Territorial aggression, literal and metaphorical, a primitive possessive instinct, continues to manifest in human relations affecting individual’s freedom. A piece of territory or a plot of land or a room and an effort to possess it by hook or by crook is a recurring theme in Pinter. This occupation sometimes goes beyond the material to men, from forceful occupation of room to forceful possession of people. In plays like The Room, The Caretaker, Betrayal, Tea Party, A Slight Ache there is a cunning attempt to possess a room or its inhabitants. The territorial aggression and aggrandisement are sometimes violent as in the case of The Room and sometimes quiet. The means of possession or ejection strategy are not however explicit. Beneath the authentic friendship, mateship and the observance of courtesy there is a deep conspiracy to dislodge the rightful owner or legal owner. In some of his plays Pinter is able to suspend the sudden outbreak of hostilities cleverly and also carefully which is dramatic. He makes such suspension possible between two categories of people who belong to different communities, between insiders and outsiders or host and guest or landlord and tenant or legal occupant and intrude or dependent and independent. Nevertheless the cohesiveness is impossible between the two although the violence is contained. Whatever the intensity of struggle or the volume of violence territorial possession
is truly dramatised in the plays like *The Caretaker, The Basement* and *No Man's Land*.

To begin with his most popular three-act, three-actor play, it is ironic that *The Caretaker* is not about a caretaker but about the man who might have become one if 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, "the caretaker" abuses 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 cleverness in playing one brother against another. The play therefore has a moral resolution that those who attempt to possess something immorally and betray the one who offers succour will be punished. Unlike other plays which end in violence *The Caretaker* has a poignant ending. Pinter himself admitted to change. He said:

> At the end of *The Caretaker*, there are two people alone in a room, and one of them must go in a such 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 realised, when I got to the point, that the characters as they had grown could never act in this way".  

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 and 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.  

The play begins with the younger brother Mick surveying the room and leaving it after he hears some voices. Aston the elder brother enters with the tramp, MacDavies whom he has saved from a fight. This kind but slow-witted, Aston offers bread to the stranger for the night. Once he is there Davies quickly surveys the surroundings. He tells that he
had been employed in a cafe and where he was illtreated. We understand that he hates all those other than the English - Blacks, Greeks and Poles. From his rambling talk which gives enough details about his career we gather that he has been 'without a seat' and has been looking for one and will be looking for one all his life. He complains to Aston that his tobacco tin has been "knocked off." He seems to get into trouble habitually but the reasons are not difficult to guess. He is boastful ("I've had dinner with the best") and fastidious about cleanliness. He has given up his wife barely less than a week after marriage just because she has kept a pile of underclothing in the vegetable pan. At work he will not do a job assigned to someone else. In fact he had threatened "...I’d break you in half." when he was asked to substitute for another. While on the one hand he claims amnesty under the pretext of being old ("...I’m an old man ... talk to old people with proper respect") he swears to avenge his insult ("I’ll get him. One night I’ll get him.")

Another interesting trait of Davies is his quick perception. While on way to Aston’s room he has noticed "the curtains pulled down there next door," "heavy big curtains right across the window" and assures himself that he is not among people whom he dislikes. More importantly he wants to know whether Aston is the "landlord." Tramp that he is his first need is a pair of shoes and asks for them. He also
tells that he has no pair of shoes and accuses the monk who had refused him a pair of shoes. When Aston offers him a pair of shoes he does not like them for their colour, shape, size and material.

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 is 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? Get out

100
round the corner to the kitchen, he says, get out round the corner, and when you've had your meal, piss off out of it. I went round to this kitchen, see? Meal they give me! A bird, I tell you, a little bird, a little tiny bird, he could have ate it in under two minutes. Right, they said to me, you've had your meal, get off out of it. 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. One of them, an Irish hooligan, come at me. I cleared out. I took a short cut to Watford and picked up a pair there. Got onto the North Circular, just past Hendon, the sole come off, right where I was walking. 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.
ASTON: Try these.

DAVIES takes the shoes, takes off his sandals and tries them on.

DAVIES: Not a bad pair of shoes. (He trudges round the room.) They're strong, all right. Yes. Not a bad shape of shoe. This leather's hardy, en't? Very hardy. Some bloke tried to flog me some suede the other day. I wouldn't wear them. Can't beat leather, for wear. Suede goes off, it creases, it stains for life in five minutes. You can't beat leather. Yes. Good shoe this.

ASTON: Good. (pp. 12-13)

However, he accepts them reluctantly and manages to get many things placed in order for his comfort and politely begs for money. Not finding his bed uncomfortable he suggests exchanging his bed with Aston's. Davies's cantankerousness is evident in all his dealings. Even when he seeks favour from others he does not behave. His request for shoes from the monk is nothing short of demand. He appears to annoy even charitable men who are disposed to help and lose their sympathy. The monk ordered him to clear out without giving
him a pair of shoes. As if that experience is not enough he begins to fault the shoes offered by Aston but finally accepts them but not without grudging. He also admits that he is homeless and he has been going about with an assumed name. He has to go to a place called Sidcup where he had left his papers fifteen years ago. He cannot go there because with the weather always wrong and the shoes ill-fitting. Aston tells him that his brother has bought him the house and he plans to decorate it and make it inhabitable.

After the overnight's experience it becomes clear that Aston and Davies cannot live in harmony. Davies has been jabbering all night but denies it. He attributes all that to the Blacks who live next door. Davies's success with Aston receives a setback with Mick's entry into the room. Shrewd that Mick is he makes a quick assessment of Davies's character and literally arm-twists him and kicks him. Davies is shocked and subdued. Instead of being apologetic he begins to fault Aston and his room which is full of junk, Davies claims to have had a similar experience with women:

ASTON: They are, yes.

Pause.

You know, I was sitting in a cafe the other day. I happened to be sitting at the same table as this women. Well, we
started to ... we started to pick up a bit of a conversation. I don't know ... about her holiday, it was, where she'd been. She'd been down to the south coast. I can't remember where though. Anyway, we were just sitting there, having this bit of a conversation ... then suddenly she put her hand over to mine ... and she said, how would you like me to have a look at your body?

...

DAVIES: They've said the same thing to me.
ASTON: Have they?
DAVIES: Women? There's many a time they've come up to me and asked me more or less the same question.(pp.22-23)

In the Second Act we see the same scene with which the earlier scene ended. Davies who has been pushed to the ground by Mick is trouserless. Mick is not only not unfriendly but more friendly than his brother Aston. He even tries to establish closer relationship with Davies by saying he bears some resemblance to his uncle's brother.
You remind me of my uncle's brother. He was always on the move, that man. Never without his passport. Had an eye for the girls. Very much your build. Bit of an athlete. Long jump specialist. He had a habit of demonstrating different run-ups in the drawing-room round about Christmas time. Had a penchant for nuts. That's what it was. Nothing else but a penchant. Couldn't eat enough of them. Peanuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, monkey nuts, wouldn't touch a piece of fruit cake. Had a marvellous stop-watch. Picked it up in Hong Kong. The day after they chucked him out of the Salvation Army. Used to go in number four for Beckenham Reserves. That was before he got his Gold Medal. Had a funny habit of carrying his fiddle on his back. Like a papoose. I think there was a bit of the Red Indian in him. To be honest, I've never made out how he came to be my uncle's brother. I've often thought that maybe it was the other way round. I mean that my uncle was his brother and he was my uncle. But I never called him uncle. As a matter of
fact I called him Sid. My mother called him Sid too. It was a funny business. Your spitting image he was. Married a Chinaman and went to Jamaica. (p.29)

Mick goes a little further and tells Davies and that everything there belongs to him. He is prepared to offer a fair price house twice. Or he is prepared to offer the job of caretaker once the house is ready but Davies is evasive and says that he does not have papers to prove his identity. In the scene that follows Mick offers Davies a sandwich and seeks his advice on how to decorate the house. Davies who has won Mick's confidence feels powerful and begins to quarrel with Aston about the window which is open. Kind and hospitable that Aston is he never takes Davies's complaints seriously. He begins to tell Davies about the time when he used to see things merely, talked to people, mixed with them until he was sent to a mental hospital. The doctor told him that he was sick and was prepared to cure him so that he could go out and live like the others. But Aston did not want to be treated even after his mother permitted it but he was caught when he tried to escape and was given shock treatment. Since then he has become slow and uncertain. He thought he would die but he survived and his brother bought this old house in a western suburb of London for him to
In the last Act of the play we find Mick and Davies discussing Aston. It is about a fortnight since Davies has been staying there during which time Mick and Aston had spoken to him separately. At no time did the three sit together to sort out things. The brothers have spoken to Davies separately but what one knows about Davies is not known to the other. Davies on his part has gathered enough knowledge of the brothers. He knows their strengths and weaknesses. He has made his own assessment and then tries to play one against the other. He dismisses Aston as one who deserves to be sent back to where he had come from suggesting that he is mentally insane and must be sent back to mental hospital. He tells Aston that Mick is always in a hurry but not very serious and he should be ignored. But Davies is only under the illusion that he has played one against other and would become the real caretaker. What he does not realise and what escapes his scheming mind is Mick's shrewdness and his ability to defeat him in his game of playing double with the brothers. What causes his undoing is his condescension to Aston which is revealed in his intolerance at Aston's sick conduct during sleep. Slow and sympathetic that Aston is he is not harsh when he tells
Davies to leave the house whereas Mick is angry and dismisses him with half a dollar:

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 a 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 all most regrettable but it looks as though I'm compelled to pay you off for your caretaking work. Here's half a dollar.
He feels in his pocket, takes out a half-crown and tosses it at DAVIES' feet. DAVIES stands still. MICK walks to the gas stove and picks up the Buddha. (pp.71-72)

The play dramatises "brotherly love" and brotherly emotion, the exchange of looks between brothers suggesting their resolve to kick out their common enemy in the face of threat to family unity. Guido Almansi's references are interesting:

Despite the viciousness of Davies, the dullness of Aston and certain traits of motiveless malignity in Mick, The Caretaker is finally a play about love: brotherly love. When Pinter was recently asked about the meaning of the faint smiling between the two brothers in the final scene, he surprised everybody present, first of all by answering such an 'impertinent' question and then by the outrageousness of his answer: 'I think it's a smile that they love each other.'

Aston and Mick neither speak nor appear together on the stage frequently but they seem to communicate their
feelings without words and each tries to protect the other in his own way from MacDavies. Anyway, the tramp needs a shelter in the world. He is even prepared to stay in a junk-filled room but not interested in caretaking. "... I never done caretaking before ... I never been a caretaker before" (p.40). For Wilson Knight, the dynamic Davies resembles "Dionysian than Dionysus." Sometimes he is genuine, sincere and straightforward. But he constantly watches Aston pretending to be asleep when he is not. The mentally paralysed Aston becomes aware of his threat to his existence and Mick is actively suspicious and plays tricks on Davies. When Aston's security is menaced Davies's refuge is also lost. Aston and Mick make Davies feel his isolation. Finally, Aston dismisses Davies because he makes noises while sleeping. He allows him to sleep neither in Mick's bed nor in his bed. He firmly says that he "couldn't change beds." All these days Aston has been good friend to him. Now he does not want the tramp to stay with them. But the cunning Davies becomes little bit aggressive and threatens Aston saying that "... you're throwing me out? You can't do that. Listen man ... if you don't want to change beds, we'll keep it as it is, I'll stay in the same bed..." (p.75). Davies still tries to possess Aston as well as his bed in that "home of meaningless jumble."
In that derelict house in a western suburb of London, only one room is habitable in which the brothers live. It has a leaking ceiling. A bucket is seen hanging from the roof to catch the water dripping through. Whether the room belongs to Aston or Mick is unclear. For such a room Davies fights, uses his cunning weapon to isolate Aston from his brother so that he can occupy the house.

The play deals with the conflict between two meticulously observed individuals, Aston and Mick on the one hand and Davies on the other hand. It is nothing but a slightly affectionate battle between the young sons and the old father. But all the three characters search for their identity which is failed and unknowable. Aston becomes reluctant, silent and "remains still, his back to Davies at the window."

Tim Law in The Basement is pleased to welcome Charles Stott who arrives unexpectedly on a rainy night. He is offered a towel to dry up his hair, a new pair of pyjamas to replace the drenched ones and a pair of slippers. From the conversation between them we understand that they have been friends for a long time but have not met for a few years. They had lived together at Chatsworth Road but after Stott left the place Law could not meet him. When Stott tells Law that he is looking for a place the latter offers to
accommodate him until he finds a room for himself. Finding Law to be a very hospitable he tells him that he has come with a friend and asks him whether she can come in. Law is surprised but agrees to entertain them though reluctantly. The girl, Jane comes inside and finds the room. The same day after the initial courtesies while Law lapses into memory remembering the time he and Stott had lived together and telling Stott about his new residence, Stott and Jane occupy Law's bed and leave him to lie on the floor. What follows is a real love making of Stott and Jane, and the vicarious experience of it for Law.

Winter with which the play begins has given place to summer and during this period Jane has moved away from Stott and has become intimate with Law. This is suggested by Stott standing on a cliff-top by himself and Law and Jane in swimming shoes in a beach. From Law and Jane's conversation in the beach it may be gathered that Jane has known little about Stott and has not known him for long. Law speaks to Jane about Stott's aristocratic connections, his academic excellence and his riches.

LAW: I have. Charming man. Man of great gifts. Very old friend of mine, as a matter of fact. Has he told you?

JANE: No.
LAW: You don't know him very well?
JANE: No.

LAW: He has a connexion with the French aristocracy. He was educated in France. Speaks French fluently, of course. Have you read his French translations?
JANE: No.

JANE: How wonderful.
LAW: You never knew?
JANE: Never.

JANE completes her sandcastle.
How pleased I was to see him. After so long. One loses touch ... so easily.

(pp.63-64)§
After sometime they are seen at the mouth of the cave whereas Stott is overshadowed by them.

Before it is a year a change has come about in the relationships. Stott and Jane sleep in the same bed but they turn away from each other. Jane though lying beside Stott looks at Law and smiles. "She leans over the edge of the bed and smiles at Law." Stott begins to pull down paintings from the walls and Law agrees with Stott that they need to be removed. The playwright suggests that Jane and Law slowly come closer. She has gained control of the kitchen. Law's curiosity about Jane makes Stott reveal that she comes from a splendid family and she is fond of music.

In the course of one year Law and Jane have become so intimate that Jane has gone so far away from Stott that they are seen together in a beach. Jane is thrusting herself on Law who wonders how he should resist her. In another six months Law and Jane have become companions going out and returning together. In the next six months the relationship continues while Stott makes changes in the room. It is unrecognizable now. There is a new set of furniture. In the next six months the three begin to go together outside and haunt places which they had visited before. In one of their visits Stott and Law remember the writers they had read and the games they had played. Stott recalls that Law lost style
in playing Squash. Law admits that it had been. But Stott warns him that it will not be any longer. In a symbolic game of running competition Law and Stott decide to run while Jane plays the referee. Law runs only to fall whereas Stott does not. In the next few months the room is furnished again. Law tells Stott that the room is a bit crowded for the three of them. Law further says that three people staying in a room is illegal but Stott does not agree with him. He refuses to take the hint to leave the place. The three continue to stay in the same room. In the next six months nothing changes with Stott and Jane sleeping together and Law shades of the light and keeps himself warm by the fire. In the next six months there is a change with Jane rejecting Stott's advances and moving away physically from him. Law is persuaded by Jane to eject Stott from the room. She tells him she remembers the happy home they had before. Unless Stott leaves they cannot enjoy as they wish. Therefore, Jane whispers to Law, who is lying at the cave by the sea:

Why don't you tell him to go? We had such a lovely home. We had such a cosy home. It was so warm. Tell him to go. It's your place. Then we could be happy again. Like we used to. Like we used to. In our first blush of love. Then we could be happy again, like we
Now Law cannot act harshly since he had said earlier that he can stay as long as he wants. So he takes to deception and begins to create disaffection between Stott and Jane. He accuses Jane of faithlessness, uses words like savage, viper and one who dirties the beautiful room and its furniture. (Whispering very deliberately). She betrays you. She betrays you. She has no loyalty. After all you've done for her. Shown her the world. Given her faith. You've been deluded" (p.72). Stott appears to take Law's words seriously and takes ill. Law and Jane wonder whether he is not dead. But Stott is not dead and by the time he recovers the room is very richly decorated and furnished. In a scene which has all the three characters Law is playing his flute and Stott takes a bowl of marbles and begins to bowl them. The marbles hit the wall, the window, Law's knee and finally his head. Although asked to play Law does not but tries to escape to the admiration of change. In the scene that follows Stott and Law are at the opposite ends of the room facing each other. They are barefooted and they hold broken milk bottles. Both of them are sweaty and have spoilt the milk bottles at each other. Slowly they advance to other and squash with the bottles. Simon Trussler comments on the relationship between Stott and Law as the play progresses:
.... For the relationships from this "time" onwards become less exploratory, the confrontations more open: and the contests between the two men begin to be directly competitive, increasingly violent—although it is always Stott who wins, by employing openly more vicious tactics each time. He first outploys Law in a pub conversation, [68] then makes him look ridiculous by failing at the last moment to join in a race they are running (for no apparent reason) across a field, with Jane as judge: Law, turning back to look for Stott, loses his balance, "stumbles, falls, hits his chin on the ground". [68-9] Back in the basement, now of oriental splendour, Stott and Law play a game of indoor cricket with marbles for balls and a flute for a bat, and the last marble of Stott's over strikes Law on the forehead and fells him. [73-5] Finally the two prepare to duel, in a room now entirely bare, with broken milk-bottles: but we witness only the preliminary sizing-up, and the scene ends as the bottles smash together in a sudden thrust. [77] After this, only the topsy-turvy return to the opening situation is
to come: and the play closes as soon as it has shown in this way that its circle is closed.*

The play closes as it began with Stott taking Law's place and Law and Jane seeking entry into the room. The scene which was inconclusive earlier, is completed now. The dialogue exchange between Stott and Law at the beginning and between Law and Stott at the end of the play is in the same repetitive manner. The interesting thing is Jane is hidden twice by the wall outside.

STOTT (with great pleasure): Law!
LAW (smiling): Hullo, Charles.
STOTT: Good God. Come in!
STOTT laughs.
Come in!
LAW enters.
I can't believe it! (p.78)

Beginning is also the same.

LAW (with great pleasure): Stott!
STOTT (smiling): Hullo, Tim.
LAW: Good God. Come in!
LAW laughs.
Come in!
STOTT enters.

I can’t believe it! (p.58)

We understand what had happened in the fight between Stott and Law. Stott must have overpowered Law, ejected him out of it and occupied it himself. Though Stott won the fight to gain the room he lost Jane. Law lost the fight, lost the room but gained the woman. Here is Ronald Hayman’s observation:

After the whispering scene, when Law betrays Jane’s betrayal to Stott, there is a scene rather reminiscent of Strindberg’s *The Dance of Death*, with Stott apparently dying in bed and Jane and Law debating what to do with him. Then we see them in the corner "snuffling each other like animal," as Pinter’s direction puts it. We never learn whether he was ill, or pretending, or why, but the next game is played with a recorder. Law irritates Stott deliberately by walking about the room, first playing it, then singing through it. Stott throws a bowl of fruit across the room and then, picking up a marble, prepares to bowl to Law, who readily responds by pretending to bat with the recorder. Stott barks the word
"Play!" and as the sound crashes into the long silence, the marble crashes into the window. They go on playing, even after a marble hits Law in the face, drawing blood. Law wins the next point by batting a marble into the fishtank—water rushes out and we see a fish flapping about on the floor—but Stott knocks Law out with a final marble on the forehead. This is the last game before the duel with milk bottles, which reaches its climax in a close-up of the two jagged circles of glass crunching into each other. After this the starting positions are reversed. Stott is in possession of the room, which is furnished as at the beginning, and we see him in the armchair reading a book. Law is now in possession of Jane. We see them outside in the rain, preparing to ring. The closing words of the play are the same as the opening words, with the roles reversed and the characters reversed. Stott looks more like an easy victim; Law looks more dangerous.7

Fascinating though the play is, it leaves many questions unanswered. The question why does Stott come in
search of accommodation. In the play Law says Stott has aristocratic connections. Why did the two friends part after living together? Where did Stott go and why has he not kept Stott informed of his whereabouts? Who is Jane—lover or wife? Why does she betray Stott and tempt Law? Did she know Law before? In one scene she tells Law that they were happy together and that they should once again live together by throwing out Stott. If what Jane says is true why does Law enquire from Stott and gather details about Jane. Trussler compares Jane with Ruth: "If Ruth in The Homecoming is the archetypal predatory female, Jane is an archetype of the adolescent sexual daydream. Neither is a "real" woman: but Jane's unreality is realised in dramatic terms, whereas Ruth's seems to have deceived Pinter as it is intended to deceive an audience." She Talking about the role played by Jane, which is dishonest, disreputable and doubtful and also the clever handling of her relationship with the two men, Sakellaridou comments:

... Jane, as a young and alluring girl, is judged immature but 'very helpful...around the house' (B, III, 160). She provides sex and food and leaves the discussion of music, art and literature to the two men. When she is not in bed, she is usually in the kitchen,
while the men play games or discuss her as if she were no better than an exchange object. In fact Jane is no more than a ping-pong ball in the men's game. She is passive and gladly accepts the roles that the males expect her to play. She does not appear to have a personality of her own. Paradoxically, although she is basically seen as a passive, subservient being, she also inspires fear. She is portrayed as sly, manipulative and dangerous. Thus Jane becomes the catalyst of the men's friendship, using slander and undermining them in a similar way to Virginia in the novel *The Dwarfs* and Miss Cutts in *The Hothouse*. In 'Kullus', which apparently inspired the writing of *The Basement*, the girl even robs Kullus of his room. In this dubious role Jane becomes the ambivalent archetypal image of the much adored and much hated woman.  

Whatever the play may mean, it certainly deals with the cunning attempt to grab what belongs to another. The play also suggests what an ingenious attempt to repossess what has been lost. The play may also be taken as suggesting
that Law's loss of game might alternate. No one in the play seems to be honest and morally right. Stott seems to promote his selfish desire to possess the room by winking at the developing relationship between Jane and Law although he does take revenge against Law by injuring him in the bowl game. The bowl game is a kind of wager that they play or that Stott asks Law to play to defeat him. Esslin comments on the play:

... one might regard *The Basement* as no more than a sequence of images on the theme of two men fighting for a girl and for a room, an abstract, non-narrative pattern of moods and pictures which are all variations on the theme and composed after the manner of a symphony in a series of movements in which the different strands are contrasted, juxtaposed, varied, fused and separated again.10

Or it could be read as a play in which action centres in the minds of characters:

... *The Basement* must either be a kind of dream or daydream: the first image of Stott standing outside in the rain may be a wish in Law's mind to see his old friend again - the
rest would then express his hopes and fears arising out of the associations which the thought of a sudden visit by Stott would conjure up in his mind: he envied his friend's superior intelligence, taste and sexual prowess; so the thought of Stott would conjure up the image of the girl he would bring along and fears of the humiliation he would have to suffer seeing Stott make love to the girl in his bed, but also hopes of seducing her away from him. Knowing Stott's artistic leanings and wealth, he might imagine Stott furnishing the room in various sumptuous ways; and the thought of stealing the girl away from him would inevitably lead to fears of his revenge - hence the more and more savage dreams about fights with Stott (which follow the dream about Stott's sudden dying, a wish to kill him, causing instant guilt feelings). And finally, having imagined himself ousted by Stott, he begins to dream how he would reconquer his room by the same means that Stott had used. In fact he yearns to be as tough and ruthless as Stott, who would bring a girl with him and oust the owner of a room.
The enigmatic scene in which it seems that Jane had in fact once been living with Law also fits into this pattern of a daydream. Here too Law merely tries out what it would feel like to be in Stott's shoes.\textsuperscript{11}

\textit{No Man's Land} (1975) written eight years after \textit{The Caretaker} (1967) appears to be a sequel to the latter. A tramp searching for a shelter and becoming aggressive to lord over the shelter and finally losing it is \textit{The Caretaker}. In \textit{No Man's Land} there are three who fight for shelter, two against one but unlike Davies in \textit{The Caretaker}, Spooner in \textit{No Man's Land} succeeds in his attempt to gain entry into Hirst's lodge. He achieves it by blackmailing the landlord who is helpless.

Unlike \textit{The Caretaker} which has three there are four men in \textit{No Man's Land}. Hirst in his sixties is well to do and seems to be living alone. He is the counterpart of Aston. Spooner, also in his sixties, who claims to be an intelligent man, is the counterpart of Davies. There are two more, Foster in his thirties and Briggs in his forties, who have been with Hirst doing all odd jobs.

Just as Aston fetches Davies to his room, Hirst has fetched Spooner to his room. And like Aston who has
offered drink and food, Hirst offers drinks to Spooner. While Hirst appears to be reticent Spooner is loquacious. In the course of the long drinking session Spooner claims that he is a man of intelligence and perception. This menacing threat that he can "discern the essential flabbiness" suggests that he has begun to blackmail his host, who however does not as yet perceive it. In the course of the conversation it is known that they have seen the same places and known the same people. For example, Jack Straw's Castle. He claims that he derives his strength from being not loved by anyone. He found in his terribly attractive mother pure malevolence and ran away from her. He is a friend of the arts and guides young poets. He had always entertained guests to sustain and preserve art. Spooner talks about his wife who was really cooperative and charming:

How beautiful she was, how tender and how true. Tell me with what speed she swung in the air, with what velocity she came off the wicket, whether she was responsive to finger spin, whether you could bowl a shooter with her, or an offbreak with a legbreak action. In other words, did she google?

Silence
You will not say. I will tell you then...
that my wife ... had everything. Eyes, a
mouth, hair, teeth, buttocks, breasts,
absolutely everything. And legs.(pp.30-31)\textsuperscript{12}

When Hirst reveals that he too had done the same Spooner asks
him to reveal his past. He asks him about his wife, whether
he truly loved her "truly caressed her, truly did cradle her,
truly did husband her, falsely dreamed or did truly adore
her" (p.31). Taking the advantage of Hirst's monosyllabic
answers to his questions Spooner begins to become impertinent
and suggests that Hirst lacks manliness and is impotent.
Hirst is upset at being cornered and Spooner comes out openly
with his designs:

You need a friend, you have a long hike, my
lad, up which, presently, you slog unfriended.
Let me perhaps be your boatman. For if and
when we talk of a river we talk of a deep and
dank architecture. In other words, never
disdain a helping hand, especially one of such
rare quality. And it is not only the quality
of my offer which is rare, it is the act
itself, the offer itself - Quite without

127
precedent. I offer myself to you as a friend.

Think before you speak. (p.33)

Spooner has thus got his first success and Hirst is broken down.

Hirst once he has recovered from his shock says that he has dreamt of water falls and lakes and drowning. He says that he is depressed. He fails to recognise Spooner. He tells Spooner that his past is still real. His youth is still with him and all the people whom he had known are solid. He is in a state of hallucinations which makes him suffocated and fears that he is being done to death. He is surrounded by ghosts which are making noises and which are humming. Hirst is so struck by memories and shadows that he falls flat. Spooner says that he will help him and when Briggs and Foster interfere he dismisses them and takes charge of Hirst.

There is however, remarkable change in Hirst and his men as Act Two opens. Briggs and Foster behave politely and take good care of Spooner. Hirst himself has recovered from his depression and suddenly remembers his association with Spooner at Oxford and the games they played. All are remembered. He begins to enquire about a certain woman,
Emily, whom he has taken away from Spooner though she resisted initially. She ultimately yielded to him and giving up Spooner spent a whole summer with Hirst. Once when Spooner was taking her to France, Hirst found himself in the same ship and had an affair with her. The lovers exploited Spooner's obsession with physical exercises and sports. Talking about Spooner's broken life Mel Gussow remarks that "as the play evolved, an older man reflected with remorse and cynicism on his life and the life of his 'dislocated family.'"\footnote{13} Now it is Spooner's turn to expose and hurt Hirst. He reminds Hirst how he had seduced Stella and was about to be weeping. He also reminds Hirst how he has betrayed his own wife:

Oh my dear sir, may I remind you that you betrayed Stella Winstanley with Emily Spooner, my own wife, throughout a long and soiled summer, a fact known at the time throughout the Home Counties? May I further remind you that Muriel Blackwood and Doreen Busby have never recovered from your insane and corrosive sexual absolutism? May I further remind you that your friendship with and corruption of Geoffrey Ramsden at Oxford was the talk of Balliol and Christchurch Cathedral? (p.76)
Hirst accuses Spooner of turning a "bully, the cutpurse, the brigand" (p.78). Moments later he begins to bargain and offers many inducements. Spooner cleverly exploits Hirst's condition and offers to live with him and be his secretary:

I ask you... to consider me for the post. If I were wearing a suit such as your own you would see me in a different light. I'm extremely good with tradespeople, hawkers, canvassers, nuns. I can be silent when desired or, when desired, convivial. I can discuss any subject of your choice - the future of the country, wild flowers, the Olympic Games. It is true I have fallen on hard times, but my imagination and intelligence are unimpaired. My will to work has not been eroded. I remain capable of undertaking the gravest and most daunting responsibilities. Temperamentally I can be what you wish. My character is, at core, a humble one. I am an honest man and, moreover, I am not too old to learn. My cooking is not to be sneezed at. I lean towards French cuisine but food without frills is not beyond my competency. I have a keen eye for dust.
My kitchen would be immaculate. I am tender towards objects. I would take good care of your silver. I play chess, billiards, and the piano. I could play Chopin for you. I could read the Bible to you. I am a good companion.

Pause

My career, I admit it freely, has been chequered. I was one of the golden of my generation. Something happened. I don't know what it was. Nevertheless I am I and have survived insult and deprivation. I am I. I offer myself not abjectly but with ancient pride. I come to you as a warrior. I shall be happy to serve you as my master. I bend my knee to your excellence. I am furnished with the qualities of piety, prudence, liberality and goodness. Decline them at your peril. It is my task as a gentleman to remain amiable in my behaviour, courageous in my undertakings, discreet and gallant in my executions, by which I mean your private life would remain your own. However, I shall be sensible to the least wrong offered you. My sword shall be ready to dissever all manifest embodiments of
malign forces that conspire to your ruin. I shall regard it as incumbent upon me to preserve a clear countenance and a clean conscience. I will accept death's challenge on your behalf. I shall meet it, for your sake, boldly, whether it be in the field or in the bedchamber. I am your Chevalier. I had rather bury myself in a tomb of honour than permit your dignity to be sullied by domestic enemy or foreign foe. I am yours to command. (pp. 88-89)

After hearing Spooner's long list of promises Hirst like a judge pronounces "let us change the subject" (p. 91). Spooner appears to have been accepted and not rejected. The difference between the closure of *No Man's Land* and some of Pinter's other plays is summed up by Jones in the following words:

.... Unlike Davies, Anna, Ruth, Goldberg and McCann, and Pinter's other numerous invaders, Spooner effects no change; the plot (or non-plot) is not so much one of invasion and, hence, disruption, as it is of absorption. At the end Spooner seems not, like Davies,
rejected, or, like Ruth, in control, but merely assimilated as yet another being suspended in the stasis of the Hirst domain. There is virtually no development or alteration of either character or situation from curtain to curtain in *No Man's Land*.14

The final lines also suggest that Hirst is so dependent on Briggs and Foster who finally impose their will on Hirst. Esslin remarks that the final lines are poetic because the reference to winter which will last forever is repeated in a kind of incantation as in a religious ritual. Hirst is entombed in the *No Man's Land* between life and death.

The uniqueness of *No Man's Land* consists in its theme which has not been explored before. There are old people in Pinter's plays who do not realise that old age is a burden. There is no fear of death in them but in this play Hirst and Spooner are artists and therefore are philosophical and poetic. The circumstances of their lives are similar: they grew up in same places, met the same people and met with similar failures. Both of them were betrayed by their wives and are lovely. If Hirst submitted himself to the tyranny of servants partly because of his homosexuality, Spooner likes to change his own and change Hirst's life. Both are
disappointed because being in *No Man's Land*, caught between life and death they are slaves to others. As Philip Larkin puts it in one of his poems old age is miserable because it is an end of choice. Hirst and Spooner therefore have no choice.

Hirst's description of the conditions of the area in which they live "no man's land ... does not move ... or change ... or grow old ... remains ... forever ... icy ... silent (p.34) and the reiteration of his words by Spooner "you are in no man's land. Which never moves, which never changes, which never goes older, but which remains forever, icy and silent" (p.95) reveal that both are frustrated because the words spoken are unproductive, sad and not promising. According to Albert E.Kalson, Bolsover Street in London "becomes symbolic of no man's land: a world of blind alleys, unfulfilled hopes and unaccountable dreams."¹⁵ No man's land is cryptic and seems to be Pinter's land of imagination. Albert E.Kalson's further remarks are quite interesting:

No man's land is then the darkly mysterious area within the mind: it is the creative imagination, the artist's sensibility; and Pinter's play becomes a map of unexplored and dangerous territory. *No Man's Land* does away
not only with conventional plot, hardly surprising in a Pinter play, but, more unexpectedly, with characters in the conventional sense. Even Deeley, Kate and Anna of *Old Times* are recognizable as complex yet whole beings who have lived at some time, even if not all three are present at the supposed time of the play. But Spooner, Hirst, Foster and Briggs have no past, no future, not even a present. They have no being whatsoever other than that which each assigns to the other as their relationships shift, glide, falter and disappear. The tensions in *No Man's Land* do not arise in the collision of the imagined with the real. Spooner, Hirst, Foster and Briggs are not four characters in search of an author. They are, in effect, four aspects of their author - any author, any artist. In merging, they become the creative imagination seeking its twisting, turning way within the darkness of the cosmos, an infinity within the confines of the room of the mind.\(^{16}\)
The playwright himself calls the play "salt, vinegar and mustard."¹⁷

From the above discussion of the plays *The Caretaker, The Basement, No Man's Land* it might be possible to reasonably conclude that territorial aggression, literal and metaphorical as old as Adam. In a sense the biblical myth dramatises Adam's territorial aggression and the consequent original sin. Adam and Eve by eating the forbidden fruit committed the first act of aggression. Satan is aggressor who sought to malign God by intruding upon Adam's territory. The Homic myth also deals with territorial aggression. The Greeks and the Trozens fight for the woman, Helen, and engage themselves in a long drawn-out war. Histories of nations are full of accounts of wars most of which are caused by territorial ambitions. The world wars that were fought early in this century are the recent examples. All these suggest man's instinct not only for survival but also for power. It is this bestial trait which survives in man inspite of religions, ethics, moral systems and codes. Pinter chooses the microscopic unit, the family and illustrate the tragic truth that man is no more than an animal fighting for territory.

¹³⁶
NOTES


2. Ibid., p.89.


5. Pinter, Harold, Tea Party and Other Plays (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1967), pp.63-64. All references to the text are from this edition.


