RENUNCIATION OF LANGUAGE IN HAROLD PINTER'S "THE HOMECOMING," "THE CARETAKER" AND "THE DUMB WAITER:" A LACANIAN ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

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Based on Harold Pinter's three plays "The Homecoming," "The Caretaker" and "The Dumb Waiter," the aim of this study is to explore the idea that an individual cannot be a speaking member of the Symbolic Order, thus of the society unless s/he obeys the prohibitions/commands of language, a concept on which both Pinter and Lacan put great emphasis in their own vision. For Pinter human beings lead a life controlled by some unknown powers and build a disastrous subjective world devoid of linguistic competence. As for Lacan, language imprisons, castrates and pushes the subject into a claustrophobic world, which is portrayed strikingly by Pinter. The

result is equally impressive; for Lacan: neurosis or psychosis, oscillating between the Orders/Registers of the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real, not possessing an assigned role in the community, and for Pinter: an absurd world where there is no meaning but a sense of loss. Lacan's explanation for the reasons of this absurd world focuses on two significant factors : the m(O)ther, who meets the basic needs in the Imaginary Order/stage of infancy and who introduces the Father to the child, and the Father, who will enable the child to obey the prohibitions of language, and thus to secure the child's adulthood.

Throughout the study the points which will be highlighted are as follows: the characteristics of the absurd drama, the place of Harold Pinter in the contemporary theatre and the justification of a Lacanian reading, subjectivity's constitution.

Keywords: Absurd Drama, Pinter, Lacan, Language, the Symbolic, the Imaginary, the Real Orders/Registers, subjectivity, humanization.

ÖZ

HAROLD PINTER'IN "YUVAYA DÖNÜŞ," "KAPICI" VE "GİT GEL DOLAP" ADLI OYUNLARINDA DİLİN TERKEDİLİŞİ: LACAN'CI BİR İNCELEME

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Harold Pinter'in "Yuvaya Dönüş," "Kapıcı" ve "Git Gel Dolap" adlı oyunlarına dayandırılarak, bu çalışmadaki amaç, bireyin, hem Pinter'in hem de Lacan'ın kendi bakış açılarından önemle vurguladığı dilin yasaklamalarına, emirlerine uymadığı takdirde, Simgesel düzenin, dolayısıyla toplumun konuşan bir üyesi olamayacağını incelemektir. Pinter'e göre, insanlar bilinmeyen güçlerce yönetilen bir yaşam sürdürürler ve dilsel yeterlilikten yoksun yıkıcı bir öznel dünya yaratırlar. Lacan'a göre ise, dil bireyi hapseder, kastre eder ve Pinter'in da çarpıcı olarak betimlediği klastrofobik bir dünyaya iter. Sonuç aynı derecede etkileyicidir: Lacan'a göre; nevroz veya psikoz, Simgesel, Yansıtma ve Gerçek düzenleri/kayıtları arasında gidip gelmek, toplumda atanmış bir role sahip olmamak. Pinter'a göre ise; anlamın

olmadığı ama kayıp duygusunun olduğu absürd bir dünya. Bu absürd dünyanın sebepleriyle ilgili Lacan'ın açıklaması iki önemli faktör üzerinde odaklanır: Yansıtma düzenindeki/çocukluk evresindeki temel ihtiyaçları karşılayan ve babayı çocukla tanıştıran anne, ve çocuğun dilin yasaklarına uymasını, böylece yetişkin hayatını sağlıklı geçirmesini sağlayacak olan baba.

Bu çalışma boyunca incelenecek konular şöyledir: Absürd Tiyatro'nun özellikleri, çağdaş tiyatroda Harold Pinter'in yeri, Lacan'cı okumanın gerekçesi, benliğin kurulması.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Absürd Tiyatro, Pinter, Lacan, Dil, Sembolik, Yansıtma, Gerçek Düzenler/Kayıtlar, benlik, toplumsallaşma.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> *Truth in drama is forever elusive. You never quite find it but the search for it is compulsive. The search is clearly what drives the endeavour. The search is your task. More often than not you stumble upon the truth in the dark, colliding with it or just glimpsing an image or a shape which seems to correspond to the truth, often without realising that you have done so. But the real truth is that there never is any such thing as one truth to be found in dramatic art. There are many. These truths challenge each other, recoil from each other, reflect each other, ignore each other, tease each other, are blind to each other. Sometimes you feel you have the truth of a moment in your hand, then it slips through your fingers and is lost.*
>
> *Harold Pinter*[1]

The roots of a new movement, which was to be called the Theatre of the Absurd later, sprouted without getting its full name in the late nineteenth century in Paris. Schumacher informs that these roots can be found "in the plays of Alfred Jarry (1873–1907) and Guillaume Apollinaire (1880– 1918) and in the theories of Antonin Artaud (1896– 1948)" (467). The Theatre of the Absurd was also to be traced in such movements as Dadaism and surrealism[2] again in France in the 1920s. However, this movement's exact name was not coined until the critic Martin Esslin, who, in 1961, categorized the playwrights' works written in the 1950s under the Theatre of the

[1] Harold Pinter. The Nobel Lecture Thursday December 8, 2005

[2] Esslin takes Guillaume Apollinaire's play "*Les Mamelles de Tiresias* ('The Breasts of Tiresias') as an archetypal play for "a surrealist drama," a definition labelled by its author. In this play the action culminates to a series of "savagely grotesque images." The "hero, or rather the heroine changes sex by letting her breasts float towards the heavens in the shape of two toy balloons" (Esslin 1965). Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) and Roger Vitrac (1899-1952) are regarded as the two proponents of surrealism in drama in France.

Absurd. In fact, he derived the word absurd from the French philosopher Albert Camus's essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1942)[3], in which he found: "The feeling of the absurd can strike anyone round the corner of any street." Thus Esslin led the term "absurd" to be put "at the centre of philosophical debate and at the forefront of artistic reflection for the years to come" (Schumacher 465).

The dictionary definition of the term absurd is given in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as "against reason or common sense; clearly false or foolish; out of harmony with reason." Deleon states that the term means ridiculous in common English. However, he warns that this last usage of the term has nothing to do with that of the Theatre of the Absurd: "Absurdity is the attempt to find a rational explanation to an irrational existence" (1). For Ionesco the term meant to be "devoid of purpose" (qtd. in Deleon 1). For Hodgson the term means more or less the same: "the absence of valid moral categories, the insufficiency of reason" (128).

The movement can be taken as a response of the playwrights to the drastic collapse in the epistemological structure which had already started at the threshold of the century and which was triggered by the positive sciences in the first half of the century. Due to this collapse, the traditional belief that man lived in a secure world was replaced with a new perspective which put man under the dominance of "sub-human, cosmic and non-commonsensical powers" (Birlik 2000: 2). The result was man's discovery that he was no longer living in a secure world dominated by God. Instead, his world was now determined by "elemental powers" being controlled

[3] Albert Camus's "The Myth of Sisyphus" takes its story from a mythological figure called Sisyphus, who was condemned to an interminable punishment due to his attempt to deceive first Death and later Hades, the Lord of the Underworld, so that he could escape his inevitable demise. Sisyphus's guilt resulted from his disregarding the tradition of Greek hospitality by killing his guests. As a result, he was blinded and was sentenced to roll a giant boulder continually up a mountain to the peak. However, Sisyphus will never be able to stop his effort as the boulder would roll back down the mountain into the valley. In conclusion, Camus questions suicide and alternatives to it. He also questions the value of life through this myth by using it as a metaphor for life in his essay published in 1942 in France and 1955 in London. Camus intends to show the meaninglessness of life. Life has no value except the ones created by us. In short, is there any alternative that will hinder suicide in order not to face the futility inherent in the world? Thus, man's efforts are seen as futile, absurd just as life itself. So, it is meaningless to find the ultimate truth since the advances in science will prove the futility of the beliefs or opinions once accepted as irrefutable. Just as Sisyphus's endless and pointless labour, modern men spend their lives by working at pointless jobs such as in factories and/or offices.

neither by God nor by any transcendental power: "No longer could faith – Christianity- be seen as a unique or even necessary revelation" (Coote 12). Man no longer had a rational, integrated uniqueness and he was no longer "the mid-point of a concentric world" (Birlik 2000: 2). Instead he had to accept an "unstable identity in a decentred universe that was in a chaotic and multi-dimensional flux" (2).

To this early twentieth century instability was added the traumatic feeling of annihilation caused by the two World wars, which would later be enhanced by another threat; nuclear eradication. The consequences of the two great wars, equally distressing, led to a breakdown and a disappointment both in liberal faith and in the radical social revolution since Stalin turned out to be a tyrant. The century introduced another tyrant, Hitler, who dominated Europe during the Second World War, and brought mass murder, genocide and barbarism. The two great wars' consequences as the dissolution of the previously held certainties and the collapse of the firmest foundations for hope and optimism, in the outwardly prosperous societies of Western Europe and the United States, were experienced as spiritual emptiness, a sense of loss of meaning of the world in the second half of the century. Men found themselves in a universe which was "both frightening and illogical - in a word, absurd" (Esslin 1965). The result was a moral confusion, a collapse in cultural values, a discontinuity of the conventional viewpoint and beliefs, all of which led to a new movement: the Theatre of the Absurd,[4] which penetrated the second half of the century's plays especially after the second devastating trauma, the World War II.

When the pioneer French philosopher Albert Camus used the expression "the feeling of the absurd" in "The Myth of Sisyphus," he showed that feeling of "absurdity of the world" springs from "the confrontation between man's conscience, his consciousness, his thirst for rationality and the inert, irrational, unknowable world"

[4] A significant and perhaps strange fact about the pioneers of absurd drama is that "these playwrights are largely exiles from other countries domiciled in Paris:" Beckett (1906-1989) an Anglo-Irishman, who writes in French and translates his own works into English; Ionesco (1912-1994) half-French and half-Rumanian; Adamov (1908-1970) a Russo-Armenian. Jean Genet (1910-1986), Jean Tardieu (1903) and Boris Vian (1920-1959) are of French origins, but Genet has something in common with Beckett and Ionesco as he is an exile in a different sense: an exile from society itself, a child abandoned by his mother, brought up by foster-parents and drifting from detention centres for juvenile delinquents into an underworld of thieves and male prostitutes, prison and penitentiary. (Esslin 1965)

(qtd. in Schumacher 465). Ionesco gives expression to the predicament of the man in the second part of the century as follows: “Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless” (qtd. in Dukore 5). As a result, Norrish depicts a bleak atmosphere:

> all solutions offered by ideological theatre, whether Brechtian or not, were false solutions... In any case there is no solution, for the moment, to offer the human condition. Socialism as well as liberalism have failed. Life is unliveable.’
>
> (qtd. in Schumacher 469-470)

In such a context, a playwright:

> simply writes plays in which he can offer only a testimony, not a didactic message, that the true artist is expected to ask the right questions, not to offer ready-made solutions.
>
> (Schumacher 469)

The captivating paradox that Ionesco emphasized is voiced by another absurdist, Becket, as follows:

> The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express. (qtd. in Schumacher 470)

In accordance with his point of view, in *Waiting For Godot* Beckett presents the human condition as having not a promising future since that condition is lost in a hostile world because Godot, no matter what power it represents, will never keep its promises and manage to put humans in a state of ceaseless hope for his/her future. He will not put any meaning into his/her life.

This new movement reversed the traditional style that had been used in drama since Aeschylus, which had a strong, straightforward plot moving relentlessly to a meaningful conclusion, and which had convincingly portrayed and clearly drawn characters who were equipped with rhetorical dialogue. Their location was familiar, or if exotic, it was easily identifiable. However, the Theatre of the Absurd rejected all these traditions which aimed to create order out of disorder or which aimed to

construct meaning out of chaos. Instead, it preferred to face the chaos head-on (Schumacher 465).

Absurdist writers departed from the conventional aspect of time, space, plot, realistic characters, and situations. Instead, they put ambiguity /fluidity at the centre of their plays. They presented either no plots or plots with no meanings, and language was used in repetitive or nonsensical dialogues. As a result, not a torrent of words but silence as a new technique was employed in these plays. Kane interprets this new technique as a deliberate choice of the absurdists to communicate through the nonverbal expression of silence (13). Thus, silence became an "indispensable component of the text" (15):

> Beckett, Chekhov, Albee and Pinter are distinguished by their shocking retreat from the word, yield to temptation and authority of silence to express the unspoken and unspeakable.
>
> (Kane 14)

Absurdists' portrayal of this world as an arena of metaphysical tragedy involves no logic. Another aspect of an absurd play is its rejection of language as a means of communication. The reason behind this rejection is the absurdists' perception of language as unreliable and insufficient for communication. For them language is one of those collapsed closed systems which has an essentialist claim to give a total explanation of experience. As a result, being decentred and defunctioned, language fell from grace:

> from being a noble instrument of genuine communication language has become a kind of ballast filling empty spaces. And equally, in a universe that seems to be drained of meaning, the pompous and laborious attempts at explanation that we call philosophy or politics must appear as empty chatter.
>
> (Esslin 1965)

In fact, Absurd Drama makes fun of everyday speech and attempts to show what is hidden behind it. Therefore, for the absurdists the conventionalised or stereo-typed speech is a barrier which one should get rid of in order to grasp the essence of reality. In other words, Absurd Drama deals with not what has been said but with what has

not been revealed through the words. As a result, implied meaning gains importance rather than explicit utterances.

Absurd Drama presents a critique of language, yet on the other hand, it shares the primary preoccupation of contemporary philosophy concerning language. While the traditional usage of language with all those grammatical conventions hides the genuineness in human relationships, the absurd drama attempts to reflect language as a genuine instrument in its inverted style in the attempt to reach reality. These dramatists suggest that real conversation of human beings embraces absurdity and nonsensicality, and they call the well-made play unrealistic. Because: "in a world that has become absurd, the Theatre of the Absurd is the most realistic comment on the most accurate reproduction of reality" (Esslin 1965).

Another aspect of an absurd play is its offloading dramatic conflict in the traditional sense. The reason for this lies in the supposition that such conflicts and clashes of personality are related to a rigid and permanent establishment. After all, in a meaningless/absurd world those conflicts also seem meaningless. The lack of a traditional dramatic conflict in an absurd play can also be explained by the lack of movement on the stage, unlike sequential events in a traditional play. That is why absurd drama may be called a theatre of situation.

In spite of the fact that Harold Pinter was at first condemned by both the audiences and the critics for the nature of his plays combining bewildering characters and dialogues, he is one of the dramatists who dominated the second half of the twentieth century and who has been the most influential English playwright since Bernard Shaw. Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1957), "The Caretaker" (1959), "The Homecoming" (1964), and "Old Times" (1970) gained the status of modern classics long before Pinter secured his own reputation as a great dramatist. However, Bock states that Pinter's plays after "The Homecoming" "have not reached the quality of his earlier plays… Nor have they been acted and analysed as often as the others" (180).

The place of Pinter[5] in British Drama was gradually but strongly secured after Absurd Drama was acknowledged as a distinct dramatic movement by critics in 1960, especially by Martin Esslin, in whose work the background and characteristics of absurd drama were demonstrated in a detailed analysis. Therefore, upon the introduction of such a new trend in the world of drama, both audiences and critics started to perceive the absurd dramatists' goals and to appreciate those works within their context of absurd qualities. Yet, since every new trend needs time to be digested, Pinter's plays faced quite contradictory reactions until they were accepted as classics of both Pinter and twentieth century drama.

Although Pinter can be regarded as a representative of Absurd Drama, his works are associated with many other things. Thus Randisi drives the nail home when he groups Pinter's drama under different headings:

> Harold Pinter has been equated with the theatre of the absurd, of cruelty, of situation and the comedy of menace. His work has been called naturalistic, realistic, existential, supra-realistic, impressionistic and compressionistic. (61)

Pinter has been noted for his own style of using some elements in such a dexterous way that his techniques as well as his themes are equally accepted as his hallmarks: his characters' breakdown of communication either deliberately or accidentally; their understatement contracted or coded talk and silence; the nameless menace situated in the centre of their lives; their obsessions and jealousy; and their mental disturbance.

Pinter has abandoned traditional usage of language and rationality, but has benefited from the other elements of the traditional drama. In other words, Pinter used the everyday/ordinary speech, realistic characters or situations so skilfully that one

---

[5] Schumacher attracts the attention to some absurd dramatists (including Harold Pinter), who have a tendency to write "straightforward political" plays in their later career (471). These absurdists, in their later career, attempted to depict not the absurdity of man's condition but a political picture of the contemporary world:

> Like Sartre, Genet and Adamov, all in their different ways, Pinter has left behind metaphysical speculations about man's place in the universe to grapple with the more immediate problems of how to live and survive in a precarious political situation. (471)

cannot grasp the immediate meaning or logic although the play has a real atmosphere. This is expressed in Esslin's words as follows:

> Harold Pinter, whose uncanny accuracy in the reproduction of real conversation among English people has earned him the reputation of having a tape-recorder built into his memory, reveals that the bulk of everyday conversation is largely devoid of logic and sense, is in fact nonsensical. (Esslin 1965)

The logical starting point for an examination of a Pinter play would be the combination of realism with the world of absurd. Pinter himself admits that he creates realistic situations in which the characters, their actions and the dialogue between them turn out to be unrealistic.

First and foremost, Pinter situates his characters in a concrete setting: a room, or a house, or a close shelter symbolising "warmth and protection against a threatening world, but [which] is a prison and a threat in itself" (Bock 171). In that room the characters are dominated by the feelings of "loneliness, bewilderment, separation and loss: themes that recur in all his works" (Billington 6). Stephen Gale states that Pinter's first play "The Room" (1957), a comedy of menace, functions as a tone for the rest of Pinter's works (320). Through the woman character, Rose, the sense of insecurity and uncertainty is revealed by her fear of being thrown out of the room she inhabits. Pinter's characters are absolutely afraid of the outer world so that they choose to create their own worlds with their own rules rather than observe the rules of the external world outside the room, which would most probably secure their place or peace in that world/room.

One can say that the room or the shelter inhabited by Pinter's characters has close affinities with the symbiotic relationship between the mother and the child, the child's "fear of being born" (Bock 171). After all, before birth, the child is protected in the mother's womb and after the birth the infant is provided with his/her basic needs, demands until the time s/he communicates these needs and demands via language. Entrance into language signals that it is time for the child for a long, hard and necessary process in order to get out of the room/to separate from the mother.

In this respect, there is a strong parallelism between the setting of the room as a shelter for Pinter's characters and Lacan's theory about the child's integration into the Symbolic Order. The child is frightened to face the threatening world, where s/he will have to be forced to separate from the mother and to accept the rules of the world or, in Lacan's terms, the rules of language. On the other hand, if the child refuses to be born into the Symbolic Order/ to be separated from the mother, the child will be doomed to be trapped in another world. Likewise, Pinter's characters are, as in Bock's words; "obsessed with both being driven out of the protective womb and not being able to leave it" (171-172).

While the room symbol is associated with the mother, a female symbol, Pinter's plays also present a patriarchal aspect, which is another justification for a Lacanian reading because of Lacan's emphasis on the father figure, the Law or the Name of the Father. In other words, Pinter combines both the maternal and the paternal aspects regardless of the characters' numbers or the genders in his plays. Although in many of Pinter's plays, there are no or very few female figures, in contrast to male ones, on the stage, the presence of a woman (generally a whore or a mother or both) is almost always felt, at least in the characters' memory. Even though the play is dominated by males, the existence or influence of women is always present at the background: In "The Homecoming," Max had a brother, three sons, three grandsons and a dead but always present wife as well as Ruth, in "The Caretaker" Mick has a brother, who brings a male tramp to his junk-filled attic where the need for a caretaker representing the primordial mother figure is discussed in the second chapter of this study, in "The Dumb Waiter" there are two male characters but the closed shelter can be seen as a maternal symbol since the characters are imprisoned there and are anxious about the external world, in *The Birthday Party* Stanley is treated like a son while Meg plays the role of the mother. In "The Room" Rose assumes the role of the mother while Bert is treated by Rose like her child. In other words, even if there is no woman, there is the room as a symbol for the woman either as a mother or as a whore or sometimes both just like Jessie and Ruth in "The Homecoming," or Sarah in "The Lover" (1963).

Just like the constant use of the "room" there are other typical elements of Pinter's plays: at the centre of the play there hangs the existence of an ambiguity, the source of which is not known until the very end or even after that. This ambiguity creates a sense of menace, strengthened by three dots, silences, pauses, or a wilful refusal for communication by the characters, whose identity, autonomy, sense of past and future are unstable or without any sound evidence. One other element which threatens these characters and makes the inherent ambiguity even more powerful is the theme of an intruder, who may come from outside the room or turn out to be one(s) of the inhabitants of the room. Thus that sense of menace leads into a question of power and violence, evoked powerfully by Pinter's use of some dramatic theatrical elements such as blackouts and/or fading lights.

The intrinsic ambiguity in a Pinter play causes these plays to be defined as comedy of menace, a term first applied to *The Birthday Party* by Irving Wardle in 1958 (Dukore 25). Pinter's plays cover comic passages, whose nature also evokes a sense of menace, mystery, evasion, implying an urge to conceal something about the characters. Dukore's remark about the nature of menace in Pinter's plays is quite appropriate: these plays generally start with comedy but later "turn to physical, psychological, or potential violence" (26). Likewise, Albert R. Braunmuller points out the physical aspect of menace:

> Real or imagined objects and factual attributes of the environment achieve "menace" when they become instruments of aggression. The rather garish pistols of *The Dumb Waiter* give way to more terrifyingly ordinary objects- a vacuum cleaner and a statue ["The Caretaker"] or a glass of water and a cheese roll ["The Homecoming"]. (157)

As for the comic effects of menace, the dialogue between Rose and Mr Kidd ("The Room") about the number of floors in that house evokes the comedy that Pinter aims at because Mr Kidd does not remember the number of the floors since he no longer counts them. On the other hand, the comic effect of *The Birthday Party* is created by Meg's stupidity and inability to comprehend the meaning of what happens around her, let alone her own reality. The same comic effect is also valid for "The Dumb

Waiter" since these people are beyond grasping the correlation between the signifier and signified in their closed world.

The roots of menace in Pinter's plays are unspecified and devoid of realistic explanations. That is why a disturbing situation is created because of this intense obfuscation. The menace generally comes from outside as in "The Room," *The Birthday Party,* "The Homecoming," "The Caretaker," "The Dumb Waiter." In all these plays an intruder with a menacing power over the other characters is ushered into that closed shelter or more specifically into the claustrophobic world of the characters. The nature of this menace prepares also a ground for a Lacanian reading because menace can be interpreted as language, or the Real, which are the constituent elements of human subjects and which are in a constant clash with each other. The subjects suffer from a false sense of security which is concentrated on their relationship to language. That is language both in a Lacanian sense and in traditional sense poses a threat to these characters. Bernard F. Dukore explains this as follows:

> Because events and actions are unexplained, and apparently illogical or unmotivated, the world seems capricious or malevolent. One can rely upon nothing. What is apparently secure is not secure. A haven does not protect. A weapon vanishes without warning. Linguistic absurdity may suggest the absurdity of the human condition. (Dukore 27)

Obviously, the haven that Dukore refers to is language which Lacan defines as something central in human's life. Pinter's characters cannot access language with its multiple dimensions, thus they suffer from psychological deficiency. Language appears as an ambiguous power dominating and throwing them into a kind of claustrophobic world where they turn into frantic figures. They struggle with that unknown power, trying to get rid of it. In the end they submit and they feel lost in this process of struggle as they do not know anything about the power's nature.

The menace created in his plays has an effective unsettling quality which has become Pinter's hallmark. His particular use of menace turned his name into an adjective: "his work is so singular that the word 'Pinteresque' describes those situations fraught with menacing ambiguity…" (Fletcher 18). Under the pressure of menace, Pinter's

characters attempt desperately to protect themselves and impose their power over another. For Fletcher these "rearguard attempts" are not "mere verbal skirmishes," but "strategic campaigns in the battle for position, in the struggle for dominance and subservience" (21). The characters are in a constant battle for power: Lenny and Ruth in "The Homecoming," Mick and Davies in "The Caretaker," Spooner in "No Man's Land," Goldberg in *The Birthday Party* and several other characters. They:

> want people or places, or both, under their control, in their power. They know, many of them, how to manipulate situations to their advantage; they manoeuvre, some of them, with great flair and cunning. (Nightingale 141)

Another aspect of power is defined by Ruby Cohn, for whom Pinter's plays exhibit "bitter dramas of dehumanization" and "the religion and society which have traditionally structured human morality are, in Pinter's plays, the immoral agents which destroy the individual" (qtd. in Nightingale 139). Pinter depicts this kind of power as an ambiguous entity whose source is unspecified: Goldberg and McCann, in *The Birthday Party,* come to take Stanley to Monty in order to integrate Stanley into the rules or commands of a power, the identity of which is not mentioned. Another ambiguous entity creating an unknown power is seen in "The Dumb Waiter;" the identity of that power is interpreted as the voice of the Real in Lacanian terms in the third chapter of this thesis.

The reason why some characters are more powerful than the others lies in the fact that they use language more skilfully than the others as well as their possession of a potentiality for physical violence when necessary. The connotations of Mick's question to Davies in "The Caretaker"- "What's the game?" (27)- reflect very well the characters' refusal for any other power or manipulation in their realm. As in Almansi's perfect diagnosis of their linguistic ability, "language reigns supreme" (63) for all these authoritarian characters. According to Almansi, Pinter appears to be concerned with stamping out "the inner world of the soul, intimate thoughts, of memories and desires." Yet all these efforts to resist "the realm of private language" function only to serve the emergence of a subtext about "the ideas, emotions, feelings, amorous longings" (63). At this point Almansi complements Pinter as: "The

only writer who has transformed psychological depth and inwardness into an insult…" (64). Davies in "The Caretaker" epitomizes this kind of insult at the hands of Mick while, in fact, he is under the illusion of sharing his opinions about Aston.

Penelope Prentice attracts attention to one of the most remarkable qualities of Pinter's work: "our attention is captured each moment" because of a conflict not "between idealized good pitted against embodied evil" but "one which arises from each character's desire for attention, respect approval, some affection and love from another" (1994: 141). This conflict for the Desire to be recognised or to be in the field of the other's vision as a subject is extremely important in Pinter.

In the course of the plays the characters try to evade their inabilities or inferiorities by trying to remember or remind the others of their past, where they feel secure or as a recognised subject. Stanley in *The Birthday Party* boasts about how great an artist he was as a musician while Max boasts about how dreadful he and MacGregor ("The Homecoming") were when they were young. However, Pinter warns the audiences that they should not trust everything that a character reveals about his/her past. Memory does not always tell the truth. Anna's statement about the past in "Old Times" can be taken as a perfect motto for nearly all of Pinter's plays:

> There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened, but as I recall them so they take place.
>
> (Bock: 180)

Pinter's plays pose diverse questions about dream, memory, credibility of reality, the Desire to be recognised, the notion of power as well as language and all these questions point to the same source: the character(s)' identity and his/her relationship with the external world. This gives one the necessary grounds to apply Lacanian theory, which explores human subjectivity and its formation processes in the domain of language, to Pinter's work. As will be analysed in the subsequent chapters, Pinter's characters are the victims of failure to establish their subjectivity in Lacanian terms. In a Lacanian universe, if the subject misses the process in its own frame in his/her personal evolution, he is bound to suffer from the inevitable results, whose

effects will be felt or seen throughout the subjects' lives. In fact Pinter's characters in "The Homecoming," "The Caretaker" and "The Dumb Waiter" try to come to terms with these inevitable results. From the very beginning until the very end, textual hints reveal that these characters could not position themselves in the Symbolic Order in Lacanian terms. In other words, all these characters have been unable to go through the stages of infancy on their way to enculturation successfully: they either refused to obey or could not gain the commands or prohibitions of language as the symbolic representation of reality. Goldberg's advice to MacCann, in *The Birthday Party* seems to underline the significances of the commands of language: "Play up, play up, and play the game. Honour thy father and thy mother. All along the line. Follow the line, the line… you can't go wrong" (77). As a result of their inability to "follow the line," these characters possess some dramatic fundamental developmental disorders. That is why Pinter's characters seem to be unbelievable or unacceptable figures, they are in fact suffering from different mechanisms of psychosis or neurosis. Therefore, throughout this study on "The Homecoming," "The Caretaker" and "The Dumb Waiter" I am going to focus on the characters to display their drives /aspirations/fears which show strong evidence of the fact that they are not positioned appropriately in the Symbolic Order, the domain of language.

The intersection between Pinter and Lacan is their primary concentration on language: Pinter, like other absurd dramatists, avoids using language in the traditional sense. He preferred to capture everyday/ordinary speech, and tried to portray an authentic picture of reality through his inverted use of language, as in real life he employed; pauses, silences, contracted forms, repetitions and inverted statements, all of which function as a kind of defence mechanism by the characters either intentionally or unintentionally. However, this authentic picture of the reality leads one to the deeper recesses of the character where man loses his/her sense of discipline over meaning and thus language in traditional sense dissolves. S/he no longer needs pompous words to communicate, as the word and the world do not match any more.

Lacan, too, problematizes the traditional concept of language and bases all his theories on the central assumption that language is the main constituent element in identity formation. He points out its arbitrariness and constructedness. He too challenges the Cartesian ego of a stable identity which can make rational decisions. The lack of a properly shaped subjectivity within the commands/prohibitions of language will lead the subjects into a total confusion about their own present condition and that of the culture s/he belongs to. That is to say, both for Lacan and Pinter, language in its traditional sense is decentred or defunctionalized and both prefer to look "awry" in Žižek's terms at this phenomenon.

Devoid of the sanctions of language, Pinter's characters have created a claustrophobic world for themselves where discipline of place is kept whereas discipline of time is shattered to some extent. The destructive consequences of this shattered world are depicted both by Pinter and by Lacan in different ways, but they serve to a common point: In this universe, these characters are forced to live not as speaking members of the society they inhabit but as deformed men living in the margins. Pinter dramatizes these margins and his characters become more comprehensible when one gives them a Lacanian hearing. They are presented as rootless subjects having no subjectivity, and oscillating between the three Orders; the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. At this point it is necessary to define the importance of language in human beings' lives for Lacan.

For Lacan there is a symbiotic tie between the Symbolic Order and language; and language and the identity formation processes of an infant. Lacan says that; "man speaks, then, but it is because the symbol has made him a man" (1977: 65). According to him, it is these symbols that "envelop the life of a man in a network so total that" these symbols:

> join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him 'by flesh and blood;... so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he *is* not yet and even beyond his death;... where the Word absolves his being or condemns it.... (1977: 68)

For Lacan "it was certainly the Word *(verbe)* that was in the beginning" and the subjects dwell in "its creation, but it is the action of our spirit that continues this creation by constantly renewing it" (1977: 61). He maintains the importance of language in humans' life as:

> no one is supposed to be ignorant of the law ... since the law of the man has been the law of language since the first words of recognition presided over the first gifts. (1977: 61)

Lacan designates in his *Écrits* that "it is the language that seizes desire at the very moment in which it is humanized by making itself recognized, it is absolutely particular to the subject" (1977: 81). In other words, language having a castrating and imprisoning effect on subjects is the keyword in the construction of subjectivity, thus for the enculturation / humanization of the subject. So, "language and social laws" shape the subject in their own frames (Lemaire 179).

According to Lacanian theories, if this determination is not achieved appropriately, the subject is not to be in conformity with the norms of culture and will have fundamental problems in being a speaking member of the Symbolic Order as s/he will be trapped between the Imaginary and the Symbolic or will lead a life in the Imaginary Order, a plane experienced at infancy before entering into language. Thus, "to ignore this Symbolic Order is to condemn the discovery to oblivion, and the experience to ruin" (Lacan 1977: 64).

It might be illuminating to give a brief account of historical evolution of Lacan's theories, which help to analyse Pinter's characters' depth in their claustrophobic world: In "An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis" Dylan Evans, a Lacanian psychoanalyst, emphasizes the two different corresponding French equivalences for Lacan's use of language; *langue* and *langage*. Evans states that these uses of language in Lacan's seminars as *langue* is used to specify a certain language like German, French, English, Turkish etc. whereas *langage* stands for the system of language in its general meaning, having no connection with a specific language. Therefore, Evans warns the researchers to be meticulous in order not to confuse the two terms. Lacan's interest in language -*langage*- results from two

reasons; the first is the psychotic language of a paranoiac woman named Aimée, who became the source of Lacan's doctoral dissertation and the second is the surrealist poetry.

Evans designates four different periods for the process of development in Lacan's use of language as opposed to Madan Sarup, who outlines Lacan's theory in three periods: the first period is between 1936 and 1949, in which Lacan stressed the constitutive function of language. Later on Lacan points out that without taking into consideration this function of language, one cannot understand deeply the reason(s) of madness. In this period Hegel's influence can be discerned in Lacan's work. Mirror phase, the importance and differences between need, demand and Desire are introduced by Lacan during this first period.

The second phase, between 1950 and 1954, underlines the importance of language as Lacan emphasizes in this period that language has a central position in subjectivity. As a result, this dominance of language will have an impact on Lacan's theories, which reflect also the influence of different phenomenologists like Heidegger, different anthropologists or linguists like Maus, Malinowski and Lévi-Strauss. During this phase is pointed out the difference between langage and parole, the meaning of which changes as a word or speech[6] (Evans 96-98).

[6] Lacan makes a difference between empty speech and full speech. The former represents the language of the Imaginary and the latter the language of the Desire. Empty speech occurs "where" the subject in question seems "to be talking in vain about someone who, even if he were his spitting image, can never become one with the assumption of his desire" (1977: 45). However, this kind of speech should not be considered in terms of its surface meaning. Lacan maintains that "the existence of communication" is realized even if there is nothing to grasp: "even if it denies the evidence, it affirms that constitutes truth; even if it is intended to deceive, the discourse speculates on faith in testimony" (1977: 43).

On the other hand, in Lacan's own definition, full or true speech is "the language that seizes desire at the very moment in which it is humanized by making itself recognized, it is absolutely particular to the subject" (1977: 81). According to Lacan, this kind of speech "already contains its own reply," thus the only thing done is "to confer on the subject's speech its dialectical punctuation" (1977: 95).

One important element about full speech is its necessity as a cure for a neurotic. Thus, full speech provides "the integration into the normal thread of discourse of a speech" (Lemaire 228).

Lacan's motto "the unconscious is structured like a language" is developed between 1955 and 1970, which is the starting date for language to be the centre of Lacan's work. In this period the impacts of Saussure and Jakobson are discerned. In contrast to Saussure's argument indicating sign as the basic unit of language, signifier is stressed by Lacan as the basic unit. Absent object is meant by sign whereas chain of language is meant by signifier for Lacan. Lacan derives the concepts metaphor and metonymy from Roman Jakobson. Metaphor stands for the substitution of one signifier for another, which is condensation in Freudian terms, and illuminates the idea of symptom, whereas metonymy refers to displacement in Freudian theory. Lacan puts forward that a "signifying game between metonymy and metaphor, ... is played until the match is called, there where I am not, because I cannot situate myself there" (1977: 166). In addition, Evans points out that Lacanian concept of discourse as a sort of social bond emerges and is developed during this third phase.

The last and fourth phase emerges from 1971 onwards, presenting Lacan's tendency to show the ambiguity of language. In this period Lacan himself coins some terms such as *lalangue* to indicate the non-communicative aspect of language. According to Lacan one-to-one correspondence between sign and referent or between signifier and signified is unstable, which explains the inherent ambiguity of language (Evans 96-98).

An important warning made by Evans is not to accept the Symbolic Order as the synonym with language since language has two dimensions, one of which stands for the Symbolic for the signifier and true/full speech, and the second for the Imaginary for signified, signification and empty speech (96-98). As language has connections both with the Symbolic and the Imaginary, it is a must for an infant to live first in the Imaginary and then "to pass through it if he is to become a social being, a member of society" (Lemaire 54). Anika Lemaire emphasizes this effect of language as "language is the vehicle of a social given, a culture, prohibitions and laws." Entering into the Symbolic Order "with its multiple dimensions," the child "will be fashioned by this order and will be indelibly marked by it without being aware of it" (54). Through language the subject is constituted and integrated into an enculturation

process of a social and ethical system, and in this process "the symbolic register of language is particularly vital for the 'subject'" (57). Furthermore, Lemaire maintains that "access to socio-cultural symbolism, to a socialized existence, is realized by going beyond the Oedipal drama" (57). Therefore, Lacan's rewriting of Freud's theory of Oedipus Complex plays a significant role in a subject's accession to language, that is the Symbolic realm.

Before the infant lives through the Oedipal Complex, there occurs his imaginary relationship with his mother, a stage called the mirror phase, upon which "human subjectivity is based" (Sarup 63). This subjectivity has to be understood as an "identification in the full sense:"

> the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image - whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term *imago*. (Lacan 1977: 2)

Therefore, Lacan holds that between this "function of the *imago*" and that of the mirror-stage there occurs a particular case in that via *imago* is established "a relation between the organism and its reality." Yet, Lacan defines every human being's birth as premature since the connection to "nature is altered by a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism." Thus there lies "a primordial Discord betrayed by the signs of uneasiness and motor unco-ordination of the neo-natal months" (1977: 4). This phase takes place while the infant is between six and eighteen months during which s/he has not fully mastered its own body. The child finds itself in front of a mirror and sees its own reflection and then turns around to see an Other, which plays the role of verification for its existence as there is a self and other. Sarup maintains that "this is the action upon which all subjectivity is based, the moment in which the human individual is born" (64).

In one of the articles of *Reading Seminar XI,* Antonio Quinet designates the mirror stage as the place where the ego is formed and has a relation with the "fellow being at the centre of its constitution. In addition, this fellow being is "the prototype of the mirror stage, and its specular order is marked like the scopic order, which is the

register of the gaze" (140). Thus, two worlds are created; one is the world of images and the latter stands for the invisible. While the former represents "an imaginary perceptual order" in which there are images, the other corresponds to the "Real" in which drives are dominant. All this process about the world of images is realized in the mirror stage. Thus, this stage's importance lies in the fact that the mirror phase "entails consequences that range from the most secure normality to the most psychotic disintegration of the personality" (Sarup 64). As a result, the Imaginary gains its twofold importance as having a role in human genesis and a continuous role in the human psyche.

In *Écrits* Lacan calls the mirror stage as a "drama whose internal thrusts is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation" (1977: 4). Insufficiency stands for the fact that child's basic needs are provided by its mother and anticipation for the child's expectation to see its own body as an adult. At this moment an important development will occur on the part of the child since the child, in quest for being a subject, will need a structure which "encloses and alienates" (Sarup 65). Therefore, being a subject involves a dilemma or paradox; the child becomes a subject or gets an identity but, at the same time, he becomes alienated or is the prisoner of that identity as a result of which he reaches a position in a group as a member, and in his family as the bearer of the family name.

The reason why this identification process is important while studying the subject's accession to his subjectivity is because "it is through the Imaginary that the subject's ego (*le moi*, "the me") comes into being, as Judith Feher Gurewich expresses in her article "Who's Afraid of Jacques Lacan?" (22). Thus it is seen that the ego is a thing produced, not a thing innate and it is produced as a result of an identification with another object, which plays the role of a mirror and causes the child to create an Ideal-I, that is the ideal-ego. This is also called the imaginary identification in which a subject identifies with an image representing what s/he would like to be. To put all these definitions about the ego into a nutshell, the Imaginary:

> is the world, the register, of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined. It is the pre-linguistic, pre-Oedipal

> domain in which the specular image traps the subject in an illusory ideal of completeness. (Sarup 66)

So, it may be inferred that at the heart of the ego there lies a frustration. Lacan explains this frustration as "not of a desire of the subject, but frustration by an object in which" that Desire "is alienated and which the more it is elaborated, the more profound the alienation from his *Jouissance* becomes for the subject" (1977: 42).

Sarup indicates that, due to unconscious mechanisms, *Jouissance* and death are the two elements of prohibitions for the speaking subject. For Lacan *Jouissance* is associated with the "ecstatic or orgasmic enjoyment- an exquisite pain – of something or someone." So the term *Jouissance* does not just mean excessive enjoyment but a feeling beyond pleasure. In Sarup's words: "it also refers to those moments when too much pleasure is pain." As a result, *Jouissance* should not be thought as "pleasure in pain," which connotes masochism but an unconscious pleasure causing pain. Sarup gives an example for this pain caused by *Jouissance*: "while listening to music the other day I burst out crying without knowing why." So, with the pain coming from pleasure is *Jouissance*. However, it should be noted that *Jouissance* stops its function when it is consciously experienced since at that time that feeling is associated with mere pleasure. Again in Sarup's terms: "*Jouissance* occurs when physical fun becomes unphysical pleasure." Similar to death, *Jouissance* signifies "something whose limits cannot be overcome" (99-100). The place of *Jouissance* is defined by Lacan in the following way:

> 'I' am in the place from which a voice is heard clamouring 'the universe is a defect in the purity of Non-Being.'
> And not without reason, for by protecting itself this place makes Being itself languish. This place is called *Jouissance*, and it is the absence of this that makes the universe vain.
> (Lacan 1977: 317)

Alenka Zupančič defines that subjects "experience *Jouissance* as strange, dissimilar, other, and hostile. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" compels me to love "that most neighborly of neighbors who is inside me," my *Jouissance* (1998: 43-44).

After the constitution of the imaginary identification, there occurs another identification called the Symbolic in which the ego-ideal emerges. While the ideal-ego represents the model related to infantile narcissism,[7] the ego-ideal represents "an agency of the personality resulting from the coming together of narcissism (idealisation of the ego) and identification with parents, or with their substitutes" (Sarup 102). Thus, there is a difference between two forms of identification of the ego as the secondary identification, the symbolic one, points out a place from where the subject is observed whereas the imaginary identification indicates how the subject looks at himself/herself. Sarup states that the emergence of "specular ego" in the Imaginary is important as:

> It [ego] arises with the mirror phase but extends far into the adult individual's experience of others and of the external world. Wherever a false identification is to be found - within the subject or between one subject and another or between subject and thing – there the Imaginary holds sway. It can be thought as a kind of garment, the first layer of which is armour. The Imaginary performs the function of méconnaissance (misrecognition) and is to be distinguished from knowledge (connaissance). (101)

The thing that causes misrecognition is the ego, whose function is "to misunderstand" as "Lacan argues that the ego is structured by compulsive false connections" (Sarup 63). Judith Feher Gurewich's description of misrecognition in Lacanian terms needs to be quoted as it reveals why it should be directed to transference to get rid of its effects:

> The fact that we believe we are the sole engineers of our thoughts and feelings, that we believe we are autonomous and cohesive individuals in control of our actions, that we think we know why we seek analytic treatment...these aspects of experience are what Lacan calls méconnaissance or misrecognition .... But as the transference unfolds méconnaissance becomes more fragile. ...We realize that we not only speak but that we are also spoken by invisible laws that run through our discourse and our affects, shaping our conscious

[7] Each stage in the process of becoming, in which man fashions his world by assuming his original rent (*déchirement*), is marked by a sacrifice bordering upon suicide. The narcissistic identification with the mirror image already reveals this tendency on the part of man, as he alienates himself in a double, just as the Narcissus of legend fell into the water and drowned trying to rejoin his image. (Lemaire 181)

> life, linking us to others in ways we cannot perceive or understand. (7-8)

The ego leads the subject to misunderstand as a result of "compulsive false connections." Thus it seems that "it [ego] must be profoundly distrusted because it [ego] is unable to discriminate the subject's own desires from the desires of others" (Sarup 72). Desire is important for Lacan because through Desire there is a dialectic between self and other because with Desire the subject is introduced with "I." When the subject desires something, that Desire, in fact, symbolizes a Desire for recognition.

However recognition causes a fight in terms of dialectic in which the victory is not to kill the opponent but the autonomy of the rival since the winner aims at fighting to be recognised by the other. Thus, the loser is declined to the state of slave while the winner achieves the state of master. All this takes us to Hegelian thought, according to which man's humanity is realised only when he is recognised by another. Yet, in this fight for recognition, if one of the adversaries is killed by the other, then, there will be no one to recognise the other. Indeed, there will be nobody left to recognise the master's existence or his superiority. So, the real victory is not to kill but to defeat 'dialectically,' which is the keyword in the master-slave relationship. As a result, one of them must be enslaved by the other in order to achieve the state of master. On the other hand, while the master imposes his power onto the other, the master's inferior, the slave, already accepts this superiority as this recognition will provide human reality and dignity. However, as opposed to the master's being recognised by the slave, the master does not attach the same value to the slave. While the master does not change or progress, there is no reason for the slave not to change or progress as his wish is to gain autonomy. Having been degraded into the inferior position, the slave is forced to work by the master. However, as opposed to the master, the slave, through slavery, has the chance of attaining his autonomy as he surmounts his fear of death through his service (Sarup 33-34).

Lacan's warnings about the master-slave relationship should, nevertheless, be remembered as this relation does not have anything to do with the "domestication of

man by man." In contrast, the master's only reason in this struggle is to get "pure prestige" (Sarup 33), by which he poses a risk for his life. By means of this risk he gains superiority or is recognised as the master by the slave. However, this recognition does not mean much for the master as it is a slave not a man who has recognised him.[8] In other words, the master does not accept the slave as a man.

Within the frame of this master/slave relationship, "Desire" gains its importance as it signifies a Desire for the Other. The triad "need, demand and Desire" follows each other consecutively due to the child's psychic development but Desire is much more important for Lacan as through this term the child is able to enter the Symbolic Order if s/he could follow Lacanian path to enculturation.

The child wishes to be the Phallus for the mother as it thinks that the mother wishes what she lacks, the Phallus. However it is a must not to forget that just as no father is needed for the Symbolic Father in order to be a speaking member of the Symbolic Order, no Phallus can be possessed by any father because both have Symbolic dimensions. Phallus signifies a third person's entering into the dual relationship between the mother and the child. The third person is the father who symbolizes the Name or the Law-of-the-Father. But, as mentioned before, this should be understood as the Symbolic Father not the real father. In other words, the child should accept the Law-of-the-Father through his mother. That Law stands for the prohibition of incest, a law which initiates the foundation of social life. With the prohibition of incest, the child is forced to accept the Father's Law, which is an indication for the child to accept his separation from the mother as well as to accept his father's intervention to his relationship with his mother. Thus, it becomes a must for the child to resolve the Oedipus Complex in order to gain his/her subjectivity. Gurewich assures that it

[8] Whereas there is no transformation on the part of the master, the opposite occurs for the slave since it is the slave who must work on the benefits of his master. On the other hand, the master demands not only recognition and respect but also work/labour from the slave. Moreover, the slave has to be within the rules of the game which is created and played by the master:

> However, this situation [master/slave relation] does unfold further. Its point of departure, being imaginary, is hence mythical. But its extensions lead us on to the symbolic plane. You know the extensions – that is what makes us speak of the master and the slave. (Lacan 1988:223)

should not be understood that the child wants to have sex with his/her mother: "It is rather that the submission to the law of culture implies that the child has to be cut off from the maternal realm in order to become a speaking subject in its own right" (15).

To put all these into a nutshell, the importance of entering into the domain of language, which is there even before the child's birth, is centred on the child's resolution of the Oedipus Complex, that is accepting the Name-of- the Father, which is the Phallus for the mother. Thus, to enter the language includes a process causing primal repression, "yet what is being repressed are not the drives per se but the signifiers that were attached to them and that originated in the desire of the other" (Gurewich 16). Thus, if the child undergoes the necessary experience of the loss of his/her mother, that is his/her first frustration, as this means that the child is now out of the field of the mother's Desire. So, the father's intervention is a must for the child to get out of this field. On the other hand, what is needed is not only the real father's intervention but also the Symbolic Father's because the child's frustration experience is not related to the presence of a father but to the acceptance of the Law he signifies via the mother or the mother's substitute. Marc Silverstein defines the place and importance of the Symbolic Father as:

> an "identity" articulated through the cultural codes and master tropes of patriarchy, the privileged signifying position in which patriarchal ideology locates what Roland Barthes terms "the hallucinatory attributes of the Father: power, fascination, instituting authority, terror, power to castrate." (77)

In Lacanian terms, the child's being a successful speaking member of the social life is dependent upon its acceptance of the father's Law or the Father's Name, through which the child experiences the fear of castration.

In the light of Lacanian theory on the significance of language in determining subjectivity, this study, as is mentioned before, aims to set forth the harsh effects of language on Pinter's characters, as I believe it is their problematic relation to language which causes Pinter's characters to be defined by different critics as "gruesome," "horrible" or "inexplicable" or "nasty" or "difficult to understand their

motives, behaviour or attitude" and thus causes Pinter to be regarded as being cold or malicious towards his characters.

In the subsequent chapter, I hope to shed further light on certain Lacanian concepts like *langue* as a specific language, *langage* in its general meaning, mirror phase, gaze, the ego as the ideal-ego and ego-ideal, *Jouissance*, the Orders/Registers of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, the relationship between need, demand and Desire, master-slave relationship due to demand and Desire of the subjects, the place of the m(O)ther, Law or the Name of the Father, Oedipus Complex, castration, Phallus.

In the first chapter of this study, I will focus on "The Homecoming," which presents troubled characters in their attempts to position themselves in the Symbolic Order. Lacanian theory sheds further light on their failure to be a speaking member of their discourse, and the past and present implications of this failure. The characters' failure to insert themselves into the world of human relation will primarily be centred upon the m(O)ther figure and the Law.

In the second chapter, which focuses on "The Caretaker," I will problematize the identity of the caretaker, against the background of the characters' attempts to establish hegemony over others. The chapter also poses questions on the correlation between language as an intermediary and the identity markers of the caretaker. Also, the neurosis phenomenon will be explored with references to characters as it is one of the natural results of the failure to access language according to Lacanian discourse.

In the last chapter, on "The Dumb Waiter," Lacan's notions of signifier/signified as well as metaphor/metonymy and repetition automatism will be under focus with reference to Ben and Gus and to their inverted use of language. In contrast to the previous chapters where the other two Registers- the Symbolic and the Imaginary are emphasized, in this last chapter Lacan's third Register, the Real will be explored in full since the characters are partly dominated by this Register. Moreover, neurosis

will be further analysed since, like almost all Pinter's characters, Ben and Gus suffer from this phenomenon. The chapter will end with an analysis of the devastating aspect of the ideal ego [moi], which originates in infancy and causes misrecognition until the secondary identification in the Symbolic Order.

CHAPTER II

THE RETURN OF THE MOTHER IN "**THE HOMECOMING"**

Before you have managed to adjust yourself to living alone in your room - you're not really terribly fit and equipped to go out and fight the battles... which are fought mostly in abstractions in the outside world.
Harold Pinter[1]

Lacan builds all his theories on the central assumption that language is inherently bound up with the privilege of access to the discourse and has its own processes that any speaking being needs to undergo in order to position himself/herself as a member of the Symbolic Order. These processes are not easy as they have lots of multiple dimensions that have to be lived in accordance with the rules of the Orders that Lacan puts forward. As language exists even before the subject is born, the subject has no choice but to be subjugated to its rules. The speaking being of the Symbolic Order, therefore, first has to be equipped with the rules of language that dominates him/her the time s/he is born. In this chapter I will try to give a Lacanian hearing to Pinter's characters in "The Homecoming" as these characters could not go through the processes of language properly, subverted the Lacanian developmental orders, and thus are victimized by language. Now they are denied any access to the Symbolic Order, they live in and can "be" only in the margins of it. I will seek to problematize and lay out the elusive and complex nature of these characters; and the ontological correlation between their identity formation processes and their failure to integrate into the Symbolic Order.

[1] Esslin 1992: 27

A comprehensive study of critics' treatment of Harold Pinter's plays reveals that Pinter, at the beginning of his career as a dramatist, had to confront the abusive attitude of some critics' towards his plays, both in London and New York, particularly in the case of *The Birthday Party* and the much-discussed play, "The Homecoming." In an article called "Critical Games 'The Homecoming' " by Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson, it is stated that "the price Pinter has had to pay" was the "text's dismemberment" which also signifies the "text's enrichment" (59). In the same article it is also emphasized that the play was subjected to " 'soap opera' interpretations" (59) at its first performance, which shows the extent of criticism degrading the play into a state of worthless product. "The Homecoming" was commonly accepted by many critics as "baffling and enigmatic in the extreme." Even Harold Hobson, who, unlike his other London contemporaries, appreciated *The Birthday Party* and who was known as a Pinter's proponent shared other critics' comments, by pointing out in *the Sunday Times* that "The Homecoming" presents "an aesthetic defect that does not exist."[2]

Other newspapers like *the Daily Telegraph* criticized the play as "gruesomely funny" while *the Sun* questioned Pinter's aim in writing such a play; and *the City Press*'s reviewer stated that "he may never see a nastier play." The extent of rampant criticism reached a point of accusing the play of presenting "nothing new," of having no "meaning and dramatic interest," of being "too long" and "less than first-rate Harold Pinter" (qtd. in Deleon 61-62). The reason why the play triggered such rampant harsh criticism is disclosed in Michael Billington's words: "in its image of the naked violence of family life and of the primal, atavistic power of the female, it shocked, disturbed and seemed to establish a direct line to the collective subconscious" (162). For these critics, both the characters and their treatment of each other were entirely in breach of society's rules. The experience the audience underwent throughout the play was so acute that it was nearly impossible to apprehend the gist of the play at first glance.

[2] http://www.uaf.edu/theatre/season/season.html#homecoming

Although the play was harshly condemned at the beginning because of the seemingly immoral actions or attitudes of the characters, of the language they used and thus of their shattering down the family institution, this great deal of harsh criticism could not prevent some organizations from entitling the play, or more correctly from appraising Pinter's creative and artistic skill: "The Homecoming" won three awards in the USA in the same year of its first performance, in 1967: the Antionette ("Tony") Perry Award, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and the Whitbread Anglo-American Award. The fact that the play was found enigmatic or nasty or that it won awards as the best play in the States does not change its status as a much-discussed Pinter play, and it still confuses the audiences' minds encouraging new interpretations. As Jerry Patch admits, "The Homecoming" "continues to spark controversy, argument and discussion ... a quarter century after it achieved classic status. The places it pokes in its audiences are still tender to the touch".

The synopsis of this controversial play prepares the ground for a more comprehensive analysis of the play's enigmatic nature from a Lacanian vantage point. However, no event or characters' attitude in the following summary can be regarded as more important than any other since each one has a significant importance in its own context and everything in the play is inter-related and serves a certain function, as will be unfolded step by step throughout the analysis.

The eldest son, Teddy, a philosophy professor at an American University, returns home with his wife, Ruth, after a six-year absence in the middle of the night while all the household are asleep and unaware of this sudden visit. It is understood later that Teddy left London the day he got married to a pornography model without his family's knowledge six years ago, and the family knows nothing about Teddy's marriage or about his three sons. The second son, Lenny, a pimp, wakes up because of some ambiguous ticks in his mind, and in the living room he meets his brother without any sign of surprise. Then, Teddy goes upstairs to sleep, and Ruth comes back from a stroll. She meets Lenny in the living room; the dialogue between them is coloured with Desire or sexual challenge, particularly when she says:

> Sit on my lap. Take a long cool sip.
> *She pats her lap. Pause.*

She stands, moves to him with the glass.
Put your head back and open your mouth. (50)

In the morning the foul-mouthed old father, Max, an ex-butcher, meets the newcomers. He is aggravated due to his assumption that he is the only one who is unaware of this sudden visit. He starts insulting his daughter-in-law as a "dirty tart, smelly scrubber, stinking pox-ridden slut" (57) and then goes on using abusive expressions for Teddy and Ruth by making references to his dead wife, Jessie:

> I haven't seen the bitch for six years, he comes home without a word, he brings a filthy scrubber off the street, he shacks up in my house!
> ...
> I've never had a whore under this roof before. Ever since your mother died. My word of honour. *(To Joey.)* Have you ever had a whore here? Has Lenny ever had a whore here? They come back from America, they bring the slopbucket with them. They bring the bedpan with them. *(To Teddy.)* Take that disease away from me. Get her away from me. (58)

Subsequently, forgetting all about the insults, the father suddenly changes his attitude, addresses the same woman as Miss; and creates a family gathering atmosphere chatting about grandchildren, preparing a family meal in the Second Act.

Much more complicated events, situations and dialogues take place in the Second Act: Max accuses his brother, Sam, a sixty-three-year old chauffeur, of "bending over for half a dollar on Blackfriars Bridge" (64). Max's harsh attitude towards Sam never ceases from the beginning till the end. Max almost always attempts to find a way to insult Sam in different ways. He mocks Sam's job when Sam talks about how his customers appreciate his code of conduct and challenges Sam, that is to say he does not understand why Sam is accepted as the best chauffeur that his customers have ever had. As Lenny takes sides with his uncle by complimenting his general sense of courtesy and his driving skills, Max changes his tactics. This time he questions why Sam has never been able to establish a family institution:

> It's funny you never got married, isn't it? A man with all your gifts.
> *Pause*
> Isn't it? A man like you? (30)

Upon Max's hidden attack on Sam's homosexuality, which is not stated clearly at this point, Sam's reply creates a question in the audiences' minds: "I wouldn't bring her here" (31). In the dialogue between Max and Sam it is hinted that there is something extraordinary in these characters' perception of the marriage institution. When Sam refuses to have had intercourse in his car with anybody, and admits to leave that to others, Max insists on Sam's revealing the identity of those others. The implication here is revealed later when Sam confesses that he will "never get a bride like" the one Max had: "Nothing like your bride...going about these days. Like Jessie" (32). The reason why Max is full of anger with Sam will be illuminated by Sam's striking confession about Jessie in the closing act. The statements regarding Jessie by each of the family members serve to ensure that the mother is always present in this house although she is physically absent.

Like the battle between Max and Sam, there is another one between the brothers Lenny and Teddy although theirs revolves around linguistics and philosophical matters. Lenny attempts to question Teddy's sufficiency as a philosopher. Lenny's first attempt is to focus on religion as he thinks "there is a certain logical incoherence in the central affirmations of Christian theism" (67). His second attempt is about how the unknown can "merit reverence:" "How can you revere that of which you're ignorant" (68). However, Teddy is either unable to answer these existentialist queries about being or not being or he is unwilling to participate in a verbal battle with Lenny. Teddy says in an escapist tone:

> That question doesn't fall within my province.
> ...
> If they're within my province.
> ...
> I'm afraid I'm the wrong person to ask. (67, 68)

Lenny's last challenging question is about the meaning of a table, which turns his attempts to philosophize into a miserable parody:

> LENNY. Well, for instance, take a table. Philosophically speaking. What is it?
> TEDDY. A table. (68)

Lenny challenges Teddy about his certainty as he wants to talk about the word itself not the material. In this respect it seems that Teddy is not a specialist in dealing with the philosophical or linguistic aspects of a word. The answer that Teddy or the others have not been able to give comes from Ruth in a significantly surprising way, which brings an end to the one-sided discussion and serves as a flashback to the scene where she first confronts Lenny:

> Don't be too sure though. You've forgotten something. Look at me. I ... move my leg. That's all it is. But I wear ...underwear...which moves with me ...it...captures your attention. Perhaps you misinterpret. The action is simple. It's a leg... moving. My lips move. Why don't you restrict...your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant... than the words which come through them. You must bear that... possibility...in mind. (68-69)

Ruth implies that beyond the surface of things there are hidden meanings or hidden facts that people are unaware. Later on Ruth's relaxed attitude towards the all- male family leads her to a dance with Lenny and their kissing each other. This makes the little brother, Joey, a part-time boxer, repeat his father's accusations in the First Act: "Christ. She's wide open. She's a tart. Old Lenny's got a tart in here" (74-75). This is followed by Joey's kissing, embracing, and lying with her on the sofa while Lenny caresses her hair, Max and Teddy watching the event without any intervention. Subsequently, Ruth and Joey have intercourse upstairs while Lenny and Teddy are downstairs, quarrelling about Teddy's stealing deliberately Lenny's cheese-roll sandwich. The gruesome events continue up to a point that the family, except the homosexual brother Sam and the careless or indifferent Teddy, gather to offer Ruth a contract, for her to stay in London with them, look after them and make money for both herself and the family through prostitution.

Ironically, Ruth will prove that she will not be their commodity or slave as they wish. Contrary to their expectations, she asks for a more mutually beneficial contract with some conditions, demanding a maid, a convenient flat for the prostitution and new clothes. In the middle of the discussion on the contract, Sam confesses the hidden but hinted fact about the dead mother: Jessie and her husband's dead friend, MacGregor, had intercourse at the back of his cab while Sam was driving them along. It was

Sam's duty to take care of Jessie while Max was away for work, as he trusted his brother. Having confessed a fact about Max's dead wife and his best friend, about whom Max always talks admiringly, Sam collapses and lies still, which is confronted with ignorance by each member of the family and with anger by Max: "He's not even dead!"(94).

Finally Teddy, the husband, leaves for the States without Ruth. What is left behind is a picture of Ruth sitting on a chair, touching Joey's head lightly, Lenny standing still and watching, Sam lying still and Max kneeling and asking for a kiss from her:

> I am not an old man.
> *Pause*
> Do you hear me?
> *He raises his face to her.*
> Kiss me. (97-98)

When asked by Mel Gussow what "the Homecoming" is about, Harold Pinter replies that the play is about "love": "I thought I was dealing with 'love' in 'The Homecoming' " (23). Although the need for "love" especially by the father, Max, is repeated or felt throughout the play, I believe that the play covers a deeper theme than the "love" theme. What lies at the heart of the text is these characters' marginal status in the Symbolic Order they live in and their inability to integrate to it. It is because of this reason that the play opens itself up more when one gives it a Lacanian hearing.

Enslavement dialectically is one of the dominant themes in "the Homecoming" seen at the very beginning of the play between the father, Max and the son, Lenny. Max's entrance into the play by coming from the kitchen will later present his position at home as feminized since he too declares that he hates the sitting room: "It's the kitchen I like. It's nice in there. It's cosy..." (53). On the other hand, Lenny is seen as doing nothing throughout the play except drawing the conditions of the contract for Ruth to stay and work for them as a whore. He is always in the position of enslaving his father through verbal attacks, almost all of which are insults or scorns and the rest are mockeries.

Lenny shows his position as the master on the sofa while Max is the slave coming from the kitchen:

> *Evening.*
> *Lenny is sitting on the sofa with a newspaper, a pencil in his hand. He wears a dark suit. He makes occasional marks on the back page.*
> *Max comes in, from the direction of the kitchen. He goes to the sideboard, opens top drawer, rummages in it, closes it.*
> *He wears an old cardigan and a cap, and carries a stick.* (23)

It is hardly coincidence that even their physical appearances consolidate a master-slave relationship between the father Max, and the son Lenny. Lenny's dark suit is a sign which hints that he is a businessman whereas Max's old cardigan and stick draw the picture of an old man, of a father, who has the authority at home if there is any by him. However, the first lines will bring out the reality, that is to say Lenny is totally against or refuses his father's authority. Lenny displays the role of the master with his remarks at the beginning of the play and will keep that role until the very end. Although Max's need for recognition is repeated three times by him in different ways, it never achieves fulfilment. The father's need for recognition is consistently refuted either with a pause or with an insult by his son: "Why don't you shut up, you daft prat?" (23).

Yet Max never gives up his attempts to be recognized by his son. The significant thing about this scene is that while Lenny is ignorant, on purpose, of the father's existence in the room and more importantly displays a wilful attitude not to recognize him and prefers insults while addressing his father, Max, in turn, as a husband, does not show any respect for his dead wife, Jessie, the mother. While Lenny addresses his father as "daft prat, stupid sod," (23, 25) Max calls his wife "bitch" and adds that it "made him sick to look at her rotten stinking face" (25).

In the course of the play, Max treats his brother Sam similarly, calling him "maggot or paralyzed prat" (31, 35) as well as insulting Sam's homosexuality. At the very beginning of the play, through such details, it is clearly shown by Pinter that the

members of this family except the little son are in a constant battle to be recognised by the other.

Desire has connection with the demand which shows the subject's first entrance to language, the Symbolic domain. While at first the infant needs his m(O)ther for his primary / basic needs, with demand s/he enters into the Symbolic Order. The triad - need, demand and Desire- is a theory adopted by Lacan, who was affected by Alexandre Kojeve's lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The reason why Desire is important lies in the fact that "the central moment in the emergence of individuality revolves around Desire" (Sarup 31). The father's struggle for recognition by the other members of this house shows, indeed, his Desire to be "desired" or to be "loved" by the household. In the first scene of "The Homecoming," Max asks Lenny and Sam to recognise him when they converse between each other without showing any interest in him. Max directly asks for recognition by asking them to be included into their dialogue, or in Lacan's words, desires to be the others' Desire. He cannot stand being excluded or being ignored:

> MAX.I'm here, too, you know.
> *Sam looks at him.*
> I said I'm here, too. I'm sitting here.
> SAM. I know you're here. (28)

This is not the first time that Max asks for or desires recognition from the other(s) and will not be the last. In the very first scene it was Lenny who ignored his father's existence when Max entered the room asking repeatedly for the scissors to cut something from the paper. What is worse for Max is that whenever he wants to be heard by the other(s) or to be included into the dialogue between other(s), he needs to use some significant utterances to be heard such as "I said/ Did you hear me?/ I'm talking to you,/ I'm here, too, /I said I'm here , too, I'm sitting here." Even his last words at the very end of the play are the same as the one in the very beginning; "Do you hear me? Kiss me" (97-98). In fact, Max beseeches to be included into Ruth's company with his son Joey, both of whom are in the position of slaves as opposed to the position of the master, who has been Lenny until the time Ruth arrives home. However, this does not mean that from then on Ruth is and will certainly be the sole

master in the house since Lenny refuses to be in an inferior position and prefers staying away from Ruth at the end of the play. Lenny is the only person to have avoided Ruth's company and to have preferred looking at the scene. Yet, he stumbles in the First Act when Ruth makes a very direct sexual proposition to him when he wants to get back the glass:

> LENNY. ... Just give me the glass.
> RUTH. No.
> *Pause*
> LENNY. I'll take it then.
> RUTH. If you take the glass, I'll take you.
> *Pause*
> LENNY. How about me taking the glass without you taking me?
> RUTH. Why don't I just take you? (49-50)

Ignoring what she has just suggested "sit on my lap. Take a long cool sip" (50), Ruth goes upstairs leaving Lenny shouting behind "What was that supposed to be? Some kind of proposal?" (51) While trying to enslave Ruth by his verbal attacks, it is Lenny, who is degraded into the position of slave by Ruth, who forces Lenny, by means of her dialectic skill to recognise her.

In Lacanian terms it is a must for a human being to direct his Desire to another Desire:

> Desire is human only if one desires, not the body, but the Desire of the other; ... if he wants to be 'desired 'or 'loved' or, rather, 'recognized' in his human value, in his reality as a human individual. (Sarup 32)

Therefore, Desire plays an important role in human relations and it never ends: "It is only by being 'recognised' by another, by many others, or – in the extreme- by all others, that a human being is really human, for himself/herself as well as for others" (Sarup 33). At this point it might be noteworthy to remember the very first scene in the play when Max forces Lenny to believe that he "was once a tearaway" (24) and he is still strong although he has just mentioned that "he is getting old." Max would like not to be misunderstood as he also adds that he "had a kind heart" (24) as if he wants to emphasize that he was not a tyrant. However, he also says that he was one

of the most hated men in the West End of London. Max continuously reminds his family of the power he once had as a young man: "We'd walk into a place, the whole room'd stand up, they'd make way to let us pass" (24). At this time, Max hints that it was his friend, MacGregor, who was the master in this relationship but not himself: "Mind you, he was a big man, he was over six foot tall. His family were all MacGregors, ... but he was the only one they called Mac" (24).

With the opening of "The Homecoming," the audiences witness a dialectic which implies the slavery relationship between Max and Lenny as mentioned earlier. Lenny never listens to his father no matter how insistent Max is on being recognised. In addition to this master-slave relationship, this reveals another dimension for both Max and Lenny. In Act One, after Ruth leaves, Max comes downstairs in pyjamas upon Lenny's shout resulting from Ruth's liberal proposal to him. Max's searching for the reasons of Lenny's cry gets the same attitude from Lenny as in the opening scene. Lenny's reply is: "I was thinking aloud" (51). In spite of all Max's efforts to learn why Lenny was shouting, Lenny, as the master, never replies in the direction of his father's wish. Dialectically, Lenny always occupies the superior position. Lenny replies indifferently to Max's question about whether he is hiding somebody at home, which is true in a way because Max is uninformed about Teddy and Ruth coming home in the middle of the night after six years, without any notice in advance. Instead Lenny is curious about something else related to his own genesis. Through the quotation below, the audiences are forced to have doubts about Lenny's real father since Lenny hints that he may not be Max's son:

> I'll tell you what, Dad, since you're in the mood for a bit of a ... chat, I'll ask you a question....That night ... you know... the night you got me ... that night with Mum, what was it like? Eh? When I was just a glint in your eye. What was it like? What was the background to it? I mean, I want to know the real facts about my background. I mean, for instance, is it a fact that you had me in mind all the time, or is it a fact that I was the last thing you had in mind?
>
> *Pause*
>
> ...And there's lots of people of my age share that curiosity, you know that, Dad? They often ruminate, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups, about the true facts of that particular night-

> the night they were made in the image of those two people at it.
> ……(52)

A closer analysis of their speeches reveals that the moral codes and norms concerning the family institution are shattered completely by them. Lacan holds the idea that the "marriage tie is governed by an order of preference whose law concerning the kinship names is, like language, imperative for the group in its forms, but unconscious in its structure" (1977: 66). Pinter's characters in the play are wilfully ignorant of these imperatives imposed by marriage. Furthermore, they prefer to create their own rules regarding marriage which are completely incompatible with the society's norms. The propulsive drive that leads these characters to violate marriage ties is inaugurated by the couple's coming home after a trip to Venice, a journey aiming at getting rid of Ruth's dissatisfaction or restlessness concerning her life in America. While this homecoming seems to be Teddy's, the eldest son, on the surface, it is, in fact, the m(O)ther's coming home in Ruth's personality. One might also say that Teddy never left home spiritually; he went out into the world to bring Jessie back in another name. It would not be erroneous to say that in their case history repeats itself.

Upon their arrival, or more specifically with Ruth's arrival, they undergo a relapse into the Imaginary. The details in their lives hint provocatively at a lack of identification with the Symbolic m(O)ther during their Imaginary period, and now, it seems, Ruth will substitute for that anchoring point. Teddy ironically foreshadows this prospective substitution of Ruth as their m(O)ther in the first scene when they have just arrived:

> Actually there was a wall, across there ...with a door. We knocked it down ... years ago...to make an open living area. The structure wasn't affected, you see. My mother was dead. (37)

As it will be revealed in detail later in this chapter, the m(O)ther has come back to them. It was first Jessie, who had an affair with Max's dearest friend in Sam's cab. Now it is Ruth, who will have affairs with them. Their mother, accessible to all of them in terms of incestuous relations, returns without recognizing the Law of the Father.

Interestingly enough, upon Joey's and Sam's declaration of their hunger in act one, Max already hints their need for the m(O)ther, or more correctly their demand, for a Lack regarding the substitution of the m(O)ther: " Who do you think I am, your mother?... Go and find yourself a mother" (32). In addition to the lack of a m(O)ther in the Imaginary of their lives, there is another significant problem, which is made clear by Max's utterance, and which reveals the fact that Max himself is feminized in his practical life. In act two, Max recalls his feminized role when Jessie was alive:

> I remember the night I came home, I kept quiet. First of all I gave Lenny a bath, then Teddy a bath, then Joey a bath. What fun we used to have in the bath, eh, boys? Then I came downstairs and I made Jessie put her feet up on a pouffe – what happened to that pouffe, I haven't seen it for years – she put her feet up on the pouffe ... Then I gave her a drop of cherry brandy.
> (62)

As a result there appears an identity problem due to Max's and Jessie's insufficiency in their roles as the father and the mother. The importance of these roles will be dealt with in detail under the concept of the Law, which symbolizes the Name-of the Father, with which the infant's identification is crucial as that figure plays the role of castrating agent to encode / enculturate the infant. Lacan indicates that "it is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law" (1977: 67). On the other hand, the same figure needs the m(O)ther, who indeed leads the infant to identification with the father. Yet, in order to lead that identification the m(O)ther herself has to acknowledge the father's authority by letting him fill her Lack.

The reason why the distortations about husband-wife, father-son, brother-brother, daughter-in-law or sister-in-law relations are quite important elements in Pinter's "The Homecoming" is that these characters have clearly not achieved or have absolutely lacked some very important steps on the way to their subjectivity. This makes them failures in their constitution as subjects, as they are not positioned appropriately in the Symbolic Order.

The text is abundant with hints about Lenny' failure to pass through the Imaginary Order successfully, as a result of which he could not achieve what Lacan called the Symbolic identification. The strongest support for this idea is the ticks, which force Lenny to get up, and which belong to the Register of the Lacanian Real, the non-verbal realm which has connection both with the Imaginary and the Symbolic but is neither Symbolic nor Imaginary. Indeed, these ticks are beyond words because the Real is not related to reality which is something knowable as Lacan's third order the Real is unknowable. That's why the Real seems to be the most incomprehensible among the other two Registers: the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Sarup defines this concept as a realm which has a link to the "dimensions of sexuality and death" (85) and which is not inside but outside the subject. Birlik states that Lacan's Register of the Real stands for the "psychic realm where there is fullness as there is no absence or loss. There is no loss because there is no language yet" (2004: 4). Thus, the Real stands for the inexpressible, unspeakable, causing the subject to hear voices or to have hallucinations for "it is the order where the subject meets with inexpressible enjoyment and death" (Sarup 85). As a result, the Real shows an unbearable situation in which it is "always-already-there" so it cannot be seen or heard due to the fact that this concept is "associated with the sudden, the disconcerting and the unpredictable" (Sarup 104). Thus, given the Lacanian Real, ticks that wake Lenny up establish his resistance for symbolisation and his entrapment between the Real and the Symbolic, the second of which represents the subject's accession to language. Because only through the Symbol the subject is shaped and can verbalize/ symbolize his/her feelings and Desires.

Lenny wakes up in the middle of the night due to "some ticks in his mind": "It's just that something keeps waking me up. Some kind of tick" (41). Upon Teddy's illiterate search for what it is or upon his final suggestion that it may be the clock, Lenny agrees at first although he is not completely satisfied with the suggestion. Later on Lenny talks to Ruth about this tick in his mind as follows.

> The tick's been keeping me up. The trouble is I'm not all that convinced it was the clock. I mean there are lots of things which tick in the night, don't you find that? All sorts of objects, which in the day, you wouldn't call anything else but commonplace.

> They give you no trouble. But in the night any given one of a number of them is liable to start letting out a bit of a tick....They're as quiet as mice during the daytime...saying it was the clock that woke me up, well, that could very easily prove something of a false hypothesis. (44)

This tick reminds one of Judith Gurewich's definition of the Lacanian Real as something which "appears to the subject as a shattering enigma" the subject will need to "symbolize it [the Real] to have a meaning "that is, to find signifiers that can ensure its control" (33). Sarup's illumination about what a gap in the Symbolic Order causes in the subject's psyche is important here as it sheds light upon Lenny's hallucination regarding these ticks in his mind:

> Lacan suggests that when there is gap in the Symbolic order and the place of the Other is deleted or seriously disordered, a gap opens in the Imaginary order, leading to various imaginary distortions, and also new phenomena in the Real order such as voices (auditory hallucinations). The Real order is the domain that subsists outside symbolisation. It is what is outside the subject; in the case of hallucination, it is what has been expelled or foreclosed by the subject. (109)

The reason why Pinter's characters can be called as either mostly neurotic or to a lesser extent psychotic is that they are captured between the Imaginary and the Symbolic or between the Real or the Symbolic, which again displays the fact that they have not undergone the enculturation process with the necessary dimensions. To Lacan these three systems are tangible for the young subject:

> I have taught you to identify the symbolic with language... On the other hand,...the objects are constituted by the interplay of projections, introjections, expulsions, reintrojections of bad objects, and that the subject, having projected his sadism, sees it coming back from these objects, and, by this very fact, finds himself jammed up by an anxious fear don't you have the feeling that that we are in the domain of the imaginary?
> From then on the whole problem is that of the juncture of the symbolic and of the imaginary in the constitution of the real.
> (Lacan 1988: 74)

Thus, it is seen that the Imaginary realm has its importance like that of the other two Registers. However, for the young subject the Real and the Imaginary have equivalent value (Lacan 1988: 84).

In “The Homecoming” it is immediately visible that the basic needs, which have their roots in the Imaginary, are very important for these characters. They most of the time talk about food, which is nearly always prepared by feminised Max and which is, in turn, insulted by Lenny, who says that Max is “cooking for a lot of dogs” (27). Besides being the cook, Max is also the cleaner as he is obsessed with cleanliness and order as in Lenny’s words: “I’m rather worried about the carpet. It’s not me, it’s my father. He’s obsessed with order and clarity. He doesn’t like mess” (49). On the other hand, Max is not satisfied with this responsibility and warns the others to find a mother for themselves. So, it is hinted from time to time that a need for a woman or more correctly a need for the long-waited m(O)ther lies in the centre of the play. One other basic need repeated by Max is each person’s contributing to the budget. In accordance with his wish about earning money, Max threatens Sam that he will be kicked when he stops earning money. So, everybody in the house has a function related to basic needs. The jobs of the characters reveal their proximity to the culture: Joey is a part-time boxer, Sam is a chauffeur, who is going to be given “the boot” (35) by Max when he ceases to earn money. On the other hand, Lenny disguises himself as a businessman though he is a pimp, who also offers to take Ruth to Greek street with him to earn her living as well as mothering them. Like a professional man as he himself admits, Lenny plans how they will make use of Ruth as a whore: First, he will take her to his working place, then he will limit her working time to four hours a night since they also need her at home.

The articulation of their needs in a Lacanian sense culminates when Joey protests over sharing Ruth with others, Lenny and Max refuse Joey’s discontent:

> LENNY. I’ve got a very distinguished clientele, Joey. They’re more distinguished than you’ll ever be.
> MAX. So you can count yourself lucky we’re including you in.
> JOEY. I didn’t think I was going to share her! (89)

Joey’s refusal to share her with others reminds one of an infant’s refusal to lose her/his mother. After all, Joey is the subject who most openly displays the inseparable bond of the infant with the m(O)ther since he wants to be the object-a for Ruth- the m(O)ther substitute. As a result, we see that these characters, first and

foremost, are driven by need, like a child who is in need of its mother at infancy since it cannot meet its needs for itself.

Lacan says "need is biological; it can be satisfied" (Sarup 67). Yet, all these needs are transformed into demand since the enunciation of need in language is accompanied with the child's plea for satisfaction. This plea for satisfaction refers in fact to a plea for recognition since "Demand entails a closed circuit to and from the mother" (Birlik 2004: 5). Thus, as is mentioned earlier, Desire for recognition results from this demand of the characters in the play. At the core of what is desired lies the subject's wish for wholeness, which stands for the impossible request as it is lost in the Imaginary at the expense of subjectivity. So, need is pointed to an object whereas demand requires an other who is generally the mother and who will recognise or verify the child's existence.

That the mother will interpret the baby's need for food, for comfort etc., does not change the fact about demand that it is "transitive" and "demand is really for something else. For the next thing the other can give, for the thing that will 'prove' the other's love" (Sarup 67). Thus, the child's satisfaction of its demand is never gained because at its core all demands aim at the other's love. In "The Homecoming" everybody denies (or are denied) the other of this verification for his/her totality or of their Desire for recognition. A case in point is Lenny's constant resistance to satisfy his father's demand for love:

> ...Why don't you buy a dog? You're a dog cook: Honest. You think you're cooking for a lot of dogs. (27)
> ...
> You'll go before me, Dad, if you talk to me in that tone of voice. (27)
> ...
> What the boys [Sam & Joey] want is your own special brand of cooking, Dad. That's what the boys look forward to. The special understanding of food, you know, that you've got. (33)

Max, ironically, will always enunciate his Desire for love and recognition throughout the play. When he calms down after insulting his daughter-in-law in the morning upon seeing their secret coming and spending the night at home without any notice

beforehand, he asks for a cuddle from Teddy, which indicates "love and recognition" for Max:

> You want to kiss your old father? Want a cuddle with your old father?
> ...
> You still love your old Dad. Eh?
> ...
> He still loves his father! (59-60)

On the other hand, Sam is also denied recognition and love from Max, who either threatens Sam with being kicked when he is too old to work, or insults his homosexuality. Thus it is seen that these characters' basic needs are in the form of demands which relate to their Desire for recognition and love from the other but is always insatiable since this Desire shows a Lack in the subject. The subject will always be in need of filling that Lack to achieve wholeness but will never gain it as he lost it at birth by separating from the mother. Therefore, the subject will always ask for the Desire of the Other - "it is both the desire for the Other's desire and desire for the Other" (Sarup 69). The thing that causes Desire to emerge is the *objet-petit-a* [*objet-a*] which can range from breast, penis or voice to a song or glance, all of which represent its being inseparable from the body it belongs to. In this way, it is seen that the subject's Desire will never be satisfied since it asks for an inseparable part from a whole. As a result there occurs an initial failure of satisfaction that will cause the child to control his feeling which will take him to the beginning of language.

The fact that Ruth has come back home to occupy the place of the dead mother reinforces the idea that Max could not succeed in playing the figure of the castrating Father to enculturate his sons. His insufficiency reverses the patriarchal process of family formation, thus identity formation of the family members. All the fundamentals of the traditional society are undermined due to him and his wife in his family and because of their sexual role-reversal as a husband and wife.

It is a must for the child not to refuse to be separated from its mother. Silverstein emphasizes the mother's role regarding the child's acceptance of this Law since the

mother plays the role of "guarantor for the identity of the family" (83). At this point, it might be interesting to look at the scene when Max, after lunch prepared by him, talks about the dead mother with all due deference in the opening of the Second Act in contrast to that in the First Act:

> Mind you, she taught those boys everything they know. She taught them all the morality they know. I'm telling you. Every single bit of the moral code they live by – was taught to them by their mother...That woman was the backbone to this family...I left a woman at home with a will of iron, a heart of gold and a mind. Right, Sam. (61-62)

The irony hidden between Max's lines reveals what the boys know: Joey becomes a boxer whereas Lenny chooses to be a pimp, two professions connected with the "dirty world" and implying the mother's links with that world. If the mother is the guarantor for the identity of the family as Silverstein expresses above, then there seems to be a very important problem regarding the position of the mother for this family in "The Homecoming." As is mentioned earlier in this chapter, upon Ruth's arrival they relapse into the Imaginary and the absence of the m(O)ther is enunciated through the characters' behaviour, language and treatment of each other. One reason why these characters are not positioned in the Symbolic Order is Jessie's own refusal to acknowledge Max's authority and to let him fill her Lack. Jessie herself did not accept the Name of the Father and did not play the role of the socializing agent for her sons in accordance with the Law. This problem about the position of the mother is a long-term problem, in which Max's and Sam's mother is also included. Max furiously confesses a fact about his mother and brothers:

> Two families! My mother was bedridden, my brothers were all invalids. I had to earn the money for the leading psychiatrists. I had to read books! I had to study the disease, so that I could cope with an emergency at every stage. A crippled family, three bastard sons, a slutbitch of a wife - don't talk to me about the pain of childbirth - I suffered the pain…. (63)

Neither his mother nor his wife have a respectable position in Max's life. Ruth will not have any, either. According to Max, he followed his father's track: "a number one butcher, three grown men" (55-56). Yet, Max is unaware of the fact that he is too weak a figure to take the place of the Symbolic Father.

On the other hand, Max's insufficiency leads into the annihilation of the gaze in their lives. Their gendered identities run against the grain. Gaze for Lacan does not necessarily mean the eyes as gaze can "function as an object." Maurice Merleau-Ponty's thesis holds a central function in Lacan's theory regarding the gaze namely "there is a pre-existing gaze, a kind of staring at us by the outside world." This thesis of Merleau-Ponty is further developed by Lacan as Antonio Quinet expresses Lacan's theory of the gaze in the article called "The Gaze as an Object:"

> The drive indicates that the subject is seen, that there is a gaze which aims at the subject, a gaze we cannot see because it is excluded from our field of vision. This gaze gives us the distinction between what belongs to the imaginary order and what belongs to the order of the real where the drive manifests itself. (139-140)

Thus, the subject is declined to the state of the object via the gaze; as a result, the gaze causes Desire, whose cause is related to the emergence of *objet petit-a*. To Lacan the gaze is the gaze of the Other. In other words, the gaze takes sides with the object whereas the look belongs to the subject. Lacan makes a clear definition of the gaze in his *Seminar Book I* as:

> I can feel myself under the gaze of someone whose eyes I do not even see, not even discern. All that is necessary is for something to signify to me that there may be others there. This window, if it gets dark, and if I have reasons for thinking that there is someone behind it, it is straightaway a gaze. From the moment this gaze exists, I am already something other, in that I feel myself becoming an object for the gaze of others. But in this position, which is a reciprocal one, others also know that I am an object who knows himself to be seen. (1988: 215)

Thus, Max's inability to play the role of the Symbolic Father results in his sons' inability to make an attempt to fill the gap or Lack in their existence and to acknowledge the gaze.

It seems that a vicious circle has been present in these characters' lives: first, the m(O)ther was absent in Max's infancy, which led to his insufficient position as a father whose role is designated by society, that is, he has not been able to identify with the signifier Law in the Other. Secondly, Jessie denied Max of his authority thus

causing her sons not to identify with the father by accepting his Law, a process necessary to enter into language. Thirdly, as Ruth treats Teddy in the same way as Jessie treated Max, Teddy's sons will share the same fate as their father, grandfather and uncles. As a matter of fact, the women's position as well as that of the fathers' in this family have never met with the roles that society assigns. The figures of woman in "The Homecoming" are whores regardless of their being mother or wife. Thus, the women's position in the play is degraded by all the males except for the homosexual Sam.

Ruth and Jessie act like a touchstone to reveal true colours for the other characters. The dialogue below indicates how their approach to Ruth gives them away. Sam rejects the contract prepared for Ruth to stay in London as a whore for financial worries and as a substitute for the dead mother:

> MAX.... Perhaps we'll keep her here.
> *Pause*
> SAM. Don't be silly.
> MAX. What's silly?
> SAM. You're talking rubbish.
> MAX. Me?
> SAM. She's got three children.
> MAX. She can have more! Here. If she's so keen.
> SAM. She doesn't want any more.
> MAX. How do you know about what she wants, eh, Ted?
> TEDDY. *(Smiling)* The best thing for her is to come home with me Dad. Really. We're married you know. (86)

While Sam tries to prevent Max from offering such a contract, Teddy's claim to return to America with her signifies how weak and insufficient a husband Teddy is, like his father. Teddy himself clearly shows his dependence on Ruth in the First Act when she wants to go out to have some fresh air. Upon Ruth's request, there is a dialogue between the two reminding the mother-child relationship:

> RUTH. I just feel like some air.
> TEDDY. But I'm going to bed.
> RUTH. That's all right.
> TEDDY. But what am I going to do?
> *Pause*

> The last thing I want is a breath of air. Why do you want a breath of air?
> RUTH. I just do.
> TEDDY. But it's late.
> RUTH. I won't go far. I'll come back.
> *Pause*
> TEDDY. I'm not going to bed without you. (40)

If we attend to such specific details about them, it is tempting to suggest that Teddy, like the other characters, has never undergone the castration period properly and could not identify himself with the Father, could not constitute his own subjectivity. Teddy has been captured between the Symbolic and the Imaginary by not accepting his father's intervention, indeed the Symbolic Father's, to the dual relationship between his mother and himself.

Finally Sam confesses the hidden but hinted fact about the dead wife or mother, Jessie, whose infidelity to her husband is most probably known by each member: "MacGregor had Jessie in the back of my cab as I drove them along" (94). Sam's sudden collapse upon his confession reminds one of Lacan's statement regarding full speech: "no doubt they [the subject's associations, namely, his free speech] do oppress him, but it is rather ... a full speech that is painful to him" (1977: 253). Not to the audiences' surprise, Sam is accused of having a diseased imagination by Max at that point. Thus it turns into a question about who has that diseased imagination because it has been Max who has both insulted and praised Jessie as a whore and a mother throughout the play. The mother or the wife figure is rejected both by Max and Lenny as Lenny has also requested from Ruth not to be called Leonard because "that was the name his mother gave him" (46).

While Jessie rejects her appropriate position in the Law, she prepares the ground for her sons not to play the role of the Symbolic Father in the future as well as causing them not to identify with their Symbolic Father who possesses the Phallus, the most important signifier needed to be accepted by the child to have a place in language. Phallus should not be confused with the penis because the penis is a biological organ having relation with the Real whereas the Phallus has relation with the Symbolic connoting "power, fascination, instituting authority, terror, power to castrate"

(Silverstein 89). Silverstein's comment - in Lacanian terms - on the importance of the mother's acceptance of the father's word as Law needs to be quoted since it demonstrates the correlation between the Phallus, the Law and the mother's recognition of them:

> If the mother recognizes the father's word as law, if she associates the phallus with the father, then the child will displace its desire for the mother's desire onto the father, become liberated from the Desire-of-the-Mother and subject to the Name-of-the-Father, and enter into signifying network, the symbolic order of language that constitutes subjectivity. If, on the other hand, the mother withholds recognition of the father's utterance, if she identifies her child as the phallic object of desire, then the child will remain within the Oedipal matrix, subjected to the mother's desire, unable to gain access to the symbolic order, and deprived of subjectivity. (89)

In the light of the quotation above, it might be claimed that the Law was not recognised by Jessie and this is implied by several details in the text, her adultery or possible whoredom being the most telling case. As a result, her sons are deprived of entering into language by not resolving the Oedipus Complex and thus having the same fate as their own father, who failed to represent the Symbolic Father in the family. Her eldest son Teddy was her favourite as Sam confided: "You were always your mother's favourite. She told me. It's true. You were always the ... you were always the main object of her love" (79).

The dual relation between the mother and the infant can clearly be seen in why Teddy wants Ruth to return to America instead of staying with his family in London: "She's a great help to me over there. (66) "You can help me with my lectures when we get back. I'd love that. I'd be so grateful for it, really" (71). As Teddy remained in his mother's Desire and could not resolve the Oedipus complex, and could not recognise the Law, he has remained as dependent on the mother just as the infant's dependence on his mother in the Imaginary Order. In this regard, it is seen that Teddy has been suffering from obsessional neurosis, which includes mechanisms of "inversion, isolation, reduplication, cancellation and displacement" (Lacan 1977: 5).

Lemaire states that the obsessional neurotic feels "himself to be loved too much. He was judged by his mother to be too adequate a signifier of her desire." The obsessional is dominated by a false assumption of "too great self-adequacy, unable to liberate himself for a perpetual process of becoming" (229). It is this perpetual inadequacy of Teddy what causes him to burst into a protest against his family when he says he will never send his critical work to his own family in London:

> You wouldn't understand my works. You wouldn't have the faintest idea of what they were about. You wouldn't appreciate the points of reference. You're way behind. All of you. There's no point in my sending you my works. You'd be lost. It's nothing to do with the question of intelligence. It's a way of being able to look at the world. It's a question of how far you can operate on things and not in things. I mean it's a question of your capacity to ally the two, to relate the two, to balance the two. To see, to be able to *see*! I'm the one who can see...You're just objects. You just... move about. I can observe it. I can see what you do. It's the same as I do. But you're lost in it. You won't get me being ... I won't be lost in it.
>
> BLACKOUT. (77-78)

This is in fact Teddy's first and last protest in words, which are so violent because he cannot bear a separation from Ruth/the m(O)ther. While Teddy was prepared to return to America, with two cases in the living room, first Lenny and then Joey breaks his bond with Ruth/the m(O)ther. Lenny offers to dance with Ruth just before they go and then they start kissing each other. Having observed this event, Joey embraces, kisses and lies on her on the sofa in front of them. Teddy's second but stupid protest is just to steal Lenny's sandwich like a child who bitterly resents having lost his most-loved toy. Thus, with this isolation, Teddy gets his belated castration and separation from his identification with his m(O)ther. After all, only two characters are called (once) by their proper names by Ruth, who calls Lenny "Leonard" (49) and Teddy "Eddie" (96). However, Lenny refuses to be called "Leonard" since it is "the name his mother gave him" (49).

On the other hand, upon having sexual affair with Ruth/the m(O)ther, the brothers violate what is forbidden to them, the perverted relationship, by the Name/Law-of-

the Father. Not only the brothers but also the sister-in-law transgresses this forbidden rule. Lacan equates this rule with that of language:

> The primordial Law is therefore that which in regulating marriage ties superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of a nature abandoned to the law of mating. The prohibition of incest is merely its subjective pivot, ...
> This law, then, is revealed clearly enough as identical with an order of language. For without kinship nominations, no power is capable of instituting the order of preferences and taboos that bind and weave the yarn of lineage through succeeding generations. (Lacan 1977: 66)

Just as Jessie did not recognize the Law, like obsessional neurotic Teddy, Lenny never recognizes the Name-of-the Father and is always in the process of enslaving his father by verbal attacks as well as appointing him to a maternal position. Like his older brothers, Joey is also a failure, perhaps the most ineffectual one, in the Symbolic Order of language he is like an infant who depends on his mother for his basic needs or demands. This justifies why he does not want to share Ruth with other people at Greek Street:

> Eh, wait a minute. I don't want to share her...I don't want to share her with a lot of yobs! ... I didn't think I was going to have to share her! (88-89)

In these circumstances it is tempting to suggest that while Teddy is trapped between the Imaginary and Symbolic, Lenny between the Real and the Symbolic, Joey, on the other hand, is trapped within the Imaginary Order. Joey could not pass through the imaginary identification, that is, his ideal-ego emerged, but he could not reach the Symbolic identification, the ego ideal. A certain example showing Joey's misrecognition in the Mirror stage is presented in the play as follows:

> *JOEY in front of the mirror. He is doing some slow limbering-up exercises. He stops, combs his hair, carefully. He then shadowboxes, heavily, watching himself in the mirror.* (53)

As the ideal-ego represents, Joey stands on a point where he looks at himself and is satisfied with what he sees. Joey bears the illusion of a stable unity or wholeness just as the infant in the mirror stage assumes. In Lacanian terms, Joey has never

substituted his father for his mother. In other words, Joey has never been able to pass through the stages of the Oedipus Complex, which necessitates this substitution. Joey's identification with the mother to be her *objet petit-a*, her Desire, is his misrecognition since he has not achieved the knowledge that no matter how hard he tries, the mother will not be dissatisfied. As a result, Joey has not been able to detach himself from his imaginary identification and could not experience the loss or the separation from the mother internalizing the otherness by entering into the Law.

Thus, the keyword or the first step to be a subject in language is through the mother's recognizing the father's Law. As long as the father's position is misrecognized or is not accepted, then the child will be trapped between the Imaginary and the Symbolic or between the Symbolic or the Real- the third Lacanian Order that stands for the psychic realm of the infant who has not experienced the sense of loss yet as the child has not entered the Symbolic Order in the absence of language.

Before I conclude, I wish to underline that in their identity formation, the places of the Symbolic Father and that of the m(O)ther have never been filled appropriately by their real, biological parents. The absence of the mother's recognition of the Father's Law has led all the characters in "The Homecoming" to a failure in their attempts to position themselves in language, the domain of the Symbolic. It is not too difficult to see in Ruth's decision to stay in London, an implication that Teddy's sons, too, will have the same fate just like their father, grandfather and uncles since there will be no recognition of the Law by their mother. That is to say the traditional mother, who has a very important role as an anchoring figure in a family, is missing in three generations in "The Homecoming:" Max's mother, Max's own family as well as Max's son's family, that is Teddy's.

If the child resolves the phenomenon of the Oedipus, then s/he internalizes the Law Of the Father and achieves a cultural normalization. As Anika Lemaire notes "succeeding in sublimating the Oedipus is in fact to accept reality" in the aftermath of which the child:

> directs himself into the struggle for recognition on the basis of work, sublimating his lack of being in an ever more perfect quest for accomplishment... The child who is conscious of his title 'member of society' will assume the norms of society, its laws, taboos and ideals. (179-180)

Thus, the child's solution to this dilemma will appoint his/her place in the society s/he lives in as "normal, neurotic, homosexual, heterosexual, and so forth" (Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 304). If the Oedipal crisis has not been dissolved in accordance with an "acceptable manner to their societies," those subjects "could be viewed as the knots in a cultural signifying chain" (Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 304). There will be a price to pay if a child overthrows the commands of the Symbolic Order. Pinter's characters in the play pay this price heavily as they have not gone through the enculturation process in Lacanian terms: they are neurotics in their closed circuit as a result of their failure to possess their place as a speaking member of the Symbolic Order and they are pushed to the margins. In such a context one would be driving the nail home if one says that it is the mother, Jessie, in Ruth's clothes and in Teddy's words: "The structure wasn't affected" (37). The circuit of the family has remained the same, starting from the same point and going back to the same destination.

CHAPTER III

PASSION FOR HEGEMONY IN **"THE CARETAKER"**

In "The Caretaker," Pinter places his characters in an isolated and claustrophobic world where they themselves put the rules in their attempts to establish hegemony over others. Having explored Lacan's theory on language's crucial effect in establishing one's "self" and its stages of development as well as the theory of enculturation in the previous chapter, this chapter will dwell upon the characters' entrapment between the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, thus their insufficiency to be full speaking members of the society they inhabit. The Symbolic Father's significance and necessity in enabling the child to experience castration, and thus to accept the commands of language will also be explored in more detail in the course of this chapter against the background of the intertwined relationships between the characters. However, both for the sake of consistency in all three chapters and for the justification of why Pinter's play should be interpreted in Lacanian light, I will try to give a general picture of the first reactions given by many critics after the play's first appearance on stage.

"The Caretaker," Pinter's second full-length play of three acts, brought him great acclaim. It was commonly accepted as a masterpiece, and Harold Pinter was aplauded as a dramatist. However, for Pinter the tradition of negative criticism in the aftermath of the first performance remained the same since many critics like Nigel Dennis blamed Pinter for having a "narrow, static, and visionless" world and as imitating Beckett inadequately. A. Alvarez incriminated the playwright as "repetitive, predictable, and more mannered than funny" (Deleon 45). The play failed to attract attention in Paris as people fell into confusion about the play's meaning.

The reaction of the audience in Germany towards the play was to boo it. What Pinter remembers about its first performance in Düsseldorf is noteworthy:

> I took, as is the Continental custom, a bow with a German cast of the Caretaker at the end of the play on the first night. I was at once booed violently by what must have been the finest collection of booers in the world. I thought they were using megaphones, but it was pure mouth. The cast was as dogged as the audience, however, and we took thirty-four curtain calls, all to boos. By the thirty-fourth there were only two people left in the house, still booing. I was strangely warmed by all this, and now, whenever I sense a tremor of the old apprehension or expectation, I remember Düsseldorf, and am cured.
>
> (1960: 10)

Unlike the displeasing reputation of "The Homecoming," "The Caretaker" received extraordinary ovations in London and New York despite the Düsseldorf protests. Unlike the abovementioned reviewers' accusations, Noel Coward praised the play as embracing "an original and unmistakable sense of theatre" and Howard Taubman glorified Pinter: "Pinter has woven a play of strangely compelling beauty and passion…" (Deleon 13). The approbation of the play and its characters shared a common ground among many critics: the play presented "a step from extraordinary promise to extraordinary achievement" and the characters created were "perfectly unequivocal" (Deleon 45). Mel Gussow is right when he makes the point that Pinter's earlier plays are looked back now as classics even though they were massacred earlier (Gussow 21).

"The Caretaker" does not have an enigmatic structure such as that of "The Room," where Rose goes blind suddenly upon Bert's killing the negro, or that of "The Homecoming" where Sam collapses suddenly upon a confession concerning the dead wife's betrayal with her husband's best friend, or again that of *The Birthday Party* where the audiences witness blackouts and screams in the dark at Stanley's birthday party. That is why "The Caretaker" is defined as direct and the characters as clear-cut. Moreover, the play has a realistic plot, a sound connection between the characters and real life. Bernard F. Dukore acutely claims that "unlike *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, and *The Hothouse*, no unrealistic elements erupt in *The Caretaker*" (Dukore 49). Even the playwright himself designated the play as "very

straightforward and simple" (Dukore 49). For Pinter, the simplicity of the play lies in the fact that at its core the play is about "a caretaker and two brothers:"

> I feel that I can deal, without resorting to that kind of thing, [cabaret turns, blackouts and screams in the dark] with a human situation. I do see this play as merely a particular human situation, concerning three particular people, and not, incidentally, symbols. (Hinchliffe 88-89)

In contrast to the incomprehensible family relationships in "The Homecoming," "The Caretaker" has three male characters, two of whom are brothers, Aston and Mick, and the other is an old tramp, Mac Davies or Bernard Jenkins –his assumed identity- who is rescued by Aston from being beaten by his fellow worker at his working place due to his refusal of taking the rubbish bucket out. Thanks to his compassionate and benevolent nature, Aston brings the old homeless and penniless Davies to his shabby attic full of junk, ranging from paint buckets, screws, a shopping trolley, planks of wood, screws, an old broken electric toaster to a Buddha statue on the gas stove. Although he was exposed to an electro-shock treatment upon other people's betrayal of him - this is Aston's own interpretation-, and although he implies that he does not trust people, he can feel warmth for Davies. Just like a mother or a benevolent figure, Aston tries to provide this peevish, stubborn old man with anything he needs or may need. Bringing Davies to his shrine Aston first offers tobacco, then a bed (home), shoes, money, smoke jacket, and finally the job of a caretaker. Davies's reactions to all these offers resemble that of a child: He accepts tobacco for his pipe that he never smokes but likes pretending to smoke. He continually complains about the bed because of a series of reasons: First, it is draughty there. Second, there is a gas stove which frightens him: it might fall upon him. He wants to change beds with Aston. However, Davies accepts money and a smoking jacket without any discontent. As for the last offer, the position of caretaker intimidates Davies because he has changed his name to Jenkins and now he is frightened that he may be caught and put into prison if he answers those doorbells: they might be looking for him. Unlike Aston, Mick, the younger brother, never shares his brother's humane attitude towards this rootless tramp, who is unwilling to answer even the simplest of his questions:

> 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 a bit of track, like…you know… (23)

The next day as soon as Aston goes out to purchase a jigsaw and to get Davies's bag from the cafe, Davies locks the door and starts to search through the things in the room. The First Act closes with Mick, a tradesman in the construction field, who secretly and silently enters into the room. He observes Davies' inspection in the room for a while and then attacks Davies. His arm is seized and his body is forced to the floor by Mick. And it is not surprising that the closing remark by Mick is: "What's the game?" (27).

With the intention of intimidating the tramp, Mick's interrogation about Davies's identity opens the next act, throughout which Mick never ceases attacking the old tramp verbally. First, he likens Davies to a number of people whom Mick knows. Then, he insults Davies by his linguistic competence. Later, as if playing a childish game, Mick does not let Davies get his bag. Whenever Davies tries to get it, Mick catches and throws the bag in order not to give it to the owner. Before dominating Davies verbally, Mick's last physical violence over him is to threaten and frighten him in the dark with the nozzle of an electrolux. Throughout the play, Mick keeps the whip hand over Davies, implying his power. If this is a game, he is the master not the old tramp, whose only chance is to obey the master's rules. The Second Act closes with Aston's confession about his electro-shock treatment in an asylum upon his mother's permission and about his wish that he should have died as it had been a painful experience for him. This confession will later be used as a kind of weapon by Davies against him, who assumes that he has a right to indict Aston for being insane and thus to kick Aston out of his room. His intention is to replace Aston's residence and to be in good terms with Mick. That is, he wants to seize whatever Aston has.

The Third Act opens with Davies's playing off Mick against his brother, Aston:

> He don't answer me when I talk to him.
> *He lights a match, holds it to his pipe, and blows it.*
> He don't give me no knife!
> *Pause.* (56)
> He's supposed to be in charge of it here, he had nothing to say, he hadn't got a word to say. (57)
> I mean you come up to me, you ask my advice, he wouldn't never do a thing like that. (57-58)
> You and me, we could get this place going. (58)
> You want to tell him… that we got ideas for this place, we could build it up, we could get it started. (61)

Aston retreats after his confession and Davies starts to boggle at his own position with Aston since Aston no longer cares for him. Davies resents this and goes so far as to say: "He's no friend of mine. You don't know where you are with him" (59). Moreover, he accuses Aston for indifference since Aston does not care about the fact that Davies needs a clock. Davies resents even further as Aston wakes him up in the middle of night in order to stop Davies's disturbing noises. As a result, Davies wakes up exhausted in the morning and he cannot deal with his business. Indeed, Davies has already started to have a battle with Aston when he says: "I tell you I've half a mind to give him a mouthful one of these days" (60). On the other hand, Davies is perplexed because he catches Aston's look and smile at him in the morning just before he goes out. Davies is in bed watching Aston through his blanket:

> I got my eye on him all the time through the blanket, see? … He just looks at me and he smiles, but he don't that I can see him doing it! (61)

When Aston mentions that Davies groans in his sleep, Davies does not believe it as, he thinks, he does not dream:

> DAVIES. I don't dream. I've never dreamed.
> ASTON. No, nor have I.
> Davies. Nor me.
> *Pause.*
> Why you ask me that, then?
> ASTON. You were making noises.
> DAVIES. Who was?
> ASTON. You were.

DAVIES gets out of bed. He wears long underpants.
DAVIES. Now, wait a minute. Wait a minute, what do you mean? What kind of noises?
ASTON. You were making groans. You were jabbering.
DAVIES. Jabbering? Me?
ASTON. Yes.
DAVIES. I don't jabber, man. Nobody ever told me that before. (20-21)

In a state of complete anger and resentment, Davies claims that he is a sane man, unlike Aston:

> Nobody ever got me inside one of them places, anyway. I'm a sane man! …Why'd you invite me in here in the first place if you was going to treat me like this? You think you're better than me you got another think coming. I know enough. They had you inside one of them places before, they can have you inside again. Your brother's got his eye on you! […] All they got to do is get the word […] That was the greatest mistake they made, you take my tip, letting you get out of that place […] You think I'm going to do your dirty work? Haaaaahhhhh! You better think again! You want me to do all the dirty work all up and down them stairs just so I can sleep in this lousy filthy hole every night? Not me, boy […] You're up the creek! You're half off! […] Whoever saw you slip me a few bob? […] I never been inside a nuthouse! (65)

The play comes to an end with Davies's frustration that he would be hired by Mick as a caretaker and that Aston would be kicked by his younger brother. Thus the room would be inhabited only by Davies, who bears the false assumption that there is a mutual agreement and understanding between Mick and himself. Ironically, Mick rejects this request by calling him impertinent since Davies insults Aston for being nutty. Hopeless and frustrated, Davies, in his last effort to position himself in that room, fails again.

Although in "The Caretaker" "there are no deflections from the hunting down of victim by villain" says Ruby Cohn in the article called "The World of Harold Pinter" (89), the fight refers to some kind of power by the use of which human beings are forced to win in order not to be subjugated. When power is used either by a person or by a structure such as a state, a mafia or language, it aims at terrorising or subjugating the opponent as there should be one winner and a loser; or a master and a slave. This has been manifested in Pinter's plays as he admits: "How power is used,

how you terrorise someone, how you subjugate someone, has always been alive in my work" (qtd. in Nightingale 141).

As is stated above, power needs not to be associated with a person since there are some abstract concepts like language which impose such significant influence on people that a subject is forced to lose if s/he refuses to obey the necessary rules or commands whose destructive effects will never abandon the victim(s) all their lives. Pinter's main concern of manifesting how power is used has been mostly shown as something beyond the reach of the characters. Thus these people are doomed to struggle with some external forces or power which is inherently bound up with language, but they are unaware of the nature of it.

Almansi refers to some of Pinter's characters' ability to use language over their inferiors to gag them, and this reveals even more the significant effect of language on people. In this line of thinking, Austin E. Quigley designates the "diverse linguistic abilities" of characters in "The Caretaker" as possessing "a diversity of goals:"

> The linguistic ability to create and sustain a social identity becomes a focus of thematic concern as the liabilities as well as the benefits of particular abilities gradually emerge. (114)

However creating and sustaining a social identity using the linguistic ability is beyond these people's grasp. Language itself has such a strong influence over any subject that not passing through its necessary stages in the proper sense will cause each subject to fail to constitute its subjectivity and thus fail to inhabit a place as a speaking member of the Symbolic Order, as is discussed in the previous chapter. Pinter himself acknowledges this "transcendental" power of language in an interview:

> MG [Mel Gussow]: Who's Harold Pinter?
> HP: He's not me. He's someone else's creation. It's very curious. Quite often when people shake me warmly by the hand and say they're pleased to meet me, I have very mixed feelings – because I'm not quite sure who it is they think they're meeting. In fact, who they are meeting at all. I can't explain it very well.
> (Gussow 25)

When, in his article titled "Names and Naming in the Plays of Harold Pinter," Ronald Knowles puts forward a question: "Why is it that Pinter chooses to give some characters names when they remain unnamed in the course of the play?" (125). The answer to this query can be found in Pinter's quotation above since Pinter's expression "someone else" signifies language, which exists even before the subject's birth and will create the subject's identification if its commands are fulfilled.

The reason why Lacan's work seems to be the ideal tool for illuminating the psyche of Pinter's characters is that Lacan provides a comprehensive reply on why these characters have been living in the margins instead of possessing a place in the community they belong to. Thus, in Lacanian theory accessing language with all its dimensions is seen as obligatory for each subject in any society. Not being able to acknowledge the commands of language, Pinter's characters have, in fact, chosen, unconsciously, to suffer from a life in the margins by creating their own world.

For Lacan, language is the structure of the Symbolic Order necessary for the subject to enter into so as to hold a place in the civilized world first by breaking the bond between the mother and himself/herself; and subsequently by accepting the castration/ the Name-Of-the-Father. Only if they "define themselves in language, by the Word and through the Law" will subjects be able to name themselves in the course of their lives (Cook 2). So, Roland Knowles's query about Pinter's characters' staying unnamed through the play points to the fact that Pinter's characters have not fully been able to integrate into the Symbolic Order, a failure which brings about some kind of psychological, or more specifically developmental disorders. In this light neurosis is the illness that Pinter's characters mostly suffer from. The subject is captured in a place between Lacanian three orders, the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic or trapped in a single order. Marc Silverstein draws a parallelism between Pinter and Lacan "at least the 'structuralist' Lacan":

> the subject must undergo a continuous and inescapable subjection to the power of a destiny that works through, without being irreducible to, the symbolic order… For Pinter as for Lacan, the subject remains enveloped within a determining structure of cultural codes that maps the trajectory of its

> existence; that allows "its" empowerment only if such empowerment leaves the cultural order intact; that leaves it, like Sartre's characters, in a state of impasse from which there is no exit. (Silverstein 157)

When taking into consideration Lacan's theory of language's remarkable role as a crucial trajectory in the formation of subjectivity for enculturation, it is not surprising that the older brother, Aston has finally chosen or more correctly was forced to choose, to submit to the pressures of the society. He was sent to an asylum where he was administered electro- shock treatment due to his "strangeness." Yet, the electro shock therapy was carried on, much to his surprise, no matter how determinedly he tried to prevent the doctors from committing the act by standing up against the wall. He thought they would not or could not go on with the treatment because his spine might have been broken:

> the night they came I got up and stood against the wall. They told me to get on the bed, and I knew they had to get me on the bed because if they did it while I was standing up they might break my spine. So I stood up and then one or two of them came for me, well, I was younger then, I was much stronger than I am now, I was quite strong then, I laid one of them out and I had another one round the throat, and then suddenly this chief had these pincers on my skull and I knew he wasn't supposed to do it while I was standing up, that's why..... anyway, he did it. So I did get out […] but I couldn't walk very well. […]The trouble was …my thoughts … had become very slow… (54-55)

The purpose of the treatment was revealed to Aston by the doctor: the examination of his brain would enable Aston to leave the hospital and to "live like the others" (53). Without it he will be doomed to live there for the rest of his life. So Aston could not find a way of escape from this impasse since his false assumptions -that without his permission the doctors could not do anything to him- resulted in a frustration on his part due to his mother's permission for this brain treatment. In fact, at the hospital Aston realized that he had no choice but to submit. Aston's castration is double layered: he was castrated first by his mother as she signed the related documents for electroconvulsive therapy and subsequently by the doctor who committed the treatment with the "pincers with wires on attached to a little machine:"

> But he just repeated what he'd said. Well, I wasn't a fool. I knew I was a minor. …So I wrote to her and told her what they were trying to do. But she signed their form, you see, giving them permission. I know that because he showed me her signature when I brought it up. (54)

No matter how determinedly Aston tried to escape from this castration, he could not manage it. He first observed the other people's treatment and then underwent his own:

> Well, that night I tried to escape, that night. I spent five hours sawing at one of the bars on the window in this ward. Right throughout the dark. They used to shine a torch over the beds every half an hour. So I timed it just right. And then it was nearly done, and a man had a… he had a fit, right next to me. And they caught me, anyway. About a week later they started to come round and do this thing to the brain. We were all supposed to have it done, in this ward. (54)

The problem with Aston lies in the fact that by refusing the castration, he escaped a gap necessary for the entrance to the Symbolic Order. For Lacan "without this gap that alienates him [the child] from his own image, this symbiosis with the Symbolic, in which he constitutes himself as subject to death, could not have occurred" (1977: 196). The position of an infant in the Symbolic triangle that Lacan draws is explained by Lacan as such: "I" plays the role of the ego-ideal in the Imaginary Order, the primordial object signifier is the m(O)ther, and the Father is situated in the place of Other as the Name-Of-the-Father. This chain of signifiers refers to a crucial Lacanian signifier "Other." Accordingly, Anthony Wilden translates this concept of Lacanian Other in different ways: sometimes it is used to mean "Otherness," sometimes "the Other." It signifies both parents as the mother stands for the "real Other" and as the father occupies the "Symbolic Other". In any case the big Other should never be understood as standing for a person but a principle (Lacan 1968: 264). As a result, only by internalizing the Other, will the subject be able to face the reality, the society:

> homological fastening of the signification of the subject under the signifier of the phallus may affect the support of the field of reality by the quadrangle MieI. (1977: 197)

The letter M is the m(O)ther while the other two "ie" stand for "the two imaginary terms of the narcissistic relation, the ego and the specular image" (1977: 197). As a result, the infant will reach the castration phase by first breaking his bond with his/her primordial object/specular image [mother] and by accepting the Phallus as a pure signifier- the Law/the Name-Of-the-Father. Aston could not break the bond with the primordial object and not accept the Law. The result, for Aston, was an exposure to such a medical cure.

Yet, the cure does not bring satisfactory results: that disastrous asylum experience caused him severe headaches and scattered thoughts as well as his slow thinking. Aston gives the reason why he was taken to hospital for an examination, because he

> talked too much. That was my mistake….And these men, they used to listen, whenever I…had anything to say…The trouble was, I used to have kind of hallucinations. They weren't hallucinations, they…I used to get the feeling I could see things…very clearly … everything … was so clear… everything used … everything used to get very quiet […] but maybe I was wrong. (52-53)

When he perceived the external reality differently from others, this was called hallucination by them. In fact, according to him, he was seeing things clearly. Aston has not been able to accommodate himself in his community in his working place, a factory, and the cafe where he was spending time. It is because of this that Aston could not understand why people "always used to listen" (52) to him at first but later "started being funny" (53).

Before being imprisoned at hospital, Aston had a false assumption similar to that of a child in front of the mirror. Here it might be interesting to look at how Richard Feldstein defines this experience in his article called "the Phallic Gaze of Wonderland:"

> In the initial experience before the mirror, the child constitutes an idealized ego whose foundation rests on a fictional construction of integral boundaries in an identification with an objectified virtual image. In the mirror s/he is presented with a

> gap between viewer and viewed, the assumption of which position is crucial to the development of the personality. (159)

Let alone the gap between the viewer and the viewed, Aston could not realize his fragmented body due to his idealized ego, which misleads subjects into the idea that s/he is a unified entity. However, with that brain treatment Aston's unified self-image is severely threatened, as in Feldstein's words, he experiences disidentification:

> However, in situations where one's unified self-image is severely threatened (having an emotional breakdown, being placed in a concentration camp…) a process of disidentification can occur. (159)

What Aston experiences at the hospital is a subversion of the castration as it does not lead him to an encounter with the big Other:

> It has a functional value, representing both the "significant other" to whom the neurotic's demands are addressed (the appeal to the Other), as well as the internalization of this Other (we desire what the Other desires) and the unconscious subject itself or himself (the unconscious is the discourse of-or from-the Other). (Lacan 1968: 264)

All subjects have to internalize the Other, thus, the Desire of and for the Other in order not to undergo psychical disintegration and to secure a place in society. Cook makes a difference between the subjects who accept and who refuse to have a position in the Symbolic Order:

> If to enter discourse is to suffer division, what of the subjects who refuse apportionment, who remain inviolate despite the immersion in language… Lacan makes it clear that the individual may not pass into language intact. There is always a price to be exacted and if one refuses to pay one's debts, then one is rendered a bankrupt. (13)

The bankruptcy that Pinter's characters experience is their oscillating either between the three Orders or being trapped within one Order such as the Imaginary, and thus suffering from psychical disunion: neurosis or psychosis. The neurosis phenomena, from which nearly all of Pinter's characters suffer, can be in different forms such as obsessions as is seen in the case of Aston and Davies, both of whom show the

symptoms of "inversion, isolation, reduplication, cancellation and displacement" (Lacan 1977: 5). On the other hand, if subjects follow the true path, then their basic needs will result in a demand and a Desire simultaneously, because while directing his/her demand, the subject splits from his/her imaginary identification and starts demanding. This indicates the entrance into discourse and thus the birth of Desire. At this point there occurs the sense of lack of object which is not separated from Desire. As a result, via demand the infant gets rid of an inarticulated situation and moves towards being a speaking subject.

For the neurotics, the problem is centred on repression: Lemaire says that "the neurotic represses his symptom's signified." There is a "loss of symbolic reference of the signifier's constituting the central points of the structure of his complex" (227). Thus, internal conflicts occur as a result of repression in neurotics, who may develop some obsessions as in the example of Aston, who collects anything with the idea that they might be useful one day. Aston's junk-filled attic has a place for everything that he thinks valuable. Interestingly, the last thing he intends to buy is a jigsaw that may be handy when [or more correctly if] he realizes his dream, that is, building a shed in the garden. He clings onto an illusion that he will build a shed in the back garden one day. Aston will never realize this illusion although he repeatedly talks about it to Davies. He cannot bring himself to build the shed but he constantly procrastinates on it, which is his way of clinging to life. However, in the end he decides to get rid of Davies since Davies has turned out to be a trouble maker for him. First and foremost, Aston is obsessed with Davies's groaning in his sleep: This dream element is important because it leads us to the repetition compulsion. Repetition compulsion causes the traumatic neurosis to repeat the distressing situation of his/her experience in the dream. As for Davies's dreams, he repeats his painful emotions in his dream by groaning. This disturbs Aston, who probably remembers his own traumatic experience at the hospital. The second disturbance caused by Davies is his insults about Aston's brain treatment. For Davies it is not a hospital but a nuthouse. Davies's last insult comes when he calls Aston's dream shed stinking. This triggers Aston's reaction:

> Anyway, I'm going to be busy. I've got that shed to get up. If I don't get it up now it'll never go up. Until it's up I can't get started. (74)

Davies uses his knowledge of Aston's asylum experience to his own ends. Rather than sympathize with Aston, he takes it as something degrading and tries to prove to Mick that he would make a better caretaker than Aston. In a final effort, Davies puts the blame on Aston:

> I didn't tell you nothing! … It was him who told you. It was your brother who must have told you. He's nutty! He'd tell you anything, out of spite, he's nutty, he's half way gone, it was him who told you. (71)

At that point, Mick hurls the Buddha statue as he is angry with Davies. The broken statue is significant both for Davies and Aston. First, Mick shatters Davies's false assumption that they two will unite to kick Aston and realize Mick's dreams to build a penthouse. Secondly, Mick reminds Aston of their own relationship and wants him to break the bond with Davies. It is high time for Aston to adhere to the unarticulated treaty between them:

> *ASTON comes in. He closes the door, moves into the room and faces MICK. They look at each other. Both are smiling, faintly… ASTON leaves the door open, crosses behind DAVIES, sees the broken Buddha, and looks at the pieces for a moment. He then goes to his bed, takes off his overcoat, sits, takes the screwdriver and plug and pokes the plug.* (73)

Mick's breaking the statute of Buddha, in fact, possesses a castration effect for Davies as it implies the forthcoming penalty for his ingratitude towards Aston: having seen the broken statute, Aston also realizes that he must withdraw himself and show Davies the door. He, in fact, asked Davies to leave before and now he has a valid reason to turn him out and is determined not to give up his decision. Aston has already learnt what it leads to if he confides his deep thoughts and feelings to a person. He trusted people before and had to undergo an unbearable and unforgettable experience: the consequences of trusting people cost a great deal to him. He learned a painful lesson. As a result of his ingratitude and ceaseless demands, Davies has been expelled both by Mick and Aston.

Davies is obsessed with the idea of going to Sidcup to get his identity papers, which a man has been keeping for him for about fifteen years according to his account. However, this wish will never be fulfilled because Davies has been waiting for good weather which will never break and for a good pair of shoes. Interestingly, any pair of shoes that is offered by Aston has a defect for Davies; they are either the wrong size (12, 62) or do not fit and will cripple him in a week (13). Or they are without laces (62) or the colour of the laces that Aston provides do not fit with that of the shoes.

Like Aston, Davies displays the symptoms of obsessional neurosis: He makes plans but cancels them continuously. All these details remind one of Hamlet's procrastination of killing the king. The audience feels that if he goes to that place-if such a place exists of course - he will confront something that might challenge his identity.

On the other hand, Davies's endless demands remind one of the relationships between the mother and the child but in this relationship Aston cannot be Davies's primal object that satisfies the child's needs, demands or/and Desires since Aston himself is trapped between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Although Aston was castrated at the hospital upon the written approval of his mother, who leads Aston to undergo the separation process from the mother, he cannot be a fully speaking member of the Symbolic Order. Thus, Davies' demands, which imply the infants' entrance to the Symbolic Order dialectically as well as the birth of Desire, cannot be met by Aston since Aston withdraws himself from the community completely after his subverted castration at the hospital. So, Davies's Desire for recognition from Aston can never be satisfied: "He don't answer me when I talk to him (57), I can't get the hang of him (58), Christ! That bastard, he ain't even listening to me!" (64).

In fact, Aston stops meeting Davies's demands, except for shoes, after that confession scene at the end of Act Two. As a result, whenever Davies complains about draught, rain, open window at night or inconvenient bed, Aston refuses to act in the way Davies expects because Aston himself is trapped under the destructive

effect of language, like Davies. For Davies, when Aston meets his needs, he functions like a mother. Ironically, when Davies asks for more (the real aim of his demand is Aston's availability), Davies confronts Aston's absence, not his presence. When Davies is invited to live in this room and to perform the job of the caretaker, offered both by Aston and Mick, he is very much like the newborn infant in this new world. Fink defines this new world for the newborn infant in Lacanian terms as follows: every subject is born into "a world of discourse, a discourse of language that precedes our birth and that will live on after our death." Thus, before its birth an infant has a place meticulously prepared "for it in its parents' linguistic universe:"

> the parents speak of the child yet to be born, try to select the perfect name for it, prepare a room for it, and begin imagining what their lives will be like with an additional member of the household. The words they use to talk about the child have often been in use for decades, if not centuries, and the parents have generally neither defined nor redefined them despite many years of use. Those words are handed down to them by centuries of tradition they constitute the Other of language…as the linguistic Other, or the Other as language. (1995: 5)

What is misleading for Davies is that this room has never been prepared for his coming and nobody in this room has talked about either his coming or preparing a place for him in the room. Ironically, they cannot decide on how to address him as he has two different names, an indication of the confusion about his position: This tramp has been neither Davies nor Bernard Jenkins. He has not been able to constitute his identity because he has been unable to say one fixed "I." In this context, Lacan's question is noteworthy as it displays a subject's utmost effort to reach his/her identity in the Symbolic Order: " 'I have been this only in order to become what I can be': if this were not the permanent high point of the subject's assumption of his own mirages, in what sense would this constitute progress?" (1977: 43).

Aston stands for the subversion of the symbiotic tie between the mother and the infant: Aston's early attempts to meet Davies's needs create this illusion temporarily but it does not last long. Thus Aston stands for misrecognition- caused by Davies's ego- for Davies. Just as Aston misrecognised his place in the Symbolic world, Davies

has also misrecognised his own position, which is an important failure as one's realistic perception of his position is crucial as:

> It means that, in the relation of the imaginary and the real, and in the constitution of the world such as results from it, everything depends on the position of the subject. And the position of the subject… is essentially characterised by its place in the symbolic world, in other words in the world of speech. Whether he has the right to, or is prohibited from, calling himself *Pedro* hangs on this place. Depending on what is the case, he is within the field of the cone or he isn't. (Lacan 1988: 80)

In the light of Lacan's quotation above, it would not be erroneous to say that Davies is totally confused about his position not only in the world outside but also in this room. That is to say, for the position in this room he cannot either completely separate himself from Aston or cannot find a place for himself under Mick's authority. As a result, Davies cannot regard Aston as his caretaker due to such ambiguities. Davies is beyond being the caretaker for Aston since Aston does not let him dominate a place in the way Davies is looking for. So Davies is completely at a loss with his relationship with Aston:

> He's friendly, friendly, I didn't say he wasn't…
> …
> …I just can't exactly…make him out.
> …
> Just can't get the hang of him, that's all. (46)

As for Mick, he does not play the role of the caretaker but that of the Name-Of-The-Father[1] for Davies, who is forced to a complete submissive attitude by Mick at the end of Act One.

[1] Žižek depicts the function of the father in the triad of Real, Symbolic and Imaginary as such:

> symbolic father is the Name of the Father; imaginary father is the (respectful, dignified…) "self-image" of the father; real father is the excess of enjoyment whose perception traumatically disturbs this "self-image." (1998 a: 99)

Davies's acceptance of Mick's authority starts at the end of the First Act when Mick uses physical violence. He gives Davies the message that he should not venture to be the master as the master's place is occupied by Mick himself:

> MICK: I'm awfully glad. It's awfully nice to meet you.
> *Pause.*
> What did you say your name was?
> DAVIES. Jenkins.
> MICK. I beg your pardon?
> DAVIES. Jenkins.
> *Pause.*
> MICK. Jen … kins.
> *A drip sounds in the bucket. DAVIES looks up.*
> You remind me of my uncle's brother. He was always on the move, that man. Never without his passport. …Very much your build…To be honest, I've never made out how he came to be my uncle's brother. …Your spitting image he was.… (29)

Accordingly, Mick employs all his resources skilfully to enslave Davies: first physical violence and then verbal assault and later his linguistic competence.

Mick shatters down Davies's assumption that the room, the house and the bed he slept belong to Aston. As a result, it is not Aston but Mick that Davies has to obey. Whenever an objection is made by Davies, Mick forces Davies to submit by reminding him of the rules that Davies has to acknowledge:

> What did they teach you? (31)
> (*moving to him*.) Now don't get perky, son, don't get perky.… (33)
> Don't get out of your depth, friend, don't start taking liberties with my old mother, let's have a bit of respect. (33)
> Listen, son, Listen, sonny. You stink. (33)
> Watch your step, sonny! You're knocking at the door when no one's at home. Don't push it too hard. You come busting into a private house, laying your hands on anything you can lay your hands on. Don't overstep the mark, son. (36)

Davies accepts Mick's rules by recognising his mastery only nominally but he forgets or does not recognise in practice what Mick is trying to stress. Mick warns Davies not to disturb the harmony between himself and his brother Aston, as well as Aston's position in the room. Davies cannot apprehend the gist of Mick's warnings.

It looks as if Mick does not want anybody to intervene in the relationship between his brother and himself. In fact there is a mutual master- slave relationship between the brothers, who have silently decided and accepted the relevant positions. Mick is aware of the possible threats posed by Davies to this hierarchy:

> MICK. No, you're still not understanding me. I can't help being interested in any friend of my brother's. I mean, you're my brother's friend, aren't you?
> DAVIES. Well, I … I wouldn't put it as far as that.
> MICK. Don't you find him friendly, then?
> DAVIES. Well, I wouldn't say we was all that friends. I mean, he done me no harm, but I wouldn't say he was any particular friend of mine…. (45)

In his attempts to dominate Davies completely Mick plays a series of tricks on him: he creates a warm atmosphere by offering a sandwich and later the job of the caretaker. Immediately afterwards, Mick questions Davies's identity once more in an indirect way by asking for some references for the job. All Mick's efforts seem to be serving for a specific function: Mick does not recognise Davies as a man and it is not important for Mick to destroy him by chucking him out. In Lacanian terms Mick can show "performative efficiency" and fits into Žižek's definition of the master: "the Master is the subject who is fully engaged in his (speech) act," who, in a way, "is his word," "whose word displays an immediate performative efficiency…" (1998 a: 80).

As a result, Mick achieves his goal as the master by leading Davies to a kind of free association[2] throughout the play: the last one is just before the end of the play, in

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[2] Free association, a mode of enunciation, was used by Freud as a cure in psychoanalysis. Colette Soler defines the meaning of free association in accordance with Freudian view:

> And what does Freudian technique do? First it transforms the subject of suffering into a subject of thought. It is what we call free association. When Freud or any other psychoanalyst demands free association of the patient, s/he demands that the patient speak as s/he thinks. Free association involves saying what you silently think. Free association thus demands something unusual of the subject, who has to articulate a series of thoughts without reflection or control. (41)

As a result the subject "has to become a producer of thoughts." For Soler what Lacan does in using this technique is to "translate thought into signifiers." Thus a transformation of "the subject of suffering into a subject of thought" occurs by means of free association, through which "the subject of the cogito" is possible to be constituted. (41)

which Davies's innermost thoughts or feelings are revealed. This ironically works as a psychoanalytic cure. Žižek defines the importance of liberation in free associations as follows:

> That is to say, "liberation" always implies a reference to the Other *qua* Master: ultimately, nothing liberates as well as a good Master, since "liberation" consists precisely in our shifting the burden onto the Other/Master. (1992: 59)

Towards the end of act three, when Davies calls Aston "nutty" and admits to having told Aston to go back where he comes from [the asylum], it is high time for Mick to castrate Davies; that is, to break the bond with Davies that Davies has falsely been clinging to:

> 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…you stink from arse-hole to breakfast time.… (72)

Finally by declaring openly that Aston is completely responsible for the room; and by not answering Davies's question "What about me?" (72), Mick implies clearly that it is impossible for Davies to engage a place between the two brothers. Mick has, in fact, warned Davies before about the rules that he must follow if he is to live in this room. In other words, Mick has refused to be the caretaker for Davies. Davies's need for the caretaker cannot be met by any of these characters since Davies is in quest for a mother not for a father. The Father figure:

> represents the Word of the father as employed by the mother-in other words, it represents the authority of the father upon which she calls in her dealings with the child. Thus is the Symbolic father the figure of the Law to which the real or Imaginary father may or may not conform. (Lacan 1968: 296)

While directing his Desire on Aston, Davies cannot find a position for himself. Aston can be neither a mother nor a father for this intruder although he temporarily plays

the role of the mother. Then, he turns his eyes towards Mick but Mick, in Lacanian sense, fills the father's situation, in which there is a command or authority that Davies has to obey. This obedience would have ensured Davies with a position in the Symbolic Order if he had been aware of the signifier-signified relationship. Moreover, what is misleading for Davies is "the *objectal* movement of the subject's [his interminably wrong] desire toward the mother" (Lacan 1968: 295). Davies has succeeded in "splitting [his] demand from need" (Lacan 1968: 296) and in the emergence of his Desire but he has been imprisoned there since the mother/the primordial caretaker was unable to "introduce into the child's view of 'reality' the fact of the lack of object upon which desire depends. This lack of object is an absence…" (Lacan 1968: 296). The emergence of Desire, or to accept this absence means to recognize the emergence of Law because "Law and desire" stem "from the fact that both are born together, joined and necessitated by each other in the law of incest and what?" (Lacan 1990: 89) Davies has already revealed his complaints about Aston's absences both physically and verbally. That is why he switched his expectations to Mick only to find the prohibitions and commands of language, towards which he is completely deaf and blind just like Ben and Gus in "The Dumb Waiter." The search for a caretaker in this play ends up with no solution since each character has been unable to recognise language as the ultimate caretaker to be a speaking member of their society. Or if there is a caretaker, Mick may be regarded as the responsible agent for Aston although it is not clearly stated by each of the brothers but is hinted in the silent communication between them.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEATH OF THE MOI IN "THE DUMB WAITER"

> *When we look into a mirror we think the image that confronts us is accurate. But move a millimetre and the image changes. We are actually looking at a never-ending range of reflections. But sometimes a writer has to smash the mirror - for it is on the other side of that mirror that the truth stares at us.*
>
> *Harold Pinter*[1]

In accordance with Lacanian epistemology, a failure to occupy a position in language usually means that the subject has been trapped in the Imaginary Order and has been paralysed within his/her misrecognition caused by his/her ego. Lacan verifies that language exists before the infant's birth and it has a far reaching impact on his/her "I"dentity or rather self formation, and on his process of anchoring into the discourse. A closer reading of "The Dumb Waiter" from a Lacanian vantage point reveals that, as in the case of Pinter's other neurotic characters, Ben and Gus are trapped in the Imaginary Register, disturbed by the ruptures caused by their awareness of the Real and their vague and distorted awareness of the Symbolic Register, the domain of language. Very suitably, their predicament which destabilizes their "selfhood" is incarnated in their linguistic incompetence. That is to say, the play undercuts simplistic readings positing a complex interaction between the nature of selfhood and language. It is because of this reason that this chapter teases out the issues of the signifier and the signified, the metaphor and metonymy, the importance of the repetition compulsion, primary and secondary repression, the

[1] Harold Pinter. The Nobel Lecture Thursday December 8, 2005

reasons causing neurosis, the Imaginary and the Symbolic identification of the ego with references to the characters.

It is not too difficult to see that Pinter has been in the centre of harsh criticism after nearly each of his plays' first productions even at the times when he was acknowledged as highly successful. Critics accepted "The Dumb Waiter" more or less in the same way: the play was taken either as incomprehensible or a failure or that the playwright was accused of using a continual "artistic hypnosis" (Deleon 24). On the other hand, there were some other critics like Harold Hobson, who had appreciated Pinter's artistic talent in the ill-treated *The Birthday Party*, (he praised Pinter as possessing "the most original, disturbing and arresting talent in theatrical London" (Esslin 1970: 9)), and who commented on "The Dumb Waiter" as presenting a "view of life, an individual world" (Deleon 24) where answers were totally insufficient for the questions evoked.

The Times's evaluation of "The Dumb Waiter" stresses the sources of the tension in the play as incomprehensible together with Pinter's glorification as a dramatist and his resemblance to an Australian composer, Anton Webern:

> Like Webern he [Pinter] has a taste for short, compressed forms,… and like Webern he inclines to etiolated pointilliste textures, forever trembling on the edge of silence, and to structures elusive, yet so precisely organized that they possess an inner tension nonetheless potent because its sources are not completely understood. (Esslin 1970: 11)

Regarding the uncovered ambiguity which exists in the centre of each play by Pinter, Penelope Prentice argues that it is this ambiguity that shapes a redefinition of the villain and the victim:

> What puzzled critics called wilful mystification or glibly labelled theatre of the absurd is in reality a manifestation of the carefully constructed ambiguity which redefines villain and victim in Pinter's portrayal of the dominant/ subservient conflict.
> (2000: 11)

As opposed to Lenny and Ruth in "The Homecoming" and Mick in "The Caretaker," three of whom skilfully use language over other characters as a means of power or menace, in "The Dumb Waiter," neither of the characters, Ben and Gus, possess this efficiency. However, as is mentioned above, a battle for power, a battle for intimidation to monopolize the place of master is realized via language and at times via physical violence by Ben over Gus, who, nevertheless, has not completely submitted to his senior as he does not fulfil Ben's orders as soon as they are given or who questions Ben's orders as well as the transactions of the organization or person/people they belong to.

In fact, given the quality of the questions that Gus asks Ben, it is seen that Gus has not been fully able to express himself in language, and Ben has also been lost in language. In contrast to his partner, Ben has abandoned questioning their crimes and the results. Nor do either of the characters question the meaning of words. In his article named "Pinter and the Pinteresque," John Fletcher argues that language is used as a means of dominating other people in Pinter's plays (22). However, such a statement would be positively misleading for "The Dumb Waiter." As is stated before, while Lenny, Ruth and Mick hold such a power, in "The Dumb Waiter" neither Ben nor Gus has the ability to browbeat each other by means of linguistic fluency. It may be because of this reason that Pinter creates no antagonists or protagonists. At this point one cannot help recalling Pinter's own remarks on the interconnections between society and the individual:

> There's no question of hero and villain … I'm afraid society is a pattern which does kill and crab and confine, and that at the same time the individuals who make the society do the same to themselves by conforming to their own habits continually day after day and year after year. (qtd. in Prentice 2000: 11-12)

The reason why Pinter is not concerned with the presence of a hero/heroine or villain in his plays lies in the fact that the guilt or more correctly failure or success does not result from the individual(s) but from society or, in Lacanian terms, from the Symbolic Order / the domain of language. Thus, a kind of vicious circle is revealed through Pinter's quotation above as individuals constitute society and they are, in turn, constituted by it. Thus, in a Lacanian line of reading which emphasizes the

centrality of language, it is not society that kills, crabs and confines the individual as Pinter expresses above but language which surrounds and dominates each speaking member of the society even before their birth, as Lacan notes:

> if he [the subject] can appear the slave of language is all the more so of a discourse in the universal movement in which his place is already inscribed at birth.… (1977: 148)

In Lacanian terms, Lemaire notes that once subjects are fashioned by the Symbolic Order, they will be "indelibly marked by language without being aware of it" (54) and thus, instead of heroes/heroines or villains; speaking members of society- whether they are shaped as heroes/heroines or victims/victimizers- are constituted through language. In *Book XX Encore 1972-1973* Lacan goes a step further in his concept of the subject and defines speaking members of society as signifiers, a definition which brings to the fore the constructedness of their identity even better:

> thanks to a certain number of conventions, prohibitions, and inhibitions that are the effect of language and can only be taken from that fabric and register. There isn't the slightest prediscursive reality, for the very fine reason that what constitutes a collectivity – what I called men, women, and children – means nothing qua prediscursive reality. Men, women, and children are but signifiers. (1998: 33)

When Lacan denies a prediscursive reality, he aims at defining reality, indeed every reality, as something "founded and defined by a discourse" (1998: 32). Thus, the function of the signifier according to Lacan deals with imperative, that is "signifier is, first and foremost, imperative," implying there is no way to escape but obey or undergo some crucial psychological problems as a result of not acknowledging the signifiers in their true context (1998: 32).

On the other hand, Lacan makes a clear distinction that signified is not related to ears but to reading – "the reading of the signifier we hear." Thus, hearing has nothing to do with the signified but the signifier: "The signified is the effect of the signifier" (1998: 33). In conclusion, the only choice for the subject is to be able first to hear the signifier and then to get the effect of it. Otherwise, the subject will be doomed to lead a trapped life between realms of what Lacan calls the Imaginary, the Symbolic

and/or the Real. Having not been able to surrender to the imperative/signifier, that is the commands of language, the subjectivity will not be formed in a Lacanian sense but the subject will end up as either psychotic or suffering from different mechanisms of neurosis "to disguise, to displace, to deny, to divide, to subdue the aggressive intention by means of a defensive decomposition…" (Lacan 1977: 14).

In the light of a Lacanian episteme, it is seen that in "The Dumb Waiter" the characters Ben and Gus, the two hired assassins of an unknown or ambiguous organization or patron, have not been able to internalize the orders or rules, namely signifier/imperative, of language. As a result, they, like almost all Pinter's characters, are not able to express themselves efficiently and skilfully in discourse as they are captivated under a power, which was called as extraordinary or outside forces by most of the early critics. That is why "The Dumb Waiter" was treated nearly in the same way as Pinter's other plays by early critics even though it enabled Pinter to possess a place within the theatrical canon. However, the point must be made that all those much-discussed plays –*The Birthday Party*, "The Caretaker," "The Homecoming," "The Dumb Waiter"- which were underestimated and called strange or gruesome by the early critics, became Pinter classics in time, by means of new theories shedding deeper light upon their ambiguities.

Along with Ben and Gus, there is also Wilson, who is physically absent but whose existence is present due to Gus's insistent repetition of his name, and finally a dumb waiter, whose existence poses a dreadful threat in these characters' lives. The dumb waiter's symbolic function will be revealed in the course of this chapter.

The characters' speeches reveal how language collapses or dissolves in their lives. As will be stated later in more detail in the course of the chapter, language is defunctionalized by these characters. They exist on the periphery of the Symbolic Order since this Order does not exist for them or they have not been able to create it (or acknowledge its authority in their identity) because of their inefficiency to hear the signifier and thus get the signified. As a result, they speak and act not as adults

but like children whose patterns are amoral as they have not achieved the status of speaking members.

A synopsis of the play might help to give a better idea of their linguistic incompetence within their closed circuit of two people: The two hit men, Ben and Gus have been hired to kill a person about whom they are told nothing. They were told just to wait in a drab basement room to get the relevant instructions from Wilson about when and how they will commit the murder. The room's furniture consists of two beds between which there is a serving hatch, closed. On the left side of the room a door leads into the kitchen and lavatory. On the right side another door is opened to a passage. The play opens with Ben's lying on the bed on the left and reading a paper while Gus is sitting on the other bed and tying his shoelaces with difficulty. In the opening scene no communication takes place between the two. The audience see Gus in motion. Having tied his shoelaces, Gus stands up, and goes slowly in the direction of the door on the left. Yet, as something disturbs or attracts his attention, he shakes his foot, takes off one of his shoes and finds a flattened empty matchbox, which he puts into his pocket after examining thoroughly. Meanwhile, as Ben is watching Gus, their eyes meet. Later, Gus does the same thing with the other shoe while Ben is watching his repeated action. This time it is a flattened cigarette packet, which is shaken and examined by Gus, like the matchbox, and is put in his pocket. Their eyes meet once more. Having tied his shoes again, Gus leaves for the lavatory. On the other hand, the audience see Ben only rattling the paper, watching Gus from time to time and then turning to read his paper again, most probably to the same news items. Ironically, he reads only the news of deaths by accident or murder, which are regarded by them as much more horrifying than their own crimes. Interestingly enough, the two hired murderers are taken aback by news of death and murder, and they read as if they were absolutely unfamiliar with the phenomenon.

When Gus returns from the lavatory, the first exclamation is uttered by Ben, who has been surprised by a piece of news about an eighty-seven-year-old man's death in a traffic accident. Much to the audiences' surprise, the news startles both of them. This reaction coming from two men who murder people regardless of their sex, age or

religion without knowing any reason for the conduct, upon a request from a superior figure creates a sense of irony:

> BEN. He crawled under a lorry. A stationary lorry.
> GUS. No?
> BEN. The lorry started and ran over him.
> GUS. Go on!
> BEN. That's what it says here.
> GUS. Get away.
> BEN. It's enough to make you want to puke, isn't it?
> GUS. Who advised him to do a thing like that?
> BEN. A man of eighty-seven crawling under a lorry!
> GUS. It's unbelievable.
> BEN. It's down here in black and white.
> GUS. Incredible. (130)

Gus leaves for the toilet once again when Ben returns to the paper and makes occasional remarks about the news. Upon Gus's return, Ben asks him to make tea- an order which is repeated for several times and which is either affirmed or ignored by Gus. However, Gus does not make the tea until the scene where an envelope full of matches is sent suddenly and ambiguously under the door. The first reference to their profession comes from Gus, who, like Rose in "The Room," never stops talking about anything that comes to his mind: "I hope it won't be a long job, this one" (131). The thing that seems both funny and strange is that they treat their job as if they were performing an ordinary job. Gus's wish about their prospective murder does not get a reply from Ben but another exclamation "Kaw" (131) about an eight-year-old child's killing a cat. The dialogue about this event illuminates the characters' personalities and foreshadows the prospective murder that they will commit once they receive the instructions from Wilson, who seems to be the organizer of everything ranging from setting the plans for the murder to the shelter they will wait in for the last-minute instructions prior to the act of crime:

> BEN. *(slamming his paper down)* Kaw!
> GUS. What's that?
> BEN. A child of eight killed a cat!
> GUS. Get away.
> BEN. It's a fact. What about that, eh? A child of eight killing a cat!
> GUS. How did he do it?
> BEN. It was a girl.

GUS. How did she do it?
BEN. She-
He picks up the paper and studies it.
It doesn't say.
GUS. Why not?
BEN. Wait a minute. It just says- Her brother, aged eleven, viewed the incident from the tool shed.
…
GUS. I bet he did it.
BEN. Who?
GUS. The brother.
BEN. I think you're right.
Pause.
(*Slamming down the paper.*) What about that, eh? A kid of eleven killing a cat and blaming it on his little sister of eight!
(131-132)

As is obvious, Ben differs from Gus: Ben never questions but gets the information on the surface while Gus aims to find out the rationale behind things or events. Although they differ in this sense, they have much in common. Both of them are totally unaware of both the existence of the signifier and the signified. One example of their blindness in terms of the vicinity they live in for the time being will be revealed later in the play when they first discover the dumb waiter, which will cause them a great deal of fuss in their attempt to meet at first ordinary and, subsequently, high-class orders. Their second discovery is the existence of a speaking tube on the wall between their beds. Although they have had enough time to look through the room in detail, neither of them are aware of these facilities in the room until the appearance of the dumb waiter. The climax climbs up gradually at the beginning of the play by Gus's restlessness in his speech and actions, and is secured by their sudden and unexpected awareness of the dumb waiter.

Before the dumb waiter's frightening appearance, Gus reveals his complaints about their job as there is nothing exciting, motivating or interesting for him: their routine is to arrive at a place at night which they have never seen before, then to sleep all day waiting for the instructions, later to perform the job-murder-, and finally to leave at night again. It seems that, unlike Ben, Gus has already started to question this repetitive demotivating job: "Don't you ever get a bit fed up?" (134). To Ben, the problem with Gus results from Gus's having no pastime activity such as woodwork

or model boats, which prevents Ben from being idle. While Gus's tiresomely talkative attitude leads Ben to join him in talking about clean sheets or football, an envelope full of about a dozen of matches without any written message in it is slipped under the door. Ben sets Gus in motion to pick up the envelope and find out the courier. Forgetting the mystery about the envelope, they initiate a talk on the matches' being handy as Gus always runs out of them. Ben's command of making tea is repeated for the first time by Gus as they have the necessary equipment now, the matches. Yet, this action is delayed again by Gus until the debate concerning whether one lights the kettle or gas has been resolved by Ben with a shout in the form of imperative: "THE KETTLE, YOU FOOL!" (142). However, the order will be delayed again by Gus for some time. In fact, they are unaware of the fact that they use each other's words and then completely forget it, ironically, accusing the other of using a wrong expression:

> GUS. I can light the kettle now.
> …
> BEN…*(Slapping his hand*). Don't waste them! Go on, go and light it.
> GUS. Eh?
> BEN. Go and light it.
> GUS. Light what?
> BEN. The kettle.
> GUS. You mean the gas.
> BEN. Who does?
> GUS. You do.
> …
> GUS. How can you light a kettle?
> …
> GUS. I've never heard it.
> …
> GUS. They say put on the kettle.
> BEN. *(taut*). Who says?
> …
> GUS. Yes, but I've never heard –
> …
> BEN. (*wearily*). Put on the bloody kettle, for Christ's sake.
>
> (141,142,143)

The order for making tea, repeated several times since the beginning of the play, has been finally realised by Gus, who returns from the kitchen with a curious attitude about their current job to learn the identity of their victim or to barrage Ben to get

some information about this murder. However, Gus's wish to drink a cup of tea before they commit the murder results in frustration as the gas has gone out due to the meter which has to be refilled with coins. Ben's offer to get money from Wilson, their superior, when he appears does not delight Gus since Wilson does not always come. He might just send messages concerning the instructions about the murder.

On the other hand, Wilson is a tough person for Gus as he finds him difficult "to talk to" (145). Gus intends to ask him a great deal of things such as the clearing of the job after they murder, because their duty is simply to kill and leave. He was particularly concerned with their last murder of a girl. Gus says that he "can't remember a mess like that one" (146). Ben's reply about the clearing up the job reveals a fact about the organization: it consists of different departments for different duties. While they argue about Gus's restlessness concerning their job, a loud clatter and racket is heard, coming from the wall between the beds. This is their first discovery of the dumb waiter, which implies that this basement may have been used as a kitchen according to Ben's account. However Gus is not satisfied with Ben's idea because the gas stove has only three rings, naturally not enough to meet the demands of customers. From then on the dumb waiter descends and ascends bringing at first usual orders for food like "two braised steak and chips. Two sago puddings. Two teas without sugar, soup, liver and onion, jam tart" (147-148). Subsequently the orders become complicated: exotic dishes such as "Macaroni Pastitsio, Ormitha Macarounada" (152). Upon Ben's orders they frantically decide to send something up with the intention of appeasing the order-giver(s) although the things they send are completely irrelevant to the requests coming from the upper floor(s). While sending, Gus calls up the brands:

> GUS. *(calling up the hatch*). Three McVitie and Price! One Lyons Red Label! One Smith's Crisps! One Eccles cake! One Fruit and Nut!
> BEN. Cadbury's.
> GUS. *(up the hatch*). Cadbury's.
> BEN. *(handing the milk*). One bottle of milk.
> GUS. *(up the hatch*). One bottle of milk! Half a pint! *(he looks at the label.)* Express Diary! *(He puts the bottle in the box.)* (152)

Orders from above never cease. The next order asks for another dish with which they are unfamiliar: "One Bamboo Shoots, Water Chestnuts and Chicken. One Char Siu

and Bean sprouts" (154). Just as Ben has decided to write a note telling they have not got it, Gus discovers the existing speaking tube "which hangs on the right wall of the hatch facing his [Gus's] bed" (154). With the instructions of Ben, Gus speaks into the tube that the larder is totally empty. In contrast to Gus's direct and angry tone of voice, Ben talks into the tube in a politer tone:

> GUS. The larder's bare!
> BEN. Give me that!
> *He grabs the tube and puts it to his mouth.*
> *(Speaking with great deference.)* Good evening. I'm sorry to –bother you, but we just thought we'd better let you know that we haven't got anything left. We sent up all we had. There's no more food down here. (155)

While giving information about the food stock, Ben learns that all the things sent upstairs have failed to please the figure above because "the Eccles cake was stale, the chocolate was melted, the biscuits were mouldy" (156). The last demand- tea- from above leads Gus to a complete rebellion as he also wants to drink and eat something before the murder. Moreover, Gus does not understand why the order-giver(s) asks for tea since they don't have any gas due to the meter problem. Gus's belief is that the sender of the matches is the same person as the owner of the order. After all, the matches were sent because Gus is short of them. As the time gets closer, Ben gives Gus the instruction on how they will murder the victim. After the rehearsal scene of the murder, Gus leaves for the lavatory again since the last request for tea makes Gus dispirited. He believes strongly that there is a game played upon them:

> *(passionately, advancing)*. What's he doing it for? We've been through our tests, haven't we? We got right through our tests, years ago, didn't we? We took them together, don't you remember, didn't we? We've proved ourselves before now, haven't we? We've always done our job. What's he doing all this for? What's the idea? What's he playing these games for? (162)

However it turns out that tea order was not the last one since a new order "scampi" comes through the dumb waiter. Having been tired of these unfamiliar orders and of the unbearable pressure of their prospective crime, Gus madly speaks into the intercom tube that they have got nothing. "The larder's bare!" (155). When Gus

leaves the room to have a glass of water in the kitchen, Ben gets the last instruction via the tube that the victim will arrive straight away. Shouting for Gus, Ben diminishes the bulge of his revolver, goes quickly to the left door, from where Gus, stripped of his jacket, waistcoat, tie, holster and revolver, stumbles in. As in the rehearsal scene, the victim enters the room, finds Ben in front of him, looks at him. Just as Ben has instructed earlier, no communication takes place between them but there is a long silence, which will most probably result in Ben's killing his partner, Gus. In the rehearsal scene Gus warns Ben that Ben has forgotten to tell Gus to get his revolver. Though admitting this fact at that time, Ben meets Gus in a totally defenceless position. So it has already been planned to strip Gus of his gun.

As can be seen in the details of the play, Pinter skilfully integrates ambiguity into his characters, the events of the past and future, the use of language by his characters. As a result, one can never feel safe or sure about the deepest meaning kept when reading or watching it. Almost everything in the play functions to strengthen this existing and confusing ambiguity although on the surface it is about the title itself as Pinter himself admits. "The Homecoming" is about a return, but whose return is that and what is its function or why does that return occur? "The Caretaker," on the other hand, sets forth the queries about the identity of the caretaker: who is the real caretaker, why is it necessary, who cares for whom or what? As for "The Dumb Waiter," the questions to be asked should be who or what is, in fact, the dumb waiter, why is it dumb, what is its function, that is, why did Pinter put a dumb waiter in that specific room inhabited by those certain characters while they were waiting for their victim?

Pinter's reply to questions about the deep ambiguity in his plays emphasizes that one should be careful with a writer who explicitly puts everything to the foreground without leaving any doubt about "his worthiness, his usefulness, his altruism" (1960:13). For Pinter "this kind of writer clearly trusts words absolutely." But Pinter himself has "mixed feelings about words" since according to him words reach "nothing less than nausea:"

> Language, under these conditions, is a highly ambiguous business. So often, below the words spoken, is the thing known and unspoken. My characters tell me so much and no more, with reference to their experience, their aspirations, their motives, their history. Between my lack of biographical data about them and the ambiguity of what they say lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration but which it is compulsory to explore. (1960:13)

The compulsory territory that Pinter states in the quotation above centres on language in "The Dumb Waiter" in Lacanian theory. Lacan admits that "it was certainly the Word (*verbe*) that was in the beginning." As a result "we live in its creation." Lacan emphasizes the importance of the Law: "the law of man has been the law of language since the first words of recognition presided over the first gifts" (1977: 61). Lacan aims at equating these gifts with the symbols because the symbols represent pact as well as signifiers of the pact. Thus, it is understood that language has its own rules which must be acquiesced by each subject. Should a subject deny or reject the signifiers that language imposes, s/he is bound to relapse into the Imaginary or to be trapped between those orders.

As for "The Dumb Waiter," what indicates the two hit men's insufficiency to be fully speaking members of the Symbolic Order is the repetition automatism, in which subjects are trapped in their intersubjectivity. In the repetition automatism the subject "is only condemned to repeat something when he has forgotten the origins of the compulsion," and the cycle of repetition should be broken by making the subject remember (Evans 164). Lacan admits the complexity or perplexity of this notion of repetition because there are attempts to:

> reduce it to a repetition of needs. …the compulsion to repeat was based…on the question…by the insistence of speech which returns in the subject until it has said its final word, speech that must return, despite the resistance of the ego which is a defence, that is, the adherence to the imaginary misconstrual of identification with the other. Repetition is fundamentally the insistence of speech. (1993: 242)

The subject is doomed to repeat some certain signifiers although there is a resistance to block those signifiers. However, later in 1960s Lacan defined repetition as "the

return of the *Jouissance*, an excess of enjoyment which returns again and again to transgress the limits of the PLEASURE PRINCIPLE and seek death" (Evans 164). Pleasure Principle is a kind of command, which prohibits incest and thus has a connection with the Symbolic whereas *Jouissance* shows the excessive enjoyment which attempts what the pleasure principle prohibits. So, in contrast to the pleasure principle's bond with the Symbolic, *Jouissance* has a bond with the Real as it forces one to enjoy the desired object or thing at most. So, in repetition *Jouissance* returns to violate what the pleasure principle bans. Sarup states that in the repetition compulsion there is connection with Desire: "not the frustration of a desire but of the lack of recognition of a desire" (88). In short, in speech is witnessed the return of the repressed and transference, both of which function as a Desire in the life of the subject to signify his/her Desire for recognition, and thus, both of which are classified in the repetition automatism as they show types of return. When Lacan's theory is applied to "The Dumb Waiter," it is obvious that Ben has no Desire for recognition while Gus insistently desires to be recognised both by Ben, who refuses to answer Gus's interrogation, and Wilson, who generally sends messages instead of physically appearing and who is hard for Gus to communicate. Much to his disappointment, Gus cannot appoint a position neither with Ben nor with Wilson.

Repression is a symptom of neurosis, which is a psychological illness that almost all of Pinter's characters suffer from. Yet, Ragland-Sullivan's warning should be kept in mind that repetition does not signify an abnormal but a "normal [Lacan's use] mode of the subject, unaware that its curious structure makes it live the dialectical unconscious at the level of conscious life" (1986: 112). However, "this [Lacanian] normal mode of the subject" should not conceal the repetition's function as a "deadlier beat:" "the effort to place 'something' unified and familiar between a Real[2]

[2] In the article titled "Stealing Material" Ellie Ragland-Sullivan points out that the Real was Lacan's own creation whereas the concepts of the Imaginary and the Symbolic were taken from Freud:

> one must agree that he did indeed add the Real by the use of the Borromean knot to show the production of *objet a* in the points of jamming and crossing that characterize everyday speech and miscommunication. Furthermore, whatever opposes the Real (such as an effraction in the body) appears in the substitution of memories and takes its cause as a material one: symptom.
>
> (1991:98)

void in being and intimations of their own Imaginary nature" (1986: 112). Thus, there occurs a connection between conscious and unconscious systems due to the active and synchronic quality with the repression. That is why, not the repetition per se but the result of the repression processes, primary and secondary, causes neurosis. The necessity of the secondary repression for the psychic health, "individuation, and social functioning," is emphasized by Ragland-Sullivan. Having not undergone the secondary repression may end up with psychosis since "failure to differentiate from the m(O)ther over the father's 'dead' body is a foreclosure of the signifier for castration." Because this failure implicitly means "no" "to reality, society, and compromise." This failure to accept castration or to say no may get the shape of "a viable personal or political choice" on condition that it would not create "an intolerable psychic pain" (1986: 116). If the intolerable psychic pain occurs as a result of rejecting castration- saying no to reality, society or compromise- then the most dreadful consequence of this refusal will result in psychosis, as a result of which:

> identity repetition stops because the *moi*[ideal ego] ceases to reconstitute itself in the Real; it simply desires no longer, for the *moi*[ideal ego] has been swallowed up by the Other(A) and so has become equal to itself. (1986: 111-112)

Thus, it is seen that repression has both healthy and unhealthy consequences for the psychic structure of the subject who will succeed or fail in accepting/denying the path to enculturation according to the way s/he perceives repression in the repetition automatism. Repression is connected by Lacan with the signifier instead of signified. Thus, signifier is the thing that the subject represses in the Mirror stage and by means of repetition that signifier(s) is felt by the subject without being consciously aware of it.

Lacan divides repression into two categories as the primary and the secondary repression. The former bears an alienation "in needs" that "constitutes a …(primal repression), an inability" which "is supposed, to be articulated in demand, but it re-appears in something it gives rise to that presents itself in man as desire" (Lacan

1977: 286). Demand calls for not a satisfaction but a request for "a presence or absence,"[3] representing the primordial relation between the mother and the child:

> Demand constitutes the Other as already possessing the 'privilege' of satisfying needs, that is to say, the power of depriving them of that alone by which they are satisfied. This privilege of the Other thus outlines the radical form of the gift of that which the Other does not have, namely, its love.
> (Lacan 1977: 286)

Secondary repression as a form of repetition automatism "is a specific physical act by which a signifier is elided from the signifying chain" (Evans 165). Bearing the return of the repressed, the structure of secondary repression resembles that of the metaphor. The signifier which was repressed in the mirror stage "reappears under the guise of the various formations of the unconscious" in dreams, jokes, paraprexes or as a symptom. Like Sarup, Sullivan stresses Lacan's connection of Desire with the secondary repression:

> the Desire which coincides with the end of the mirror stage. This second repression hides the first and thereby creates the unconscious barrier between consciousness and perception that obliges those cognitive modes of perception to "misrecognize" the true nature of the "self." The *moi* is an Imaginary, alien form- a symptom in which a subject believes literally without reference to its origins in repression. This misrecognition leads to denial (*Verneinung, denegation*), which is a form of resistance to the return of the repressed. So viewed, the *moi* is a principle of negation. (1986: 113)

While the primary repression has an imaginary dimension, the secondary's dimension is related to the Symbolic as Desire is created when the infant starts to demand his/her needs through language.

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[3] The emergence of this primordial relationship between the mother and the child is due to Freud's observation of his grandson "who had a cotton reel with a piece of string tied to it." The grandson throws the reel and utters the sound "fort," standing for the mother's absence and then pulls it back with another sound "da," representing the mother's presence. Thus, "fort" says the mother has gone away while "da" indicates the mother has come back. This is an anchoring point on the part of the child as through this game the child learns "to control his feelings about the presence and absence of the loved object, the mother" (Sarup 68). Through the child's game of his mother's being in and out of his vision, the child's entrance into language can be visible. This can be seen as the beginning of Lacan's Symbolic Order, by which the child starts un/consciously to be aware of a controlling mechanism over his psychic world.

The reason why Pinter's "The Dumb Waiter" lends itself to Lacanian analysis and his theory of forming subjectivity is that the traits of repetition compulsion can clearly be seen in the two hit men's discourse or behaviour throughout the play. In the very beginning of the play it is seen that Ben is just lying on the bed, reading a paper except the scenes where he is obsessed with meeting the orders of the dumb waiter. On the other hand, Gus is constantly tying and untying his shoes, going out and coming in. This first scene of Gus is always repeated because throughout the play it is always Gus, who is always on the move, going either to the lavatory or the kitchen and coming back. In addition, it is Gus again, who repeats some certain demands such as drinking tea, complaining about the dullness of their job, wishing to learn the identity of their victim and the owner of the building that they inhabit until the murder time and so on. All these acts and demands of Gus, and Ben's deliberate restraint and stillness are reminiscent of Lacan's theory about the repetition system, in which the subject is forced to experience first a primal and then a secondary repression.

In the centre of the repression lies the lack of the recognition of a Desire according to Lacan. So there lies a necessity of the repetition of the Desire in order to be recognised. However, the problem for Gus and Ben is that they are unable to acknowledge their Desire, and only by recognizing their Desire can they stop repeating it. That is why in "The Dumb Waiter" the dominance of the signifier is traced in accordance with a Lacanian reading. The characters, Ben and Gus, are at the mercy of the Symbolic Order's law(s) which shape the individuation. On the other hand, the ambiguous entity in the form of the dumb waiter functions as a metaphor /a signifier for the Real bringing some incomprehensible or insatiable orders- that cannot be met by the characters. For Ben and Gus, the dumb waiter comes from not a known but from a vague place which is dark and in the form of a tunnel, whose arrival point is known but whose destination is unknown. Ben and Gus cannot hear this waiter as it cannot speak. However, they are also unaware of the hatch that would be completely visible to both of them under normal conditions because it is just on the wall, between their beds. The secret why they cannot see it until it descends with a frightening noise lies in the fact that the Real cannot be seen,

heard or felt until it makes its appearance. Yet, this does not mean that they will articulate the Real since the Real is non-verbal. Like Lenny in "The Homecoming," who has been disturbed by the ticks in his mind, the same disturbance is there for both of these characters.

Whenever the dumb waiter descends with new orders, they are startled by its orders, as they are in a totally helpless position and do not know what to do. Its first appearance is important to display the extent of their blindness, which dominates the entire play:

> *There is a loud clatter and racket in the bulge of wall between the beds, of something descending. They grab their revolvers, jump up and face the wall. The noise comes to a stop. Silence. They look at each other. Ben gestures sharply towards the wall. Gus approaches the wall slowly. He bangs it with his revolver. It is hollow. Ben moves to the head of his bed, his revolver cocked. Gus puts his revolver on his bed and pats along the bottom of the centre panel. He find a rim. He lifts the panel. Disclosed is a serving-hatch, a 'dumb waiter'.* (147)

Another sign of their blindness is displayed when they decide to inform the order-giver(s) that they have no food. At that point Gus notices the intercom tube which is completely visible but has escaped their attention like the dumb waiter:

> *Gus, turning for a pencil, suddenly discovers the speaking-tube, which hangs on the right wall of the hatch facing his bed.*
> 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 bob. We should have used it before, instead of shouting up there.
> GUS. Funny I never noticed it before. (154)

Although the Real is beyond words, beyond visible dimension, these two characters are depicted completely blind to nearly everything ranging from their vicinity to all the signifiers inherent in their dialogues. The signifiers seem to be flying in the air, arriving nowhere.

The characters live in a specific world of their own creation rather than the Symbolic Register because the latter does not extend into their claustrophobic world, in which the pressure of the Real is dominant. The waiter is dumb and the envelop does not have a letter but matches for tea in it. The letter in fact is double layered: First it signifies the Word that will function as the Symbolic exchange for them. On the other hand, because the envelope is devoid of a letter, it belongs to the Real, non-verbalized realm. The envelope satisfies their demand by bringing the matches for their physical need but they cannot transform it into demand. Alan Sheridan, the translator of *Écrits*, formulates the Real as such:

> It [the Real] then became that before which the imaginary faltered, that over which the symbolic stumbles, that which is refractory, resistant. Hence the formula: 'the real is impossible.' It is in this sense that the term begins to appear regularly, as an adjective, to describe that which is lacking in the symbolic order, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped: the umbilical cord of the symbolic. (1977: X)

The Real does not belong to the other two Registers, on the other hand, it breaks off its bonds neither with the Imaginary nor with the Symbolic. That is, it is always in the subjects' lives. Ragland-Sullivan defines the Real as "the kernel at the heart of psychic experience, the effect behind psychic truth…" (1986: 192). Therefore, the implications of the Real come from their neo-natal stage to disturb Ben and Gus's existence. That the Real belongs to a non-verbal realm justifies the fact that Ben and Gus can never meet those orders in the direction that the Real demands. Ben and Gus are totally ignorant of the identity or residence of the order-giver. Yet, they, in total confusion and with the pressure of the Real, are rushed into pleasing the order-giver with the things they have although they do not understand the orders.

All the things they send are not enough to satisfy the ambiguous figure because "the Eccles cake was stale, the chocolate was melted, the biscuits were mouldy" (156). After all, like Lenny's ticks, these orders are impossible to grasp. The dumb waiter is used as a means of correspondence for these two characters but as it cannot speak/verbalize/symbolize, its messages lead Ben and Gus to a total misery in their efforts to please the unknown entity.

The dumb waiter in fact is a signifier but the signified cannot be grasped by Ben and Gus as in the example of other signifiers that the play covers. However this signifier/metaphor for the Real differs from the other signifiers as it belongs to a non-verbal realm. Here it might be useful to look at Lacan's view of these terms: Lacan's formula for the metaphor is basic; "one word for another" (1977: 157). Two figures of speech, metaphor and metonymy, are borrowed by Lacan from Roman Jakobson, for whom these two poles in language have a role as the "characteristic modes of binarily opposed polarities which between them underpin the twofold process of selection and combination" (Sarup 50). Lacan combines Freud's condensation with metaphor, which shows a selection, and Freud's displacement with metonymy, representing substitution. Thus, selection represents a choice, which is an indicator for value judgement as it needs an ability to choose between categories. Therefore, metaphoric use of language allows one to select a word to signify something without taking into consideration that word's literal meaning and referent. Sarup maintains that the use of these two processes in language will function as a:

> model for understanding of psychic functions: the concept of metaphor illuminates the notion of 'symptom' (the replacing one signifier by an associated one), that of metonymy sheds lights on the origin of desire (through the combinative connection of signifier to signifier and the sense this implies of the infinitive extension of such a process into uncharted areas.) (51)

For Lacan, signifiers have nothing to do with the objects but with the chain of language, which is not stable but mobile. Thus, a signifier leads to another or other signifiers: "When the signified seems finally to be within reach" this gives birth to more signifiers (Sarup 47). To show the relation between the signifier and the signified, Lacan reverses Saussure's formula as S/s: the bar between the two letters shows the supremacy of signifier(S) over the signified(s). Thus, signifiers are heard before the signified is grasped by the auditor.

Ben and Gus have never been able to recognise the signifiers that inhabit their claustrophobic world. Not only are they blind to the signifiers coming from outside but also to the ones they send to each other. Each signifier returns from the receiver to the sender in an inverted form but neither of them are aware of the signified. As a

result of their blindness, they do not understand the signified of the signifier(s) that they have sent before to the other, which reminds Lacan's statement that the signifier is manifested through a structure and:

> The signifier is nevertheless there in nature, and if we weren't looking for the signifier, we shouldn't find anything there at all. To extract a natural law is to extract a meaningless formula. The less it signifies anything, the happier we are. (1993: 184).

The reason for happiness in the chain of signification is because each word leads to another signifier and thus it never ceases. In the process, language itself metamorphoses into the primary signifier: "the most fundamental of interhuman relations" (Lacan 1993: 197), Then subjects first of all have to accept this fundamental. In consequence, there appears a natural state: the signifier "with its own actions and insistence" exists in "human being's interests- however profound, primitive, elementary…" (Lacan 1993: 197).

At the beginning of the play they are amazed at the reports about death in the paper, and their reaction is: "get away, unbelievable, incredible" (130) without taking into consideration that they have been committing crimes probably for a long time, since Gus admits that he cannot count the number of deaths. In addition, Gus has been troubled with his job as he obsessively asks about their present job in order to relieve himself of the burden or pain that he has been suffering. Throughout the play Gus pesters Ben with meaningless questions, requests or complaints, to almost all of which he either cannot get a satisfactory answer or no answer at all. Gus is obsessed with the prospective murder as he keeps either commenting or asking questions about it:

> I hope it won't be a long job, this one (131)
> What time is he getting in touch? (132)
> He doesn't seem to bother much about our comfort these days (135)
> What's he doing all this for? What's the idea? What's he playing these games for. (162)

Gus's obvious anxiety concerning both the job they do and the owner of the organization never ceases. So, even though the regulation or the realization of the job

is always the same way, Gus has already started to question the nature of their business since their last victim's death, a girl's. It seems that the traumatic experience has started with the murder of the girl as it was a total mess according to Gus's account. However, Ben will not be able to soothe Gus. After all, even if Ben attempted, he could not be successful as there is a mutual blindness on both parts. When Gus asks Ben about what the matter is with the lavatory tank as it needs so much time to fill, the answer surprises Gus:

> GUS: Have you noticed the time that tank takes to fill?
> BEN. What tank?
> GUS. In the lavatory.
> BEN. No. Does it?
> GUS. Terrible.
> BEN. Well, What about it?
> GUS. What do you think's the matter with it?
> BEN. Nothing.
> GUS. Nothing?
> BEN. It's got a deficient ballcock. That's all.
> GUS. A deficient what?
> BEN. Ballcock.
> GUS. No? Really?
> BEN. That's what I should say.
> GUS. Go on! That didn't occur to me. (133)

Another scene where Gus is restless about the nature of the job, about which Ben could do nothing as both of them are the workers of an organization, is representative of their situation:

> …
> I wouldn't like to live in this dump. I wouldn't mind if you had a window, you could see what it looked like outside.
> …
> I mean, you come into a place when it's still dark, you come into a room you've never seen before, you sleep all day, you do your job, and then you go away in the night again.
> *Pause.*
> I like to get a look at the scenery. You never get the chance in this job. (134)

All Gus's repetitions in his speech and his repeated events play a role as a reference for the repetition compulsion introduced before in this chapter. In Freudian terms, this compulsion occurs as a result of repression the aim of which is to express itself.

Thus, the ego's clinging to the Pleasure/Unpleasure Principle is sometimes overridden by this repression. Lacanian understanding of this automatism emphasizes that there is the insistence of the signifying chain. As is stated before in this chapter, repetition is a healthy procedure for the Lacanian subject- precise personality structure [he categorizes human subjects as "normal, neurotic, perverse, psychotic" (Ragland-Sullivan 1986: 194). The subject has to experience both the primary and the secondary repression but if these two stages have not been passed through successfully, then there will occur an insistence, coming from the subject's unconscious, to be expressed. The neurotic subject has no choice but to express the repressed due to that intolerable pressure. Lemaire's definition of neurotic's problem shows that there occurs a:

> loss of the symbolic reference of the signifiers constituting the central points of the structure of his complex. For example, the neurotics represses his symptom's signified.
> This loss of the signifier's referential value causes him to relapse to the level of the imaginary, to the absence of mediation between the self and the idea. This what is realized by repression. (227)

In Piron's words:

> The subject does not have access to the symbolic dimension of his symptoms. He believes in them and establishes his imaginary lived experience in the real. (qtd. in Lemaire 227-228)

Lemaire indicates two important points about neurotics: The first focuses on the already structured "experience which is the object of repression" (228). The experience shows itself in language, by which it is expressed. In other words, the existence of the experience is shown in discourse "before being rejected" (228). Lemaire's verification for this repression's being enunciated through language is that the neurotic "has passed a judgement of existence on the repressed signification." Therefore, there is a possibility for that signification to be re-evoked in discourse and re-integrated "into the flow of discourse."

As for the second important point in a neurotic's case, a neurotic suffers from a "certain disturbance in the universal usage of significant relations, the relations that

is, between signs whose nature it is to evoke one another" (228). The experience mentioned above as a first important point leads to the neurotic's associating "one signifier with another in a metonymic relation" or substituting "one signifier for another in a metaphor." This signifying chain either in metonymical or metaphorical relation causes a "personal code" which is in the form of free association (228). In this line of reading one can say that language has collapsed in "The Dumb Waiter." The characters Ben and Gus talk in such a way that nobody in fact hears what the other says. Therefore, the signifiers never reach the signified:

> BEN. (*lowering the paper*). You kill me. Anyone would think you're working every day. How often do we do a job? Once a week? What are you complaining about?
> GUS. Yes, but we've got to be on tap though, haven't we? You can't move out of the house in case a call come.
> BEN. You know what your trouble is?
> GUS. What?
> BEN. You haven't got any interests.
> GUS. I've got interests.
> BEN. What? Tell me one of your interests.
> *Pause.*
> GUS. I've got interests.
> BEN. What? Tell me one of your interests.
> *Pause.*
> GUS. I've got interests.
> BEN. Look at me. What have I got?
> GUS. I don't know. What?
> BEN. I've got my woodwork. I've got my model boats. Have you ever seen me idle? I'm never idle. I know how to occupy my time, to its best advantage. Then when a call comes, I'm ready.
> GUS. Don't you ever get a bit fed up?
> BEN. Fed up? What with?
> *Silence*. (134)

It seems that each character talks to himself rather than to the other. This kind of speech reminds of Bruce Fink's argument about discourse, which is "never one-dimensional." Fink argues that "one discourse can use the same mouthpiece at the same time." However, this aspect of discourse leads to "two distinct levels:" intentional and unintentional discourse. The former covers the speaker's attempt to express what he wants to say or mean while the latter is formed indeliberately through a "deformed or garbled word, a kind of conflation of 'job,' 'snob,' and perhaps other words as well." Fink defines these two different kinds of talk as

"ego[or self] talk" which displays the subject's own conscious thoughts and beliefs about her/himself and "some other kind of talk[the Other]" which is uttered unintentionally coming from not the conscious self but from some other place in a form of blunder, "mumble, or garble" (1995: 3).

At this point, it is essential to remember Lemaire's analysis on the characteristic of neurosis:

> The patient's lived experience makes him associate one signifier with another in a metonymic relation, or makes him substitute one signifier for another in a metaphor. These privileged relations result in the constitution of a personal code which can only be translated by the technique of free association.
>
> (Lemaire 228)

This technique of free association is in fact what Fink aims at by saying unintentional talk in a form of blunder, "mumble, or garble." In consequence, this unintentional discourse causes symbols which can be interpreted as "alienated discourses and desires" in Piron's words (qtd. in Lemaire 228).

On the other hand, the treatment for a neurotic results in a "transition from the non-symbolized imaginary to the symbolized imaginary" (228). Piron's interpretation is as follows:

> Every symptom and every oniric symbol is a compromise: a wish fulfilled and mutilated, a discourse addressed to the other but codified, a speech pronounced but deformed.
>
> (qtd. in Lemaire 228)

In other words, full speech, which is not deformed in contrast to empty speech, leads to "the reintegration into the normal thread of discourse of a speech" (228). In the light of Lemaire's and Piron's analyses of neurotic one can say that all those repetitions made by Gus, in fact, show the extent of his victimization under the talk of the Other. The distressing situations are felt by Gus repeatedly in such a way that he cannot stop himself pestering Ben by his repeated statements or actions. That is why signifiers are sent by both of them but turned back in inverted ways to the sender bringing no signified as neither of them are able to comprehend. In the scene

where an envelope is sent under the door, the first thing they do is not to find out the sender but to see the contents of it. As they wait for a message from Wilson, they might think that it has arrived but they are still beyond following each other's signifiers to catch the signified. Instead, they repeat each other:

> BEN. What's that?
> GUS. I don't know.
> BEN. Where did it come from?
> GUS. Under the door.
> BEN. Well, what's it?
> GUS. I don't know.
> *They stare at it.*
> BEN. Pick it up.
> GUS. What do you mean?
> BEN. Pick it up!
> *Gus slowly moves towards it, bends and picks* it up.
> What's it?
> GUS. An envelope.
> BEN. Is there anything on it?
> GUS. No.
> BEN. Is it sealed?
> GUS. Yes.
> BEN. Open it.
> GUS. What?
> BEN. Open it!
> *Gus opens it and looks inside.*
> What's in it?
> *Gus empties twelve matches into his hand.*
> GUS. Matches.
> BEN. Matches?
> GUS. Yes
> BEN. Show it to me.
> *Gus passes the envelope. Ben examines it.*
> Nothing on it. Not a word. (139-140)

This dialogue can be taken as the most typical one in the text in terms of the nature of repetition as it offers a very good example of how they fail to communicate by repeating what has been said before by the other one. Just as Lacan's definition for the Prefect of Police and Dupin, two characters in Edgar Allen Poe's *Purloined Letter,* the dialogue between Gus and Ben is nearly the same as between:

> a deaf man and one who hears. That is, it presents the real complexity of what is ordinarily simplified, with the most

> confused results, in the notion of communication. This example demonstrates indeed how an act of communication may give the impression at which theorists too often stop: of allowing in its transmission but a single meaning, as though the highly significant commentary into which he who understands integrates it, could, because unperceived by him who does not understand, be considered null. (Lacan *Seminar on The Purloined Letter*)

On the other hand, although Ben and Gus should know that their victims are unaware of the fact that they are going to be killed by these two hit men, each of these hit men, like their victims, does not think that they themselves can be killed in the same way. As in the example of deficient ballcock of the lavatory, which does not need a comprehensive analysis in order to understand why the tank gets filled in such a long time, the probability of their being victims instead of victimizers occurs to neither of them. It is clearly seen that both of the characters are completely blind to the truth about everything in their lives. The reason of their blindness can be explained in terms of the blind ego.

It seems that Ben and Gus constitute the ego's two different dimensions: Ideal-ego and ego-ideal. Ben stands for the ego-ideal while Gus represents the ideal-ego. Making a reference to Mannoni, Lacan defines the ego as having two different narcissistic dimensions; one in the Imaginary and the other in the Symbolic. The ideal-ego signifies the first narcissism in the mirror stage, "connected with the corporeal image" which is "identical for the entirety of the subject's mechanisms" creating a difference for the subject that is to say "he is a man not a horse" (1988: 125). James M. Mellard informs that this first imaginary identification is experienced in the Mirror stage "wherein the infant assumes a sense of bodily unity cognized in the other and organized strictly within the register of the Imaginary" (17). Mellard emphasizes the importance of the first narcissism as it "venerates the ideal ego" thus having a function of necessity for the "human being, to being a human subject" (17). In order for the first narcissism to occur a physical presence for the infant is necessary since that presence functions as a "corporeal image" related to the infant's body. Yet, this image is misleading for the infant as s/he is assured of a unity of herself/himself through that image.

When entering into the Symbolic Order the infant experiences his/her second narcissism leading to his/her ego-ideal. This Symbolic identification with the other provides knowledge on the part of the infant. For Lacan the ego-ideal:

> is the other as speaking, the other in so far as he has a symbolic relation to me [*moi*], which, within the terms of our dynamic manipulation, is both similar, to and different from the imaginary libido. Symbolic exchange is what links human beings to each other, that is, it is speech, and it makes it possible to identify the subject…. (1988: 142)

Thus, in accordance with Lacan's analysis of the ego, Mellard formulates the ego's function as having twofold dimensions: The first plane includes an "I and ideal-ego" resulting from the first narcissism in the Imaginary Register whereas the second plane covers an "ego ideal and the 'great' Other/*Autre* spelled with a capital letter;" as a result of second narcissism in the Symbolic Register and "under the aegis of the unconscious that Lacan sometimes identifies with the great Other itself" (Mellard 19).

In the light of Lacanian theory of the ego, Gus stands for the ideal-ego, asking for knowledge and constantly reconstituting itself through repetition. In other words, Gus desires to be recognised under his illusions of a defragmented body instead of a fragmented one but getting no reply from the ego-ideal that is Ben, who insistently refuses to be dominated under the armour of the ideal-ego. Ben's reluctance to question the nature of their job in contrast to Gus shows that he has accepted the rules arranged by the organization:

> BEN. You get your holidays, don't you?
> GUS. Only a fortnight.
> BEN. *(lowering the paper).* You kill me. Anyone would think you're working every day. How often do we do a job? Once a week? What are you complaining about? (134)

According to Ben, the trouble with Gus lies in the fact that he has no other interests except for his job. Ben plans his life in accordance with his pastimes, which helps him to pass his time instead of questioning the nature of his job. So, whenever a job is ordered, he gets ready. On the other hand, it is important to remember Sarup's

interpretation about the ego in Lacanian terms: "for Lacan, the ego is the enemy" (72). As will be remembered, the child who is "developmentally half-formed and muscularly uncontrolled," misrecognizes his/her own body as a stable structure in his/her first narcissism, which leads the ego to be constructed by "alienating identifications." The reason why it is a must not to rely on the ego lies in the fact that the ego is:

> unable to discriminate the subject's own desires from the desires of others… the ego is not autonomous, but subordinated and alienated to the people and images with which it has identified during its development. (72)

As a result, representing the ego-ideal Ben is not aware of his own Desires, and is fragmented and completely submissive to the disembodied entity. Mellard presents the fragmented ego as writing itself as an author and reading itself as a reader in the case of a literary text, and, thus creating a kind of completion through the text. We can apply this to the case of Ben and Gus, who are creating some kind of wholeness instead of fragmented parts: "In itself, the ego is metaphorical, but in relation to Desire it is metonymical since it is merely a part, not a whole" (Mellard 46).

Thus, in the case of Ben and Gus, the problem lies in the fact that neither of them meet the "precondition for the *act of becoming aware of oneself as a distinct entity"* (Lemaire 54). That is the first and foremost precondition of language. As a result, whatever happens in that closed drab room does not help any transformation on the characters' personality. They are not awakened to the truth/to reach full speech by the news Ben reads, and by the sudden appearance of the envelope bringing no written signifier, or a letter. After all, even if there were a written note as a signifier, they would not understand it as they are either deaf or blind to anything around them except for the sudden noisy ambiguous entity, whose existence serves only to frighten them.

While Ben is unable to acknowledge his Desire and to differentiate it from that of the Other, Gus's Desire will never find its way to be recognised. Having alienated from his Desire and recognising the Other's as his own Desire, Ben kills the ideal-ego,

Gus. After all, Ben has diagnosed Gus's problem: "You're playing a dirty game, my lad!" (150). On the other hand, Gus's wish and anxiety to get out of the basement soon will never be realized as he is the victim they have been waiting for. If the ego is the enemy as Sarup states, then representing two different stages of the ego, it is necessary for Ben to kill the other, the ideal-ego, who misrecognises his own image as whole and refuses to accept outside orders or forces that threaten his assumed wholeness. Otherwise, either Ben or both of them will be killed.

The most important element in the claustrophobic world of these two people is the lack of an intermediary which is:

> necessary between man and the world, between man and man, between self and manifestation of self. The intermediary is the necessary and sufficient condition once men wish to come to an agreement with one another on general principles and wish to exchange something in common. (Lemaire 54)

The intermediary that Lemaire emphasizes in Lacanian theory is language, to commands of which all subjects must submit if they want to establish both their subjectivity and a position in the society they inhabit. As the Symbolic Order cannot penetrate into the world of Ben and Gus, there is no intermediary.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The collapse of the epistemological structure which was initiated at the threshold of the century gained full speed in the aftermath of the second Great War. The result was the loss of the previous settled framework for thought and sense of stability; and a devastating process of questioning the previous absolutes. The previous Cartesian presupposition that the subject is a unified agent capable of rational behaviour was replaced by the claim that man is totally rootless and lost, and thus, is unable to direct his fate. Due to the strong sense of absurdity faced by man in the mid-twentieth century, linguistic competence was also questioned and seen to have absolutely dissolved. The collapse of language as a closed system overlaps with the collapse of the previous God-centred discourse.

Pinter's use of language in his plays brings him closer to Lacan, who also tried to redefine what lies at the centre of reality and the subject's relation to it. Both Lacan and Pinter focus on this linguistic incompetence of subjects. While Pinter aims to show that man is stripped from all his competence in this chaotic world, Lacan focuses on directing attention to the origins of man's impotence. Both Pinter and Lacan share a common ground concerning the effects of language on man's life even though they view these effects from different angles. While Pinter presents man as trapped in ambiguity, imprisoned within four walls and devoid of intersubjective bonds, Lacan tries to give a psycholinguistic explication to this predicament. From a Lacanian view, Pinter's plays emphasize the subject's alienation within his/her culture: instead of acknowledging the sole hegemony of the Symbolic, the subject oscillates between the three Orders or sometimes within a Register. Therefore, what Pinter does metamorphoses into dramatisation of Lacanian theories in inverted form:

if the human subject adopts language, s/he, indeed unconsciously, submits to language so that s/he is able to use the repository of language in the dual relations of the signifier/signified, metaphor/metonymy. This is what Pinter's characters fail to do in their claustrophobic worlds: they transgress the prohibitions exercised by language.

Pinter directs the audiences through his characters' speech or actions to an ambiguous past, where Lacan's theory is needed to shed further light upon this ambiguity. While Pinter situates his characters in a universe where there is discipline of place, he abandons the discipline of time as memory is an unreliable device for him. With their unreliable memory and rootlessness his characters are very much like empty signifiers flying in their Limbo. On the other hand, Lacan relies upon the past since, for him, the subject's current situation as a normal or abnormal person [Lacan's terms] is a result of his/her first dual relationship with the m(O)ther and then of the triadic upon the intervention of the Father/the Law. Thus, it becomes a necessity to read the past in order to make sense of the present. In other words, Lacan and Pinter serve to a common purpose: The former works on the past while the latter brings the present forth as a result of the past. The crucial moment of rupture for Pinter starts with the disappearance of the concept of time whereas for Lacan the reason for this division comes from the subject's history. Thus, Pinter's warnings concerning the unreliability of memory to the audiences deserve attention: the characters' subjective world as well as their empty or/and full speeches reveal some certain facts about their infancy.

First and foremost, Pinter's situating menace at the heart of his characters' closed circuit intersects with Lacan's notion of the infant's sense of Lack/division that s/he has to undergo when the Father imposes his Law onto the child. Instead of accepting that Law and thus being a speaking member of culture, Pinter's characters prefer to stay within the boundaries of their subjective world. However, they cannot help fixing their eyes on the door through which an intruder can step in anytime. Pinter assures the audiences that this intruder does not necessarily come from outside since that intruder could be one of them. Lacan develops Pinter's notion about the

intruder's identity further: language. At this point, the effect of language is twofold: First it plays the role of an intermediary between the subject and the society, a social and ethical system. Thus, the intruder coming from outside will play an important role in the process of humanization. On the other hand, everybody will be dominated by this power which appears not after but before one's birth. Secondly, the intruder is the characters' own morbid energy, which is incarnated in their excessive use of violence, posing an eternal threat upon the owner. It is nearly always the morbid energy in them that causes anxiety and a kind of death. After all, that morbid energy results from those free instinctual energies because the subject denies language to operate on these energies and thus to organise them in a healthier way.

What Pinter dramatizes in "The Homecoming" as well as in "The Caretaker" and "The Dumb Waiter" is the characters' closed circuit separate from the society. At the heart of the first play lies the dead mother's inadequate relationship with her sons. Since Jessie could not realize her maternal role by not allowing her sons to break that two-term relation with herself, her sons are prevented from recognising the paternal role. In other words, the Father as a third subject could not be inserted into that imaginary dyad. After all, Jessie herself denied the Phallus, which prevents the child from getting rid of his/her Desire to be the mother's sole *objet petit a*/object of Desire. On the other hand, Max as a father is not adequate either, since he fails to act his assigned paternal role. Had Max succeeded in having his Law recognised first by the mother and then by his sons, he would have altered the symmetry of the dyad and thus have broken the vicious circle. Then his grandsons would have had a chance to break free from the same vicious circle. Ruth's replacing Jessie's position leaves no way out for her sons on the way to their enculturation. In conclusion, the place of the Father has been empty for three generations in this family's house. In other words, the m(O)ther has not been substituted by the Father, that is, the paternal metaphor/the Other has not been internalized by them due to maternal metonymy.

In "The Caretaker," Pinter problematizes the identity markers of a caretaker. He also dramatizes the characters' passion for hegemony. While no character volunteers to be the caretaker of the other, they, on the other hand, attempt to dominate the other.

However what is missing is the characters' wilful refrainment in conducting their roles. Both Aston and Mick are misrecognised by Davies since Aston refuses to be the m(O)ther for him. As for Mick, he occupies the position of the Symbolic Father by dismissing Davies forever from this subjective world and ejecting him out to find a place for himself outside this attic. In castration, the Father's role is not to dislodge the child but to have him/her recognise the Law and, thus, not to desire to be the mother's ultimate Desire. Yet, Davies misrecognises the Law as he attempts to eject Aston and to ally with the Father. In the end, the ultimate caretaker is regarded as Mick for his brother, Aston.

In the "Dumb Waiter" Pinter dramatizes two assassins' claustrophobic world in which they are entirely, if metaphorically, deaf and blind not only to their surroundings but also to each other. Symbolically they are also blind to their own reality. Pinter reverses language in traditional sense in this play. Each character repeats what the other says and asks quite foolish questions or makes unnecessary or ridiculous explanations about the things in this basement. Pinter dramatizes what Lacan calls the repetition automatism in which a Symbolic displacement of a signifier returns or the repressed material appears. In other words, the Other returns in the subject's signifying chain. This notion of repressed is related to the subject's Desire. Once the subject becomes aware of the source of his Desire, then s/he will be cured. Ben and Gus feel the disastrous pressure of the Real, whose existence functions only to disturb them. They cannot rationalise or symbolise as they are completely out of the Symbolic exchange. On the other hand, Gus's ideal-ego is dependent upon the other's existence since the moi [the ideal ego] misrecognizes his own existence. He insistently repeats his Desire for recognition since he has been trapped within the realm of the Imaginary and, thus, acts and speaks like a child. As for Ben, he too continuously refuses to recognise Gus. Ben is trapped between the Imaginary and the Symbolic as he underwent his secondary identification but has not been able to escape the Real like Gus. They are absolutely ignorant of the dual relation between the signifier and the signified since nobody listens to the other and is not interested in the other's speech: they are just alienated and empty speeches, bearing no signification for them. These characters are "stripped of the 'web of

discourses,' " and are "as incomplete as a bird without feathers, a turtle without its shell" as in Dennett's words (qtd. in Žižek 1998 b: 256).

Within the frame of Lacanian theory, Pinter's characters turn out to suffer from different mechanisms of neurosis. Some of them live in the margins like Lenny in "The Homecoming," like Davies and Aston in "The Caretaker," and like Ben and Gus in "The Dumb Waiter." In any case, all the characters have not been able to position themselves in the Symbolic Order, as a result, they remain as ambiguous figures. Surprisingly, none of them has a full proper name and their contracted names fly in the air leaving no trace behind. Moreover, the full names are rejected by them as Lenny refuses to be called "Leonard" and Teddy pretends not to have heard "Eddie." In "The Caretaker" Davies wanders under an assumed name "Bernard Jenkins" but does not prefer to use it unless there is an external threat. As for Ben and Gus in "The Dumb Waiter," they cannot go beyond their existence as incompetent voices because their subjectivity has not been shaped within the Other. In conclusion, none of the characters overcomes their sense of Lack. Their renunciation of the Law leads them to produce only empty signifiers and to a failure to face the Other. Each one, in his subjective world, leads a subverted life without an assigned place in the discourse.

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