CHAPTER – III

(1) THE DUMB WAITER — The Speaking Tube:

This play is one act play uses the same basic situation as The Room. The play portrays a dark room enclosed by mysterious world outside. Two persons are watching in dreadful suspense, a door which is certain to open. Whoever opens the door is sure to be killed. The two persons inside the room are professional killers. Ben and Gus by name are working class cockneys. They are working for a mysterious organisation which sends them, from time to time, across the country on missions. They are not briefed in details of their present mission. They await further instructions. These goons of an organisation do not know who looks after the room.

Ben and Gus are looking at the door waiting for the victim to walk into the trap. Behind them in the basement room, there is a dumb waiter. Slowly through a speaking tube upside the room, they receive orders for foods etc. The two killers, who are just loyal employees try desperately to fulfil these order.
In their effort to serve their hidden boss, the more intelligent of two, Gus hides some biscuits from the senior partner Ben. Gus is indignant about the impertinent and unseen boss. Ben gets his instructions from above to liquidate Gus. The supernatural forces draw the curtains down by finishing one. Ben is the boss of the twosome. Gus is the doer and the talker too. Ben and Gus are not the menacing intruders of *The Dumb Waiter*. They are the two people in a room who are menaced from outside. The play repeats the basic Pinter situation. The element of menace and uncertainty is the same as it is in *The Room* and *The Birthday Party*. *The Dumb Waiter*’s visitors, however, never appear on stage. They remain mysteriously unseen, but they do make their presence known. They give the order that Gus is to die. He is the sinner who must pay for his crimes. Ben and Gus await assignment in a basement room of the unknown house. Ben lies on the bed alternately reading the paper and watching Gus. Gus is more restless; he paces, shows constant concern with food, gives continuing attention to the lavatory, and completing about his work and his treatment by his superiors. Ben counters these complaints and gives orders. It
soon becomes obvious, however, that Ben's commands conceal his fears, while Gus, though tense, has the courage to take action and even to think about his work. His questions only irritate Ben. Soon the two men are frightened by a land clatter; they discover a dumb waiter in the wall between their beds. The dumb waiter returns again and again with orders for food placed there by an unknown presence upstairs. Ben and Gus send up all they have—Gus's store of snacks. The people upstairs send back complaints: Gus is disgruntled. He is hungry and thirsty, too. He does not like Doing a job on an empty stomach. (P.114)

Ben insists that the time for the job is near and he gives Gus instructions. These are "stated and repeated" like a ritual. Finally, while Gus is offstage, in the lavatory, Ben gets the message that the time has come to do the job. Ben calls to Gus and levels his revolver at the door. Gus stumbles in, stooped and stripped of his upper clothing and his revolver. Pinter says:

He raises his head and looks at Ben. A long silence. They stare at each other. Curtain.

(P.121)
This play reveals the terror of the terrorists. The fear and tension that barely showed behind the violence of Bert in The Room, the killer, is here emphasized in killers, Ben and Gus. They are indeed no less afraid than was Stanley, the victim in The Birthday Party. Ben and Gus are the dumb waiters – in a dual sense. They attempt to serve Gus’s meagre hoard of morsels to the unknown diners upstairs even though they are unfamiliar with the exotic dishes being ordered. They are dumb waiters also because they always made themselves available, unquestioningly, for the moment when the powers will order them to eliminate the next victim. Ben and Gus are under constant demands from the speaking tube up their room to give up their foods. Gus is reluctant to part with it. It is Ben who forcibly makes Gus obey to do so. Ben’s role thereby, is as supergo, and the supergo constantly asserts its control over Gus. The play begins and ends with auditory anal imagery. The mysterious powers have ordered Gus’s destruction at the hands of his friend, Ben. The partner Ben receives the orders from an unknown and mysterious power to get rid of the garrulous talker. The power which orders the riddance has emptied himself of emotions and morals.
curiosity of Gus is silenced for ever. Gus does fear the threat externally, but it lives with him to subdue him. Gus and Ben are mere puppets at the hands of the unknown, as we are at the hands of almighty God. That’s the ultimate fate everyone meets. The failure on the part of Gus and Ben to understand the workings of their organisation, their frustration and irritation finds its expression in the dialogue. The dialogue which establishes the supremacy of Gus but reveals the seniority of Ben.

Ben : If I say go and light the kettle I mean go and light the kettle.
Gus : How can you light kettle?

Gus : They say put on the kettle.
Ben : (taut) : who says?

Ben : Who's the senior partner here, me or you?
Gus : You.

(PP.141-142)

The dispute is a manifestation of authority over the other. It is a fight for dominance, thus ultimately establishing the relationship between a pair of human beings. This play
implies mental impotence and removing mental potency is a castration symbol.

Ben tells Gus about the newspaper item in which an eighty-seven-year-old man crawls under a lorry to get across the road.

The lorry started and ran over him. (P.130)

The story makes Ben want to "puke"; Gus finds it incredible. They react to the essence of the story: an old man found what seemed to him a rational way to bring about his own death. This enhances his fear about the room which may turn out to be a tomb, because it has no window; he cannot see outside.

Gus and Ben have emptied themselves emotionally and morally. Their intellect, will and curiosity are silenced long ago in this organisation. It shows the predicament of the victimizers not the victims. In The Birthday Party while the hired killers appear as all powerful and inscrutable, where Stanley is menaced. But in The Dumb Waiter, it is shown that hired killers are not from any other world but just like any one of us. There is obviously some kind of tension
prevailing between the two because of their different hobbies, viewpoint and identities.

Gus and Ben are enclosed in a small room waiting to perform a task not yet communicated to them by their obscure employer, whose identity is not yet revealed to the two characters, nor to the readers. Their attitude to their work, of course, and to their employer are gradually revealed as they become involved in a series of petty disagreements. Their own conflict and identity of different regions is somehow exposed to some extent.

Ben : Go on, go and light it.
Gus : Eh?
Ben : Go and light it.
Gus : You mean the gas.
Ben : Who does?
Gus : You do.
Ben : (his eyes narrowing) What do you mean?
 : I mean the gas?
Gus : They say put on the kettle.
Ben : (taunt) Who says?

(P.141)
It is a fine example of the way in which a trivial topic can be the focus of much more significant issues. Ben's orders and Gus's baffled looks and continuous questionings underscores the prevailing tensed situation. It is clear in the context that the argument is not a disinterested quest for settlement of normal usage. What is at issue is the mutual status of the characters in the relationship. Gus's attempts to correct Ben is simply an attempt to undermine his stature by catching him in error. Ben's strong counter back reveals his awareness that is his authority in their relationship that is at stake. It is Ben who seems to be familiar with the speaking tube in the room.

Gus : What's this ?
Ben : What ?
Gus : This.
Ben : (examining it) This ? It's a speaking tube.
Gus : How long has that been there ?
Ben : Just the job...

Ben : Now you speak ! speak in to it !

(PP.154-155)
As through this speaking pipe he receives the orders for liquidation of his fellow colleague, establishes that he's familiar with the activities of the organisation:

To ear. He listens. To mouth.
Understood. Repeat. He has arrived and will be coming straight away. The normal method to be employed. Understood.

- - -
Right.

- - -
Gus! (P.156)

With language problem the mutual relationship and quest for personal identity is also at stake. One seems to be the boss, the other a minion, who has his own way in the drama. If this authority is challenged by the other, the characters are left in a maddening impasse. The implicit threat to Gus is finally resorted to by physical coercion. The latent issue of supremacy or identity is thus resolved. The invisible master's complaints through the speaking tube and final resolution and order to kill Gus is the climax of the situation. It is explicitly a humiliation of the social sub-ordinates. One can detect existential situation in this drama. Ben and Gus,
hated killers though they are, become two representatives of the dumb great unwashed, the donkeys, who toil thanklessly for the advantage of the powerful and privileged. Pinter emerges here as a poet of the sorrow and humiliation of modern industrial community, drawing the attention to the unprivileged area of humanity.

(2) THE CARETAKER — The Human Predicament:

The Caretaker is a three-act, three character play. Mick and Aston are brothers, the younger in his twenties, the older — Aston — in his early thirties. Mick is a successful businessman of sorts; he owns a small van and seems to be dabbling in buying and selling properties. He has an old, derelict house in a western suburb of London. Only one room in his house is habitable. Aston, inadvertently, has been given a task of converting the whole house. The one and only habitable room is cluttered up with old furniture and other junk which Aston has acquired. Aston is a slow and awkward man who fiddles with screw-drivers and handsaws. But he is a good natured and kind hearted person. He is ready to help
his fellow human beings. He has saved an old tramp from being beaten up in a brawl in a café and brought him along to his house. Davies, the old tramp insists on doing only jobs appropriate to his station in life. He appears as an epitome of some worst traits of the British workman. He is an ill-tempered and deceptive person. He keeps several cards of names on his sleeves. He somehow wins the confidence of Aston and gets an offer of a job, the job of the caretaker. Mick, the younger brother of Aston and rather clever fellow gets hardly impressed of the traits of the old tramp. It is his credibility or papers of identity which fail him and turns him out of the house. Pinter uses the house as a metaphor. The house which is full of junks is symbolic.

The littered household things reflect the choice of Aston, who likes the uncanny things in the house. He's fond of bringing home old unused objects and on such moment he brings in a new come Davies. Before arrival of Davies, the two brothers Aston & Mick go on well in relationship. Whatever benefits and liabilities that relationship involves for each of them is set in opposition to the new possibilities that emerge. A third person entering a binary relationship sets up a situation that
demands not only new relationships with the newcomer but also an adjustment of the relationship that holds between the original pair. The common ground, the common reality, the common language between three people must inevitably differ from that between the original two. Instead of examining this re-adjustment largely from the point of view of one of the participants, as in The Room, Pinter here gives considerable attention to the needs, hopes, and problems of all three characters.

In widening his focus, Pinter also widens the scope of interrelational complexity. While the characters in The Room employ a largely similar range of verbal strategies, the characters in The Caretaker are differentiated by diverse linguistic abilities as well as by a diversity of goals. As the play progresses it becomes increasingly clear that the conflicting concerns of the characters are inextricably intertwined with verbal vulnerability and verbal power.

The three characters try to seek their alternatives in new situation which emerges after Davies’ arrival. (a) The three can establish a relationship that includes them all. (b) Aston and Davies can exclude Mick. (c) Mick and Davies can
exclude Aston. (d) Mick and Aston can exclude Davies. These alternatives constantly underline the strugglers for control. During the absence of any one member, the two tries to establish the binary relationship. As the new situation presented by Davies' arrival involves an adjustment for all three characters, any adjustment between any pair must affect and be affected by the third person. Mick's rapid exit upon hearing the approach of voices leaves his link with the house and its occupants unspecified but established – a type of link which is reflected in the clutter onstage and which becomes characteristic of the play as a whole.

The Davies / Aston relationship begins with Aston apparently in command of the situation as both host and rescuer of the itinerant Davies. His calm, quiet acceptance of the uneasy guest seems a natural posture of superiority, and Davies at first accepts it as such. As both guest and rescued Davies, in contrast to Aston, is noisy, repetitive and insecure. The obvious aim of his early initiatives is to locate a potential common ground and preferably one that will lessen his degree of dependency in the relationship. Ironically, his insecurity is increased by the very means that he adopts to
diminish it. The fact that it is he, and not Aston, who feels compelled to talk undermines his position at the same time that his verbal manoeuvres seek to strengthen it.

Davies : Sit down? Huh..... I haven't had a good sit down – I haven’t had a proper sit down..... well, I couldn’t tell you.....

Aston : (placing the chair) Here you are.....

Aston : Take a seat. (Act I, PP.16-17)

That Davies should invoke in rapid succession a sense of injury, a major prejudice, and a defiant self-reliance gives us a quick resume of the potential roles he might adopt relative to Aston. Aston’s seeming refusal to encourage any of Davies’ tentative roles provides Davies with major problems. In the face of Aston’s taciturnity he is forced to thresh around desperately for some means of altering the situation. Apparently he becomes a vulnerable victim of social prejudice.

All them toe-rags, mate, got the manners of pigs. I might have been on the road a few years but you can take it from me I’m clean. I keep my self up. That’s why I left my wife...

(Act I, P.18)
Davies’ other category of approaches involves attempts to assert a degree of independence from Aston. But his efforts to create an image of self-reliance are even less successful than his previous moves and not entirely compatible with them. His appeals for sympathy for his age and health mingle uneasily with assertions that he intends revenge for his misuse at the café:

*I’ll get him. One night I’ll get him. When I find myself around that direction.*

_Act I, P.19_

The strength of this commitment is clearly undermined by Davies’ vague reference to when it will occur and by his admission that this would not be his primary reason for going there. In spite of these repeated failures, Davies’ stock of variations on his manoeuvres is not yet exhausted. In deep, he has yet to play his trump card, unsuccessful as the heroic survivor of the café incident, unsung as the virtuous rejecter of an unhygienic wife, and unsympathetic with as a down trodden, exploited old man, he invokes a new image of one on the verge of self-sufficiency and success. The tack is circuitous involving shoes, the weather, a false name, and
papers that prove everything. But, in essence, the theme is that of a journey to Sidcup, which will solve all problems and structure of his life. Once the journey is made, all difficulties will disappear, and Davies will once more be a man to be reckoned with:

Davies: If only I could get down to Sidcup! I've been waiting for the weather to break. He's got my papers, this man I left them with, it's got it all down there, I could prove everything.

Aston: How long's he had them?

Davies: What?

Aston: How long's he had them?

Davies: Oh, must be... it was in the war...

must be... about near on fifteen year ago...

(He suddenly becomes aware of the bucket and looks up).

(Act I, PP.29-30)

But this manoeuvre too, is thwarted by Aston's reactions to it. Clearly, Davies does not match his emphasis on the importance of the journey with a similar commitment to getting there. Aston's behaviour seems peculiarly inconsistent. His apparent unconcern for Davies'
psychological needs is sharply contrasted with an evident concern for his physical needs. Davies’ outburst about the Blacks is obviously his prejudicial attitude towards the non-residents. As in The Room, Rose and Hud, adopt the modus operandi of keeping things going on – Aston and Davies also manage, though for shorter period. Innocent, friendly questions asked by Aston are construed as potential threats with ulterior motives:

Aston : Welsh, are you?
Davies : Eh?
Aston : You Welsh?
Pause
Davies : Well, I been around, you know...
what I mean...
I been about...
Aston : Where were you born then?
Davies : (darkly) What do you mean?)
Aston : Where were you born?
Davies : I was...uh...oh, it’s a bit hard, like to set your mind back...see what I mean...going back... a good way...lose bit of track, like... you know...

(Act I, P.25)

Here, we have a mute form of the inter-relational warfare that characterized the first encounter between Mrs. Hudd and Mr.
Kidd in The Room. The vital difference here is that one of the contestants is not fully conversant with the rules. Davies, on the other hand, has a knowledge of inter relational strategies and is potentially able to benefit from them in situations other than the one he currently confronts. But that very situation throws into relief the limitations to which he, too, is susceptible. The great irony of Davies' predicament is that he is socially limited by the very means that he uses to facilitate his social mobility. The inter relational strategies he has thus far demonstrated are the only ones he has available, and the evident implication of this is that he can only form relationships with people who can work within the very narrow set of strategies that he has available. To a large extent, Davies is a victim of his own expectations. His verbal strategies are predicted upon the assumption that every companion is a potential threat and a potential master, and the unfortunate result is that these are the only companions he can countenance.

That he should have turned the tables down by Mick's entry is a devastating twist for him as he is caught in self-revealing circumstances at a moment when he is bent on discovering
some one else’s secrets. But even when alone, he projects images of self preservation and self-protection:

I don’t make no noises. (P.23)
demonstrating, as in The Room the use of language to make things real to the self as well as to others. Twisting his arms and gesturing him to silence, Mike treats Davies with contempt while Davies seems to expect it in life and which he is unnecessarily warding off when talking to Aston. The contrast between Aston’s and Mick’s attitudes to Davies is strong and telling. Act I closes with Davies physically threatened and under direct interrogation of his past and present identities:

Mick : What’s your name?
Davies : I don’t know you. I don’t know who you are.
Pause
Mick : Eh?
Davies : Jenkins.
Mick : Jenkins?
Davies : Yes.
Mick : Jen...kins...what did you say your name was?
Davies : Jenkins.
Mick : I beg your pardon?
Davies : Jenkins!

Pause

Mick : Jen...kins.

(Act II, PP.39-40)

This kind of jargons Mick resorts to give us some kind of indication of his self image, and it could demonstrate his past and present identities. Mick is in trade and shows sufficient ground of his being the boss of his trade and the house where Davies is presently inhabited. Davies is further threatened by Mick who has identified the bag which Aston has brought from Davies' previous lodging.

Mick, : What's this.
Davies : Give us it, that's my bag!
Mick : (warding him off) I've seen this bag before.
Davies : That's my bag!
Mick : (eluding him) This bag's very familiar."

(Act II, P.47)

Davies is once more put in a difficult situation of having an accusation that is implied but never explicitly stated. In such a situation his ubiquitous fears run riot. But Aston, significantly, takes Davies' side and the mutual antipathies move towards a crisis. With the hostilities now on the surface
the situation is suddenly frozen as the long pause is interrupted by a drip-sounding in the bucket. His lengthy silence speaks volumes of the devious mine searching out the expedient in the new situation he confronts. Aston, in contrast, commits himself increasingly to relationship with Davies. His generosity continues, as he offers, him shirts, a smoking jacket and finally a job:

Aston : You could be...caretaker here, if you liked.
Davies : What?
Aston : You could...look after the place, if you liked.

Davies : Well, I...I never done care taking before you know...I mean to say...I never...what I mean to say is...I never been a care taker before.

Pause.
Aston : How do you feel about being one, then ?...

(Act II, P.51)

Davies’ response trails off as the situation develops more quickly than he can work out where his best interest lies. At the very moment when Aston’s power has diminished he offers Davies secure residence in the house. Davies is torn between irreconcilable possibilities. Mick, who has been
totally hostile, has the power of strength and ownership. Aston, who has not the ultimate physical or legal authority, is offering the friendship and the job. To take the job is to expose himself to Mick's wrath; to refuse it may be to lose the tentative grip he has on a place with a roof, a bed, and some warmth. Caught in a dilemma, Davies struggles to play for time, and, at the point of commitment, he warily retreats. Asked to consider answering the doorbell, he sidesteps hurriedly onto one of his favourite evasive tracks. Reiterating the multi-menaced nature of his life and the consequent dangers of answering doorbells, he launches forth once more on his problems with insurance cards, unnamed agents and self-identification:

Davies: My real name's not the one I'm using, you see. It's different. You see, the name I go under now ain't my real one. It's assumed.

(Act II, P.53)

Mick's attacks on psychological grounds have exposed Davies. Davies as a goon is exposed; manipulating with all open alternatives to secure a safe refuge in Aston / Mick's house. In a confrontation that parallels that of the youthful
Pinter in the London alley, Mick tells a potential threat out of existence and flatters Davies into a role in which he will be manageable and suitable:

Mick : I'm very impressed by what you've just said.

Pause.

: Yes, that's impressive, that is.

Pause.

: I'm impressed, any way...

I think we understand one another.

(Act II, P.56)

Davies somehow is trapped in this flattery and exposed by his own tendency of manoeuvering. Always seeking to further his own ends, Mick's about turn leaves him no where.

Davies : Oh...yes, spent half my life there, man.

Overseas...like...serving...I was.

Mick : In the colonies; weren't you ?

Davies : I was over there, I was one of the first over there.

(Act II, PP.59-60)

Offered the same job by Mick as earlier by Aston Davies, after a check on the ownership of the house, reacts, as 'decisive':

96
Well listen, I don’t mind doing a bit of caretaking. I wouldn’t mind looking after the place for you”.

(Act II, P.51)

In inviting Davies to be caretaker, Mick also indicates a potential pressure on Aston to get on with his task of decorating the house or risk having the task entrusted to the newcomer. Now, after re-assurance from the owner of the house, Davies, is no longer subservience to Aston. Aston wants his commands to be followed by Davies, but the latter is much more assertive now and establishes his authority in relationship. In spite of Aston’s generosity Davies has no compunction about attempting to exploit him. Aston’s attempt to establish a relationship on terms of equality is doomed to failure with a man who cannot cope with the option.

The Sidcup journey means to Davies what the dream of a show piece block of flats means to Mick and what the building of the shed means to Aston. All project verbally the selves they are about to be, but all get no nearer the achievement. Davies is obviously an inveterate liar who will say whatever the situation demands to suit his aims. Aston is
never so devious. But he, too, indulges in self-deception and appeals for sympathy at a time when events seem beyond his control. The balance between self-pity and an appeal to Davies is indistinct, but one of the great ironies of the play is that, after a long period of not talking to people, he decides to under-load his terrors and needs on a character who is incapable of displaying the generosity of spirit that might help him, a character who sees weakness solely in terms of its possible exploitation:

Davies : You and me, we could get this place going.

(Act II, P.60)

It is Davies' permanent problem which he wishes to solve by seeking Mick's support. But Mick has different thoughts in mind for Davies are displayed through the following:

Davies : I'd say it would, man.
Mick : A palace.
Davies : Who would live there?
Mick : I would. My brother and me.
Pause.
Davies : What about me?

(Act III, P.70)
But Mick ignores the question and leaves this question unanswered meaning—thereby that Davies is safe as long as Mick’s dream of turning this house into a palace is not fulfilled. Davies will again be rendered helpless and shelterless. Davies again becomes the victim of his own limited awareness of inter-relational possibilities. The attempt to negotiate a relationship that will exclude Aston is rejected by Mick. The tramp is exposed once again to the universal phenomenon of the roads. His desperate attempts to find favour with the hostile Mick are juxtaposed to his readiness to find fault with the generous Aston. The contrast drives home the increasing precariousness of Davies’ situation and his constant inability to see beyond the myopic limits of his own self-seeking.

Aston’s effort to improve the relationship with Davies by doing things for him is no more successful than before and no more successful than trying to affect him verbally. Davies’ threats to the generous Aston has severed the relationship between the two. He’s compelled to say to Davies:
Aston: I...I think it's about time you found somewhere else. I don't think we're hitting it off.

(Act III, P.77)

Davies on the other hand threatens back and retaliates:

Davies: You! you better find somewhere else!

(Act III, P.77)

The underlying problems of the relationship rise to the surface as the mutual awareness of irreconcilable differences becomes increasingly explicit. Pinter made an important statement in his interview:

I'm not suggesting that no character in a play can ever say what he in fact means. Not at all. I have found that there invariably does come a moment when this happens, where he says something, perhaps which he has never said before. And where this happens what he says is irrevocable, and can never be taken back.¹

The confrontation between Aston and Davies exploits once more the dramatic situation which explicitly reveals the defeated Davies trails off as he recognizes his powerlessness in the face of Aston's anger. The tramp is exposed to be impotent:

¹
Aston : You'd better go.

Davies : I'll stink you!

Aston : Get your stuff.

(Act III, P.78)

Mick’s dream of turning this house into palatial with good decoration and seeming failures of Davies and Aston has been shattered. He bursts out at Davies for several lies.

Mick : I can take nothing you say at face value, Every world 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.

(Act III, PP.82-83)

Davies, who has spent much of the time trying to manoeuver himself verbally into securing position has merely talked himself securely into hostility and rejection. As Hollis puts it:

Even the most banal aspect of existence seem fraught with serious implications for Davies because he is trying desperately to learn the game so that he can play it too. At every turn, however, he’s defeated by language.2
Davies is left defeated and his real character is exposed. It reveals his inevitability that is again on roads. His selfishness has made him to be there.

Davies : What am I going to do ?
Pause.
: What shall I do ?
Pause.
: Where am I going to go ?
Pause. (Act III, PP 86-87)

Davies is finally rejected not because he offers a poor alternative relationship for the brothers but because he offers no alternatives. Davies has revealed his character to be substantially the same in interacting with both brothers; he has nothing else to reveal. The myth of the paper at Sidcup comes to the brink of empirical testing:

Listen... if I... got down... if I was to... get my papers... would you... would you let... would you... if I got down... and got my... Long silence.

(Act III, P.87)

Aston’s acceptance of Mick is as necessary and as forced as Mick’s acceptance of Aston. Aston returns not to a new freedom but to an old role, and his final stance, with his back
to Davies and to the audience. He is again a captive of his own inertia. His inability to solve his own problems is acknowledged by him and once again he is trapped in his old world. It is discrimination of Davies’ world and Aston’s limitations. Whether he is a victim of ethnic, racial discrimination is never derived from the play. His identity as a man of the society is hardly known.

Like many of Harold Pinter’s plays, its main subject is a room and an outsider who threatens to disturb the peaceful sanctuary that this room represents. The room has a metaphysical importance. The room is a dream of Mick, the owner and only breadwinner of the family, but it is currently lived in by his elder brother Aston who has been left mentally retarded, supposedly as a result of his experience in a psychiatric hospital. The outsider is Davies, a cantankerous old tramp, who is invited to stay a while by Aston. Mick is not a well defined character. This is what Pinter has to say about ill-defined character:

A character on the stage who can present no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his
motives is as legitimate and as worthy of attention as one who, alarmingly, can do all these things.3

In this room the two brothers are the two opposite types; extrovert versus introvert, active versus passive, work-hungry versus work-shy, aggressive versus gentle, strong versus weak. Davies, on the other hand fights an unconvincing battle of his past identities. He strives frantically to keep up a sense of appearances for fear of a kind of existentialist non-being. Though his resources are somewhat limited, Davies still manages to find a few masquerading tricks up his sleeve. When he is asked if he is welsh, for instance, he hedges round the issue by simply saying,

Well, I been around, you know... (Act II, P.34)

He makes blah-blah. Davies has successfully covered up his tracks (even to himself) and eluded Mick, the pursuing hunter. But, though Davies’ ability to hide is masterly, Mick manages to seek him out by turning his very elusiveness against him. If Davies talks rubbish, even pretending not to remember the details of where he was born:
Davies: Oh, it is a bit hard, like, to set your mind back... see what I mean... going back... a good way... lose a bit of track, like...

(Act II, P.34)

Mick is determined to outplay him at his own tricks. Thus there are magnificent series of unrelated anecdotes, aimed at undermining Davies' already unstable existence. Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson observe:

Davies, hopelessly disorientated, has to resort to an alternative ploy in his battle for survival: he pretends to be some one else, disguising his 'true' identity under an assumed name Bernard Jenkins.4

The poverty within us is manifested nakedly in Davies' case. Once it is established that Davies' identity does not lie in Sidcup, as he often claims, but in his collection of evasive fronts (as Erving Goffman would put it). This makes the two brothers unite once again, and they smile at each other. Pinter himself comments of this:

I think, it's a smile that they love each other.

(Pinter's interview)

Ruby Cohn, in her article on Harold Pinter in 1962 comments:
Of all Pinter's (early) plays, *The Caretaker* makes the most bitter commentary on the human condition; instead of allowing an old man to die beaten, the system insists on tantalizing him with faint hope, thereby immeasurably increasing his final desperate anguish. There is perhaps a pun contained in the title: *The Caretaker* is twisted into a taker of care, for care is the human destiny.5

In this drama Pinter's anger is against the old established system and his characters feel choked or helpless. Davies, the devil is deprived of the paradise. His appeal:

> What am I going to do? ... Where am I going to go?" (Act III, PP.77-78)

and

> Don't you want me to get out.....?" (P.24)

falls on deaf ears. He is an old tramp but does not feel responsible and compassionate.

Aston makes his ouster more certain because of his nasty terms. Davies is not acceptable on his terms and expulsion becomes inevitable.
HYPOTHESIS:

The two plays described in this chapter are the plays of less violence in them. The Dumb Waiter which has only two characters but the predicament shown for the garrulous talker Gus is gradual development for his wipe out. Ben, the boss does not allow himself to blurt any single hint that he is the killer. His mysterious character stands unexposed till he receives the final orders through the speaking pipe. The Caretaker displays the wish to be rid of someone. The human predicament described in the play is bitter. It is a bitter pill. Aston and Mick, the two brothers unite together to expel the unwanted. These two plays concentrate on ambivalence and importance of the work.
REFERENCES:

1. H. Pinter; “Between the limes”, The Sunday Times (London), March 4, 19623, Mag. Sec.; P.25.


