that he can use as a basis for attack. Mick complains about the laziness of Aston:

Mick: He’s supposed to be doing a little job for me. . . . I keep him here to do a little job. . . . but I don’t know . . . I’m coming to the conclusion he’s a slow worker.

Pause.

What would your advice be?

Davies: Well. . . he’s a funny bloke, your brother.

Mick: What?

Davies: I was saying, he’s . . . a bit of funny bloke, your brother.

Mick stares at him.

Mick: Funny? Why?

Davies: Well. . . he’s funny. . .

Mick: What’s funny about him?
Pause.

Davies: Not liking work.

Mick: What’s funny about that?

Davies: Nothing.

Pause.

Mick: I don’t call it funny.

Davies: Nor me.

Mick: you don’t want to start getting hypercritical.

Davies: No, no, I wasn’t that, I wasn’t . . . I was only saying . . . .

Mick: Don’t get too glib. (Pinter, *Plays* 2 47-48)

Davies does not have an idea that Mick is simply throwing his words back in his face. Even after the business with the Electrolux, Davies is willing to listen to Mick and be his confidant. Mick now proposes that Davies take on the job as caretaker, the same proposition that was made by Aston earlier. Only Mick wants the references. Davies is uncertain about the real owner of the room. Earlier Mick claims that it is his room. Later Aston also says that Mick is the real owner and he is decorating his room. Still Davies is in doubt. So to clarify his doubt he asks Mick:

Davies: Yes, well … look … listen … who’s the landlord here, him or you?

Mick: Me. I am. I got deeds to prove it.
Davies: Ah … (Decisively.) Well listen, I don’t mind doing a bit of caretaking, I wouldn’t mind looking after the place for you. (Pinter, Plays 2 49)

After having sure about the real owner of the room, Davies’ tone is changed. He becomes decisive about what he says and also says that he can produce his references when he can get to Sidcup. What Davies needs is the recognition and importance from the fellow man. The whole conversation between Davies and Mick reveals Mick’s shrewdness and Davies’ further culpability and foolishness. Recognizing the obvious superiority of the younger brother Mick, Davies now regards him as the one he has to play up to and, weak as he is, he is not able to resist the temptation to speak ill of his benefactor, Aston. On the other hand, Mick, realizing the true nature of Davies, starts playing against him by praising him profusely. He gives him what Davies aspires and leaves him in a delusion that he is on his side to give him an opportunity to do as he wants to. The psychological game that Mick starts is beyond the comprehension of Davies and without realizing the real situation Davies initiates to play one brother off against the other. Davies thinks he can manipulate the brothers, but actually they are manipulating him. This is the turning point in the play.

The next morning, there is a growing tension between Aston and Davies. Davies cannot sleep by an open window and complains about the rain coming inside. Aston must have fresh air to sleep. But then, obviously, from a deep longing to be a friend and to communicate with, Aston begins to tell Davies the story his life. There was time when he was as nimble and as communicative as his brother. Indeed, he looked too much. And he had hallucination. He was taken to a mental hospital. A doctor informed him that he ought to have treatment; something would have to be done to his brain. But Aston refused:

Well, I wasn’t a fool. I knew I was a minor. I knew he couldn’t do anything to me without getting permission. I knew he had to get permission from my
mother. So I wrote to her and told her what they were trying to do. But she signed their form, you see, giving them permission. I know that because he showed me her signature when I brought it up. (Pinter, *Plays 2* 53-54)

He tried to escape in vain and was subjected to electric shock treatment. That is why he has become slow, unable to work, except on his own, pottering about the house which he is supposed to redecorate.

This is Aston’s explanation of his experiences—his only long speech and the longest one in the play. If, as he implies, he suffered brain damage as a result of electric shock treatment, all of his statements are not necessarily accurate. If he did not, they may still be inaccurate since much of what he relates occurred when he was a minor, over ten years before. As in Pinter’s other plays what happens is more important than what happened. The fact that the speech is long, in marked contrast to Aston’s incomleted or clipped speeches before and after, suggests that it is important to him, perhaps that it has taken him to formulate it or to build up courage to reveal so much. His long speech comes in such a moment when his relationship with Davies is deteriorating and the speech has a function in response to that deterioration. Aston is trying to explain his background and condition, possibly in an appeal for understanding and sympathy from the man he befriended. That man not only fails to respond but he later warns Aston he might be recommitted, calls him half-crazy, and boasts that he himself has never been inside a nut house. Martin Esslin comments on this:

This moment of Aston’s self-revelation seals Davies’s fate. Weak and beset by terrible feelings of inferiority, he simply cannot resist the temptation to take advantage of Aston’s confession; confronted with a man who has been to a mental hospital. Who admits his inadequacy, Davies is unable to react with
sympathy, with gratitude for the maimed man’s kindness, his offer to friendship. He must enjoy the thrill of treating his benefactor with the superiority of the sane over the lunatic. Transferred to the lower levels of contemporary society, this is the *hybris* of Greek tragedy which becomes the cause of Davies’s downfall. (*The Playwright* 92)

Clearly, the first two Acts of the play establish Davies as a usurper who not only acts selfishly to procure the maximum benefit from his benefactors but also acts against them to gain a territory or room for himself through a plan to oust his benefactor and savior. Before the Third Act opens, two weeks have been passed and Davies-Aston relationship has been deteriorated further. Much has been taken place already about which audience are unknown but the Davies-Mick conversation at the beginning of the Act sets the motive of the play. Davies, in short, describes everything and blames, as usual, Aston for everything. Davies and Aston have been staying together for two weeks and Davies, as shrewd as he is, analyzes the character of Aston. By this time he must have known a lot of things about Mick too, but fails to realize the trick of Mick against which he is being played upon. While on the one hand Mick shows his seriousness about the job after he gave to Davies and talks about his dream to redecorate his room like a luxurious penthouse without paying any attention to the complains of Davies against Aston; on the other hand failing to realize the reality and gravity of the circumstances, Davies, like a whining child, goes on to instigate Mick through a series of complaints against Aston:

Davies: He don’t answer me when I talk to him. (*Pinter, Plays* 2 56)

Davies: He don’t give me no knife. (*Pinter, Plays* 2 56)
Davies: What about this gas stove? He tells me it’s not connected. [...] It might do me harm! (Pinter, *Plays 2* 57)

[...] Couple of weeks ago … he sat there, he give me long chat … [...] he wasn’t looking at me, he wasn’t talking to me, he don’t care about me. He was talking to himself! That’s all he worries about. I mean, you come up to me, you ask my advice, he wouldn’t never do a thing like that. I mean, we don’t have any conversation, you see? You can’t live in the same room with someone who … who don’t have any conversation with you. (Pinter, *Plays 2* 57-58)

[...] I just can’t get the hang of him. (Pinter, *Plays 2* 58)

[...] You and me, we could get this place going. (Pinter, *Plays 2* 58)

After a series of complaints, Davies finally comes to the conclusion that he cannot live with Aston and he along with Mick can do a lot better for the room. Indirectly, what he means to say is to take Aston away from the room and only he and Mick will stay in the room. Davies is in a state of euphoria and considers himself as Mick’s friend. Mick gives him importance and comes to take his advice. When Mick asks him to speak with Aston regarding the redecoration of the room because he is Aston’s friend, Davies denies this saying that merely living in a room together does not mean that they are friends. The irony of the situation is that Davies denies Aston’s friendship and plans to expel him from the room and taking Mick as his friend who has not even thought of keeping him in the room. He tries to convince Mick that they can do well if Aston be expelled from the room. He insists:

Davies: No, what you want to do, you want to speak to him, see? I got … I got that worked out. You want to tell him … that we got ideas for this place, we
could build it up, we could get it started. You see, I could decorate it out for you, I could give you a hand in doing it … between us. (Pinter, *Plays 2 61*)

But Mick who clearly has been tempting the old man to come out of his own shell to show his true nature, departs merely saying, “Yes … may be I will” (Pinter, *Plays 2 62*).

Davies has finally given up the plan to move away and begun to unfold his stratagem to win the heart of Mick by hook or crook. The shrewdness of Davies comes out when he starts talking about the job he is offered by Mick:

I’ve been offered a good job. Man has offered it to me, he’s … he’s got plenty of ideas. He’s got a bit of a future. But they want my papers, you see, they want my references. I’d have to get down to Sidcup before I could get hold of them. That’s where they are, see. (Pinter, *Plays 2 63*)

In fact, Aston himself has also offered the same job and unlike Mick he does not want any reference or identity papers which should be easier for Davies. But Davies realizing the fact that Mick is the actual owner of the room, he wants to get it done for Mick and planning to do so without going to Sidcup. Aston by now has also understood that Davies is not interested to go anywhere or to leave the room for which he always extends his lame excuses. So, Aston silently leaves the room. This makes Davies feel unimportant, insignificant and humiliated that Aston no longer wants to hear him.

At night when Aston again complains about Davies' talking habit in his sleep, Davies reacts with the anger and contempt of the dominant partner. He even resorts to violence by pulling out his knife. He violently and harshly attacks Aston showing his ungrateful nature: “I’ve seen better days than you have, man. Nobody ever got me inside one of them places, anyway…. I never been inside a nuthouse!” (Pinter, *Plays 2 65*).
Davies' cynical reference to the mental hospital and treatment shows his desperate effort to prove his superiority over Aston as a saner man. But this personal attack on the weakness and disability of Aston proves to be fatal before brotherly affection of Mick and Aston. Davies' warning to Aston, "Your brother got his eye on you" (Pinter, Plays 2 65) is ironic as it is not Aston rather Davies himself is under the ‘eye’ of Mick. Davies is so much confident about Mick's favour and support for himself that he in a way kicks Aston away on his face. Still Aston remains cool and calm and realizes the impossibility of living together in the room. He realizes that Davies is trying to take his position in the room by ousting him. Thus, he suggests that Davies should try to find somewhere else to live. Davies having confident of getting the support of Mick ridicules Aston and says that it is not he rather Aston who would have to go. Davies says, "He's staying, he's going to run this place, and I'm staying with him" (Pinter, Plays 2 66).

Under the illusion of Mick's friendship Davies then rejects the offer of money which Aston still wants to give him so that he can go to Sidcup. But Davies has another motive and he eyes on the steady wages and fancies comfort of living in the room. He further comments on Aston's shed implying that Aston should now arrange his accommodation first by building the 'stinking shed'. This provocation makes Aston angry and for the first time Aston speaks in decisive manner: “You've no reason to call that shed stinking. You stink. Get your stuff” (Pinter, Plays 2 67). Before going out of the room Davies utters: "Now I know who I can trust" (Pinter, Plays 2 67).

This ironical statement pinpoints to Davies' character overall. His shifting trust is actually too fragile to be believed as he fails to see not only the reality of the circumstances but also his own fault which compels him to accuse someone else all the time. He fails to realize how his own behavior causes him to lose his job, his place, or as the instigator of the
fight in the bar from which Aston saved him. His self-affirmation depends on the negation of others and through the process of denial of his own inadequacies. In fact, deferring responsibility has become a part of his survival mechanism—a mechanism that functions in case of going to Sidcup.

Believing that Mick will support him, in the same evening Davies complains to Mick about Aston when he is not present in the room. Mick appears to be listening to him but when he goes so far as to suggest that Aston should “go back where he come from!” (Pinter, *Plays 2* 69) i.e., the mental hospital, Mick’s attitude changes abruptly to one of savage irony. He accuses Davies as an impostor who pretends to know about interior decoration. Mick harshly says:

What a strange man you are. Aren't you? You're really strange. Ever since you come into this house there’s been nothing but trouble. Honest. I can take nothing you say at face value. Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies. You’re violent, you’re erratic, you’re just completely unpredictable. You’re nothing else but a wild animal, when you come down to it. You’re barbarian. And to put the old tin lid on it, you stink from arse-hole to breakfast time. Look at it. You come here recommending yourself as an interior decorator, whereupon I take you on, and what happens? You make a long speech about all the references you’ve got down at Sidcup, and what happens? I haven’t noticed you go down to Sidcup to obtain them. It’s almost regrettable but it looks as though I’m compelled pay you off for your caretaking work. Here’s half a dollar. (Pinter, *Plays 2* 71-72)
This caustic criticism of Davies by Mick seals the fate of Davies as Mick is his final hope to get the permission to live in the room. The final line of the above quotation implies that Mick is no longer interested to keep him as his caretaker and also pays him off his duty he has done till then. Mick further clarifies the position of Aston: “I've got to think about the future, I'm not worried about this house. . . . I'm going to chuck it in” (Pinter, Plays 2 72).

In other words Mick clarifies that Aston is fully in charge of the room and he lays his faith on him. Aston can do whatever he wants in the room as Mick has many other things to look after and he is not worried about the room at all. On the one hand this paragraph shows Mick's faith in Aston's capability of decorating room as he is ready to leave the responsibility solely on Aston which is contradictory of his earlier statement that expresses his doubt over the capability of Aston; on the other hand this passage also shows contradiction to his stated dream about the room that he wants to decorate it like a penthouse for which he need the help of an experienced man like Davies. This makes clear that the motive of Mick is not whatever he has said and discussed with Davies earlier rather he has been playing a shrewd game to unmask the real face of Davies by taking him in his confidence and by giving him what he wishes for. After exposing the true nature of Davies, Mick in his anger picks up the statue of Buddha and smashes it on the floor.

Richard Dutton in his book Modern Tragicomedy and the British Tradition extensively comments on the significance of Buddha statue and relates Davies with this symbol. He says:

Davies' untenable position is best reflected in the piece of Aston's 'junk' with which he is repeatedly associated […] Unlike the rest of the junk, the Buddha has no practical potential; it is an alien artifact which Aston has picked up for no very persuasive reason […] Although Aston is unable or unwilling to
explain what appeals to him about statue, it is something he wishes to keep central in the room […] So the Buddha is something to which our attention is repeatedly drawn, always in relation to Davies’ being—and perhaps staying—in the room. […] it is something and nothing. It is whatever anyone wants to see in it, and so reflects Davies’ uncertain role in the room. This is particularly ironic to anyone who does know about the Buddhism since, where Christianity stresses the significance of the interceder/redeemer figure, Buddhism emphasizes the potential within each individual to reach enlightenment by himself. Which is a wry reflection on the Mick-Aston-Davies triangle, where the individuals are never themselves but are constantly playing at roles imposed by the very existence of the triangle. It is totally appropriate, therefore, that the complex game of charades comes to an end when Mick ‘hurls the Buddha against the gas stove. It breaks’. All the ambiguous tensions break with it. The brother are formally united with their faint smiles, and Davies is back to being what he has always really been, unequivocally one of life's victims. (110—111)

Martin Esslin discards any symbolic association with the statue and discusses it in terms of Aston’s habit and keeping junks in the room. This breaking of Buddha statue is also symbolic of the finalization of the expulsion of Davies from the room. He says:

Aston collects bric-a-brac of all sorts, the Buddha was one of the things he picked up as possible ornaments for the house; his ringing Davies home was another example of the same native tendency to pick things up and bring them home. Thus Mick’s destruction of the Buddha at the moment when he has decided to get rid of Davies is a symbolic action but one which is completely
motivated by the real situation in which he finds himself at that moment. He vents his rage against Davies on an object which reminds him of his brother’s failing that led to the appearance of Davies in the house.

The episode with the statue of the Buddha is thus a good example of the way in which Pinter has, in The Caretaker, fused the real and the symbolic: the presence of the Buddha in the room is a symbol, but also the direct realistic consequence of Aston’s habit of picking up useless things […] and its destruction by Mick has the same double character and function. In other words: what we do in life concretizes itself in the objects with which we surround ourselves and these become symbolical of our character. Because Aston tends to pick up useless things without much thought, he also picks up Davies. And because Mick has no use for things which merely clutter up the place and have no function, he destroys the Buddha and brings about the expulsion of Davies. (The Playwright 100-101))

After Mick’s diatribe, Davies vaguely tries to know his opinion about himself but he understands what is going to happen with him. Mick has already given his decision by his action. At that moment Aston returns in the room and the two brothers look at each other, "They look at each other. Both are smiling faintly" (Pinter, Plays 2 73). This final moment is the first time in the play that the brothers actually relate to one another without using Davies as a sort of conduit. Each knows who he is, his place, and that of Davies. They are at peace, a peace which seems to require a third party in order to be attained. It is as if the brothers cannot relate directly, but only through a third party. The faint smile signals the end of the game, and the expulsion of Davies.
Finally Davies makes a feeble attempt to regain his favour, by withdrawing any harsh words he may have said. But Aston is adamant and any chance of reconciliation has been blown up by him after his realization of truth. Davies pleads: “You been a good friend to me. You took me in. ... I'll be your man, you say the word, just say the word” (Pinter, Plays 2 73-74). Despite his pleadings and attempts of reconciliation, Aston remains firm in his decisions and denies any chance of exchanging bed or taking any help for building the shed. The play closes with Davies desperately pleading for the shelter, the home he has now lost, while Aston stands silently by the window with his back turned to Davies. Davies tries to speak something but he cannot speak any more, stands silently by the door as the curtain falls after a long silence. Aston rejects him for what he is—cantankerous, self-deluded and desperate. Aston has, literally and figuratively, turned his back on Davies. The tramp is defeated. His breakdown from loquacity to speechlessness shows him crumbling and disintegrating. The question “Where am I going to go?” (Pinter, Plays 2 76) is reiterated, harping on the homeless fate of the ousted, with the implication of dejection and total despair. The tragic sense of his eviction is evident in his struggle to make up with the host by withdrawing his demands. But he meets only blank denial. He discovers his mistakes only too late, when the host is already hardened by disappointments and disillusionments until he is disheartened. Because of his shortcomings, Davies has lost the chance of ever settling down and must return to the hostile world that he originally comes from.

Davies’ efforts for survival in the struggle for territory, his struggle to secure the shelter and warmth of room, his rejection of what he has got and pathetic involvement in a game of betrayal and expulsion show his mean and ungrateful nature. He betrays his saviour, conspires to expel Aston from the room, and struggles to win the favour of Mick for making his position secure without realizing he has been an outsider always in that room. The existing balance in the room has been disturbed by the arrival of Davies and a new equation
of shifting balance takes place inside the room. But at the end this new equation again shifts to the old existing balance of the room as everything becomes the same as it was earlier in the room but this time with a greater experiences and insight to the human behaviour. Aston's apathy at the end of the play is quite striking and tragic, as his apathy reveals another side of his character. His experience of relationship with Davies teaches him in the life to remain disinterested at the distress of others as cruelty is the form of survival and existence in life. This newer experience is the basis why Aston turns his back at the end to Davies. Valerie Minogue in the essay "Taking Care of the Caretaker" comments on this:

While Mick, the younger brother, is a bundle of undirected energies, flexing his muscles, but achieving nothing, it is Aston, the gentle elder brother who has authority. This appears to derive from his having his silences under control. He has accepted defeat, recognized limitations, and impotence, as though he had been surgically detached from his life, while Mick and the tramp are still shadow-boxing with theirs. When, at the end of a fierce scene with the tramp, he announces quietly, "I don't think we're hitting it off," it seems not merely understated, but under-experienced, only half-felt. He seems almost emotionless, though he recognizes occasional discomforts and seeks to remove them. He escaped the abuse as normal, nonentity as a mode of experience, and lives in a permanently shell-shocked state where his own reality is without importance. He seems more able to cope with immediate things than the other two, perhaps because he is so uninvolved. One may well ask whether reality is so terrible that one can only escaped it by losing half one’s life. The half that is left is capable of registering surprise; he has some sense of the fitness of things, when the tramp, completely enclosed in fantasy, does not even have this. Aston’s concern about building the shed before he
begins to decorate is far less aggressive than the excuses of the other two. One feels that he knows he’s beaten before he begins, but it doesn’t much matter anyway. The shed-illusion seems at times a polite piece of confirmation—a way of life sharing the life and idiom of the others. (Minogue 77)