A search for an identity in the dramas is as old as the Greek dramas. The Greek dramatists such as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides played a significant role in displaying the identity crisis and subsequent search for an identity in their plays. Their characters, whether mortal beings, or Gods and Goddesses, were busy interrupting the lives of the mortal beings for the sake of their pleasure and victimized or hunted them for their whims. In this sense, the Greeks were as existential as the modern playwrights are today. The nineteenth century science has given hope to mankind with its idea of progress and development. But the post Second World War era witnessed a rapid industrialization, which has shattered the hope for communal harmony and social developments in England. Instead of progress and development, the progress of dehumanization has started in the post-war situation. It has blurred the identity of poor men and society. The contemporary readers witness downfall of the values in Pinter's dramas which are primarily pre-
occupied with the problem of menacing identity. The affluence, due to development has brought in disquieting social problems; one of the fruits of the welfare state has steep rise in crime, particularly among the teenagers. Criminologists have indicated possible links with a fast changing society. There has been an alarming increase in the number of juvenile offenders, illegitimacy, prostitution and drug-taking. Traditional values have been discarded by the youth and uneasy quest for new values strained the post war community structure. A fairly sizeable section of the population feel aggrieved, ethics completely left out or partially crippled by gross difficulties. These people could not feel a sense of communal belongingness, and are aware of their loneliness in the society. They pause a threat to their identity.

Let us clarify the concept of identity in the modern sense. Identity means the knowledge of "self". It is constructed through introspection. When one confronts a situation or threat one longs for a search for an identity. He asks himself Who am I? Do I exist? are the relevant questions which occupy his or her mind when encountered. Harold Pinter's
characters live either in an ivory towers or in a temporal world. They easily shift their values, language as the situation demands. His dreams have been concerned with the struggle of an individual against some opposing force, or antagonists.

Let us explain the theme of identity in relation to The Birthday Party and The Room.

(1) THE BIRTHDAY PARTY —

The Past, Present and Future:

In Pinter’s plays, memories can be extremely short. His views of the past appears to undergo a significant change. Time is no longer to be regarded on a linear scale, hanging down in the well of the past from whose dark bottom ghosts occasionally emerge, but on a continuum, where past and present seem to occur simultaneously. The flux is lacking. This is not unlike the circular past, free from a sequential order, of some primitive populations, which forms the basis of their mode of thinking historically. In our society, history is still a Christian invention marking the great divide between
what happened before the re-surrection and what happened after wards, and making that date the turning-point in the evolution towards the city of God. But Pinter's characters are definitely not Christian. They have no future, and the past provides them with no salvation. Yet their past history often weighs them down with memories they try alternately to recapture or to obliterate. The notion of the past affecting present and present being in effect past appears to have emerged from Pinter's own reading of Proust.

Stanley in *The Birthday Party* faces the two goons Goldberg and McCann of his past organization. He has not matured and suffers from an inferiority complex, a latency period. As an adolescent, he begins to show his concern with identity when he says to Meg in their opening scene together:

> Tell me, Mrs. Boles when you address yourself to me do you even ask yourself who exactly you are talking to? Eh?

*(Act I, P.22)*

He tells McCann:

> The way some people look at me you'd think I was a different person. I suppose I have changed...

*(Act I, P.43)*
Goldberg also demands to know why Stanley has changed his name. Stanley’s retreat from adolescence is abnormally severe because his identity problems are unusually complicated. Stanley does not wish to identify with his father images. This is one reason he has run away and changed his name. He does not wish to be like McCann – a bully and strong – arm man who, in the service of others, uses his muscle instead of his brain.

He does not wish to be like Goldberg either – pompous, maudlin, unfaithful and unfit. Stanley’s problem with identity extends also to his career goals. He has tried to be a concert pianist, but “they” have forbidden him this also; “they” have locked him out. “They” want him to be rich, successful, a magnate, a statesman. At the end of the play the father figures march Stanley off into the world again. They are forcing him to accept the identity they wish to give him. He is to become their “Pride and Joy”. Whether he likes it or not, they are pushing him out of the latency and into adolescence. But Stanley goes as a dead man. The self he would have chosen has given him in to Goldberg’s Prophecy!
You are dead. You can’t live, you can’t think, you can’t love. You are dead. You’re a plague gone bad. There is no juice in you. You’re nothing but an odour!

(Act I, P.55)

Ironically, he is forced into this acceptance by his own guilt over abandoning the values of Goldberg and McCann that had once introjected. The play is about a young man hiding from the forces of maturation. A surrogate mother, Meg, protects him in his retreat and compounds his confusion by her own ignorant disregard of his needs. A surrogate father, Petey, also protects him by his permissive withdrawal from the difficult situation. In Stanley’s attempts to resist maturation, he resorts to regression, an extreme regression all the way back to the oral period of life. Martin Esslin says that Stanley “has regressed to the status of a babe in arms”. Goldberg and McCann pursue him to his refuge and force him out of it into the deadly world he fears; he fears it because there lies his final punishment for his sin. Ultimately, society or the father figures capture Stanley, and he submits to their rehabilitation. From this view, The
Birthday Party emerges as a concretization of the birth and death cycle within the psyche.

In The Birthday Party conflict is waged by sheer weight, variety and quantity of usages. Stanley is confronted by two visitors at his new abode, where he has sought an asylum. The two assailants of his resort try to ascertain his identity. Consequently, his self confidence is perished. They verbally bludgeon him into submission, by succeeding accusations.

Mac - You're a traitor to the cloth.
Goldberg - What do you use for pyjamas?
Stanley - Nothing.

Goldberg - Speak up Webber. Why did the chicken cross the road.

Goldberg - Which came first?
McCann - Chicken? Egg? Which came first?

Stanley screams.

(ACT II, PP.61-62)

Some critics, seeking to make sense of the impact of this onslaught on Stanley, have searched the list of accusations to find the “true” one to which Stanley finally proved
vulnerable. Lois Gordon, for example, picks on the accusation "Mother defiler" to postulate that:

In an effort to deny an amorous relationship with his mother, whereupon he usurped his father's place in the household, Stanley has moved to a new land and become the hopeful son of his present family.¹

Although they do not certainly say anything about his past or present life, Pinter's characters are constantly engaged in exploring, reinforcing, or changing the relationship that obtain between them and their current situations. In Pinter's world, the exploration and confirmation of relationship, is the central focus of the verbal activity of the characters on it hinges their capacity not to achieve public goals whether social, political or religious, but basically to confirm their estimate of their own identity and survive. The confirmation of a companion is the chief arbiter of reality in the Pinter world. A coercive power of social conversation becomes powerful and focus of character's confrontation. These characters including Stanley are at crucial social adjustment between themselves and the environment to which they're exposed and search for identity. Harold Pinter, in his lengthy
letter to Peterwood (30 March 1958) dwells upon the characters and the situation in which they are lined up:

All right you know what about Stanley. I think he has the right whatever he does and is to do and be just that and fuck the expense. That's what I think. But that is not the point of the play. It is a conclusion. I draw from it. Is that a point expressed in the play? Yes it's expressed by implication, agreed... Stanley fights for his life, he does not want to be drowned. Who does? But he is not articulate. The play in fact merely states that two men come down to take away another man and do so. Will the audience absorb the implications or will they not? Ask the barber.2

The reaction of audience might be one of the followings three:

(a) They should have left him alone.

(b) The silly bugger deserved it.

(c) It's all a load of crap.

Harold Pinter explains:

Meaning begins in the words, in action, continues in your head and ends nowhere. There is no end to meaning... I would conclude this, but the characters themselves do nothing but more through an occurrence, a morning, a night, a morning.3
Meaning thereby that if Stanley cannot be more articulate, he cannot survive in this mire, in the odd situation where he has perhaps stood against a system, a machinery of the goons. Stanley cannot perceive his only valid justification – which he is what he is – therefore he certainly can never be articulate about it. He knows only to attempt to justify himself by dream, by pretence and by bluff, through fright. If he had cottoned on to the fact that he need only admit to himself what he actually is and is not then Goldberg and McCann would not have paid their visit, or if they had, the same course of events would have been by no means assured. Stanley would have been another man.

Stanley loses his kingdom because of his wrong assessment of the enemies’ strength or his own overestimation. Pinter mischievously responds to Peter in his letter about the play:

> The play dictated itself but I confess that I wrote it – with intent, maliciously, purposefully, in command of growth.\(^4\)

Pinter’s concluding lines for the Play:

> The play is a comedy because the whole state of affairs is absurd and inglorious. It is, however, as you know, a very serious piece of work.\(^5\)
Goldberg and McCann represent the system in *The Birthday Party*. Goldberg is the senior partner; he utters the sacred cliches of family, class, prudence, proportion. McCann is the brawny yes-man whose strength re-enforces Goldberg's doctrine. Human emotions are tricked or brushed aside in *The Birthday Party* by the ruthless team of a dogmatic system. On the day on which the action of the play starts—Pinter preserves the unities of time and place and compresses the action into a time-span of about twenty-four hours. Meg, who is always spoiling Stan with her over solicitous infatuation, wants to surprise him with a gift. To motivate the present, she maintains that it is his birthday, although it is almost certainly nothing of the sort. Meg probably does not even know the actual date of his birthday. In the course of the opening scenes of the play Lulu, the girl from next door, arrives with a big parcel, containing Stanley's present. She is a girl of vulgar vitality and tries to arouse Stanley's interest, to get him to go out with her. But Stanley will not allow himself to be carried away:
Stanley (abruptly). How would you like to go away with Me?

Lulu : Where.
Stanley : No where. Still, we could go.
Lulu : But where could we go?
Stanley : Nowhere. There's nowhere to go.
So we could just go. It wouldn't matter.
Lulu : We might as well stay here.
Stanley : No. It’s no good here.
Lulu : Well, where else is there?
Stanley : Nowhere.
Lulu : Well, that’s a charming proposal.
(He gets up) Do you have to wear those glasses?
Stanley : Yes
Lulu : So you’re not coming out for a walk?
Stanley : I can't at the moment.
Lulu : You’re a bit of a washout, aren’t you?

(Act I, P.36)

Meg unveils her present: he is after all, a musician and as he has no piano in the house, she is giving him another musical instrument. A drum. A boys' drum. At first Stanley is stupefied. But, then, he puts the drum round his neck and begins to beat it, in a normal rhythm at first, but afterwards in more and more wildly and uncontrolled way. It is clear that Meg has again made Stanley, a grown up man. Thus the savagery of his reaction seems to signify the depth of his
despair; for Stanley accepts the reality that there is no escape for him.

Meg : It's your present.
Stanley : This isn't my birthday, Meg.
Meg : Of course, it is. Open your present.

He stares at the parcel, slowly stands, and opens it. He takes out a boy's drum.

Stanley : (flatly). It's a drum. A boy's drum.

Meg (tenderly) : It's because you haven't got a piano.
(He stares at her, then turns and walks towards the door, left.) Aren't you going to give me a kiss? (he turns sharply, and stops.

Stanley : Shall I put it round my neck?
She watches him, uncertainly. He hangs the drum... halfway round the beat becomes erratic, uncontrolled... his face and the drumbeat now savage and possessed.

(Act I. P.46)

The rituals of Stanley's destruction are enacted in the second act, by his two pursuers. Stanley does try to escape, but it is McCann, the brutal Irish terrorist, blocks his efforts to get out with increasingly open threats of violence. The second
bully Goldberg indulges in sentimental recollections of his past family life. Blinded, Stanley steps into his newly acquired drum, destroying the last vestige of his status as an artist and putting an end to his being Meg's little boy.

Silence.
They stand over him. He is crouched in the chair. He looks up slowly and kicks Goldberg in the stomach......

Goldberg : Steady, McCann.
Stanley : (Circling) uuuuuhhhhh!
McCann : Right. Judas.
Goldberg : (rising). Steady, McCann.
McCann : Come on !
Stanley : uuuuhh!
McCann : He's sweating

McCann : The bastard sweat pig is sweating.
A loud drumbeat off left, ...enter Meg, in evening dress, holding sticks and drum.

(Act II, PP.62-63)

What does the organization of the Goldberg and McCann's represent? is a mute question. On one level it is fairly clear; particularly from the final image of Stanley in the uniform of respectable, bourgeois gentility; that Stanley is the artist whom society claims back from a comfortable bohemian, 'opt-out' existence. This, it seems, is possible because he is an
artist who has doubts about his creative ability; he has not worked for a long time; he has come down, from a piano to a little boy's drum; and even that he breaks in his clumsiness in the game of blind man's buff.

Goldberg : What can you see without your glasses?
Stanley : Anything.
Goldberg : Take off his glasses.

Goldberg : Why did the chicken cross the road ?
Stanley : He wanted...
McCann : He does not know. He doesn't know which came first. (Act II, PP.59)

On another level, The Birthday Party might be seen as an image of man's fear of being driven out from his warm place of refuge on earth. On another plane again, that of psychological archetypes, The Birthday Party can also be seen as an image, a metaphor, for the process of growing up, of expulsion from the warm, cosy world of childhood. Stanley is reluctant to go out because he is afraid, not only of the outside world, but also of sexuality outside the cosy mother-son relationship. Martin Esslin concludes thus:
Thus on closer examination the different levels of approach will be seen merely as different aspects of the same, immensely complex, immensely relevant, and immensely ‘true’ poetic metaphor for a basic human situation, an existential archetype embodied in a play like The Birthday Party. And it is precisely the realism, the reality of the concrete situation portrayed, which gives the poetic image its solidarity and power. Each of the characters is endowed with his own linguistic personality: the slowness and softness of Meg, Goldberg’s mental agility, McCann’s brutality, they are all firmly delineated by the way they speak..... Both in treatment and subject matter The Birthday Party shows affinities with another masterpiece which is also a metaphor of an existential crisis of a similar nature: Kafka’s The Trial... But Pinter’s play, his first mature contribution to dramatic literature, is a wholly individual, wholly original creation.6

(2) THE ROOM — An Intruder:

The Room has two main characters, Bert and Rose Hudd. Bert is about fifty years of age and Rose in about sixty. This difference in age is reflected in their personal relationship. Rose is a motherly wife. She fusses over Bert’s food, wanting to be sure he has a hot break-fast before he goes out into the
cold. She is a talker. Bert is a silent listener. Rose’s talk discloses her anxiety; she is a fearful woman. She fears the world outside her room, and she shows an obsessive concern with the basement and whoever may inhabit it. She seems to recall having lived there once herself and constantly reiterates her preferences for the room she currently occupies. She apprehends and speculates the dispossession of the room every time someone knocks at her door. She receives a succession of visitors. Mr. Kidd, the landlord, stops in to see about the pipes. He is a vague old man who neither hears well nor remembers well. He has forgotten how many rooms and floors the old house has, when he exits, Rose bundles Bert into warm clothes and sends him out for a speedy run in his van. Next Mr. and Mrs. Sands come in, at Rose’s invitation. They are looking for the landlord because they wish to rent a room like this one. They too are vague about the house – its stairways, halls and basement. They place great attention on whether Mr. Sands is standing up or sitting down. When they leave, Mr. Kidd returns to tell Rose about a man in the basement who wishes to see her while Bert is gone. The man is blind Negro, Riley, and he is Rose’s
next visitor. He brings a message from Rose's father that he later delivers in the first person:

   I want you to come home.

She insults and rejects him initially, but finally relents and touches his eyes and head tenderly.

Pinter's first play, The Room, is one of his most puzzling works. Tension characterizes every relationship in the play though the sources of the tension are at best obliquely indicated. The conclusion focuses on the death of a blind Negro, who enters the play very late but is nonetheless central to the movement of the action Portrayed. This late entry, with its consequent abridgement of information about the Negro, has inevitably led to a variety of inspired guesses about who he is and what he represents.

Critic J. R. Hollis observes that:

   The play seems to be allegorical about life, death, and cosmic concepts; About two people in a room and how they invest that room with the secrets of their concealed lives.7

It is an existential drama, an image of an ageing woman's final confirmation with the reality of death and simply about
the people bothering other people who want to keep to themselves.

Rose is a housewife of sixty years and lives with Bert Hudd, a man of fifty years. Rose is vulnerable to outside world because she is ambivalent about her role and her life in *The Room*. Her relationship with the Negro is concealed and this generalizes an assault on civilization to move the point of focus from personal relationships towards ephemeral social structures of one kind or the other. But Pinter does not mean any assault on civilization or on anything else. His plays explore more basic problem that Gordon mentions that the potential constrains imposed upon the individual when he comes into contact with other individuals, meaning-there-by that the individual may find indispensable. Pinter's aim is that a character can only substantiate his sense of individuality or search for identity by operating in relationships which acknowledge and affirm that individuality. Bert's silence and Rose's role who casts him in the role of one dependent on her motherly supervision, and his refusal to participate in conversation is a component of her identity. We have somehow reached a conclusion in his
non-participation of Bert that there is a fixed discord. She seeks the meaning of her existence by constant talks.

This is a good room. You've got a chance in a place like this – And I'm here. You stand a chance. (P. 105)

It is a room which gives her security and her life a meaning. She seeks immense pleasure in mothering Bert as she ministers to her own needs. Ignoring Bert’s silence, she casts herself as one vitally concerned in providing Bert with food, information, advice encouragement, nursing, and admiration. The information, the advice, the encouragement, and the admiration are all ignored, and Rose is left to fantasize the indispensable role she would have played if Bert had ever become seriously ill!

I'd have pulled you through! (P. 9)

Here again the needs of her self-image seem to be served as much as any unselfish concern for Bert's health. She has confined herself in the room. She has a safe haven for her mysterious life.
She rises, goes to the window, and looks out.

— It's quiet. Becoming on for dark. There's no one about.

She stands, looking.

— Wait a minute.

Pause

— I wonder who that is.

Pause

— No.

She drops the curtain. (P. 104)

Through this first scene Rose in uncertain about her commitment to the life she leads. The unpleasantness of her view of the outside is born of her need to believe it is ugly in order to substantiate her contentment at being inside. But even in its ugliness, the outer world obsesses her, and her internal tension is externalized in the back and forth motion of the rocking chair to which she repeatedly returns. Lacking the verbal confirmation she needs from Bert, Rose uses repetition and contrast to keep herself content in Bert's world. Kidd's and Rose's counter attack establish each other's world of mystery. It is a defensive manoeuverings to each other, but Rose appears to be vulnerable in this counter game.
J. R. Taylor says:

The technique of casting doubt upon every thing by matching each apparently clear and unequivocal statement with an equally clear and unequivocal statement of its contrary ... is one which we shall find used constantly in Pinter's plays to create an air of mystery and uncertainty.  

Here Pinter's purpose is to show a character's strength to uphold consistent positions in the face of a variety of conflicting demands, and conversely, the major failure for a participant is inconsistency. Rose's anxiety in conversation and her persistent inquiries about the security of the house is of an imminent danger which is lurking in her life because of Riley's entry into the room. Mr. Kidd's insistence that Rose should meet Riley is a dream shattered situation for Rose; Rose whose identity is at stake now apprehends the future.

Mr. Kidd : You'll have to see him. I can't take it any more. You've got to see him.
Pause
Rose : Who ?
Mr. Kidd : The man. He's been waiting to see you. He wants to see you. I can't get rid of him...you've got to see him.

(PP.119-120)
It is significant that the unnamed man is not at once shown in but Kidd's insistence is significant until he is invited.

Mr. Kidd : I said, you can go up; go up, have done with it. No, he says, you must ask her if she'll see me... He just lies there, that's all, waiting.

(P.120)

Also, it is Rose, not Mr. Kidd, who locates the place where the unnamed visitor is waiting:

Rose : He lies there; in the basement?

Rose's internal conflict, previously manifest in dual-purpose projections of alternatives to her current life, now actualizes itself in the choice of whether or not to see the unknown stranger in the basement. Who the stranger might be is not as important as what his possible presence means to her. Fantasized alternatives to her current life do not put it at imminent risk. But to confront in person, a representative of her inner needs requires a choice that might prove irrevocable. The timid, fearful side of Rose's nature recoils from the prospect:
Rose : See him? I beg your pardon, Mr. Kidd. I don’t know him. Why should I see him?

Mr. Kidd : But he knows you, Mrs. Hudd, he knows you.

Rose : How could he, Mr. Kidd, When I don’t know him?

Mr. Kidd : You must know him.

Rose : But I don’t know any body. We’re quiet here. We’ve just moved into this district.

(PP.120-121)

Once more, the tactic of insecure, excessive denial, comes to the fore as Rose herself in the role of a loyal wife totally dependent on her husband and his interests. Her strident ‘No’ to see the man in the basement asserts her self-image of loyalty to Bert and conformity to the nicest social rules. Her fear that he could drop in to see her when her husband is at home concerns her highly. It is this ambivalence this fundamental dichotomy in her character, that makes her vulnerable in this situation. Rose is not simply the victim of Bert, or of Riley; rather, the play brings to a head the inherent instability of her opening situation. 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 situation seem 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.

The man downstairs is not identified when Kidd reports that he prefers to wait for Bert to leave before confronting Rose. He is likewise unidentified when Rose recoils in her fear at Mr. Kidd’s threat.

Mr. Kidd : I know what he’ll do. I know what he’ll do. If you don’t see him now, there’ll be nothing else for it... He’ll come up when Mr. Hudd’s here, when your husband’s here.
Rose : He’d never do that...He wouldn’t do that.

Mr. Kidd : Oh, yes. I know it.

This threat is merely an instrument in the hands of Mr. Kidd which he uses successfully to unravel the past of Rose. And it is a battle between the timid, withdrawn side of her nature and the curious outgoing side that urges her to align herself with a life very different from the one she lives with Bert.
Fetch him. Quick. Quick! (P. 122)
The entry of man from the basement is of course, a fine theatrical moment. His arrival brings to a crisis the conflict between two sides of Rose's ambivalent character, and his presence becomes the focal point of both her fear and her curiosity. On the one hand, he confirms her fear of coldness, darkness, and otherness in the world outside, and on the other, he justifies her obsessive curiosity about the possibility of an unknown and perhaps foreign presence in the mysterious basement. That he should be black and blind strikes one as both surprising and appropriate. Now the new Rose her nature seem to be recognizable.

Riley's tacit sentences "My name is Riley" (P. 122) and "I want to see you" (P. 123) take the readers to an oblivion of Rose's past identity. She pictures him as a customer, as a beggar and as a source of scandal, but none of these strikes any chord in Riley. Eventually; Rose reverts to the aggressive demand that he should tell her what he wants, and Riley's response brings her ambivalent character to another state of crisis. He triggers once more the conflict between her fear and curiosity that makes Rose's life so unstable. But this
time the resolution is crucial. Her identity is not unravelled to anyone and she apprehends the 'message'.

Rose : 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 any way?

(P.124)

She goes on to insult him again. The other side of her character emerges in questioning and curiosity. To her bafflement Riley says:

Your father wants you to come home.

(P.124) is a final blow to her past identity.

Rose needs to look forward for secured future, finally gains dominance over the past that is mainly for safe room and needs Bert. The latter side of her acknowledging him, temporarily disappears. With the change comes a change of name, Riley who initially addressed her as Mrs. Hudd now calls her Sal and calls her by name. The room in contrast to other things, now falls in contrast to "home".

Riley : Come home now, Sal. (P.124)
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 backed. Stroking the Negro’s head is a change in relationship with Bert, but it doesn’t diminish her strength of maintaining both the relations. Darkness, associated with Rose’s suppressed life, with her curiosity, and with the world outside, has entered the room in the shape of the Negro. When Bert draws the curtain of the room as he enters, he is no longer separating two forms of reality.

Bert’s maladjusted marriage to Rose is revealed through his outbursts when he returns from the outside journey. With realization drawing on him, he lashes out at the only focus of their new disharmony and beats Riley to death. But the change in Rose is irrevocable, and their old relationship is no longer viable. Rose stands and clutches her eyes:

Can’t see. I can’t see. I can’t see.
Black out.
Curtain (P.126)

The stage is plunged into darkness as Rose’s final cry confirms the priority of her link with the Negro over that with
Bert. This is its major strength. The loss of whatever possibilities the Negro represented for Rose leaves part of her mutilated. The blackness of Riley and Rose's blindness symbolize only the connection between them. Both Bert and Riley are essential to Rose, but they also manifest incompatible demands.

The play is built around a series of polarities between light, and dark, warmth and cold, cosiness, and in hospitality, man and woman, husband and wife, domination and subordination, Rose's fear and Rose's desires, and finally Bert and Riley. Rose longs for alternatives - no more and no less. No possible relationship could enable her to express all the range of her individuality all the time. Every relationship is a compromise, and every compromise is potentially unstable. Rose's attempts to stabilize the compromise between herself and Bert involves the contemplation of alternatives. This in turn leads to the savouring of alternatives and eventually to the collapse of their previous compromise. The conflict between the social need for compromise and the individual need for something more is at the heart of the play; and it is this which is something about
the nature of the individual that is incompatible with the communities of men. Riley functions primarily as an embodiment of Rose's fantasized alternatives of the dissatisfactions of her life with Bert. But in reaching for the alternatives she loses what is indispensable in what she already has.

Rose's inability to rest content with her choice of life with Bert brings on the collapse of that way of life. Rose and Bert being of different identities and individualities cannot go on as before, but in the absence of alternatives, they must nonetheless go on. Riley's presence in the basement and subsequent appearance in the room, his appearance as a Negro raises questions of allegorical consolidation. Critic C. Leech points out:

We are conscious of being invited to look for allegory yet not sufficiently impelled to conduct the search.⁹

The enigmatic figure of Riley at one point threatens to develop sufficient identity to arouse questions about his motives, Riley's appeals to Rose to come home are enough to function simply as contracts to Rose's concern for the sheltering
characteristics of her current abode. But at this point, his repeated appeals set up a contrast in another area:

I want you to come home. (P.30)

and

your father wants you to come home. (P.30)

Arouses curiosity as to who is doing the calling and why. Instead of remaining the simple focus of Rose's needs, Riley begins to develop sufficient individuality to justify questions about his attitudes and concerns. It is a central problem raised by Harold Pinter to show the process of characters' grasping with self identity. The process is not religious, political or philosophical but on local and much more universal in its application.

Harold Pinter points out in an interview:

Before you manage to adjust yourself to living along in your room, you are not really terribly fit and equipped to go out to fight battles.10

For Rose, this adjustment of the self to its environment is a process of eternal compromise and ever-present risk. Her longing for a "home", for a place where she could synthesize and satisfy all her needs and fantasies, is never satisfied. The
attempt to convince herself that she has found it with Bert is always a self-deception. The belief that she can find it with Riley proved equally fallacious. Trapped in a world of unsatisfactory choices where compromise and contest are inescapable, Rose battles her way through relationships that she can neither make do with nor do without. This process, the ever present stress between the individual and his companions; is the process dramatized by a play that discovers and begins to develop the dramatic possibilities of language used primarily for inter-relational concerns.

A well-known critic Firth says:

> The meaning of a great deal of speech behaviour is just the combined personal and social forces it can mobilize and direct. (11)

**HYPOTHESIS:**

Pinter's plays can be divided into four categories and two of these are clubbed together in this chapter. In the number one group plays are included which have dominating key male consciousness but are rendered helpless because of the inevitable fear of intrusion or dispossession. They cannot
sustain their identities of powerful male characters who canace the situation bravely. Stanley in *The Birthday Party*, Bert
in *The Room* are the results of such odd predicaments. In
each play the fear of dispossession is lurking over their
heads. Each play also shows the struggle for dominance as
typical of the anal conflict. Thematically these plays centre on
fear and violence and their interlocking guilts. These
characters have self inflicted identity crisis which they
perpetuate.
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1. L. G. Gordon, "Stratagems to uncover Nakedness: "The Dramas of Harold Pinter" (University of Missouri Press, 1969), P.21, cf. also P.27, "The Oedipal son, Stanley, is incapable of establishing meaningful relationship with any woman; he has won his mother from his father, but he feels such guilt that he must punish all women.

2. H. Pinter, "Funny and Moving and Frightening; Pinter" (interview with K. Halton), Vogue, Cl(October 1, 1967) P.236.


10. Pinter interview.