The period from 1931 to 1956 was the period of unprecedented crisis in which human values—individual, familial, public, political, ethical and moral were completely smashed on account of a number of factors. The fight against authoritarianism in the Pre-War period and the shrinking of Great Britain as an imperial power in the Post-War period upset the apple cart of British diplomacy, economy and social harmony. It had a very paralyzing effect on the family life and the observance of little civilities which keep the machine of life oiled and running sweetly. A.G. Gardiner rightly pointed out that the first thing to be done in the Post-War period was to restore those civilities which became a causality in the War:

It is a matter of general agreement that the war has had a chilling effect upon those little everyday civilities of behaviour that sweeten the general air. We must get those civilities back if we are to make life kindly and tolerable for each other. ¹
Pointing out the general atmosphere in the thirties, T.S. Eliot writes in ‘The Family Reunion’ that there was coldness and fear everywhere in the thirties. The sun which was once so warm and which gave light unsought for was cold and the nights which were once unf feared were full of unheard of frights. Even the clocks which never stopped in the dark could not be trusted. The times were so bad that nothing to say of human beings, even things of nature and the mechanical things like clock could not be trusted. Amy broods over the predicament of man in the very opening scene of the play saying:

O Sun, that was once so warm, O Light that was taken for granted
When I was young and strong, and sun and light unsought for
And the night unf feared and the day expected
And clocks could be trusted, tomorrow assured
And time would not stop in the dark! 2

The immediate causality both in the Pre and Post-War periods was the family and its values. The withdrawal of Great Britain from colonies like India and the participation of the British youths in the Spanish War and later in the Second World War not only uprooted and disintegrated British families and their values but also widowed women and orphaned
children in millions, the anxiety of their mothers in such a critical period is expressed by T.S. Eliot in his play ‘The Family Reunion’. Amy kept herself alive to keep her family together. Her dream of family integration in such a bad time kept her alive. She lived in Wishwood all alone to keep the family alive:

\[
I \text{ keep Wishwood alive} \\
\text{To keep the family alive, to keep them together,} \\
\text{To keep me alive, and I live to keep them.}^{3}
\]

The family life in general suffered a very big jolt on account of mutual distrust, betrayal, economic insecurity and perpetration of violence. In ‘Look Back in Anger’, Alison’s parents were uprooted and made the members of the floating population on account of Britain’s withdrawal from India in 1947. Alison’s father Colonel Redfern who served the army of an Indian Maharaja was shocked when he reached England. He found the general atmosphere very unconducive and uncongenial. Jimmy Porter, on the other hand, is an orphaned child. He has seen his father returning home from the Spanish War wounded and penniless only to die a slow death. As a small frightened boy, he spent hour upon hour in the little room where his father lay. Like a bewildered little boy, he heard all that his father spoke out without understanding half of what he said. All he could feel was the
despair and the bitterness of a dying man and helplessness and anger of a small boy. He tells Helena:

And I can never forget it. I knew more about—love .............. betrayal ............... and death, when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life.  

Nobody in the family cared for the dying father of Jimmy Porter. It was Jimmy Porter who was hardly ten years old then cared for him. His father’s family was embarrassed and irritated by the whole business. As for his mother, she could only think about the fact that she had allied herself to a man who was on the wrong side in all things. The whole family waited for Jimmy Porter’s father to die. It sent him a cheque every month and hoped that Jimmy Porter’s father would get on with it quietly, without too much vulgar fuss. Jimmy Porter’s mother just pitied him. The sense of belonging and the family bond was almost lost. It was Jimmy Porter who was trying to restore the bond of family, the bond of love and sympathy for a dying man.

In the same way, when Hugh went abroad in search of a job leaving behind his mother in England, it was Jimmy Porter who looked after her. When she passed away, it was Jimmy Porter who performed her last rites. He was angry with Alison when she failed to sent a bunch of flowers to Hugh’s mother.
as a mark of respect for the departed soul. He was sorry to learn that his wife did not observe a little courtesy on the death of a deprived and lonely woman. Jimmy Porter tells Helena:

She was alone, and I was the only one with her. And when I have to walk behind that coffin on Thursday, I'll be on my own again. Because that bitch won't even send her a bunch of flowers - I know! She made the great mistake of all her kind. She thought that because Hugh’s mother was a deprived and ignorant old woman ..................  

What the play ‘Look Back in Anger’ tries to emphasize is that there was a need of restoration of human bond of love, sympathy and service in order to make family life worth living. In Pinter’s plays, man is presented completely cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots. He is completely dehumanized and lost. All his actions are senseless, absurd and useless. Unless man restores his lost bond between man and man, man and society and man and the universe, he can not be at peace. He would be haunted all the time with unknown fears and would be a victim of senseless violence manifesting from nowhere at unexpected time. In Pinter’s dramatic world, there is an atmosphere of fear and violence which is to be relieved by introducing and storing courtesies in life. In ‘The Birthday Party’, 

206
Stanley Webber has been living as a scared man far away from his home. He has been staying as a paying guest with the strangers. The strangers like Meg, Petey and Lulu celebrate Stanley’s birthday in order to cheer him up. Though Stanley himself wants to pass his birthday quietly without being noticed yet the strangers want to make Stanley enjoy his birthday with a lot of fun, music and noise. In the same way in ‘The Caretaker’, Davies is the very image of man completely dehumanized in the Post-War period. He is just the opposite of the image of an ideal New Man which the Soviets cherished. In this connection Peter Raby remarks:

This concept, an integral element of Communist ideology from the earliest years of the Revolution, is a seductive one and has exercised a powerful influence on the Russian people. ‘New Soviet Man’ is, essentially, Man reborn, in a sense similar to the evangelical Christian idea of ‘born again’, as honest, unselfish and hard-working, placing the interests of the New Communist Society above his own. Furthermore, it is the proletarian working class which, historically, is the agent through which this radical transformation of society is made possible. Thus, a play depicting a member of the vanguard working class as deceitful, selfish and lazy, particularly when he is also attractive and amusing, was excitingly seditious.  

Davies is even worse than an animal and does not deserve any kind of sympathy of anyone but it is Aston
who tries to humanize him by saving him from a fight in a cafe and giving him shelter in his room free of charge. In spite of his being handicapped, he tries his best to help out Davies. He offers to make him the caretaker of the house under his possession. It is the feeling of brotherhood that prompts Aston to give a brotherly treatment to Davies.

In ‘The Homecoming’, Max’s family has gone so down in morals that it has to depend upon flesh trade for the income of his family. But Max has a feeling that in order to run his family like a gentleman, his house needs a woman of quality, understanding and genuine love. When someone asks Pinter about the meaning of ‘The Homecoming’, Pinter replied that:

“It was about love, and, in effect, about our search for it, our need of it, our expectation that we will find it and our hope that we can give it: It’s about love and lack of love ............... There’s no question that the family does behave very calculatingly and pretty horribly to each other and to the returning son. But they do it out of the texture of their lives and for other reasons which are not evil but slightly desperate.”

In ‘The Dumb Waiter’, Ben chooses to tell only those stories which illustrate the stupidity or cruelty of his
fellow human beings. An eighty-seven-years old man wants to cross the street but he crawls under a lorry and is killed. The lesson brought home by the story is that an old man does not deserve to die that way. He is a victim to be pitied but this philosophy undermines the very legitimacy of the entire enterprise of the two hit men, Gus and Ben. One can not kill effectively if one thinks like that.

In nearly all the plays of Pinter, the need of restoration of human values is emphasized repeatedly. Analyzing the motives of the dramatist underlying his plays, Peter Raby writes:

_The issue is not, of course, that personal bonds or family bonds are of a single kind or of exemplary status. The strength of family bonds in A Slight Ache, The Homecoming, Tea Party and The Lover, and the strength of personal bonds in The Collection, The Basement, Betrayal and No Man’s Land are not such that they exemplify the kind from which anyone would confidently seek to build a lasting civilisation. But the expectations, hopes and needs encountered in these local forms of interaction, whether satisfied or not, provide the model for understanding similar expectations, hopes and needs that shape social interaction in a political context or any other context. And if the larger political exchange is not a motivated extrapolation from the local social exchange, then a dangerous discontinuity is added at a_
larger scale to the social discontinuities that have to be constantly mediated at a smaller scale. ⁸

Not only individuals and families were sick in the Pre and Post-War periods but also the whole world. Underlying the sickness of the world in the critical period of the world gripped with fear, suspicion, racial hatred and violence, Harry says in ‘The Family Reunion’:

*It is not my conscience,  
Not my mind, that is diseased, but the world I have to live in.  
-I lay two days in contented drowsiness;  
Then I recovered. I am afraid of sleep.* ⁹

So for as the individual and familial maladies were concerned, their treatment lay in the resurrection of small courtesies like saying ‘Please’ and celebrating birthdays even of those who were strangers. The return of the feeling of ‘ourness’, sympathy and love even from those who were deprived, orphaned and divorced was a welcome sign for the individuals and the families ravaged during the War. The restoration of the values of sweetness of temper, good behaviour, sympathy and love gave a healing touch to suffering individuals and families. Since the sickness of the world was global, it required a political will and philosophy to liberate the world from fear, violence, racial
discrimination, exploitation, inequality and slavery. The Russian Revolution of 1917 raised a ray of hope for the betterment of human fate in the new political order. The new values as enshrined in the Soviet Communism were treated as the lasting remedy for the ills of the industrial society of Europe. The meteoric rise of the Labour Party just after the termination of the War and its establishment of the Welfare State in England made people enthusiastic about sharing in a Millennium but ignorance and ill-education of the working-class and the leadership of the working-class by bourgeois elements and the lumpin socialists betrayed the cause of humanity. Even the Communist governments turned totalitarian and tried to suppress the values which humanity has ever cherished. The freedom of thought and expression and the autonomy of the individual without which man cannot live were denied. Even those who were sympathetic with the Soviets got disillusioned after the exposure of the misdeeds of Stalin after his death in 1953 and the trampling of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.

Arnold Wesker highlights the human values in the industrial society and exposes how the cause of the working-class and the man in general was betrayed by the
unscrupulous socialists and the dictatorial communists. In ‘Chips with Everything’, Wesker makes a scathing attack on the British ruling class represented by R.A.F. officers. Pip Thompson who is a bourgeois intellectual is the hero of the play. He tries to declass himself and organize rebellion among the R.A.F. conscripts. Pip is intellectually a superior man and able to meet the clever challenge of the authority and give a sure direction to the rebels but he fails because of the lack of his character, his dubiousness and the clear choice of his own class. Pip represents those rebellious intellectuals who, after a heroic gesture of participation in working-class ideals, join the ranks of the establishment. When he is exposed, he is deserted by his comrades. The Pilot Officer tells him how he is ignored by his own mates for betraying the cause of humanity. He also tells him that the latter is finished and destroyed because, ‘No man survives whose motive is discovered, no man.’

He further tells him that he is guilty of breaking the bond of affinity of one human being to another and his comrades would not listen to him and follow him any more:

\[\text{We listen but we do not hear, we befriend but do not touch you, we applaud but do not act – to tolerate is to ignore. What did you expect, praise from the boys? Devotion from}\]

212
your mates? Your mates are morons, Thompson, morons. At the slightest hint from us they will disown you. ¹¹

In the play ‘Chicken Soup with Barley’, there is a struggle of individuals to realize themselves in terms of social and political ideals. The great variety of characters having a sense of family solidarity are united for a common purpose and have a political zeal for heralding a new world which insured equality, brotherhood, liberty and democracy. It is the period when all the world has a feeling of sympathy with the ideals cherished and propagated by the communists. The working-class characters seemed to believe that a Millennium was about to come. The Spanish Civil War, the International Brigade, the working-class movement in Britain, the Fascist march in London bring to us, as never before in a play, the political reality of the thirties.

But by 1946, the glow of new idealism and social and political values started petering away. The Labour government has given the Kahns a better flat in Hackney but has taken away that enthusiasm which characterized and enriched their life in the East End. It is now a life of petty struggle to make both ends meet, without any great cause to fight for. Even when the industry is booming with work, Harry manages to be crucially
out of work, leaving the whole burden of the family on Sarah’s shoulders.

Sarah’s faith sustains another blow when Ada, her daughter, declares that she has no faith in political activity, is tired of living in the jungle and is determined (when Dave comes back) to live the simple life in the country. When Harry has his first stroke, Sarah is left with nothing but her faith in Communism and Ronnie’s future. The process of disillusionment that started with the second act is completed in the third act which opens in 1955. Sarah’s life now is spent between caring for invalid Harry and filling in the National Insurance forms. It is a tedious life with Ronnie, a pastry cook in Paris, completely disillusioned in life. Ronnie comes home one evening to declare:

I’ve lost my faith and I’ve lost my ambition ...............My thoughts keep going pop, like bubbles. That’s my life now - You know?—a lot of little bubbles going pop.  

The murder of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the Soviet Union and the Hungarian revolt has shaken his faith in Communism. But Sarah refuses to be convinced: “All my life I worked with a party that meant glory and freedom and brotherhood. You want me to give it up now? ............. if the electrician who comes to mend my fuse blows it
instead, so I should stop having electricity? I should cut off my light? Socialism is my light, can you understand that? A way of life.” And she shouts at Ronnie as the curtain comes down, “You've got to care, you've got to care or you'll die ................. Ronnie, if you don’t care you'll die.”

It is not so much her arguments as her simple and grand faith in an ideal that makes her the only positive character in the play. In spite of her completely shattered personal life, she refuses to accept defeat at the hands of fate and this obstinate refusal gives her some sort of tragic dignity we associate with greater characters. This sudden transformation of the muddle-headed stubborn working-class woman gets a universal significance. The play ends with the broad, loose assertion that one must care for others, and that is the only way to spiritual salvation. For the moment we almost tend to believe in the super human regenerative strength of Sarah to arrest the cancerous growth of family disintegration and the breakdown of ideals.

In ‘Roots’, the basic pattern of characters remains more or less the same as in ‘Chicken Soup with Barley’. Family cohesiveness of the Kahns and the Bryants is the basic human texture from which Wesker goes forward to develop the
dramatic act. In the first play, he weaves a network of emotions and activities which have their mainstay in the family. Criss-crossing of events of twenty long years does not really alter the basic relationship of the older generation of the family. Sarah and Harry remain the same. In ‘Roots’, we have the same strong sense of family, the Bryant husband and wife are at loggerheads with each other, and at the end of both the plays we have two rebels of the family, Ronnie and Beatie drift away from the family, introducing a sort of cracks in the monolithic family structure and finding their own way of life. Ronnie as the weary and defeated man without any faith is as credible as Beatie in her glory of light and self-realization.

In ‘Roots’, Wesker develops his ideas of a proletarian culture and protests through Beatie against the petty, self-centered living of the Bryants. The play also highlights through Ronnie the need for educating the working-class in the right direction and developing the committed leadership from the working-class itself.

The progress of disenchantment that started in ‘Chicken soup with Barley’ comes full circle in the ‘I’m Talking about Jerusalem’. Harry is dead, Cissie, the trade
unionist sister of Harry, has left active politics, Ronnie is completely frustrated with politics and life. Sarah is an old woman stubbornly sticking to her political idealism; Ada and Dave have reached the bitter realization that one cannot create a small Jerusalem in a land of Philistines.

What Wesker wants to emphasize by the end of this ‘Trilogy’ is that the restoration of human values like love, sympathy, brotherhood and equality was essential for social harmony but in the face of the values of the industrial society, it was quality of work and spiritual satisfaction emanating from the quality of work that was made a causality in the industrial society of the Post–War period.
REFERENCES


3. Ibid. P.16.


5. Ibid. P.73.


11. Ibid. P.62.


13. Ibid. P.67-68.