EXISTENTIAL RESISTANCE TO LIFE AND INAUTHENTIC RESPONSES IN THE PLAYS OF HAROLD PINTER AND EDWARD ALBEE

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ABSTRACT

EXISTENTIAL RESISTANCE TO LIFE AND INAUTHENTIC RESPONSES IN THE PLAYS OF HAROLD PINTER AND EDWARD ALBEE

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This thesis carries out a comparative analysis of Harold Pinter's "The Birthday Party", "The Caretaker", and "A Slight Ache" and Edward Albee's "The Zoo Story" and "A Delicate Balance". It achieves this by exploring how the dramatic structure, characterization, and use of language in these plays display the playwrights' tendency to employ similar themes of existentialist philosophy; existential resistance to life and man's self-quest in the face of existential anxiety and despair. Man shows a variety of inauthentic responses in order to escape the lack of meaning in life, freedom to choose and burden of reponsibility. The aim of this study is to discuss these inauthentic responses given by the characters in the above mentioned plays. They are classified as active and passive forms and analyzed while the parallelism and differences between these two playwrights' approaches are explored.

Key Words: Existentialism, Inauthentic, Authentic, Dasein, Anxiety.

ÖZ

HAROLD PINTER'IN VE EDWARD ALBEE'NİN OYUNLARINDA HAYATA VAROLUŞSAL DİRENİŞ VE OTANTİK OLMAYAN TEPKİLER

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Bu tez Harold Pinter'ın "Doğumgünü Partisi", "Kapıcı" ve "İnce Sızı" ve Edward Albee'nin "Hayvanat Bahçesi Hikayesi" ve "Hassas Denge" adlı oyunlarını karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde inceler. İncelenen oyunlardaki dramatik yapı, karakter betimlemeleri ve dilin kullanılışı yazarların varoluşculuk felsefesinin benzer konularını incelediğini ortaya koyar. Bu yazarlar insanın hayata varoluşsal direnmesini, varoluşsal endişe ve umutsuzluk içerisinde yaşadığı benlik problemini ele alır. İnsan, hayatın anlamsızlığından, karar verme özgürlüğünden ve sorumluluk yükünden kaçmak amacıyla çok çeşitli otantik olmayan tepkiler verir. Bu çalışmanın amacı adı geçen oyunlarda karakterlerin verdiği otantik olmayan tepkileri irdelemektir. Otantik olmayan bu tepkiler aktif ve pasif olarak sınıflandırılıp incelenirken adı geçen yazarların konuya yaklaşımlarındaki benzerlik ve farklılıklar ortaya konulur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Varoluşçuluk, Otantik, Otantik olmayan, Varlık, Endişe.

To my family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the thesis is to make a comparative study of Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, and *A Slight Ache* and Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* and *A Delicate Balance* to explore how these playwrights display man's resistance to life and the inauthentic responses man gives to existential anxiety and despair. By means of an analysis of the various inauthentic responses reflected through the dramatic structure, characterization and use of language in the above mentioned plays, this study attempts to offer a discussion of the similarities between Pinter and Albee in finding an expression for modern man's existential dilemma.

Existentialism emerged as a philosophical movement giving voice to modern man's reaction to the sense of overwhelming meaninglessness and absurdity of life which came out of a time when advancing scientific and industrial revolutions and the two world wars challenged the existing moral and spiritual codes, freed people from them, but at the same time left them bereft of a life aim. As human beings become alienated to the ground beliefs which had hitherto made sense of the world and their existence, they started to feel that their existence is senseless and pointless. Although the term existentialism did not come into use until the 1940s, it was foreshadowed by the nineteenth-century philosophers, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and later explored by the twentieth century philosophers, Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus. Though there are discrepancies among these forerunners of existentialism, their common interests are the problems of human existence and condition and the way man perceives and values his existence in the universe. Existential philosophy basically tries to give ontological answers to the following questions; *what is to be human*, *what are man's unique and defining characteristics*, and *which patterns of conduct does man choose to set up his relation to the world and to the others*?

Heidegger claims that "[t]he essence of *Dasein* [human being] consists of its Existenz" (42). According to Heidegger, man can be distinguished from all other

beings in the sense that he asks questions about his existence in an effort to understand his Being and to answer the basic ontological question, *who am I*? The quest for self-identity reveals that a human being has no essence that is pre-established before his birth; his essence rests upon the fulfillment of his possibilities and potentials in whatever way he chooses. This is what Heidegger means by stating, "Dasein decides its existence" (12). Man has no fixed or predetermined specific life style, goals or values; these are all created by himself through his possibilities.

Heidegger and Nietzsche are in agreement about the idea of self-creation. Nietzsche believes in creating rather than discovering truth. According to him, "[t]ruth is … not something there, that might be found or discovered –but something that must be created and that gives a name to a process" (qtd. in Nehamas 76). As Nehamas claims, Nietzsche holds the same attitude toward the self: "Human beings … are new, unique, incomparable, … give themselves laws, … create themselves" (76). While expressing the "death of God", Nietzsche pinpoints the idea that there is nothing to guide and support mankind, and hence man has to create himself. This idea is explored through his concept of *Übermensch* (superman/overman), according to which a true self is the creator of his own morality, values and character-traits and has the willingness to accept responsibility for everything he does.

A very similar idea is explored by Sartre, who claims that "existence precedes essence" and "man is nothing else but what he makes of himself" (*Humanism* 30). Man has no predetermined purpose or meaning. He is defined by his consciousness, that is, agency, choice and responsibility. Sartre tells that "it is only through human consciousness that value, comes into the world" (qtd. in Solomon 276). According to Sartre, there is no given value, and there is no given nature determined by an outside force such as heredity and environment. Man is the only agent who gives significance and meaning to the world and to himself. Man creates himself out of nothingness through his choices, and he is entirely free to choose. One chooses oneself by formulating projects, goals, values. A human being is a forward projecting creature who becomes and emerges through action.

Man's free will is another recurrent idea of existentialist philosophy. Man has absolute freedom. All existentialist philosophers aim to show people that they are

free in their choices which entail their possibilities of being and choice of valuing their lives. Since man has no affirmed essence or nature, he is boundlessly free to create his own essence through the course of the choices he makes in various situations. "Men are free because they are able to think for themselves, and need not have recourse to laws, to rules, nor to the standards of history and science" (Warnock 12). Sartre explains this absolute freedom as: "Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being – free" because *freedom is existence* (*Being* 30). For a meaningful existence, man should have the consciousness of his being, freedom and self- responsibility. Man is a totality of what he makes of himself since he has not got a fixed and unchanging foundation as a being-in-itself, which is the contingent, fixed and unchanging being that objects have. "Human reality cannot receive its ends, as we have seen, either from outside or from a so-called nature. It chooses them" (Sartre, *Being* 107). In that sense, existentialism rejects such deterministic forces as heredity, environment or early childhood experiences. Man is all alone in forming values and attributing meaning to life.

At this point, it is important to note that existentialist understanding of freedom does not suggest absolute power over situations and happenings. In existentialist sense of freedom, there are external obstacles and other people's actions that attempt to limit one's freedom. Heidegger explains these limitations to freedom with his concept of *Geworfenheit* (throwness). Solomon comments on Heidegger's concept of throwness as: "Dasein finds himself thrown into a particular world, time and place" (214). Man is thrown into the world, and he has no control over this. Each individual has his own facticity, which is the fact of existence under certain circumstances such as time and place. However, how he experiences his circumstances, how he lives with them, and how he allows them to influence his outlook are all within his power to choose. Human beings are free in their choices, and at the same time they are limited by the givens of the situation. Another way of putting this is to say that man is free to make choices in that particular situation he is thrown into and responsible for his choices.

Man's condition is the combination of the constant process of the creation of self and the anguish of being unable to apprehend his existence due to lack of certainty. Freedom suggests opportunity for projecting toward future, yet it also suggests insecurity. As Solomon puts forward, "[e]xistenz … is the projection of possibilities", which means that at the basis of human being, there lies forward projecting (210). Man has to recreate himself every moment and project his possibilities unto future. Thus, man is always moving towards an unknown future and unrealized possibility. Human's self-discovery about his total freedom causes anguish of freedom because he realizes that he is the one who must decide for himself and take all the responsibility for his life. He feels utterly alone in the world into which he is *thrown*. He must choose and act without any standards or guides which can ensure the correctness of his choice and action. What is more, it is impossible to justify them by referring to anything outside the self.

The sense of a contingent, or as existentialists often prefer, an absurd world is part of man's life. For Camus, *absurd* is the divorce between man and his life. He puts forth: "In a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land" (5). Each individual finds himself separate from the outer world and his fellow human beings. He does not see his existence as necessary as he cannot see the totality. This leads to anguish of being. In anguish of being, man sees no meaningful relationship between his existence and the world. He fails to attach any meaning to his existence or to the universe; he falls into emptiness. That is the point where dread or as Heidegger calls *Angst* comes about as a special mode towards the world. "What is dreadful is the utter meaninglessness of human life, the lack of given directions, given standards and values, and a given conception of oneself" (Solomon 222). This statement refers to the state of throwness which is being "surrounded by the immensity of that which is little knowable and greatly unknowable" (Bugental 22). As nothing is certain, man feels anxious about his predicament in the universe which is unknown to him and of which he is no longer a part. He realizes that he has to fill the emptiness within him through his own

actions, his thoughts and perceptions on the set of choices he makes while being aware of his finiteness.

Existentialists believe that the anguish of being makes everything seem insignificant, but man's freedom ensures that he can always simply choose or refuse to choose to make anything significant. The meaning is possible due to man's desire to give meaning. "Man does have responsibility for acting or not acting and thereby determining what will be actual. Life is serious, and the power to affect what will be actual in life is a serious responsibility" (Bugental 300). However, when the burden of freedom and the weight of responsibility are too much, man seeks ways to lessen his responsibility and escape his freedom. He pretends that he is not as free as he is considered to be. He attempts to get rid of responsibility by distorting the reality, that is, lying to oneself. However, "efforts to shift the burden of responsibility upon others are necessarily self-defeating. Not to choose is also to choose, for even if we deliver out power of decision to others, we are still responsible for doing so" (Olson 52). Even the refusal to make any choice would be in itself a choice.

Heidegger, whose philosophy will be the focal point in this study, introduces two states of being: authentic being and inauthentic being. According to him, each human being is characterized by individuality. "This individuality is not a static quality of a person, but is a potentiality, a set of possibilities for every individual …. Among these possibilities are two kinds, namely the possibilities of authentic and of inauthentic existence" (Warnock 54). Heidegger claims that one can achieve authentic self by realizing his possibilities and shaping his own values and meaning in life. Thus, authenticity requires incessant self-creation and a true consciousness as one creates his or her authenticity when he or she engages in self-questioning and self-analysis. However, it is not easy to attain authenticity as it needs courage and strength to confront with the meaninglessness of human existence, emptiness of the universe and lack of justification for subjective choices, willingness to make choices in order to have value and meaning in a contingent unpredictable universe and finally responsibility for these choices. When the givens of his existence such as contingency and isolation cause overwhelming anxiety, man may not be able to cling to his individual potentials, may accept the standards, the beliefs of the mass and

may fail to realize his individuality. This state of being is called inauthentic existence.

A man who is in an inauthentic state ignores the fact that he is the only person who can create himself through the set of choices he makes. Heidegger defines this tendency to neglect one's existence as "fallenness" which "is a state in which the individual constantly obeys commands and prohibitions whose source is unknown and unidentifiable and whose justification he does not bother to inquire into" (Olson 136). A fallen man is preoccupied with the way other people see life; he cannot form his own opinions. He believes that the significance and meaning of the world depend not on him but on the labels attached to life by the mass. It is easy because "[o]ne is in average everydayness in his primitive encounter with the world, and voluntarily remaining in anonymous world is more manageable than taking the difficult step towards authenticity" (Solomon 222).

While existential embrace of life suggests being fully alive and having a passionate commitment to one's existence and his possibilities, existential resistance to life indicates self-denial of this commitment and one's potentials. Existential resistance to life is explained as: "[B]eing incarnate on earth, the deep sense of 'I don't want to be here' … or it may be a lack of commitment to life, an unwillingness to embrace life" (Hartman and Zimberoff 4). Generally, resistance to life is employed by an individual who avoids genuine awareness or authenticity, shifts responsibility by picturing himself as an object or retains his alienation. In that sense, resistance to life denotes inauthentic ties with life. Resistance reduces actuality and makes direct confrontation with the reality of life impossible. When a man resists life, he shows resistance to a passionate commitment to a way of life and purpose, to freedom of choice and responsibility for his choices, to openness to experience, to death itself because "in the ever-present face of death itself, we find the deepest commitment to life itself" (Hartman and Zimberoff 7).

Resistance to life is a kind of defense employed by an individual to avoid existential anxiety and threat. This aspect of resistance is explained by Bugental in psychotherapy as: "Directly or indirectly, all resistance arises from the patient's efforts to cope with threat that seems to him to be overwhelming. It is this threat that

is resisted by the resistance" (93). Resistance entails the ways in which a person distorts his awareness to avoid becoming conscious of the insupportable threat to his being. When a human being faces the anxiety that arises in response to the human condition, he is impelled to defend himself against it. "He may then begin to distort the actuality of the threatening object or his own authenticity so that the perception of threat is modified and the anxiety is reduced" (Bugental 94-95). Here is the origin of a person's resistance to life. It is a self-protection against what man cannot cope with. This study explores a variety of inauthentic responses that man shows in order to escape the lack of meaning in life, freedom to choose and burden of reponsibility. These inauthentic responses are classified as active and passive forms.

In the following chapter, active inauthentic responses in the chosen plays of Pinter and Albee are studied. These active responses are given by the individual who attempts to protect himself from the disappointing effects of his isolated and guideless situation in an insecure and malevolent universe by projecting his anxieties onto external threats. Through active inauthentic responses, man tends to avoid his sense of vulnerability and powerlessness by controlling the perceived source of distress in the outside world. He shows reaction within a tendency of overt hostility against the threatening world. In this way, he tries to escape the meaningless and insecure world by destroying, manipulating and dominating the selves around him.

In the third chapter, passive inauthentic responses given by the characters in Pinter's and Albee's plays are studied. In active responses, man expresses his anxiety by projecting it onto external threats, whereas in passive responses, man employs the "minimizing strategy" through which he can minimize, devalue, or simply deny the importance of what would involve anxiety and menace (Hartman and Zimberoff 16). Man resorts to this kind of inauthentic response in order to escape recognizing his freedom, which will make him confront existential dread of meaninglessness, loneliness, and guilt or to avoid the responsibilities, which are identical with becoming human. He may constrict or distort awareness of reality. Inauthenticity that shows itself in passive forms is explained by Barnes as: "Where there is pretense, there is bound sooner or later to be disillusion and conflict. If one stays in prison to avoid the evils of the world, he will miss the good as well" (229).

In the Conclusion Chapter, the similarities and differences between Pinter and Albee in displaying modern man's existential dilemma and his inauthentic responses to existential anxiety and despair are discussed.

CHAPTER 2

2. 1. ACTIVE FORMS OF INAUTHENTIC RESPONSES IN PINTER'S PLAYS

Pinter is preoccupied with the power relations among individuals in a hostile universe which renders them powerless and helpless. One of the central themes of his plays is the dominant and subservient relationships. According to Prentice, the urge in the dominant/subservient relationship is one character's struggle to assert dominance over another (*Pinter* 20). Assertion of control and dominance are active inauthentic responses given by Pinter's characters to ensure survival in the face of unspecified menace which springs from their insecure identity and to appease existential anxiety caused by their sense of meaninglessness of existence. In Pinter's plays, since the characters feel insecure, they are shown in a constant struggle to assert their identity and give meaning to their existence. They feel the need to insist on the sovereignty over what they possess by dominating others. Overpowering others is a way of feeling confident about themselves and their surroundings. "Characters are frequently acting in self-defense or are seeking to dominate (which is another form of self-defense)" (Nailsmith 12). Thus, Pinter's plays are like battlefields where each character is on guard to fight against the other. Assertion of power shows itself in physical violence or in language games through which characters are engaged in overly critical communication. Pinter himself acknowledges that "the world is a pretty violent place" and that violence "is really an expression of the question of dominance and subservience" (qtd. in Prentice, *Pinter* 21). It originates in man's sense of powerlessness and insecurity of his autonomy and desire for maintaining respect and position in the world.

2. 1. 1. *The Birthday Party*

The Birthday Party is set in a living room of a boarding house owned by Meg and Petey, whose only boarder is Stanley Webber. There is not much information about Stanley's past and background except for his reference to his career as a pianist, which creates a mystery and ambiguity in the play. He receives exaggerated nursing and motherly affection from childless Meg, who is a simple and slow-minded woman. When Meg tells Stanley that two men are going to be staying there, he is alarmed and talks about leaving and having been offered a job as a pianist. He claims that once he had given a successful concert. Lulu, a young neighbour, arrives with a parcel. She tries to persuade Stanley to go out for a walk, but he declines her invitation. When the two men mentioned, Goldberg and McCann, enter Stanley slips out the backdoor. They have come to do a job which is not explained. Meg tells Goldberg that Stanley is their only boarder and today is his birthday. Upon this, Goldberg proposes a party for him. Stanley returns only after the two men have gone to their room. Meg, to cheer him up, explains to him that they will celebrate his birthday and gives him a present, the parcel delivered by Lulu. It is a toy drum which Stanley begins playing first regularly then savagely.

When Stanley finds McCann alone, busy with tearing a sheet of newspaper into strips, he tells him that it is not his birthday, he is planning to return home, and he is the sort of man who never causes any trouble. Goldberg enters with Petey talking about the good old days. Petey cannot stay for the party as it is his chess night, and he leaves. Stanley asks for Goldberg and McCann to leave as he claims they have come to the wrong house. As a response he is subjected to a cruel cross-examination and accused of various unrelated offences.

Meg and Lulu come, and the party begins. Meg insists that they should play a game and the group play blind man's buff during which McCann breaks Stanley's eyeglasses ensures that he gets his foot caught in the drum and drags behind him towards Meg. Stanley starts strangling her, but he is stopped by Goldberg. The lights go out and everyone panics. When McCann shines his flashlight on Lulu, it is seen that she is lying on the table and Stanley is bending over her.

Next morning, after Meg leaves, Goldberg comes and informs Petey that Stanley has had a nervous breakdown, they will look after him and they will take him

to someone named Monty. Stanley appears with McCann. Although Petey demands that they leave him alone, in fear of them he cannot insist. Stanley, who is now only babbling incoherently, leaves with Goldberg and McCann. After their departure, Meg returns and starts talking about how lovely the party was.

In *The Birthday Party*, active inauthentic responses to existential anxiety and despair generally take the form of assaults. In the play, Stanley Webber protects himself from the threatening outside world as he barely goes outside the house and lives an idle life without any responsibility to carry out. Meg treats him like his son and shows him love and affection, whereas, Stanley is rude and critical. He teases her by calling her a bad wife, or expressing his dissatisfaction with the breakfast she has prepared. He believes that he has the right to be aggressive to Meg as "he knows how much she wants him to be pleased with her" (Nailsmith 63). He criticizes her inadequacy as a housewife:

> MEG. It's good tea. Good strong tea
> STANLEY. This isn't tea. It's gravy!
> MEG. It's not.
> STANLEY. Get out of it. You succulent old washing bag. (*Birthday* 12)

Stanley needs to project his inner disturbances and his own inadequacy onto Meg. This urge to externalize his inner insecurities turns Meg into an object of domination and manipulation. Moreover, Stanley releases his repressed disappointment against Meg. Whether it is pure fantasy or it has some basis in reality, he refers to his old job as a pianist and tells how they shut down the place where he was supposed to have his next concert. To hide his vulnerability and disappointment, he insults her: "Look at her. You're just an old piece of rock cake, aren't you? That's what you are, aren't you?" (*Birthday* 17). To feed his ego he threatens her by leaving the house mentioning a supposed job offer. He knows that it will upset Meg, who feels dependent on him to show motherly affection and ease the pain of loneliness. Stanley feels secure by dominating, controlling and manipulating Meg.

When Meg announces that two men will come to the house to stay for a couple of nights, Stanley is alarmed at the news. He starts to pace up and down the room and insists that they are not coming. He is nervous about the arrival of the unknown intruders since his shelter will be shattered, and his safety will be in danger. "They are

intruders, emissaries from an outside world with which Stanley has for years no contact" (Malkin 54). For what purpose these intruders are coming and why Stanley is so alarmed at their arrival remain elusive. Stanley's internal psychological disturbance is manifested in violent utterances to Meg, which suggests his inauthentic response to insecurity. He projects his troubled mind and anxiety by cruelly suggesting that two men in a van are coming to take her away in a wheelbarrow. Since Meg doesn't have a clear understanding of her surroundings and things happening around her, he can manipulate her at will: "They are looking for someone. A certain person . . . Shall I tell you who they're looking for? . . . You don't want me to tell you?" (*Birthday* 18). Apparently, not only Stanley but also Meg fears the menace that lurks outside. The characters' fear of the world outside the room is explained by Pinter as: "[W]e are all in this, all in a room, and outside is a world . . . which is most inexplicable and frightening, curious and alarming" (Esslin, *Pinter* 27). However, the characters' encounter with the world outside is unavoidable as Goldberg states: "If we hadn't come today, we'd have come tomorrow" (*Birthday* 26). The frightening possibility of an intrusion is an instrument at the characters' hands to dominate each other through fear and intimidation. As Sartre states, "the fact of the other is incontestable, and touches me to the heart. I realize him through uneasiness; through him I feel myself perpetually in danger" (*Being* 275) Pinter's characters are overwhelmed by the presence of the other as a threat to their identity, autonomy and existence.

Stanley's anxiety increases so much with the arrival of Goldberg and McCann that he slips off to avoid them. According to Misra, Goldberg and McCann act as "the agents of violence" and "media for conjuring the sense of fear and incertitude", both of which relate to existential anxiety, the most fundamental form of which is man's awareness of the threat of annihilation of his self (66). Goldberg and McCann are represented as destructive and dominating powers which shatter individual's autonomy and remove him from his shelter as Pinter himself expresses in his poem "A View of the Party": "Allied in their theme/ They imposed upon the room / A dislocation and doom" (qtd. in Scott 83).

Stanley's secluded place is disturbed, and he is forced into a circumstance that he cannot avoid people. In order to protect himself from the upcoming threats, he

resorts to manipulation and domination, again by using language, this time not to attack but to passify. First, he tries to establish closeness with McCann to win him by referring to his admiration of McCann's roots: "I know Ireland very well . . . I love that country and I admire and trust its people" (*Birthday* 36). Next, he tries to form an alliance with him, whispering and advancing: "Has he told you anything? Do you know what you're here for? Tell me. You needn't be frightened of me." (*Birthday* 36). What he is doing is triggering McCann's insecurity and thus rendering him powerless. In fact, McCann does not feel secure either and expresses it to Goldberg as: "I don't know, Nat. I'm just all right once I know what I'm doing. When I know what I'm doing, I'm all right" (*Birthday* 23).

As a final strategy, to control Goldberg and McCann, Stanley exhibits hostility. He claims his power against them: "Let me –just make this clear. You don't bother me. To me, you're nothing but a dirty joke . . . So why don't you just go, without any more fuss?" (*Birthday* 39). Stanley becomes more aggressive when he is left alone with Goldberg:

> STANLEY. … You'll have to find somewhere else.
> GOLDBERG. Are you the manager here?
> STANLEY. That's right.
> GOLDBERG. Is it a good game? (*Birthday* 38)

However, his manipulating techniques, which work with Meg, fail, and he recoils. After a battle for domination regarding who will sit down, Stanley is forced to sit down, rendered as a victim, and cross-examined by Goldberg and McCann. They ask meaningless and contradictory questions one after another, not to elicit any answer but to confuse and overwhelm him:

> GOLDBERG. What have you done with your wife?
> MCCANN. He's killed his wife!
> GOLDBERG. Why did you kill your wife?
> . . .
> GOLDBERG. Why did you never get married?
> MCCANN. She was waiting at the porch.
> GOLDBERG. You skeddadled from the wedding.
> . . .
> GOLDBERG. Webber! Why did you change your name? (*Birthday* 43-44)

This verbal bombardment aims to evoke sense of guilt in Stanley and make him inarticulate and defenseless. They accuse him of killing his wife, not getting married, being a traitor, or not taking a bath. Pinter deals with "the isolated individual trapped in a hostile world, a fear of authority, a sense of guilt . . . and the expectation of punishment" (Peacock 51). Their attack through unceasing questions allows Stanley no opportunity to respond and defend himself so that they can dominate him with groundless accusations and language games.

In Pinter's plays, language is shown not as a means for communication but domination and violence. His characters "are mostly using language for purposes of self-defence or domination, which points to their essential insecurity and isolation" (Nailsmith 73). Goldberg is supervising the dominating language games. He is displayed as a secure, outgoing and cheerful man who has high self-confidence. However, McCann is more silent, introvert and nervous, which is indicated in the scene where he tears the newspaper into even pieces. His act suggests his destructive attitude towards the world and his desire to destroy the selves around him in order to feel secure. "The tactic employed by McCann is to behave as if nothing is untoward" (Nailsmith 68). Although they are powerful, both Goldberg and McCann are playthings in the hands of authorial forces, and they are themselves insecure. Their mindless violence indicates that they are "lacking in power but incessantly attempting to obtain it" (Golomb 75).

Goldberg and McCann make use of clichéd tactics in all of their questions and accusations during the interrogation, and "they seem to be gradually overtaken by the verbal terrorism which is the source of their power" (Malkin 61). They competently use language to get what they want, and their superior control over language makes Stanley inarticulate and a victim to be manipulated and dominated. They verbally attack Stanley's dignity and degrade his self-value:

> GOLDBERG. You stuff yourself with dry toast.
> MCCANN. You contaminate womankind. (*Birthday* 45)
> . . .
> GOLDBERG. You're a plague, Webber. You're an overthrow.
> MCCANN: You're what's left! (*Birthday* 46)

By attacking his human dignity, they aim at his psychological breakdown. They express their contempt of him, curse him, and even threaten his identity and very existence. Goldberg states: "What makes you think you exist? . . . You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour!" (*Birthday* 46). They increase the existential anxiety that resides in Stanley indicating that he does not exist even in a world where man desperately tries to prove and ensure his existence.

Goldberg and McCann's sadistic impulses motivate them to have absolute and unrestricted power over Stanley. Fromm claims that there is dependence on the object of sadism since one's "own feeling of strength is rooted in the fact that he is the master over someone" (*Freedom* 125). Goldberg and McCann want to control Stanley's identity, gain power over his thoughts and freedom so that they can ensure their power, their own identity and mask their own insecurities. They regard other people as nothing but instruments to manipulate and control. This attitude towards the world and other human beings can be considered an inauthentic response since as Barnes points out, "[m]y refusal to see the Other as a subject means that I must surely fail to realize many of my own potentials" (118). The mainspring of this attitude resides in man's desire to feel secure by making others wholly objects which cannot stand as a threat. Man destroys others so that the world ceases to be threatening, and uncertainty and existential anxiety that accompanies it can be minimized.

After the interrogation, they move on with Stanley's birthday party. During the party Stanley is silent. In other words, he is "emptied of his own language, rendered speechless" (Malkin 63). The game of blind-man's buff leaves Stanley bereft of sight, which again turns him into a victim. Blindfolded Stanley first begins to strangle Meg and then during the blackout, he tries to rape Lulu. When Goldberg and McCann advance upon him, he "*begins to giggle. GOLDBERG and MCCANN move toward him. He backs, giggling the torch on his face*" (*Birthday* 59). His response to his desperate and helpless situation is violence. His violence and giggling suggest both his inability to sustain his equilibrium in the face of overwhelming anxiety and his need to project this anxiety by exhibiting aggressive, brutal and violent acts and thus to victimize others.

Goldberg and McCann move Stanley from one type of inauthentic existence into another although, ironically, they promise to save him. As the stage directions point out, "[t]hey begin to woo him, gently and with relish" (*Birthday* 76):

> GOLDBERG. You're on the verge.
> MCCANN. You're a dead duck.
> GOLDBERG. But we can save you.
> . . .
> GOLDBERG. We'll watch over you.
> MCCANN. Advise you.
> GOLDBERG. Give you proper care and treatment. (*Birthday* 76)

At the end of the interrogation and the brainwashing session, Stanley's freedom is terminated, and his individual self is destroyed. Stanley will be "re-oriented", "adjusted" and "integrated" as Goldberg claims (*Birthday* 77-76). "[I]n the realm of inauthenticity, everyone is the other and no one is himself" (Heidegger 165). Stanley appears as a speechless and deranged person:

> GOLDBERG. . . .You'll be able to make or break, Stan. By my life. (*Silence.* STANLEY *is still*) Well? What do you say?
> . . .
> STANLEY *concentrates, his mouth opens, he attempts to speak, fails and emits sounds from his throat.*
> STANLEY. Uh-gug...uh-gug...eeehhh-gag....(*On the breath.*) Caahh...caahh... (*Birthday* 78)

Stanley is in a catatonic state; however, he still attempts to resist the domination and usurpation. As Pinter acknowledges in a letter, "[i]n the rattle in his throat Stanley approximates nearest to the true nature of himself than ever before and certainly ever after. But it's late .Late in the day. He can go no further" (qtd. in Scott 81). Thus, a relationship can be established between the title of the play and Stanley's predicament. His birthday party signifies his rebirth as a member of the conformist society who is not allowed to think and act differently. "When Stanley appears in the last act, the very sight of him indicates the intruders' triumph and his conformity. He is as immaculate as a corpse and walks like a zombie" (Dukore 37). Goldberg states that Stanley is suffering from a nervous breakdown, they will take him to Monty, and he will be assumingly taken care of. Petey, who is not there during the party, is helpless in the face of their usurpation of Stanley. His last words to Stanley are:

"Stan, don't let them tell you what to do!" (*Birthday* 80). However, Stanley is already taken over by the usurpers, and the game is lost as Pinter states in his poem: "Found the game lost and won,/ Meg, all memory gone/ …/Petey, impotent" (qtd. in Scott 84).

2.1.2. *The Caretaker*

Similar to the power struggle in *The Birthday Party*, in *The Caretaker* the struggle for domination is the central theme. Language is used as a means of attack, domination, and manipulation. All of the characters to some extent evade genuine communication and human connection because their main motive is to control and manipulate their surroundings, which can ensure the sense of security. They are isolated from each other; therefore, they employ survival techniques in order to cling to their possessions, territory and autonomy. "The stage becomes the territorial space in which characters try to dominate and take, or keep, possession" (Nailsmith 4). As in *The Birthday Party*, the struggle for domination and manipulation is triggered by an intruder's arrival at a private territory.

In the play the younger brother Mick, who is in the building trade, assigned his elder brother Aston with the task of decorating the old house he bought. In the house, the only habitable room is filled with different sorts of junk including paint buckets, boxes, a kitchen sink, a toaster, a statue of Buddha, and a gas stove. Instead of decorating and turning the place into a flat, Aston collects useless items and clutters the place with these items incase they might come in handy for the house. Mick expresses his discontent with Aston's habit of collecting items: "All this junk here, it's no good to anyone" (*Caretaker* 59). He wants to turn the place into a penthouse, but he is disappointed by the fact that Aston is not interested in the idea and busies himself with collecting junk. There is an unspoken hostility between the two brothers which comes to surface when Aston brings a homeless tramp, Davies, to the house.

Although there are familial ties between Aston and Mick, they are deeply isolated from each other, and there is a subtle battle for domination. They rarely speak to each other or stay in the same room throughout the play. In fact, the only conversation between them is about the leaking roof, which reveals the lack of

communication and isolation among the characters in the play. There is no certain information about Mick and Aston's parents except for a few references, which designate the disconnection and the cause of insecurity they are overwhelmed with. At one point, Mick states that Davies reminds him of his "uncle's brother". What is more, he calls his father Sid: "I called him Sid. My Mother called him Sid, too" (*Caretaker* 29). He does not use the familial term "father" while referring to him. He is unsure about the relationship he has with his father: "To be honest, I've never made out how he came to be my uncle's brother . . . I've often thought that maybe . . . my uncle was his brother and he was my uncle" (*Caretaker* 29). There are not any genuine familial ties, and the fraternal relationship between Mick and Aston is rotten. Moreover, it is implied that Aston feels resentment to his mother. In the story he tells about his experience in the mental hospital. When the doctors had to get permission from his mother for the electroshock treatment, disregarding Aston's letter asking her not to give the permission, she signed the papers. Aston claims to be badly affected by the treatment and pictures his mother as a betrayer.

Both Mick and Aston have failed to establish a secure and strong relationship with their parents and with each other. However, they are co-dependent as they need one another to reduce the anxiety of loneliness and isolation. They both show inauthentic responses to their unsupported isolated condition. Their inauthenticity manifests itself through "a negation of any genuine relationship with others-estrangement personally. The superficially opposite pattern of domination reduces to the same underlying sequence of intrapersonal estrangement to interpersonal alienation" (Bugental 311). They choose different ways to dominate each other and employ destructiveness in the face of anxiety.

As Mick dominates Aston with his commands and demands about the tasks that are supposed to be carried out, Aston counter-attacks by establishing his sovereignty in the house. He asserts his independence by cluttering the room with junk and bringing a stranger into the house. Aston rescues Davies from a possible brawl at the café Davies works and brings him to the room he has filled with junk. "Junk collected by Aston reflects his disordered personality; on a symbolic level it establishes Davies as yet another useless item in his collections" (Peacock 77).

Davies might come in handy for Aston in asserting his autonomy and overcoming his sense of insecurity. There is a hidden struggle between the two brothers on settling who the real owner of the house is. Aston claims to Davies: "I'm in charge" (*Caretaker* 10). He wants to be in charge, whereas he is not. Similarly when Mick first encounters with Davies in the house, he states: "You're speaking to the owner" (*Caretaker* 32). Both of them try to assert their sovereignty over the house and their possessions.

Aston tries to meet the needs and desires of Davies by offering him a bed, a new pair of shoes, money and the job as a caretaker without consulting his brother. Although he seems to be motivated by mere compassion for a fellow human being, there are some implications that he might be motivated by power. It is significant that Aston is indifferent to Davies's complaints and attempts at recounting the incidents from his life. He merely cares about Davies's physical needs; he does not establish an emotional tie with him, and he "lacks sympathetic understanding of the tramp's weaknesses" (Prentice, *Ethic* 94). While Davies is telling Aston of the incident how he is never without a piece of soap thanks to one of his friends, Aston ignores his aspirations and focuses only on his need for a pair of shoes:

> DAVIES: I got this mate at Shepherd's Bush. In the convenience. Well, he was in the convenience. Run about the best convenience they had (*He watches ASTON*.) Run about the best one. Always slipped me a bit of soap, anytime I went in there . . . I was never without a piece of soap, whenever I happened to be knocking about the Shepherd's Bush area.
> ASTON (*emerging from under the bed with shoes*). Pair of brown.(*Caretaker* 11)

When Aston speaks to Davies, he asks questions just about his material needs and desires. Later, Davies communicates Aston's indifference to Mick and complains about Aston's inability or refusal to form a sympathetic communication. He says, "[Aston] don't seem to take notice of what I say to him . . . You can't live in the same room with someone who…who don't have any conversation with you" (*Caretaker* 57-58). There are two reasons why Aston tries to manipulate Davies into staying with them. First, he wants to challenge and overpower his brother by asserting his independence and forming an alliance against him. Next, as Bugental explains, "[e]strangement is the experience of being imprisoned in glass, seeing the

world in which others move but forever blocked from joining them, pantomiming communication but never really speaking with another person" (311). Aston uses Davies as a means to ease the pain of apartness and satisfy his need for human contact. He is overwhelmed by the lack of security and sense of loneliness; he is craving for an outlet. After telling Davies some incidents from his life and recounting his madhouse story in excruciating details, he confesses: "Anyway, I feel much better now. But I don't talk to people now. I steer clear places of like that café. I never go into them now. I don't talk to anyone" (*Caretaker* 55). While recounting his experience in the mental hospital, Aston delivers a long speech, which makes his claim of not talking to anyone suspicious. Pinter points out that "it isn't necessary to conclude that everything Aston says about his experience in the mental hospital is true" (qtd. in Prentice, *Ethic* 93). Thus, there is a strong possibility that Aston resorts to lies in order to use Davies as an outlet for his isolation.

Aston's seemingly selfless help to Davies causes suspicion. He makes an extreme offer to let Davies stay in his room, gives him the keys to the house and leaves him alone at home. He certainly knows that Mick will come home, regard Davies as an intruder and attack him. So, Aston makes Davies vulnerable to Mick's aggressive and powerful attacks and also challenges his brother with an intrusion to his territory. Aston's manipulation of Davies for an alliance against Mick and attempt to disturb his brother's autonomy are evident in the scene where Mick grabs Davies's bag in order to play with him. The bag passes from one character to the other:

> MICK *grabs it*. DAVIES *reaches for it*.
> ASTON *takes it*. MICK *reaches for it*.
> ASTON *gives it to* DAVIES. MICK *grabs it*.
> *Pause.*
> ASTON *takes it*. DAVIES *takes it*. MICK *takes it*. DAVIES *reaches for it*. ASTON *takes it*.
> *Pause.*
> ASTON *gives it to* MICK. MICK *gives it to* DAVIES. DAVIES *grasps it to him*. (*Caretaker* 38-39)

When Mick takes the bag, Aston tries to get it back to give it to Davies, but in the end he gives the bag to Mick, and it is Mick who returns it to Davies. The scene with

the bag indicates the shifting alliances in the play. Aston first wants to form an alliance with Davies by helping him and keeping him at the house, but when he fails, he turns to Mick again out of his need for security or sense of intimidation by Mick's power as the dominant character.

Davies's arrival initiates the destruction of the relationship between Mick and Aston, which is built on mutual dependence. After the encounter of Mick and Davies, the play turns into a battlefield for struggle as none of the characters wants to be excluded as an outsider. Mick, whose autonomy is threatened by the presence of the tramp and who can see through Davies's deviousness, has plans to exclude the tramp and maintain his previous existence with his brother. In *The Caretaker*, "each is trying to establish an attachment with one of the others. Simultaneously each is trying to protect that relationship from an outside interference, the third member, which threatens to destroy it by forming a new pairing" (Gale 83). The characters are motivated by the urge to protect their territory, but it is not the only motivation. They also want to receive emotional support. There is a "psychological need for acceptance or affection or emotional attachment" behind their aggressive and violent strategies (Gale 82). As Mick does not want to be the third member, he immediately employs physical violence and strategic language games to dominate Davies.

Mick establishes his power over Davies by his relentless questioning of the tramp in order to frighten and confuse him. His first question to Davies is "What is the game?"(*Caretaker* 27). With this question he tries to assert his authority over Davies, who is a threat to his territory and autonomy. His following questions alternate between politeness and brutality in order to overwhelm and confuse Davies:

> MICK. What's your name?
> DAVIES. I don't know you. I don't know who you are.
> *Pause*
> MICK. Eh?
> DAVIES. Jenkins.
> MICK. Jenkins?
> DAVIES. Yes.
> MICK. Jen…kins
> *Pause*
> You sleep here last night?
> DAVIES. Yes.
> MICK. Sleep well?

DAVIES. Yes.
MICK. I'm awfully glad. It's awfully nice to meet you.
Pause
What did you say your name was? (*Caretaker* 28)

Mick asks Davies his name more than once in order to give the impression that he is aware of his deceptive nature. He makes the tramp understand that he is the possessor of the room: "How do you like my room?" (*Caretaker* 29); "How do you like my bed? *Pause*. That's my bed" (*Caretaker* 31); "This is my room. You are standing in my house" (*Caretaker* 32). Davies is deeply confused since he cannot decide whether Aston or Mick is the real owner of the house. He is rendered speechless. Additionally, Mick attacks Davies's most vulnerable point, his inferiority as a tramp:

MICK. Listen, son. Listen, sonny. You stink.
DAVIES. You ain't got no right to-
MICK. You're stinking the place out. You're an old robber, there's not getting away from it. You're old skate. You don't belong in a nice place like this. (*Caretaker* 33)

Mick plans to sabotage Davies's desperate attempts to find a safe shelter which will give him the sense of belonging and to "undermine [his] already unstable existence" (Almansi and Handerson 57). He threatens him by having him arrested for "trespassing, loitering with intent, daylight robbery, filching, thieving, and stinking the place out" (*Caretaker* 34). Like Goldberg and McCann, in *The Birthday Party*, he wants to dominate Davies by overwhelming and discrediting him with his incessant and quick-fire questioning. Additionally, Mick overpowers Davies, who is alone in complete darkness, by frightening him with the vacuum cleaner:

Come on. Who's this? Who's this got my box?
Pause.
Who's in here!
Pause.
I got a knife here. I'm ready. Come on then, who are you?
He moves, stumbles, falls and cries out.
Silence.
A faint whimper from DAVIES. *He gets up.*
All right!
He stands. Heavy breathing.
Suddenly the electrolux starts to hum. A figure moves with it, guiding

> *it. The nozzle moves along the floor after* DAVIES, *who skips, dives away from it and falls, breathlessly*. (*Caretaker* 45)

Davies is in panic and wants to defend himself against any person who threatens him and his existence. Esslin claims that the scene also suggests "Davies's lack of self-confidence and his nervousness about the menace" (*Pinter* 89). Mick is not different from Davies. He tries to threaten and frighten the tramp since he himself feels powerless and insecure thinking about the possibility that he might be excluded. According to Bugental, a response to anxiety of powerlessness is "to victimize other people, capitalizing on their powerlessness and apparently gaining gratification by exercising gratuitous control over them" (299). Mick mocks and confuses Davies by saying: "I'm sorry I gave you a start. But I had you in mind too, you know. I mean my brother's guest. We got to think of your comfort, en't we? Don't want the dust to get up your noise" (*Caretaker* 46). He masks his hostility and shows fake hospitality.

When Mick realizes that his dominating techniques fail to exclude the intruder, he employs another strategy:

> MICK. Eh, you're not thinking of doing any violence on me, are you? You're not the violent sort, are you?
> DAVIES (*vehemently*). I keep myself to myself, mate. But if anyone starts with me though, they know what they got coming.
> MICK. I can believe that. (*Caretaker* 44)

First, he cunningly acknowledges Davies' power. He offers him friendly gestures, manipulates him into believing in a false alliance and gives him a sandwich as a new beginning: "I can't help being interested in any friend of my brother's. I mean, you're my brother's friend, aren't you?" (*Caretaker* 47). Mick is setting traps in order to understand Davies's motives and his relationship with his brother. He tells Davies: "I'm sorry to hear my brother's not very friendly" (*Caretaker* 48). With this remark he expects to gain Davies' trust and make him talk behind his brother's back. However, it soon becomes clear that Davies is not an easy prey. Davies protests claiming that he didn't mean that Aston was unfriendly:

> DAVIES. He's friendly, he's friendly, I didn't say he wasn't…
> MICK (*taking a salt- cellar from his pocket*.). Salt?

> DAVIES No thanks. (*He munches the sandwich*.) I just can't exactly…make him out.
> MICK (feeling *his pocket*.) I forgot the pepper. (*Caretaker* 46)

Mick, like Aston, ignores Davies's protests and ideas. His main motive is to unveil the tramp's lies and know the possible threat better to fight against it effectively. Prentice claims that "each fails to form a human connection"; any attempt for communication backfires (*Ethic* 95). The second time Mick tries to manipulate Davies, he complains about his brother's sluggishness and asks for the tramp's advice:

> MICK. He's supposed to be doing a little job for me …I keep him here to do a little job…but I don't know…I'm coming to the conclusion he's a slow worker.
> *Pause.*
> What would your advice be?
> DAVIES. Well…he is a funny bloke, your brother. (*Caretaker* 47)

Mick expresses his discontent with Aston in order to make Davies think that he is closer to him not to his brother. Davies, unaware of Mick's intention, disavows his friendship with Aston and falls into Mick's trap. He is caught by Mick when he suggests that Aston is funny. He gradually shifts his alliance with Aston to Mick, deciding that his closeness to Mick will benefit him more since he is the real owner of the house. Mick proposes him to be a caretaker, an offer which has already been made by Aston, but unlike Aston, he asks for references from Davies as his intention is different. He wants to reveal Davies's real identity. He thinks Davies is lying.

Davies is a persistent liar who distorts reality in his favor. He believes that he is successful at manipulating both Aston and Mick; however, he is the one who is manipulated by them at the same time. As a homeless tramp who has no place or money to survive, he is desperately longing for a warm, safe shelter and protection. "Davies has a long history of seeking attachments, a place where he can belong" (Gale 84). He is thrown into that particular situation which Heidegger defines as "thrownness", "the *facticity of its* [Dasein's] *being delivered over"* (174). He has the existential need for rootedness as he is overwhelmed by the anxiety which stems from the recognition of open-endedness and contingency of life. He reflects his sense

of powerlessness and anxiety and lack of security through his manipulative, aggressive and abject responses to his predicament.

Davies is strongly motivated to gain power and dominate by claiming superiority over other people because in a world where there is meaninglessness and lack of relatedness "supremacy over other people guarantees a measure of knowledge" (Cahn 5). In other words, he shows excessive self-assertiveness and derives satisfaction from asserting his superiority. According to Adler, striving toward superiority originates from a feeling of inferiority and evokes an attitude of aggression, the purpose of which is to overcome a great insecurity (*Superiority* 108-109). Davies tries to assert himself as a man of status and weight, which becomes evident in his groundless racism. When Aston offers him a seat, Davies' "instant reaction is a mixture of aggression and defence" (Billington 118). He refuses to sit down and changes the subject to the reason why he couldn't have a proper sit down referring to the minority groups at the café he works:

> Sit down? Huh…I haven't had a good sit down….I haven't had a proper sit down…well, I couldn't tell you. . . I couldn't find a seat, not one. All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them, all them aliens had it. And they had me working there . . . that's what doing me out of a seat, treating me like dirt. (*Caretaker* 5-6)

He places the blame on the minority groups which, according to him, take up unnecessary place. He has the obsession that all groups of people are treating him like dirt; he is defending his self-respect by attacking them. When Aston informs that there is an Indian family living next door, Davies refers to them as "blacks". He believes that black people are dirty and avoids them: "I mean you don't share the toilet with them. Blacks, do you?" (*Caretaker* 16). He distinguishes himself from them by his repetitive assertive remarks about his cleanness. It is an inauthentic attempt to establish his rooted place and overcome his own feeling of powerlessness by looking down upon the so-called inferiors. Davies seeks an easy way of feeling important although he lacks real self-respect:

> He longs for a distinction which cannot be lost by any stroke of fate and which he himself does not have to struggle to achieve or maintain. Therefore he trains himself in the belief that being other than a [Negro, Greek, Poles] or

> a member of whatever minority group is at hand, is in itself a priceless virtue, a secure possession of superiority. (Barnes 70)

His race-hatred and arrogant self-proclaiming reveal his fear of loss of self-esteem. It is "merely the reverse side of his own deep feelings of inadequacy, lack of insight and empathy into the plight of other human beings" (Esslin, *Pinter* 95). In that sense, he has inauthentic ties with other fellow creatures as he ensures his self-image by attacking them.

Another inauthentic response that Davies gives manifests itself in his deceptive remarks about his past. Davies has two motives: one of them is to manipulate the others and the other one is to delude himself which will be discussed in Chapter 3. He twists reality in order to persuade Aston and Mick to let him stay in the house. "Pinter's characters are abject, stupid, vile, aggressive, but they are always intelligent enough in their capacity as conscientious and persistent liars" (Almansi 72). Davies insists that he is not merely a tramp but has a grander past. He convinces himself that he has no reason to feel inferior to Aston and Mick. This is necessary because for Davies, any form of minor criticism is an attack and a challenge to his self-image. Thus, in an attempt to gain Aston's respect he defends himself about the incident at the café claiming social superiority over those with whom he has been working:

> It's not my job to take out the bucket! They got a boy there for taking out the bucket. I wasn't engaged to take out the buckets . . . Who was this git to come up and give me orders? We got the same standing. He's not my boss. He's nothing superior to me. (*Caretaker* 7-8)

He has a very high image of himself, and he regards taking the bucket out degrading. He is constantly repeating "I've had dinner with the best" (*Caretaker* 7) so that Aston will not regard him a filthy tramp who will be a burden on his shoulders. Since he craves for a place he can belong to, he suffers from the anxiety of separation from the greater whole. "This fear leads to a sense of disconnection, isolation, alienation, and to the defense of creating an autonomous and self-sufficient self-image" (Hartman and Zimberoff 9). Distinguishing himself from the people who have not got the manners, Davies claims to Aston, "I might have been on the road a few years

but you can take it from me I'm clean, I keep myself up" (*Caretaker* 7). He cannot stand being associated with filthiness and shabbiness. He tries to assert himself as a clean, respectable gentleman who has manners and good taste in clothes. Although he is wearing shabby and torn clothes, he finds faults with every kindness Aston offers. He is trying to assert his own demands on Aston, holding the idea that "nobody's got more rights than" he has (*Caretaker* 8). When Aston remarks that he makes noises while sleeping and suggests that sleeping in bed might be unfamiliar for him, infuriated Davies protests against that as well: "There's nothing unfamiliar about me with beds. I slept in beds. I don't make noises just because I sleep in a bed. I slept in plenty of beds" (*Caretaker* 21). He is a homeless tramp in a desperate situation; however, his response to his loneliness, aimlessness, and insecurity is creating for himself an image of a man who has a clean outlook, respectable past and healthy social relationships.

As Davies is trying to assert his domination, he "cannot allow his . . . [authority] to be questioned, will not feel pity for others or permit others to feel sympathy for him. He is blind to absurdity of his situation" (Prentice, *Pinter* 20). His egoistic nature tempts him to categorize people as usable friends and opposing foes. At the beginning, Aston is, for him, a usable friend, but after learning about his experience in a mental institution, Aston all of a sudden loses his status in his eyes. Feeling superior to Aston, Davies turns against him and changes alliance completely.

Davies simply wants to play one brother off against the other to ensure his place and not to become the third member. When Mick offers him to be the caretaker, he distorts reality to present himself as a capable man in order to be hired. He claims: "I am a capable sort of man. I mean to say, I've had plenty offers in my time" (*Caretaker* 48). It is obvious that he is not a capable man, but he has spent his years in evasion and deception. When Mick asks for his references, he tries to deceive him about the papers which may not be real: "I got plenty of references. All I got to do is to go down to Sidcup . . . I'll be down there any day, I tell you. I was going down today, but I'm…I'm waiting for the weather to break" (*Caretaker* 49). Even if his references are real, he finds ridiculous excuses not to go to Sidcup to get them.

Davies wants to exclude Aston, but when Mick does not include him in his dreams about turning the flat into a penthouse, he himself feels excluded:

> DAVIES. Who would live there?
> MICK. I would. My brother and me
> *Pause*
> DAVIES. What about me? (*Caretaker* 59)

His question is unanswered. Since he doesn't want to lose this safe place, he offers Mick some help in decorating the place and suggests replacing Aston, who is now an opposing foe: "No what you want to do, you want to speak to him, eh? I got that worked out. You want to tell him…that we got ideas for this place, we could build it up, we could get it started. You see I could decorate it for you . . . between us" (*Caretaker* 61). Davies is attempting to form a new alliance which is supposedly more beneficial. He starts to destroy his alliance with his usable friend by attacking him. He thinks that he is superior to Aston because he is a sane man:

> I've seen better days than you have, man. Nobody ever got me inside one of them places, anyway. I'm a sane man! 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. *You brother's got his eye on you*! (*Caretaker* 65; emphasis added)

He openly despises and abuses Aston claiming that he is at a better place than him. His aim is to survive; however, "the terrible paradox at the core of Pinter's work is that the very impulse to survive, when unchecked and driven by a quest for dominance that equates identity with position, may be the very important impulse that destroys relationship, characters" (Prentice, *Ethic* 8). While Davies is trying to destroy the alliance between the two brothers, he becomes the one who loses security as his tactics backfire. Aston withdraws himself from Davies, realizing that his efforts to be friendly didn't work out as Pinter suggests (Prentice, *Ethic* 86). Davies's "self-obsession prevents him from having any understanding of other people" (Nailsmith 108). Aston simply tells Davies to find another place to live, calmly stating that they are not really hitting off.

Losing Aston, Davies pleads with Mick to hire him as the caretaker: "I take orders from you, I do my caretaking for you, I mean you look upon me…you don't

treat me like a lump of dirt… we can both … we can both see him for what he is" (*Caretaker* 68). He makes cruel remarks about Aston's mental condition: "I tell you he should go back where he come from!"(*Caretaker* 69). He suggests that Mick should evict Aston from the house. Mick, who knows that Davies will never bring the required references, pretends to agree with him. He says, Davies could decorate the house instead of Aston. He, in a way, forces Davies to confess he is not a first-class decorator. Upon the tramp's confession, he pretends to be disappointed and shocked. With his jargon, he reduces Davies into an absurd figure:

> MICK. You wouldn't be able to decorate out a table in afromosia teak veneer, an armchair in oatmeal tweed and a beech frame settee with a woven sea-grass seat?
> DAVIES. I never said that! (*Caretaker* 70)

Mick disarms and discredits Davies with his confusing and inconsistent attitude, which suggests that he is as deceptive as Davies is. Only when Davies calls Aston "nutty", he expresses his real feelings for the tramp: "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 but a wild animal …And to put the old tin lid on it, you stink" (*Caretaker* 71-72). Eventually, Mick breaks Aston's statue of Buddha, "his brother's one cherished possession and only attempt to decorate the room. Mick's violent rejection of Davies also rejects his brother" (Prentice, *Ethic* 94). Mick's aggressive action is directed at both Aston and Davies since they both disturb his sense of security. However, when Aston enters the room, *"[t]hey look at each other. Both are smiling, faintly*" (*Caretaker* 73). Despite their estrangement and unspoken hostility towards each other, they are relieved that the intruder is deactivated.

Motivated by his sense of insecurity, Davies attempts to manipulate and dominate his surrounding, but he is left alone, rejected and loses his last chance to escape loneliness. His attempts to relate himself to a secure place with a secure identity fail. He is overwhelmed with aimlessness, rootlessness and loneliness once again as he has all through his life: "What am I going to do? *Pause* What shall I do? Where am I going to go?" (*Caretaker* 75). His final pleading with Aston indicates his

helplessness and powerlessness; he is sent back to the world which is a void, and he feels "deep alarm at the vacancy which surrounds one, insecurity of himself in the world" (Solomon 222). His rootlessness and failure in establishing a foothold in a place suggest man's predicament in general. In fact, man's inauthentic responses to his insecurity and loneliness put him in a more desperate and insecure situation.

2.1.3. *A Slight Ache*

A Slight Ache is set in a country house of a middle-aged married couple, Edward and Flora. Edward is portrayed as a shallow and insensitive man who is indifferent to his wife's great concern over the flowers in their garden. Flora is dissatisfied with Edward, who does not listen to her and fails in meeting her emotional needs. They are trapped in an uncomfortable relationship. One day while they are having breakfast in the garden, a wasp flies into a marmalade pot, and Edward kills the wasp by pouring hot water on it. The couple engages in an argument over whether wasps bite or sting. Edward's cruel tactic to kill the wasp and the meaningless argument they have reveal that something is rotten in their relationship.

Edward claims that he has a slight ache in his eyes as if he has not slept. He is irritated by the presence of a matchseller who has been standing at their back gate for two months. Although Flora thinks that he is a harmless old man, her husband expresses his desire to interview with the matchseller to get rid of his disturbing presence. Edward asks Flora to summon the matchseller to his study room so that he can learn why he has been standing there for such a long time. During his interviews with the matchseller, Edward is confronted with the remorseless silence of the man, and his questions remain unanswered. He tries to define the matchseller and thrusts various identities upon him, but he fails. Edward's insecurities and sense of anxiety escalate; his ache in his eyes gets worse. The examination and the matchseller's silence gradually disintegrate Edward. Reluctant to face the threat, he goes outside, and Flora starts talking to the matchseller. She starts seducing him by ascribing to him several roles (a lover or a son). Edward becomes more hysterical and insecure as he fears becoming an outcast and losing his possessions. Finally, he becomes weaker and falls on the floor, whereas the matchseller figuratively rises up. Flora gives

Edward the matchseller's tray and leaves with the man for lunch. Edward is left alone outside without a shelter, identity, and attachment. This reversal of roles makes the matchseller a substitute for Edward.

Displaying a parallelism with *The Caretaker*, *A Slight Ache* presents the disturbance of a private territory by an intruder, this time in the role of a matchseller standing at the back gate of a couple's house. Pinter's people, in this play, are visited by menace and overwhelmed by existential anxieties within their mundane activities. Esslin states that in *A Slight Ache* man's existential anxiety is represented "not as an abstraction, not as a surreal phantasmagoria, but as something real, ordinary and acceptable as an everyday occurrence" (Pinter 28). The play, like *The Birthday Party* and *The Caretaker*, unfolds Pinter's violent world which defeats the characters in the end.

The play starts with Edward and Flora sitting at the breakfast table, indulged in their domestic routine, and deeply alienated from each other. Edward, self-absorbed in his reading, avoids a genuine communication with his wife, Flora, who, as her name suggests, is interested in the sort of flora in their garden. She understands its flowers, and in need of drawing Edward's interest and including him in her own world asks him whether he noticed the honeysuckle. However, her husband does not take notice of it:

> FLORA. That's convolvulus.
> EDWARD. That?
> FLORA. Yes.
> EDWARD. Oh.
> [*Pause.*]
> I thought it was japonica.
> FLORA. Oh, good Lord no.
> EDWARD. Pass the teapot, please.
> *Pause. She pours tea for him.*
> I don't see why I should be expected to distinguish between these plants. It's not my job. (*Slight* 170)

Edward does not attentively listen to her, which is apparent in his evasive answers. He fails to recognize the flowers in his own garden, which is an indication of his failure in understanding the emotional void in his relationship with his wife. He lacks authentic understanding of his and Flora's inner lives. As Cahn states, "[Edward]

knows little about the quality and depth of his wife's more personal concerns, and this ignorance makes Edward defensive" (12). He is aware of his shallowness but tries to cover it up since he does not want to lay himself open to criticism. He needs to feel powerful at all times to preserve his self-esteem. Edward, like Davies in *The Caretaker*, is hypersensitive to criticism and wants to divert the attention away from any suggestion of his weaknesses and inadequacies. He shows covert hostility to his wife while justifying his lack of interest in her flowers.

Edward is absorbed in himself and always assumes the power to control his surroundings. The tension caused by Edward's domineering nature is revealed as a wasp strays on the breakfast table. In need of asserting his control over the situation, Edward gives orders to his wife to prevent the wasp from entering the marmalade pot. Ironically, in the end he is the one who causes the wasp to enter the pot:

> EDWARD. Cover the pot. There's a wasp. [*He puts the paper down on the table*.] Don't move. Keep still. What are you doing?
> FLORA. Covering the pot.
> . . .
> EDWARD. Give me the lid.
> FLORA. It's in.
> . . .
> EDWARD. Give it to me! Now…Slowly….
> FLORA. What are you doing?
> EDWARD. Be quiet. Slowly…carefully…on …the ….pot! Ha-ha-ha. Very good.
> *He sits on a chair to the right of the table.*
> FLORA. Now he's in the marmalade.
> EDWARD. Precisely. (*Slight* 171)

Edward refuses to receive directions from his wife even though he is clearly unsure about his tactics to deactivate the wasp. He is unwilling to accept any blame for his mistakes. Edward's assertion can be regarded as "masculine protest" which is coined and defined by Adler as the striving to be strong and powerful to compensate the feeling of inferiority (*Superiority* 45). Edward is uncertain about his identity, fails to face his true self and finally projects his insecurity onto the wasp and his wife. "A seemingly trivial incident is used by Pinter to depict Edward's vindictive delight in tapping an alien creature and establish bullying dominance over his wife" (Billington 97). Edward feels the urge to protect his image as the authority figure in the house.

He regards his wife's suggestions and remarks about the wasp as "nonsense" (*Slight* 171) or "rubbish" (*Slight* 172).

Edward and Flora decide to kill the wasp as they both are irritated by the sight of it. At this point, Edward complains about a slight ache he feels in his eyes, which is "a manifestation of psychological pain and emotional vulnerability" (Cahn 12). Later in the play, his ache gets worse since he feels more helpless and threatened by another intruder. Ignoring his physical weakness, he concentrates on the extermination of the wasp. First he drowns the wasp and then scalds it, blinds it and kills it. Flora, badly affected by the sight, feels compassion for the wasp, whereas Edward takes a sadistic satisfaction from his actions:

> EDWARD. . . . Aah…down here…right down…blinding him…that's …it.
> FLORA. Is it?
> EDWARD. Lift the lid. All right, I will. There he is! Dead. What a monster.
> [*He squashes it on a plate.*]
> FLORA. What an awful experience.
> EDWARD. What a beautiful day it is. Beautiful. (*Slight* 174)

This trivial matter of killing the wasp reveals that Edward's response to any outside force, which penetrates and disrupts his security, is "to trap, dominate and neutralize it, exactly what he seeks to do with the matchseller as the play progresses" (Billington 98). He clings to his environment and possessions "[i]n a world where meaning is uncertain, where objects and territory are all that are definable" (Cahn 5). His obsession with the security of his territory and his violence are his inauthentic responses to existential anxiety. Only in this way can he forget his inner emptiness, assert his self created image and attribute a meaning to his existence.

However, Edward's momentary victory over the wasp is disturbed when he sees the matchseller at the back gate. The old man has been standing there and trying to sell matches to passers-by for two months. Edward guards himself believing that the stranger is a possible threat to his territory. On the other hand, Flora is not disturbed by his presence, which implies her striving for a human contact with another person as Edward does not meet her emotional needs. According to Prentice, menace in this play, as in *The Caretaker*, "is a threat to emotional well-being which grows out of the fact that the characters involved are placed in circumstances in

which their psychological needs are not met by those around them" (*Ethic* 120). The lack of love and communication in their relationship generates Edward's fear of being excluded and Flora's need for a companion. That reminds Mick and Davies's fear of alienation in *The Caretaker*. Flora is interested in the old man, and she feels compassion for him:

> FLORA. Do you find him interesting, Edward?
> EDWARD [*casually*]. Interesting? No. No, I…don't find him interesting.
> FLORA. He is a very nice old man, really.
> EDWARD. You've spoken to him?
> FLORA. No. No, I haven't spoken to him. I've nodded. (*Slight* 175)

Edward's reaction to the presence of a possible intruder is a mixture of fear and anxiety. He fears the unknown, and he is anxious about the threats to his already unstable existence. He starts to pace up and down, which reminds one of Stanley's reactions in *The Birthday Party* when he learns that two stranger are coming:

> EDWARD [*pacing up and down*]. For two months he's been standing on that spot, do you realize that? Two months. I haven't been able to step outside the back gate.
> FLORA. Why on earth not?
> EDWARD [*to himself*]. It used to give me great pleasure, such pleasure, to stroll along through the long grass, out through the back gate, pass into the lane. That pleasure is now denied me. It's my own house, isn't it? It's my own gate. (*Slight* 175-176)

The matchseller is a mysterious menace for Edward. Like in most of Pinter's plays, though "menace may take the shape of particular characters; it is usually unspecific or unexplained, therefore more ominous" (Dukore 26). The menace that lurks in Edward's life stands at his back gate. Edward is suspicious about the matchseller, who waits on the desolate lane where no one passes, and he claims that "the whole thing is preposterous" (*Slight* 176) and "there's something very false about that man" (*Slight* 179). He feels like he is being spied on by a stranger who has malicious plans. Edward fears the possibility that his rights and possessions may be taken away, which will render him more alienated and isolated than ever. Pinter's characters are very much involved in an existential struggle to establish a foothold in a territory as the universe is alienating, uncertain and threatening. Due to his anxiety, Edward's ache in his eyes gets worse and Flora sees right though his inner fears:

FLORA. You're frightened of him.
EDWARD. I'm not.
FLORA. You're frightened of a poor old man. Why?
EDWARD. I am not!
FLORA. He's a poor, harmless old man.
EDWARD. Aaah my eyes.
FLORA. Let me bathe them.
EDWARD. Keep away. (*Slight* 178)

Edward does not let his physical or psychological weaknesses be recognized by other people due to the fear of being rendered helpless. He is integrated neither within himself nor with the others, so he reacts violently when he is reminded of that truth. When Flora, intrigued by the old man, states, "He looks bigger. Have you been watching him?", Edward is irritated by her interest in another male who shows signs of strength and endurance (*Slight* 177). He responds aggressively: "Get out. Leave me alone" (*Slight* 178). In panic, he wants to cast off anyone who deepens his sense of insecurity.

Edward decides to speak to the matchseller in order to find out about his real intentions since he believes that the man is an imposter. He claims: "I really can't tolerate something so… absurd, right on my doorstep" (*Slight* 178-179). He uses the word "absurd" to describe the situation; the absurdity of this situation threatens him deeply, which alludes to his anxiety caused by the contingency of the world. He has settled his mind to "get to the bottom of it" and "get rid of him" (*Slight* 179). He devotes himself to the eviction of the stranger. When Flora asks whether he will go out to him, he protests: "Certainly not! Go out to *him*? Certainly…not. I'll invite him in here" (*Slight* 179). Edward regards himself as superior and wants to deal with the intruder in his familiar territory so that he will have the upper hand. Flora suggests calling the police, but Edward rejects her advice claiming: "No, you're a woman, you know nothing" (*Slight* 189). Edward employs his masculine protest again to dispel the awful feeling of powerlessness. He demands his wife to go and fetch the matchseller.

When Edward encounters with the matchseller, who is almost deaf and blind, he tries to assert his superiority over a homeless old man who is his social inferior. "Thematically, the struggle for dominance dramatizes the frailty of an identity based

solely on outward roles and relative position" (Prentice, *Ethic* 33). Edward draws the matchseller's attention to his own masculinity by advising him to "[g]et a good woman to stick by you. Never mind what the world says. Keep at it. Keep your shoulder to the wheel. It'll pay dividends" (*Slight* 184). He brags about having everything including luxurious possessions, intellect, and a companion to support him. He offers the matchseller drinks in a pretentious and snobbish manner: "Tia Maria? A Wachenheimer Fuchsmantel Reisling BeerenAuslese? Gin and it? Chateauneuf –du-Pape?" to remind him of his socially superior position (*Slight* 185). He emphasizes the contrast between him and the matchseller by stating: "I was in much the same position myself then as you are now, you understand. Struggling to make my way in the world. I was in commerce too."(*Slight* 184). Edward tries to show that he has made his way in the world and overcome many difficulties and challenges in life. For him, the matchseller represents "the world of poverty and degradation he has specifically denied" (Billington 98). In that sense, Edward tries to make the man feel intimidated by his social and personal superiority, but there is no point since the matchseller cannot hear or see him. Actually, Edward is the one who is blind; he is blind to the void that is situated within him. He does not have an authentic I. He can define his identity only through the role ascribed to him by others or by himself. He tries to prove his self-worth by saying: "I entertain the villagers annually, as a matter of fact. I'm not the squire, but they look upon me with some regard" (*Slight* 182). This remark proves that he is not sure even about his social standing. Deeply insecure of his identity, he asserts his intellectual power by mentioning the theological and philosophical essays he writes. He assigns himself a fixed role and function in life. However, in the play there is no clue about the essays he has written but just his notes for an essay, which makes one doubt about his identity even as an essay writer.

Edward asks several questions to learn about the intruder and his intentions better: "Why do you stand outside my back gate, from dawn till dusk, why do you pretend to sell matches, why…?" (*Slight* 187). Edward is paranoid in the sense that he believes the man's real purpose is not selling matches but lurking to attack. During the interrogation, all Edward gets is the deadening silence of the

matchseller. As Deleon claims, "confronted with silence, he [Edward] is also confronted with his inner emptiness" (30). Thus, to ward off confrontation, he constantly talks. When his attempts to draw the matchseller into conversation fail, he is gradually overwhelmed by a psychological and physical weakness; however, he still renounces his weakness by asserting his power and the matchseller's inferiority:

> You may think I was alarmed by the look of you. You would be quite mistaken. I was not alarmed by the look of you. I did not find you at all alarming. No, no. Nothing outside this room has ever alarmed me. You disgusted me, quite forcibly, if you want to know the truth. (*Slight* 187)

Edward attacks the matchseller's self-worth by his cruel remarks about his appearance and social status since he cannot stand the fact that he is intimidated by someone who is inferior to him in every respect. Yet, "[r]espectability of upper-class life has not done away with his feelings of inferiority" (Deleon 64). He feels weak and suffocated: "[*Muttering*.] I must get some air. I must get a breath of air" (*Slight* 187). His physical weakness designates the emotional and spiritual defect that resides in him. When he goes out to his garden, he is relieved: "The peace. The peace out here" (*Slight* 188). Flora tries to appease him by suggesting that he is the real owner of the house:

> FLORA. Look at our trees.
> EDWARD. Yes.
> FLORA. Our own trees. Can you hear the birds?
> EDWARD. No, I can't hear them.
> FLORA. But they're singing, high up, and flapping.
> EDWARD. Good, let them flap. (*Slight* 188)

Flora tries to put an end to his paranoid obsession by drawing his attention to the tranquility in their garden. However, Edward remains insensitive to his environment since he is preoccupied with the matchseller and the distress he has caused. He is determined to take him down and know all about him. Flora wants to convince him of the pointlessness of his fears of a quiet and inoffensive man: "I could show him out now, it wouldn't matter. You've seen him, he's harmless, unfortunate…old, that's all. Edward-listen- he's not here through any… design, or anything, I know it. . . .He'll move on. I can…make him. I promise you. There's no point in upsetting

yourself like this. He's an old man, weak in the head…that's all" (*Slight* 188-189). Edward blames her for being deluded, which denotes his refusal to face the real source of his fear. When Flora asks him to let her talk to the man to get the truth about him, he again shows paranoia and suspects that Flora is conspiring against him. He hurts her physically by seizing her arms harshly and yelling: "What are you plotting?" (*Slight* 190). Nevertheless, he lets her talk with the matchseller.

Suspicious of Flora's betrayal, Edward comes back and dismisses her violently. He resumes his cross-examination, but he is again responded with silence. He pleads to hear something uttered by the matchseller: "Did you say something? [*Pause.*] Did you say something? [*Pause*.] Anything?" (*Slight* 194). Edward needs him to be articulate in order to avoid the menacing atmosphere created by silence. This silence forces him to look inward, and he is afraid of what he would find there. Fearing that his wife and his house that are necessary for his self definition are being usurped, he asserts sovereignty over his possessions with a last effort:

> God damn it, I'm entitled to know something about you! You're in my blasted house, on my territory, drinking my wine, eating my duck! . . . In my room, My den. I can rem…[*He stops abruptly*.]
> [*Pause.*]
> You find that funny? Are you grinning?
> [*Pause.*]
> [*In disgust*.] Good Christ, is that a grin on your face? (*Slight* 195)

Edward becomes more hysterical and starts to lose his mental and psychological balance. The urge to conquest, to know something about the threat, and to turn it into a familiar form which he can deal with is stronger; thus, the emotional and psychological agitation becomes more violent. "The intruder does not violently force his way in but with his silence he is found to be more menacing" (Misra 34). The remarkable irony is that silence wins over Edward's speech and domineering techniques. Edward becomes more disturbed and vulnerable. He believes that the matchseller is humiliating him and making fun of his defenselessness.

Wardle claims that "the Pinter character . . . is there to defend his room. If anyone invades it he is on his defenses, the intruder may be a victim, an ally, or an assailant. Until the proprietor finds out which, there is talk" (qtd. in Cahn 5). Edward

attributes all these roles to that stranger. First, he tries to victimize the matchseller through assaults and mortification; and then he regards him as an ally calling him: "My oldest acquaintance. My nearest and dearest. My kith and kin" (*Slight* 196). He tries to establish a close tie with the matchseller so that he can avoid the threat he poses. Additionally, Edward sees him as a person who has compassion for his predicament: "You're weeping. You're shaking with grief. For me. I can't believe it. For my plight" (*Slight* 197). In short, he assigns the man any role he desires to take the upper hand and to reduce his anxiety. Finally, he sees the old man as an assailant who is laughing at him and his predicament. The matchseller "acts as a catalyst for the projection of the other's deepest feelings. Edward, in projecting his thoughts . . . disintegrates" (Esslin, *Theatre* 208). He externalizes his inner weaknesses through the matchseller. He is shattered due to his realization of the worthlessness of his existence and identity. The matchseller seems much stronger and younger than Edward, who gradually loses his strength. In horror, he states: "Your face. Your body.[*Overwhelming nausea and horror*.] . . .You are laughing at me!. . . You look younger. You look extraordinarily …youthful." (*Slight* 199). The threat has grown bigger and stronger, and Edward is defeated. In a final attempt, he once more asks the man: "Who are you?" (*Slight* 199). He is left alone without an answer and sent away by Flora with a tray of matches. Edward finds himself in what he fears the most, in the matchseller's position, a blind man without a shelter and possessions to claim.

According to Prentice, Edward's blindness represents his inability to imagine himself in anyone else's skin and his refusal to know himself (*Ethic* 68). He is incapable of establishing an authentic relationship with another person, namely the matchseller and to some extent Flora. Moreover, he gives inauthentic responses to his inner conflicts by asserting power over another, which ends in defeat, isolation and insecurity. "Pinter has most frequently marked the breakdown of the games people play by exposing their outbursts of suppressed inner violence" (Merritt 114). Edward chooses to play the game of dominating the other, but this act of aggression results in greater alienation and complete loss of identity.

2. 2. ACTIVE INAUTHENTIC RESPONSES IN EDWARD ALBEE'S PLAYS

Like Pinter, Albee, in his plays, explores modern man's predicament, and he mostly focuses on the great isolation and alienation man suffers from, the lack of communication between an individual and the other members of society. Albee believes that outside forces such as social institutions and other people apply pressures on the individual who tries to establish and preserve his identity in an uncertain and sinister world. Thus, the question of individual identity becomes central to Albee's plays as well. His characters yearn for their existence and identity while they are aware of its pain which has its mainspring in living in a meaningless void. "His fundamental theme is the collapse of communality, the Other as threat . . . His subject is loss, desolation, spiritual depletion" (Bigsby, *Modern* 127-128) Albee's people are overwhelmed by the sense of abandonment and alienation; thus, they show aggressiveness to the indifferent world which isolates and abandons them in a menacing situation. Albee shows "the polar opposites of freedom vs. imprisonment, conformity vs. confrontation" (Kolin 18) through the characters who have inauthentic existence. Closely paralleling Pinter's characters, his characters' "verbalization is indeed a response to their terror of a silence in which the real questions will assert themselves" (Bigsby, *Critical* 268). Their bravado suggests the sense of insecurity and unwillingness for confrontation. Albee's drama is similar to Pinter's dramatic world in the sense that they both introduce violence, destruction and domination as defensive behaviors used in order to abstain from authentic acknowledgement of life.

2.2.1. *The Zoo Story*

When *The Zoo Story* opens, on a park bench in New York's Central Park sits Peter, an editor reading a book. He is a happy conformist with a nuclear family and a good income. He is disturbed by an intruder, Jerry, who appears all of a sudden and tries to communicate with him by abruptly stating that he has been to the zoo. As the play develops, Jerry's attempt to make contact with Peter takes various forms; questions are followed by personal confessions, torturing remarks leave their places

to physical attacks, all of which end with the murder/suicide of Jerry, who throws himself on the knife held by Peter.

In the play, neither Peter nor Jerry can be defined as characters who have authentic bounds with life. Jerry and Peter are portrayed as opposite characters in terms of the inauthentic responses they give. Jerry tries to cope with the existential anxiety by projecting it through aggressiveness, whereas Peter shows passive inauthentic responses in the sense that he resigns from struggling with the contingency of life, which is discussed in Chapter 3. In this chapter, the focus is on how Jerry displays the anguish of being and desperately seeks connection in an aggressive and destructive manner.

Jerry, in his late thirties, is carelessly dressed and growing fat. According to stage directions, "his fall from physical grace should not suggest debauchery; he has, to come closest to it, a great weariness" (*Zoo* 158). He is depicted as a drained person who is disgusted with his own existence and the alienation that the universe thrusts upon him. With his weariness and shabbiness, he signifies the dreadful and exhausting aspects of life. Camus states that "weariness comes at the end of acts of mechanical life", and he adds that "it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness" (10). The most important characteristic of Jerry is that he has the consciousness of man's finiteness, his being condemned to make choices in a contingent world, and the isolated territories that alienate people from themselves and other human beings. However, Jerry has difficulty in accepting that predicament; he is shocked and dismayed by the human circumstance. In other words, Jerry is trapped in his own sense of anguish and cannot set himself free from the restrictive bounds of this desperate situation. He is projecting his inner conflicts onto external world; he has the great need for relatedness and connection, which results in aggressive reactions.

From the very beginning of the play, Jerry is depicted as an intruder who barges into Peter's petty comfort, that is, reading his book on a park bench. The interaction between Peter and Jerry, two people who have never met before, is initiated due to Jerry's impulse to make connection with someone and tell his story. Jerry attempts to engage Peter in a conversation without the latter's consent:

> JERRY. I've been to the zoo. [PETER *doesn't notice*.] I said, I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I'VE BEEN TO THE ZOO!
> PETER. Hm?...What?... I'm sorry, were you talking to me?
> JERRY. I went to the zoo, and then I walked until I came here. Have I been walking north? (*Zoo* 159)

Peter is not sure whether Jerry is addressing to him and does not know how to respond. He is annoyed with the stranger who forces him to react to his invasion, and he is "*anxious to get back to his reading*" (*Zoo* 159). Jerry, who has not got any interest in manners and respect in personal space, ignores Peter's need for privacy and goes on disturbing him with his questions. Peter tries not to take any notice of him and starts preparing his pipe. This triggers Jerry's need to defend himself against the feeling created by rejection. He assaults Peter:

> JERRY [*watches as PETER, anxious to dismiss him, prepares his pipe*]. Well, boy; you're not going to get lung cancer, are you?
> PETER [*looks up, a little annoyed, then smiles*]. No sir. Not from this.
> JERRY. No, sir. What you'll probably get is cancer of the mouth, and then you'll have to wear one of those things Freud wore after they took one whole side of his jaw away. What do they call those things?
> PETER [*uncomfortable*]. A prosthesis? (*Zoo* 159-160)

While tempting Peter to engage in an interaction, Jerry is not only attacking Peter's privacy but also making him uncomfortable by suggesting that he will probably get cancer by smoking. "The raw violence of Jerry's intrusion feeds the audience's reflex judgment of his behavior as a threat" (McCarthy 46). Like Pinter, Albee employs the theme of menace through the intrusion of an outsider in order to unfold the existential threat to one's existence and security. Peter wants to protect himself and keep his distance since he does not seek any connection. However, Jerry challenges his desire for solitude and reluctance to communicate. Jerry's attitude indicates that he lacks understanding of an authentic and mutual human relationship which is based on reciprocal understanding and respect for others.

Jerry proceeds with his persistent questions on Peter's private life with the compulsion to overshadow his isolation. However, the communication between them is confined to superficial interrogation. Peter, who is "*bewildered by the seeming lack of communication*", reveals that he is married and has two daughters (*Zoo* 161). Jerry abuses this self exposure by suggesting his inability to conceive a male child.

He mocks and attacks Peter's masculinity. Most of the time, Jerry simply ignores Peter's remarks and fails to acknowledge his total personality. As he confesses, he asks these questions because he has the desire to connect with someone:

> JERRY. . . . I don't talk to many people except to say like: give a beer, or where is the john, or what time does the feature go on, or keep your hands to yourself, buddy. You know- things like that.
> PETER. I must say I don't ….
> JERRY. But every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really *talk*; like to get to know somebody, know all about him.
> PETER [*lightly laughing, still uncomfortable*]. And am I the guinea pig for today?
> JERRY. On a sun-drenched Sunday afternoon like this: Who better than a nice married man with two daughters and …uh…a dog? (*Zoo* 161-162)

Although, Jerry has authentic awareness of his isolation and loneliness, he has inauthentic perception of relatedness and connection as he considers Peter as a means to an end. Moreover, when Peter simply asks quick-fire questions such as: "What do you make?" (*Zoo* 162); "Where do you live?" (*Zoo* 163), he explains how uncomfortable he is with being questioned: "It's that you don't really carry on a conversation; you just ask questions. And I'm ...I'm normally ...uh...reticent" (*Zoo* 163). In their interaction, it can be observed that "[t]he one who can talk fluently imposes his authority over the one who is reticent or less articulate" (Misra 67). Jerry confuses and attacks Peter with his unpredictable questions; he mocks and frightens him in a patronizing manner:

> JERRY. . . . Say, what's the dividing line between upper-middle-class and lower-upper-middle class?
> PETER. My dear fellow, I...
> JERRY. Don't my dear follow me.
> PETER [*unhappily*]. Was I patronizing? I believe I was; I'm sorry. But, you see, your question about the classes bewildered me.
> JERRY. And when you're bewildered you become patronizing?
> PETER. I...I don't express myself too well, sometimes. [*He attempts a joke on himself.]* I'm in publishing, not writing.
> JERRY[*amused but not at the humour*]. So be it. The truth is: I was being patronizing. (*Zoo* 163)

Jerry verbally dominates Peter and makes him subservient and more reticent. He gains power and control over the situation. Peter is exposed to lunatic remarks which

are full of violent elements. When he tells that he has two cats and birds at his house, Jerry reveals the violence found within him:

> JERRY. Do they carry disease? The birds.
> PETER. I don't believe so.
> JERRY. That's too bad. If they did you could set them loose in the house and the cats could eat them and die, maybe. (*Zoo* 162)

The statement implies Jerry's longing for death, and his suicidal tendencies find their outlet in violence directed to other creatures. Jerry is angry at his powerlessness in front of a contingent universe; thus, he fancies destruction as a means to gain control. He tries to make sense of a senseless world; however, he is dependent on another person or creature to externalize his anger and aggression while creating his personal meaning.

The reasons for Jerry's awful sense of isolation should be considered in order to understand his present motives. Jerry is shaken by his realization of the world as a dissonant and chaotic place which desolates people. Charles Lyons claims that "the play assumes the absurdity, the chaos of the human condition and its essential loneliness" (qtd. in Bailey 31). Jerry exists on the margins of society, and he is trapped in a chaotic environment; he calls the rooming-house he lives a "tormented house" (*Zoo* 169), where the residents are removed from communication and connection. "Jerry describes his building, the residents and his possessions in terms of confining enclosures" (Kolin 21). Like a prison cell, Jerry's room is "a laughably small room" which is separated from "another laughably small room" (*Zoo* 164). His description that the residents are isolated and alienated, "everyone separated from by bars from everyone else" (*Zoo* 179), refers to the universal human condition where loneliness and helplessness prevail as "God . . . turned his back on the whole thing some time ago…with…some day, with people" (*Zoo* 175). Jerry mentions a lady in the rooming-house: "I do know that there's a lady living on the third floor, in the front. I know because she cries all the time. Whenever I go out or come back in, whenever I pass in her door, I always hear her crying, muffled, but …very determined. Very determined indeed" (*Zoo* 168). Like the lady, Jerry is trying to catch the attention of other people who are indifferent to his tormented soul. He

wants his existential despair to be heard and known by other people. That is the reason why he forces Peter to listen to his stories.

Jerry's possessions signify the universal loneliness and dissonance as well. He mentions some letters, "when letters…When will you write? When will you come?" (*Zoo* 165). These letters denote the pursuit of human contact which is suppressed by the living conditions which impose isolation on people. Additionally, Jerry also mentions two picture frames which are empty. Peter enquires about the empty picture frames:

> JERRY. I don't see why they need any explanation at all. Isn't it clear? I don't have any pictures of anyone to put in them
> PETER. Your parents…perhaps…a girl-friend…(*Zoo* 165-166)

Jerry gives further explanation about the empty picture frames. He tells Peter that his mother deserted them for another man and his father walked into an omnibus. Jerry is abandoned and is deprived of any familial ties as he describes himself as a "permanent transient" (*Zoo* 177). He is an outcast who escapes the oppressive environment through his "solitary but free passage" (*Zoo* 176). He cannot establish authentic ties with anyone or anything; he is "a fugitive from schedules, family ties, loneliness" (Kolin 21).

Although Jerry argues that he has no feeling about the deprivation of love in his life, he follows his own inauthentic ways to find love, which is apparent in his relationship with women. Albee presents "his figures … [as] incomplete; their sexuality is compromised, their values betrayed, their hopes abandoned, their relationships attenuates. As a result, they become hollow men and women, evidence of their own spiritual emptiness" (Bigsby, *Modern* 147). Jerry's relationship with women is limited to sex act and has nothing to do with an emotional or spiritual contact. As he confesses: "I've never been able to have sex with, or how is it put? …make love to anybody more than once. Once; that's it . . . oh, do I love the little ladies; really, I love them. For about an hour." (*Zoo* 167). He treats women as objects. Hartman and Zimberoff state that "the underlying fear in this strategy is the chaos of abandonment. This individual desperately seeks physical closeness while trying to create mental distance" (21). As Jerry has been abandoned many times in

his life, with his one-night affairs while satisfying his need for human contact, he prevents further loss and loneliness. He attacks Peter in order to externalize his anger at any kind of principles or social norms such as getting married: "Look! Are you going to tell me to get married and have parakeets?" (*Zoo* 167). Although he displays how unsafe he feels at the risk of overwhelming chaos, he, at the same time, escapes order and stability in fear of abandonment.

With the same fear of abondenment Jerry starts telling his experience with his landlady's dog to make Peter stay and listen to him. He captures Peter's attention by tempting him with his vivid narration of stories. At the climax of the play, Jerry's story about the dog has a very important role. Albee admits: "I suppose the dog story in *The Zoo Story*, to a certain extent, is a microcosm of the play by the fact that people are not communicating ultimately failing and trying and failing" (qtd. in Bailey 32-33). The dog story, in fact, illustrates Jerry's desperate attempt to connect with anything and his ultimate failure. He explains how important any contact is in an alienating world that staves off communication:

> If you can't deal with people you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS! [*Much faster now, and like a conspirator*] Don't you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people…SOMETHING. With a bed, with a cockroach, with a mirror…no, that's too hard, that's one of the last steps. (*Zoo* 175)

Jerry's goal is to make a meaningful contact with anything however small or insignificant the object is.

Jerry starts telling his story "[*as if reading from a huge billboard*]: THE STORY OF JERRY AND THE DOG" (*Zoo* 170). Bailey points out that "with his isolation and painful sense of alienation, Jerry wants his story to make a difference; he wants to earn his marginalized story a memorable place in the larger narrative of society" (32). Just like he wants to fill the empty picture frames in his room, he wants to fill the existential void he feels with his stories so that he can reduce the alienation of his existence. Jerry is wearied. His deprivation of relatedness and his struggle for demolishing indifference result in extreme acts of aggression and violence. Before the dog story, he tells Peter: "What I am going to tell you has something to do with how sometimes it's necessary to go a long distance out of the

way in order to come back a short distance correctly" (*Zoo* 170). Jerry is ready to go out of his way and to perform vicious acts to create meaning, to act upon something and to provoke confrontation at the end. He complains about the indifference of the universe and people: "Animals are indifferent to me …like people. [*He smiles slightly*]…most of the time. But this dog wasn't indifferent. From the beginning he'd snarl and then go for me, to get one of my legs" (*Zoo* 171). Jerry made up his mind; he would either "kill the dog with kindness, and if that doesn't work", he would just kill him (*Zoo* 171). He could not bear the idea that the dog did not love him. He decided to answer violence with violence if kindness would not work. To prove the dog that he was there to be loved, he gave it a bag of hamburgers. The dog ate the hamburgers, but then again it snarled at him. Jerry was hurt and offended because his sense of loneliness was augmented. As a hostile and violent respond, he poisoned the dog with the rat poison he put in the hamburgers.

The main purpose of Jerry was not to kill the dog, but to provoke a response. He confesses to Peter: "I wanted the dog to live so that I could see what our new relationship might come to" (*Zoo* 174). He was curious about whether they would be friends or enemies because in either way he would make a connection which is preferable to indifference. However, he failed as he discloses to Peter: "I had tried to love, and I had tried to kill, and both had been unsuccessful by themselves" (*Zoo* 175). Jerry describes his current relationship with the dog as: "Whenever the dog and I see each other we both stop where we are. We regard each other with a mixture of sadness and suspicion, and then we feign indifference . . . We neither love nor hurt because we do not try to reach each other" (*Zoo* 176). His attempts ended in indifference which he tries to escape in the first place. *The Zoo Story*, as Esslin suggests, displays "an outsider's inability to establish genuine contact with a dog, let alone any human being" (*Absurd* 225-226).

Jerry has learned something from that experience: "Neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves, independent of each other, creates any effect beyond themselves; and … the two combined, together, at the same time, are the teaching emotion" (*Zoo* 176). He exerts kindness and cruelty on other people to shock them out of their senses and apathy. He uses what he has learned from the dog to

communicate with a human being, Peter. He hopes that his tactics will work well in his next endeavor.

Jerry's behavior to the dog is identical with his attitude to Peter. First, he achieves "*a hypnotic effect on Peter"* (*Zoo* 170), and then he exerts his power on him by saying: "I'm here, and I'm not leaving" (*Zoo* 177). Jerry reveals that he is a potential threat to Peter, and he urges him to confront the threat. Peter wants to leave; Jerry tickles him as a distraction, and he starts poking and punching him in the arm, demanding him to move over so that he can sit on the bench, "using the paradoxical blend of kindness and cruelty he exercised with the dog" (Kolin 23). He tempts Peter to defend his territory like he has done with the dog. Jerry finally starts talking about the zoo, which he has been postponing from the start. He states that he went to the zoo "to find out more about the way people exist with animals, and the way animals exist with each other, and with people too" (*Zoo* 179). Jerry points out the separation of animals from each other and people. He suggests that people are separated from each other like the animals in cages. In that sense, there is a parallelism between Jerry's zoo story and Albee's *The Zoo Story*. Through Jerry's story, Albee explores the loss of communication, the difficulty of establishing human contact and man's growing isolation.

As Jerry describes the isolating conditions at the zoo, he gradually pushes Peter off the bench, "forcing him literally and in every other sense off balance" (Paolucci 40). He wants Peter to break through the civilized manners and pick up an animalistic and brutal fight. He attacks his self-respect by treating him as a child:

> JERRY. I said I want this bench, and I'm going to have it. Now get over there.
> PETER. People can't have everything they want. You should know that; it's a rule; people can have some of the things they want, but they can't have everything.
> JERRY [*laughs*]. Imbecile! You're slow-witted!
> PETER. Stop that!
> JERRY. You're a vegetable! Go lie down on the ground. (*Zoo* 180)

Jerry knows that this bench is important for Peter since he has "hours of great pleasure, great satisfaction, right here" (*Zoo* 182). That is why he provokes Peter through usurpation. After a long argument which revolves around whose bench it is,

Jerry exerts physical violence on Peter by slapping him. He forces Peter into a duel for the bench, attacking his identity and masculinity: "You fight, you miserable bastard; fight for that bench…fight for your manhood, you pathetic little vegetable [*Spits on Peter's face*] You couldn't even get your wife with a male child" (*Zoo* 183). As in Pinter's plays, in *The Zoo Story*, the desire for territorial security is identical with maintaining personal autonomy and self-respect. Jerry tries to reveal the savage in Peter in order to prove his idea that all humans are territorial animals which cling to their isolated spaces which mean certainty for them.

Jerry takes out an ugly-looking knife and tosses it at Peter's feet. Infuriated and threatened, Peter picks up the knife for self-preservation against the raving lunatic who threatens him. Jerry traps Peter in a situation where he cannot get away as he is forced to exert his will and power. For the conclusion of the play, Albee depicts a shocking and violent scene. Jerry impales himself on the knife at the end of Peter's still firm arm and falls on the ground. Jerry suggests that he has planned all this just to end his life in an unforgettable way. Without this violent action, Jerry's existence will remain insignificant and unrecognized. Jerry confesses his desire for attention: "And now I'll tell you what happened at the zoo. I think …I think this is what happened at the zoo . . . And now you know what you'll see in your TV" (*Zoo* 184). He anticipates that his death, consequently his story, will take the attention of media, and it will be historicized.

The final image of Jerry's brutal death and his scream are likened to "the sound of an infuriated and fatally wounded animal" (*Zoo* 183). As Jerry reveals the savage in him, he appreciates Peter's confrontation too: "It is alright, you're an animal. You're an animal, too." (*Zoo* 184). As long as there is confrontation, Jerry does not care the means to the end. He wants the dog and Peter to understand his motives; however, both the dog and Peter act not with empathy but with the desire to protect their territory.

It can be claimed that Jerry has awakened from the ordinary trance of life; he has the consciousness of man's inescapable mortality and the deadening isolation. "Because life is lonely and death inevitable, Jerry seeks to master them in a single deed of ambiguous suicide-murder" (Cohn 10). Seen from this perspective, Jerry

may be defined as an authentic character since he has overcome the anxiety of death "in which our ontic self-affirmation is threatened by non-being" (Bugental 294). He has made a free choice to end his life and his agitation. However, he has betrayed his own existence in the sense that he has abandoned his responsibility and opportunity to create himself. As one of the requirements of authentic existence, even in the face of contingency of life, human beings are expected to assert their freedom by passionate commitment to life which determines the actual meaning of life. "The legitimate existentialist view holds that life may be meaningful … only if one is willing to engage in action where everything is at stake and without any guarantee either of outcome or of any essential rightness" (Barnes 195). Jerry cannot recover from the sense of helplessness and powerlessness and he is overtaken by the urge to put an end to his agitation through death. Additionally, while Jerry is asserting his choice, he is suppressing Peter's freedom to choose. He forces the action of murder-suicide on a stranger. No matter how noble Jerry's ontological goals are, Peter involuntarily gets involved in violence. As Paolucci puts forward "what is significant is the heightening of frustration to an insupportable burden which [Peter] can never share with anyone" (43). He will be isolated and alone more than ever because he has to carry the burden of what he witnessed and he will be haunted by this experience in the rest of his life. His already unstable sense of security and existence is disturbed by the intrusion of Jerry. Peter leaves in horror with a lack of understanding of Jerry's motives and the reasons for his death. As a result, Jerry fails again to achieve a genuine contact.

2.2.2. *A Delicate Balance*

In *A Delicate Balance*, through the dynamics of a family and friendship, Albee dramatizes how human beings choose not to confront the illusions governing their world to ignore the fact that they are wholly responsible for their lives. Moreover, Albee explores the characters' lack of rootedness and their demand for their right to belong. As McCarthy suggests, "at crucial moments such rights are transformed into primitive violent demands" (92). The characters in the play engage in a psychological battle, and in some occasions language is consciously manipulated by them in an attempt to gain dominance, assert their needs, or to conceal fearful

realities.

A Delicate Balance depicts the characters' struggle to protect the domestic order in the household against inner and outer threats which may leave them defenseless in the face of nothingness. The mistress of the house, Agnes takes on the duty of balancing between their susceptibility to terrors of existence and the need to conceal their emotional and spiritual aridity. Agnes seems to be holding the reins in the family; she exerts control and pressure over her husband Tobias, who has passively disposed his authority, her sister Claire, who uses alcohol in order to numb herself, and her daughter Julia, who is unable to sustain a functional marriage. The household is portrayed as the personification of hostility and devastation that the universe imposes upon man. The play opens with Agnes and Tobias having drinks in their upper-middle class home. "The false air of the superficial harmony between this husband and wife who practice concealment of emotion are close to disruption at the moment the curtain rises" (Stenz 73). Agnes states the possibility of losing her mind in a soft voice "with a tiny hint of smile on her face" (*Delicate* 21). Disturbing subject matters are revealed in a curious state of peace just like the fact that the aggressiveness innate in their relationship is hidden behind their civilized manners. Agnes mentions that she is overwhelmed by the burdens in her life, the most important of which is Tobias's defense of Claire's alcoholism:

> AGNES. If I were to list the mountain of my burdens- if I had a thick pad and a month to spare- that bending my shoulders most, with the possible exception of Julia's trouble with marriage, would be your-it must be instinctive, I think or reflex, that's more like it- your reflex defense of everything that Claire…
> TOBIAS (*Very nice, but there is steel underneath*). Stop it, Agnes.
> AGNES (*A little laugh*). Are you going to throw something at me? Your glass? My goodness, I hope not…that awful anisette all over everything.
> TOBIAS (*Patient)*. No.
> AGNES (*Quietly daring him*). What then?
> TOBIAS *(Looking at his hand*). I shall sit very quietly…
> AGNES. ….as always…. (*Delicate* 21-22)

In this scene, Agnes's anger is directed both at Claire's irresponsible and ineffectual life and Tobias's irritating inability to discipline Claire. She uses language as a means of manipulation in the sense that she neutralizes the possibility of Tobias's

outbursts of rage. She resorts to reverse psychology in order to keep Tobias inert no matter how critical her remarks are. In contrast to *The Zoo Story*, *A Delicate Balance* does not offer overt scenes of violence, but violence is confined to suggestions of breaking objects or the characters' sarcastic and ironic remarks.

Claire and Agnes are represented as two opposing characters that constantly attack each other. They are in conflict; Agnes is preoccupied with preserving family dignity, whereas Claire embarrasses the family with her drunken escapades. For Agnes, Claire is a troublemaker and hanger-on whose main aim is to upset the balance that she desperately tries to maintain. The hostility resides in their malicious remarks; each of them fancies the other's death. Claire suggests Tobias kill Agnes: "Why don't you kill Agnes?" (*Delicate* 26). She yearns for her sister's death, which is supposed to put an end to her miseries. Later, she wants Tobias to kill all the family members including herself which would be an "act of passion" (*Delicate* 27). Claire fancies her own death, which designates her failure in life and the reasons for her escape into intoxication. For Claire, the house is a tormented one and destructiveness may provide her with a kind of relief from her pain, anguish and powerlessness. "Destructiveness is the outcome of unlived life. Those individual and social conditions that make for suppression of life produce the passion for destruction that forms … the reservoir from which the particular hostile tendencies – either against others or against oneself –are nourished" (Fromm, *Freedom* 158). Additionally, Claire admits to Tobias: "Unless you kill Agnes…how will I ever know whether I want to live?" (*Delicate* 27). She is thwarting life by descending into alcoholism; she is claiming that "her excuse for not living is Agnes" (Stenz 81). However, she "cannot wholly rid herself of a sense of guilt at her personal failure" (Nilsen 152). She is overcome by self-rejection and feeling of being condemned to a sterile life; thus, she holds Agnes responsible for her own misery and bitterness. Claire's hatred for Agnes goes back to their adolescence, which can be inferred from the following dialogue:

> CLAIRE (*A twang in her voice*). Maw used to say . . . 'when you go out into the world, get dumped outa the nest, or pushed by your sister…'
> AGNES (*Steady, but burning*). Lies (*Eyes slits*) She kept you, allowed you…tolerated! Put up with your filth, your… 'emancipated womanhood.'

(*Delicate* 69-70)

Both Agnes and Claire put the blame of their insecurities on each other. Claire claims that Agnes disposes her of the nest and renders her isolated and insecure. In response to this, Agnes, who is obsessively preoccupied with social graces and whose sense of security is dependent on order, argues that Claire is a disgrace to the family.

Agnes's self-imposed steadiness is threatened by Claire, who encourages Tobias to cooperate with her to overbalance and tempt her sister:

> Warn me when she's coming; I'll act drunk. Pretend you're very sick, Tobias, like you were with the stomach business, but pretend you feel your insides are all green … you can hardly walk and you hate. You hate with the same green stinking sickness you feel your bowels have turned into…yourself, and *everybody*. (*Delicate* 31)

Claire is presented as an anarchist who defies the authority and order that Agnes inflicts. She wants to eliminate false steadiness and orderliness since she feels that the world is threatening, disorganized and sickening. She is the one who has realized that the superficial harmony and the ground rules that Agnes exerts are "too…settled" and "too…dried up" (*Delicate* 36). In that sense, Claire reminds *The Zoo Story*'s protagonist, Jerry, who, through his portrayal of the chaotic world, tries to demolish the delicate shelter that Peter builds for himself. Both Jerry and Claire show acts of aggression in order to take the others' attention to the threatening and deranged reality that encloses one. Claire "spares no one in her flashes of insight-not even herself" (Paouluci 111). Although she has an authentic awareness of the existential anxiety, she responds to it by exerting bitter and critical sides of her. Aggressiveness and destructiveness provide her with a sense of detachment from and superiority over the others who are confused and sullen in the face of emptiness.

Claire claims that she is not an alcoholic but "merely willful" (*Delicate* 34), which denotes that she indulges in self-destructiveness. She wants to be overcome by the effects of alcohol and pain, which is severely opposed by Agnes:

> AGNES. … I WILL NOT TOLERATE IT! I WILL NOT HAVE YOU! (*Softer but tight-lipped*) Oh, God. I wouldn't mind for a moment if you filled your bathtub with it, lowered yourself in it, DROWNED! I rather wish you would. It would give me the peace of mind to know you could do something well, thoroughly. If you want to kill yourself –then do it *right*!

. . .
CLAIRE. … I am not a alcoholic!
…
AGNES. . . . If we change for the worse with drink, we are an alcoholic. It is as simple as that
CLAIRE. And who is to say?
AGNES. I! (*Delicate* 34-35)

Agnes, who has mastered self-control and control of others, cannot stand the fact that people eliminate the burden of life by losing themselves. She is the one who dictates the ground rules and maintains the order which "relies on the members of the family enacting their roles and nobody destroying the delicate balance of forces" (Bigsby, *Critical* 295). She reduces Claire's choice to drink to mere alcoholism and declares her sister's role in the family as an alcoholic. However, Agnes does not oppose the idea of suicide; in fact, she is fascinated with the eternal peace it might bring. She confesses to Tobias: "There are times when I think it would be so ….proper, if one could take a pill-or even inject-just…remove . . . I'm concerned with peace …not mere relief" (*Delicate* 23). Agnes is longing for death which can save her from the responsibilities of being " a wife, a mother; a lover; a homemaker; a nurse; a hostess; an agitator; a pacifier; a truth-teller; a deceiver" (*Delicate* 51).

Agnes and Claire use each other as a target of attack and outlet through which they protect themselves from their own weaknesses. Despite their antagonism, they need each other in order to prove their existence and have a sense of certainty in their lives. Agnes acts as a catharsis for Claire to discharge her resentment with sorrowful life and feeling of insecurity and separateness. Although Claire claims that she is staying with her sister on their father's dying wish, it is apparent that she is highly dependent on Agnes as she is unable to stand alone and express her individual potentials. "This dependence … not only gives a certain amount of security but also results in a feeling of weakness and bondage. As far as this is the case, the very person who is dependent … feels enslaved ... and, to a greater or lesser degree, [a] rebel" (Fromm, *Freedom* 151). Claire is aggressive towards her sister because she believes that Agnes restricts her potentials, which are, in fact, denied by Claire herself. Additionally, with the conflict she creates at home, Claire sustains her identity as the agitator and trouble-maker. Similarly, Agnes depends on Claire in

order to feel good about her steady, though superficial, existence and identity as the manager of the house. Albee claims: "Claire is what [Agnes] plays up. She emphasizes what she has become" (qtd. in Gussow 262). Claire is the audience to whom Agnes can display her controlling and domineering nature, and she affirms her stability through Claire's derangement.

Agnes is quite defensive against the criticism directed to her compulsive nature; she makes excuses by arguing that it is not brutality in her but the "souring side of love" that makes her controlling. In fact, she tries to rationalize her domineering attitude toward people and life through "reaction formations of over-goodness or over-concern for others" (Fromm, *Freedom* 124). She tries to justify her authoritative and callous reactions to other people: "If you are expecting it, if you are sadly and wearily expecting it, it does … If I scold, it is because I wish I needn't" (*Delicate* 25). Agnes is placing the responsibility for her sharpness on others who are forcing her to be like that. She gains self-affirmation through others' weaknesses and passivity; she refers to other members of the family as "injured" (*Delicate* 26). Nevertheless, Agnes is one of the crippled character; she just aggressively refuses being one by claiming her superiority and control. When Julia blames her for being just like a "drill sergeant", she defends herself:

> JULIA. No, more like a drill sergeant! *You* will do this, *you* will not say that.
> AGNES. "To keep in shape." Have you heard the expression? Most people misunderstand it, assume it means alteration, when it does not. Maintenance. When we keep something in shape, we maintain its shape-whether we are proud of that shape, or not, is another matter we keep *it* from falling apart. We do not attempt the impossible. We maintain. We hold. (*Delicate* 66)

Agnes avoids confronting her fears, the most significant of which is the chaos created by existential self-awareness. She describes herself as a steady wife; she wants the entire household to be as steady as she is even though this steadiness is not necessarily authentic, but rather superficial and limited. Thus, like the other characters, Agnes resists change, which might disturb the balance that helps her endure anxieties. She asserts: "There is a balance to be maintained, after all, the rest of you teeter, unconcerned, or uncaring assuming you're on level ground…by divine right, I gather, though that is hardly so" (*Delicate* 67). Agnes insists that her

aggressiveness derives from the others' abdication of responsibility and authority. However, she refuses to attempt the impossible and try to diminish the sense of alienation and inauthentic existence. She denies the reality of the fact that "experience of the harshness of the real is the only way by which a man can come to his own self. To play an active part in the world even though one aims at an impossible, an unattainable goal is the necessary precondition of one's own being" (Bigsby, *Critical* 276). Thus, her efforts are only to maintaining status quo; she refrains from being potent about eliminating the problems and threats, which is revealed when her fortress is penetrated from without.

The delicate balance of the house is disturbed by the intrusion of reality with the arrival of their old friends Harry and Edna. The visitors come to their house uninvited and ask to be taken in as they are shaken by their sudden perception of "terror" or contingency of their own existence. Harry and Edna flee from the existential emptiness and loss of meaning. The dawning recognition creates in them an urge to be protected from their anxieties. They have difficulty in describing the source of their anxiety as existential anxiety does not take any particular object:

> HARRY (*Looks at EDNA*). I…I don't know quite what happened then; we….we were…it was all very quiet, and we were all alone…
> . . .
> EDNA (*Open weeping; loud*). WE GOT….FRIGTENED.
> (*Open sobbing; no one moves*)
> HARRY (*Quiet wonder, confusion*). We got scared.
> . . .
> EDNA. We…were…terrified
> HARRY. We were scared
> (*Silence. AGNES comforting EDNA. HARRY stock still. Quite innocent, almost childlike*)
> It was like being lost: very young again, with the dark, and lost. There was no…thing…to be …frightened of, but…
> EDNA (*Tears, quiet hysteria*). WE WERE FRIGTENED…AND THERE WAS NOTHING. (*Delicate* 46)

Harry and Edna cannot explain the source of their terror, which also indicates the failure of language. Language is in fact not for meaningful expression but for concealing existential pain and fear behind superficial remarks. Since language has been used as a protective device for a long time, when the characters need it most for

self expression they find themselves trapped in it.

What Harry and Edna feel is the "Angst" or the dread of nothingness which is explained by Heidegger as: "The nothing with which anxiety brings us face to face, unveils nullity by which Dasein, in its very basis, is defined, and this basis itself is as thrownness into death" (356). In this fear, man realizes that he is without any support or predetermined goal; he is confronted with his finiteness or aimlessness in a contingent universe. Closely paralleling Pinter, Albee introduces threat as an abstraction, which is underlined by Claire:

> CLAIRE (*A small, sad chuckle*). I was wondering when it would begin…when it would start.
> TOBIAS (*Hearing her pmly after a moment*). Start? (*Louder*) START? (*Pause*) WHAT?!"
> CLAIRE (*Raises her glass to him*). Don't you know yet? (*Small chuckle*) You will. (*Delicate* 48)

Claire remains calm and takes a humorous attitude in the face of imminent threat, which aims to sever genuine communication and ridicule the importance of anxiety-arousing events. This attitude "suggests a degree of detachment from experience which is the essence of [the characters'] problem" (Bigsby, *Critical* 299).

The first reaction of Agnes to the arrival of Harry and Edna, who brought terror, is disturbance. She does not offer any consolation to them even though she notices their distress. "The play centers on the implications of the discovery of the void, the nothing at the heart of human experience, and assumes that human love is the only encounter to the existential terror that nothing causes, while presenting examples of the failure of that potentially healing love" (Clum 66). Harry and Edna want to be taken in claiming: "…We couldn't go anywhere else, so we came here" (*Delicate* 47). Their demand to be protected from insecurities violates the precariously balanced environment and detached routine of the household. Claire realizes that their visit is not a friendly and casual one, and she asks them: "Why did you come? . . . (*Eyes narrowing*) What happened, Harry?" (*Delicate* 44). She treats the visitors as intruders that need to be questioned, which is also a prevalent method in Pinter's drama where confrontation with the intruder follows a defensive interrogation. Agnes has the same attitude when she asks them: ". . . What do you

really…want?" (*Delicate* 81). She believes that Harry and Edna bring "the terror" that has deadly side effects on people who are not immune, in other words people who have not confronted with the emptiness and purposelessness of existence. She describes Harry and Edna as a disease:

> Let me tell you about the disease…mortal illness; you either are immune to it…or you fight it. If you are immune, you wade right in, you treat the patient until he either lives, or dies of it. But if you are not immune, you risk infection …It is not Edna and Harry who have come to us-our friends-it is a disease. (*Delicate* 109)

Agnes wants to get rid of the disease that may cause the erosion of an established balance and existence. In that sense, she affirms what Claire states about the family and modern society earlier: "We're not a communal nation, dear; giving, but not sharing, outgoing, but not friendly" (*Delicate* 74). She is unable to show compassion to others, which shows her "inability to transcend the artificiality of order and superficiality of love" (Saraswathi 86). She does not want Harry and Edna's burdens and fears in the house that "has not the emotional or moral resources to withstand the demands" (McCarthy 80). Thus, she attacks their vulnerable spots and anguish by stating: "I forgot that you're …very frightened people"; Edna protests: "DON'T YOU MAKE FUN OF US!" (*Delicate* 82). As she does with the other members of the family, Agnes discloses their weakness in order to gain self-assurance. Agnes fits Fromm's description of a "hoarding character [whose] orderliness is sterile and rigid" and "who experiences himself like a beleaguered fortress. He must prevent anything going out and save what is inside the fortress." (*Destructiveness* 293). According to Fromm's description, in a hoarding character's relationship with others intimacy is a threat; remoteness or possession of a person means security since relating oneself by love and productivity is an impossibilty (*Destructiveness* 294). Agnes is motivated to discharge her energy and to control her surroundings in order to assure her strength and security.

Julia is another character who exerts aggressive demands to establish a foothold in the house. She returns home after her forth marital failure in order to take refuge in the shelter provided by her parents. She seeks for consolation and detachment from her misery and failure; whereas, she receives accusation and

inhospitality. Tobias claims that she expects "to come back here, nestle in to being fifteen …" (*Delicate* 55). Julia violently refuses her dependency:

> JULIA (*Rage*). I DON'T ASK TO COME BACK HERE!
> TOBIAS. YOU BELONG HERE! … Well. Now that I've taken out on my only daughter the …disgust of my declining years, I'll mix a very good and strong martini. Join me? (*Delicate* 55)

Both Tobias and Julia project their self-hatred caused by failures and powerlessness on each other to get rid of their sense of weariness with life. Additionally, Julia shifts the responsibility for her broken marriages to her parents who pushed her on whatever man they "thought would hold the fief together best" with the idea that "[l]ove will come after" (*Delicate* 57). In fact, Julia has the best example of a dysfunctional marriage and family right in front of her eyes. As Agnes reveals, Julia's sense of insecurity dates back to the birth of their second child:

> Teddy's birth, and how she felt unwanted, tricked; his death, and was she more relieved than lost…? All the schools we sent her to, and did she fail in them through hate …or love? And when we come to marriage, dear: each one of them, the fear, the happiness, the sex, the stopping, the infidelities… (*Delicate* 85)

The presence of another child deprived Julia of care and fulcrum of her parents, which underpins her obsession with her rightful place in the house. Agnes also refers to Tobias's emotional and physical withdrawal from the marriage after Teddy's death, and she claims that the emotional disarray in their marriage is repeated in Julia's endeavors: "We see ourselves repeated by those we bring into it all, either by mirror or reflection, honor or fault" (*Delicate* 68). In that sense, "the terror, in fact is not an external event, no surprise. It already exists in Tobias's household in a variety of guises" (McCarthy 107). It lurks in the fear of abandonment or in emotional and spiritual disconnectedness that renders them helpless. Albee suggests: "The theory is that your only true home is your childhood home, and the rest is game playing. The homes that we make for ourselves are basically an imitation of the homes that we grew up" (qtd. in Gussow 256). Julia cannot find any other place to ease the pain, and her childhood home is unable to provide any emotional sustenance.

When she arrives, she finds to her anger that her childhood room is occupied with Harry and Edna who are also in need of a refuge. Like a whimpering child, she

insists on getting her room back and she regards her parents' friends as intruders to her personal space:

> TOBIAS (*Frustration and rage*). HARRY AND EDNA ARE OUR FRIENDS!!
> JULIA (*Equal*). THEY ARE INTRUDERS!! (*Delicate* 108)

Julia is declaring her rights over her possessions and identity which are threatened by the uninvited guests. According to Claire, "she is laying claim to the cave" where there is not anything but primitive acts of aggression and territorial protection (*Delicate* 74). Julia feels rejected and removed from her only shelter that endows her with comfort and warmth. She claims that she will fight for her place in the house to death. Harry and Edna are not willing to give up the secure place. Julia protests against their intrusion and shouts: "YOU ARE A GUEST IN THIS HOUSE!"(*Delicate* 76). While Julia questions their position and rights in the house claiming "You have no rights here" (*Delicate* 76), Edna defends their right to stay as Agnes and Tobias's best friends and Julia's godparents. Edna and Julia engage in a psychological battle regarding the room:

> EDNA (*Calm*). You may lie down in *our* room, if you prefer.
> JULIA (*A trapped woman, surrounded*). *Your* room! (*To AGNES*) *Your* room? MINE! (*Looks from one to another, sees only waiting faces*) MINE!! (*Delicate* 79)

Julia becomes more hysterical as no one in the family backs her up in her struggle or is concerned with her needs. She asks for her parent's help like a scared child: "MOTHER! FATHER! HELP ME!" (*Delicate* 78). Agnes, who desires for the eviction of Harry and Edna as well, tempts Julia to take more serious steps to deactivate the intruders: "Well, why don't you run upstairs and claim your goddamn room back! Barricade yourself in there! Push a bureau in front of the door! Take Tobias's pistol while you're at it! Arm yourself!" (*Delicate* 69). Agnes retreats from taking action; whereas, she manipulates and provokes Julia into taking the responsibility of dismissing the threat by putting odd ideas into her head.

Since the others are unwilling to help and understand her, Julia practices Agnes's violent suggestion to take her room back. She returns with Tobias's pistol, threatens and frightens Harry and Edna:

JULIA (*To* HARRY *and* EDNA; *venom*). Are you going?
. . .
ARE YOU!?
EDNA (*Finally; curiously unconcerned*). Going? No, we are not going.
HARRY. No.
. . .
EDNA (*Becoming* AGNES). You return to your nest from you latest disaster, dispossessed, and suddenly dispossessing; screaming the house down, clawing at order…
JULIA. STOP HER!
EDNA. …willful, wicked, wretched girl….
JULIA. You are not my….YOU HAVE NO RIGHTS!
EDNA. We have rights here. We belong. (*Delicate* 88)

The need to belong somewhere is the reason for the characters' aggressive struggle against each other's presence. Julia attempts to take revenge on the usurpers as Jerry does with the dog in *The Zoo Story* to regain his free passage. She is counterattacked with Edna's slap and accusations that she is not willing to confront her weaknesses and failures in life. Julia demands protection because she believes that she is entitled with the privilege of being protected and looked after. Her hostility stems from her sense of insecurity which is the result of being displaced and dispossessed; she has a desperate need for order and affection. However, Julia's last attempt to dominate the intruders is unsuccessful since they are not moved by her tantrums and threats.

Julia is right when she argues that Harry and Edna "have come in and *ordered!*"(*Delicate* 107). They simply demand security and care in an assertive manner, which is apparent in Edna's following statements: "Friendship *is* something like a marriage, is it not, Tobias? For better and for worse? … We *haven't* come to the wrong place, *have* we?" (*Delicate* 90). They proclaim their position in the house without consulting their hosts. They justify their intrusion with the affirmation that their friendship entitles them with those rights. "The presence of the intruders provokes an increasing instability in the house, as they assume dominance over the familiar situation" (Saraswathi 88). Imposing their demands on the family and interfering with the family issues, they subvert the established hierarchy. Harry takes the role of Tobias by serving drinks. Agnes asks: "Will you make me a drink, Harry, since you're being Tobias?" (*Delicate* 81).Similarly, Edna, like Agnes, tries to manipulate the others by defining *friendship* and expecting their approval. In fact, the

arrival of Julia, Harry and Edna causes the collapse of the balance. They all demand love, affection and protection since they want to evade the excruciating emptiness and threats that reside in their own houses. As a result they give inauthentic responses as they are blind to the fact that feeling of security and of being rooted somewhere can only be achieved through recognizing their own responsibility for their lives.

Agnes realizes that the stability in the house is shattered due to the exchange of pre-established roles and struggles for possession and power. She declares herself to be the "fulcrum" of the family, whereas Harry and Edna intimidate her position by asserting their demands. Agnes believes that the order has to be restored again as soon as possible; however, she does not want to take the huge responsibility of making the decision. That is why she chooses to manipulate Tobias into dealing with the disintegrative presence of Harry and Edna. Agnes claims that she is not the decision maker of the house and she has complied with Tobias's very important decisions such as not having another child or leaving her alone in miseries:

> AGNES (*Remorseless*). When Teddy died? (*Pause*) We could have had another son; we could have tried. But no…those months-or was it a year-?
> TOBIAS. No more of this!
> AGNES. …I think it was a year, when you spilled yourself on my belly, sir? "Please? Please, Tobias?" No, you wouldn't even say it out: I don't want another child, another loss. "Please? Please, Tobias?" And guiding you, trying to hold you in?
> TOBIAS (*Tortured*). Oh, Agnes! Please!
> . . .
> AGNES. The theory being pat: that a half of a loaf is worse than none. That you are racked with guilt-stupidly!-and I must suffer for it.
> TOBIAS. Yes?
> AGNES (*Quietly; sadly*). Well, it was your decision, was it not?
> TOBIAS. Yes. (*Delicate* 101-2)

Agnes tortures Tobias with her remorseless remarks and intensifies his sense of guilt which stems from his years of avoidance. When Tobias claims that she is the one who really rules the game, Agnes answers: "That is an *illusion* you have" (*Delicate* 100). However, it is important to note that Agnes has let her life be a cipher and settled for the sterile conditions in which there are not any physical or emotional bonds with her husband. Although Agnes claims that she is ready to comply with

whatever Tobias decides, she manipulates him by presenting the dreadful consequences of admission of the terror:

> Are we immune to it? The plague, my darling, the terror sitting in the room upstairs? … (*Shrugs*) well, why not be infected, why not die of it? We're bound to die of something…soon, or in a while. Or shall we burn them out, rid ourselves of it all…and wait for the next invasion. You decide, my darling. (*Delicate* 110)

Agnes insinuates by suggesting that eviction of their friends is necessary in order to survive and sustain the quiet routine that Tobias yearns for. Eventually, Tobias, who is burdened with the guilt of withdrawal, attempts to take the responsibility of deciding whether self-protection or the sacred requirements of love are more important. Since his authority is not self-inflicted but imposed by Agnes, Tobias is unsure about which path to take.

Tobias is a character who does not show outburst of anger or exert demands; most of the time he is apathetic, uninvolved and resigned. Claire and Julia describe him respectively as "predictable and stolid" (*Delicate* 37) and "ineffectual, noneminence, cipher" (*Delicate* 56). Tobias makes use of passivity to resist the aggressive demands of others; he defends himself against the threats through warding off and withdrawal. However, there are some suggestions of aggression that resides in him and underlies his insecurity. A remarkable example is his relationship with his former cat. Tobias tells Agnes and Claire that he realized his cat suddenly stopped liking him. He was shaken with the frightening awareness of the emotional paralysis in his life and his reaction was a combination of hatred, resentment and wistfulness. He expresses his feelings as: "She and I had lived together and been, well, you know, friends, and….there was no *reason*. And I hated her for that. I hated her, well, I suppose because I was being accused of something, of …failing . . . I resented having a …being judged. Being betrayed" (*Delicate* 39). Tobias was bereft of love and friendship that had provided him with a sense of belonging. Burst with anger, he smacked the cat, demanded her to love him and finally had her put into sleep. He could not stand the fact that he might be responsible for the situation; so, he chose a violent act to remove the cat.

There is a striking parallelism between Tobias's cat story and Jerry's dog story. Like Jerry, Tobias exerted violence on an animal since he wanted to dispel the fear of loss of love and threats to his self-affirmation. Quoting Agnes, Tobias notes: "If we do not love someone…never have loved someone…" (*Delicate* 40); Claire comments on it as: "…Oh, stop it! 'Love' is not the problem. You love Agnes and Agnes loves Julia and Julia loves me and I love you. We all love each other; yes we do . . . Yes; to the depths of our self-pity and our greed. What else but love?" (*Delicate* 40). She displays the unreciprocal and illusory nature of their love which is motivated not with emotional and moral bonds but with self-interest. Both the cat and Tobias are unable to sustain mutual love in their relationship and they betray each other in different ways. Tobias regrets having the cat put into sleep and states: "I might have tried longer. I might have worn a hair shirt, locked myself in the house with her, done penance. For something. For what. God knows" (*Delicate* 40). Tobias is unable to make contact with another creature as he does not have a clear understanding of his own self. Albee acknowledges that the story is "sort of a metaphor for the whole play" (qtd. in Gussow 264). The story indicates the inability to show affection and get involved in another's life after years of evasion. The characters choose aggression rather than facing the emotional barrenness in their relationships. Agnes and Claire approve Tobias's violence inflicted on the cat: "You probably *did* the right thing. Distasteful alternatives; the less…*ugly* choice" (*Delicate* 40). The sustenance of death in life manner of living, even provided through violence, is always a better choice for them than confrontation and commitment.

With Harry and Edna's arrival, Tobias is compelled to a situation where he has to confront his inability to love and to acknowledge his capacity for betrayal, upon both of which his security depends. "Tobias's analysis of the cat's reversal of feelings is precise and devastating, for it applies transparently to his own behavior toward those who love him" (Paolucci 114). Tobias wants to act according to decorum and take the visitors in as an obligation of their forty year-friendship. On the other hand, he recognizes that there is not love and compassion to support their commonality. He feels he has betrayed his friends like his cat betrayed him in the

past. Tobias reflects his resentment through outbursts in "*all the horror and exuberance of a man who has kept his emotions under control for too long*" (*Delicate* 114). Albee describes Tobias's hysterical speech as "*bravura*" in the stage directions (*Delicate* 114). Tobias wants to discharge his resentment and anger with himself for having the poverty of love, and he states: "The fact that I like you well enough, but not enough …that best friend in the world should be something else-more-well, that's my poverty" (*Delicate* 116). The terror which is brought by Harry and Edna afflicts Tobias in the sense that he recognizes the erosion of love and companionship in his heart which is the consequence of his withdrawal from life. Awareness of an empty friendship leads him to an awareness of emptiness in family relationships, and, by extension, existential emptiness: "[I]f…if that's all Harry and Edna mean to us, then…then what about us? When we talk to each other…what have we meant? Anything? … Then it's …all been empty" (*Delicate* 109). Tobias refers to the illusion of language and human contact, which is prevalent in Albee's theatre. Like he did with the cat, "Tobias felt love as a demand- a want" and he responds in a demanding manner in order not to be overwhelmed by the sense of alienation and to dismiss the emptiness (McCarthy 93). Tobias tells Harry that they have the right to stay:

> AND BY GOD YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE IT!
> DO YOU HEAR ME?
> YOU BRING YOUR TERROR AND YOU COME IN HERE AND YOU LIVE WITH US! YOU BRING YOUR PLAUGE! YOU STAY WITH US! I DON'T WANT YOU HERE! I DON'T LOVE YOU! BUT BY GOD…YOU STAY!! (*Delicate* 116-7)

As he forced the cat to love him, he demands Harry and Edna to stay. With his hysterical demand on them he lashes out in frustration and projects his disgust with himself and panic deriving from the awareness of his detrimental isolation, loss of contact and the impossibility of creating a true and meaningful relationship which requires action and risk taking.

In conclusion, the existential dread of nothingness which drives Harry and Edna to Tobias and Agnes's house reveals the undisclosed terrors that lurk inside the house. Agnes guards herself against the terror of instability and chaos; Julia is

terrified with the terror of abandonment in a threatening world; Claire "teeters on the brink of destruction, unable to tear herself away" (Paolucci 108); Tobias is shattered by the terror of emotional void in his life. The characters' "lives are focused to a point which, most typically, Albee sees in the image of a fulcrum. They're in a state of precarious balance. They are caught at a dubious apogee from which they can … discharge their energy in a serious attempt to deal with the fear of decline" (Bigsby, *Critical* 296). All the characters try to evade the overwhelming existential anxieties and terrors by asserting themselves, demanding recognition and acceptance and controlling their sterile environment, which denotes the failure of individual commitment, spontaneity and responsibility. As in many Pinter plays, threats to the characters' assumed positions and identity and the character's fierce responses to preserve their sense of security and ordinary existence cannot be ignored.

CHAPTER 3

3. 1. PASSIVE FORMS OF INAUTHENTIC RESPONSES IN PINTER'S PLAYS

Ambiguity pervades Pinter's plays. "[T]he world seems capricious or malevolent. One can rely upon nothing. What is apparently secure is not secure" (Dukore 27). Pinter's characters are represented as trapped in small shelters, feeling apprehensive and fearing a possible intrusion of the unknown from the outside which may dominate them. The fear of possible but unspecified menace puts them in an insecure state, and they retreat into their seemingly secure territory. The places in which they take refuge stand for certainty for them since there they are not forced to confront the displeasures and challenges of life, that is, the overwhelming existential anxiety. Any kind of evasiveness in Pinter's characters can be considered as a means of self-protection, for they are afraid to reveal themselves, which might render them as victims of their absurd condition. In order to avoid the suffering caused by loss of connection and isolation, they tend to annihilate any act of communication or connection with others. Pinter says: "Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone's life is too frightening. To disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility" (qtd. in Almansi 73). The characters refuse to communicate, and they hide themselves in their concealed lives in order to reduce the source of anxiety to the minimum. As Pinter writes of his characters, they are "inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling"(qtd. in Scott 13). They choose to evade issues, and they are unwilling to confront their anxieties. Instead of a genuine confrontation and embrace of life as it is, they avoid their responsibilities, deny reality and find their peace of mind in self-delusions.

3.1.1. The Birthday Party

In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley, who discards his reponsibility for himself and others, withdraws from the outside world into a safe shelter offered by Meg and

Petey, who are willing to take care of him. He has been living in that boarding house for one year, doing nothing and sleeping as long as he likes. He is pictured as bedraggled, lethargic, and childlike. He receives nurturing and care from his mother-substitute, Meg. He is contemptuos of her and whimsey like a child. However, at the same time he is totally dependent on her. As Pinter acknowledges, Stanley "has lost any adult comprehension and reverts to a childhood malice and mischief" (qtd. in Nailsmith 52-53), which is obvious in his ambivalent love-hate feelings towards Meg. While calling her "old piece of rock cake" (*Birthday* 17), he cannot help admitting his need for her: " I don't know what I'd do without you" (*Birthday* 12).

Apparently, dissappointed in the past, Stanley chooses not to get involved in life and to protect himself from the evils of the world such as uncertainty, meaninglessness, overwhelming responsibility and freedom. He remains lethargic and passive in the face of life which demands obedience to certain values and requires responsibilities, the most important of which is the responsibility of creating oneself. His state includes "apathy, lack of commitment, shallowness and evasion of any decisive and determined course of action" (Golomb 38). In this inauthentic mode of existence, his attention is withdrawn from external sources of distress. The reason behind his dissappointment in life and withdrawal is not distinctly revealed because in Pinter's plays, what is "revealed to the audience [is] not the character's motives or history, but only their current aims and fears" (Peacock 46). However, there are some implications of it in Stanley's complaint on the destruction of his career as a pianist due to some undefined authorities:

> They carved me up. Carved me up. It was all arranged, it was all worked out. My next concert. Somewhere else it was. In winter. I went down there to play. Then, when I got there, the hall was closed … (*Bitterly.*) All right Jack, I can take a tip. I'd like to know who was responsible for that … They wanted me to crawl down on my bended knees. (*Birthday* 17)

Stanley feels rejected and flees from that displeasing situation by withdrawing from the society that causes his alienation. Pinter's plays study the existential dilemma and anxiety of man who feels abandoned or thrown in an uncertain and sinister universe. In that sense, the anxiety Stanley experiences makes him escape from his sense of

self and reflective thoughts on his existence. "Always to have to choose freely and create one's own self is to be in a constant state of dread or anxiety, but to give up this quest means to be rid of one's self and to be in despair" (Golomb 56). The fear of rejection and abandonment causes Stanley's withdrawal and creates in him a lack of commitment to values and social roles. In that way, he tries to ensure that the pain of being rejected and loss of meaning can be avoided. His behavior can be regarded as anti-social as he refuses to engage in life or indulge in communication. When Meg suggests that Stanley go shopping with her, he refuses. When Lulu urges him to go outside for a walk, he again refuses. "Stanley refuses to communicate with strangers or to leave the perceived security of his … territory, and … resists attempt to draw [him] back into the wider social world" (Peacock 56). He reduces the anxiety and fear by hiding, constricting his awareness. However, "authenticity consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that involves" (Golomb 12).

Stanley tries to escape the insecurity although it resides in himself. He doesn't have a clear understanding of himself: "I want to ask you something...Tell me, Mrs. Boles, when you address yourself to me, do you ever ask yourself who exactly you are talking to?" (*Birthday* 15) To be able to assert his identity, he is dependent on other people, and he is aware that no matter where he goes, he will be haunted by his existential anxiety. That is the main reason why he remains inactive and lethargic. He believes that there is no salvation offered by an outside force and there is nowhere to go, no place to save him from this dread. His conversation with Lulu is a good example of his conviction:

> STANLEY(*abruptly*). How would you like to go away with me?
> LULU. Where.
> STANLEY. Nowhere. Still, we could go.
> LULU. But where could we go?
> STANLEY. Nowhere. There's nowhere to go. So we could just go. It wouldn't matter.
> LULU. We might as well stay here.
> STANLEY. No. It's no good here.
> LULU. Well, where else is there?
> STANLEY. Nowhere. (*Birthday* 20)

Stanley is incapable of doing anything to avoid his overwhelming anxiety and guilt since by escaping the world he is escaping himself. Esslin establishes a connection between Pinter's and Heidegger's ideas of man's authentic bounds with his existence and the universe: "Pinter, like Heidegger, takes as his starting point in man's confrontation with himself and the nature of his own being" (*Pinter* 27). If man cannot confront himself and the dread caused by the outside world, the outcome is the sense of despair and isolation as Stanley experiences. As Heidegger claims: " Authentic Being-one's-self does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it so that it becomes a free-floating 'I'" (344). Stanley has certain needs such as attachment to and connection with other human beings, or having an asserted identity and secure place in life. However, he deactivates these needs for comfort.

The arrival of the two intruders reminds Stanley that he is unsafe and without certainties in the universe once again. His main desire is to return to the womb in which man is not yet responsible for himself. "He is tempted by living according to his instincts, but man's dilemma is existential. If he acts upon his instincts, his deeds will terrify and haunt him, his only alternative is to attempt a constricting life out of the fear of what is inside" (Merritt 110). Stanley has chosen inauthentic ways of living; he feels guilty because of his choice. Goldberg and McCann's arrival is the external manifestation of his sense of guilt. "Stanley is guilty of being Stanley. His fears concern the world outside, which makes immeasurable demands on him (the individual) from the kinds of directions which he chooses not to fulfill" (Nailsmith 43). In dread and horror, he tries to justify his choice and disown his sense of guilt: "I like it here, but I'll be moving soon. Back home. I'll stay there too, this time. No place like home. (*He laughs*) I wouldn't have left, but business calls. Business called, and I had to leave for a bit" (*Birthday* 34). Moreover, he repeatedly claims that he has lived quietly and has not caused any trouble: "All those years I lived in Basingstoke I never stepped outside the door" (*Birthday* 36). Finally, he denies the inauthentic responses he shows by claiming: "I have a responsibility towards the people in this house. They've been down here too long. They've lost their sense of smell. I haven't" (*Birthday* 39). Although he tries to defend himself by pretending to be an insignificant part of the mass who abides by the norms of society, he fails at

deceiving Goldberg and McCann. Thus, he collapses under the weight of Goldberg and McCann's domination. At the end, he surrenders his freedom and identity to the intruders. Pinter asserts that "Stanley cannot perceive his only valid justification - which is he is what he is- therefore he certainly can never be articulate about it" (qtd. in Billington 77).

Inauthenticity suggests the denial of one's individuality, unique potentials and possibilities for oneself. When the weight of freedom in unbearable, man may prefer to deny his freedom of choice and see himself as a helpless object. He blindly accepts public standards and conventions. In other words, he becomes "anyone, which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness" (Heidegger 164). He is incapable of defining and expressing himself; he lets public standards define him, which eventually destroys his individuality and constricts his understanding of a genuine self.

Thus, conformity becomes a kind of self-preservation in the face of existential anxiety of isolation and loneliness. Man who becomes "aware of himself as an individual entity, different from nature and other people" feels powerless and regards his existence as unsignificant (Fromm, *Freedom* 17). He is terrified with his weakness in the face of a threatening universe. He needs the sense of communion and belonging to somewhere in order to avoid his powerlessness and insignificance. Additionally, he yearns for a direction and guideline offered from the outside in order to evade the burden of choice and uncertainty and to find protection. "These ties . . . let him recognize himself and others only through the medium of his, or their, participation in a clan, a social and religious community ,and not as human beings" (Fromm, *Freedom* 29). Even though man is deprived of his freedom, submission promises certainty which has been lost.

In *The Birthday Party*, Pinter explores man's inauthentic response in blind conformity through his two intruders, Goldberg and McCann, who are the representatives of an unspecified organization and whose goal is to oblige people to conform to the conventional society. They are not defined as autonomous individuals whose actions and values are entirely their own, but as *anyone* who is controlled by the manifestations of social conformity. "Goldberg and Mccann represent the

Judaeo-Christion tradition in Western civilisation that demands conformity towards family, state and church" (Nailsmith 41). Especially Goldberg is represented as an instrument in the hands of strong outside forces and his blind attachment to authorial orders is explored in the scene where McCann isn't sure whether it is the right house or not. Goldberg is so blindly adherent to the orders he receives that he states: "What makes you think it's the wrong house? ... I wasn't looking for a number" (*Birthday* 22). He is confident about his surroundings, and he complains about McCann's lack of trust in him:

> GOLDBERG. McCann, what are you so nervous about? Pull yourself together. Everywhere you go these days it's like a funeral.
> ...
> MCCANN. This job-no, listen- this job, is it going to be like anything we've ever done before? (*Birthday* 22-23)

Their comformity is also evident in their use of language which is full of "clichés, corporate jargon, gangster slang and social pieties" (Malkin 54). Their choice of words is not individual. During the cross-examination, they use stereotyped investigation questions and words borrowed from cliché jargon. They attack Stanley for betraying his wife, mother and origins; they accuse him of not being loyal to the country: "What were you doing yesterday?" (*Birthday* 41); "Why did you leave the organization?" (*Birthday* 42); "Why did you betray us?" (*Birthday* 42); "Where is your old mum?" (*Birthday* 43). Additionally, they blame him for being indifferent and insensitive to religious powers and rules:

> GOLDBERG. You stink of sin.
> MCCANN. I can smell it.
> ...
> GOLDBERG. Do you recognise an external force ,responsible for you, suffering for you?
> ...
> When did you last pray? (*Birthday* 44)

Goldberg and McCann's use of language does not reflect any individuality or spontaneity; they just adopt the ideas and values offered by cultural and religious patterns. They are simply repeating somebody else's authoritative opinions, and they are deluded that these opinions are their own. "All their actions are motivated by

authorial forces, and hence they are blind to the larger picture around them" (Prentice, *Pinter* 20). For example, Goldberg's motto in life is inherited from his father: "Do your duty and keep your observations. Always bid good morning to the neighbours. Never, never forget your family, for they are the rock, the constitution and the core" (*Birthday* 72). He does not feel the need to question what he has been told. According to him, since Stanley doesn't care for the values, morality, or conformist ideologies of the society, he is an anarchist. Goldberg claims: "We're right and you're wrong, Webber, all along the line"(*Birthday* 45). He uses language to push him into conformity and inject values, regulated norms and orderly behaviour. "The evocative power of jargon creates an image of the impersonal web that society weaves in order to snare the individual" (Malkin 60). As McCan states, they want to make a new man out of Stanley and seduce him with the conforming habits by promising him a new life:

> GOLDBERG. You'll be adjusted.
> MCCANN. You'll be our pride and joy.
> GOLDBERG. You'll be a mensch.
> MCCANN. You'll be a success.
> GOLDBERG. You'll be integrated.
> MCCANN. You'll give orders.
> GOLDBERG. You'll make decisions. (*Birthday* 77-78)

When Stanley appears "*in a dark well cut suit and while collar ... clean-shaven*" in the last act, it is clear that the intruders have been successful. (*Birthday* 75). "In the realm of inauthenticity everyone is the other, and no one is himself" (Heidegger 165). Ironically both Goldberg and McCann are badly affected by the nerve-breaking transformation of Stanley, which is apparent in McCann's rejection to go up to Stanley's room again or Goldberg's following statements: "I don't know why, but I feel knocked out. I feel a bit...It's uncommon for me" (*Birthday* 70). Nevertheless, Goldberg seems to be sticking to his motto: "Work hard and play hard" (*Birthday* 72); he confirms his own conformity and advises McCann an adherence to automaton conformity. He explains the benefits of stability and certainty:

> That's why I've reached my position, McCann. Because I've always been as fit as a fiddle. All my life I've said the same. Play up, play up, and play the

> game. Honour thy father and thy mother. All along the line. Follow the line, the line, McCann, and you can't go wrong. What do you think? I'm a self-made man? No! I sat where I was told to sit ... [F]ollow my line? Follow my mental? Learn by heart. (*Birthday* 71)

Goldberg stands for respectful ties with family and country and sumission to authority and tradition. However, he is unable to complete his final thoughts: "Because I believe that the world...(*Vacant*.)...Because I believe that the world....(*Desperate*.)....BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT THE WORLD....(*Lost*.) (*Birthday* 72). Goldberg and McCann persecute Stanley through conformity, but at the same time they are persecuted since they've lost their true identiy, individuality, and they show inauthentic response to the ontological core of their existencce.

Another type of passive inauthentic response is that the characters retreat into a nostalgic past which denotes security and stability. They can neither relate their thoughts to the present nor evaluate present incidents authentically. The fact that they are reminiscent of past is an indication of their inner insecurity and yearning for certainty. Their escape into their innocent childhood memories and glorifying moments of past suggests their inauthentic relationships with their present existence. According to Heidegger, man is a being towards future; he reflects on his future possibilities and potentials because he is constantly moving forward. "Steady elimination of the future by the slow revelation of old time" permeates Pinter's plays (Alexander 40). Heidegger adds that "past, future and present are equally open to us ... At times, one dimension dominates and becomes the one that engages and perhaps imprisons us" (61). Authentic man has a true understanding of what he was and what he resolves to be in the future, while inauthentic man "understands the past in terms of the present . . . when one's existence is inauthentically historical, it is loaded down with the legacy of a past which has become unrecognizable" (Heidegger 75). In order to free himself, man needs to transcend past and open a way to the future.

The Birthday Party displays "some vanished world ... into which all but one of the characters readily escapes" (Billington 82). An idealised and glorified past helps the characters assert their identity. For Stanley, the most glorious moment of his life is the concert he gave in Lower Edmonton. Through this memory, he can prove his existence as a man with high status, success and respect:

> I had a unique touch. Absolutely unique. The came up to me. They came up to me and said they were grateful. Champagne we had that night, the lot (*Pause.*) My father nearly came down to hear ne. Well, I dropped him a card anyway. But I don't think he could make it. No, I- I lost the adress, that was it. (*Pause.*) yes. (*Birthday* 16-17)

This speech indicates Stanley's desire for acceptance so that he can hold on to a secure place on earth. *"The Birthday Party* is the story of Stanley who bases his life on illusion, self-deception and pretension" (Deleon 36). There is nothing in the play to verify his story. As Pinter claims, "we are faced with the immense difficulty, if not the impossibility of verifying the past" (qtd. in Prentice, *Ethic* lxvii). Whether real or idealized, Stanley's story denotes his need for stability and certainty onto which he can base his existence.

The most reminiscent character is Goldberg. He is constantly referring to his past as the time of golden days. He constantly recalls his innocent childhood for comfort and safety: "'Simey!' my old mum used to shout, 'quick before it gets cold.' And there on the table what would I see? The nicest place of gefilte fish you could wish to find on a plate." (*Birthday* 37). While referring to his innocent days of childhood, Goldberg is evoking the idea that Stanley has retreated into a womb-like state in an attempt to turn away from a hostile world to days of innocence. "Pinter takes the issue of dispossession all the way back to the womb by exploring the nostalgia for the security of childhood"(Deleon 27). After the touching speech that Meg makes in honor of Stanley's birthday, Goldberg becomes reminiscent again, remembering the good old days when there were harmony, sincerity, and authentic relationships among people: "Until a few minutes ago, ladies and gentlemen, I, like all of you, was asking the same question. What's happened to the love, the bonhomie, the unashamed expression of affection of the day before yesterday, that our mums taught us in the nursery?" (*Birthday* 50). Goldberg's fantasy of returning to a unified pattern in the universe is expressed in his description of today's world as alienating and meaningless: "We all wander on our tod through this world. It's a lonely pillow to kip on" (*Birthday* 50).

During the birthday party, all the characters, except for deranged Stanley, resort to recollections of the past to gain comfort. One of the most interesting

nostalgic exchanges takes place between McCann and Meg. Meg retreats into a world of a happy family, whereas McCann "is enveloped in a Celtic mist that implies the male solidarity of an IRA gang" (Billington 82):

> MCCANN. I know a place. Roscrea. Mother Nolan's.
> MEG. There was a night-light in my room, where I was a little girl.
> MCCANN. One time I stayed therte all night with the boys. Singing and drinking all night.
> MEG. And my Nanny used to sit up with me, and sing songs to me.
> MCCANN. A plate of fry in the morning. *Now where am I*? (*Birthday* 54, emphasis added)

Through his rethorical question, McCann gives voice to all the characters' disappointment in life. Since they are dissappointed with their present conditions, they find refuge in an idealized, certain past. They ward off external reality by creating self-illusions in order to minimize their existential anxiety. As McCann expresses: "Oh the Garden of Eden has vanished they say. But I know the lie of it still" (*Birthday* 55). He refers to a lost paradise and past which has abandoned human beings in an hostile world and threatening state of existence. "Memory, for Pinter, is both personal and infectious" (Billington 82). McCann and Meg's memories also trigger Lulu's memories of her former lover; she remarks to Goldberg: "You are the dead image of the first man I ever loved" (*Birthday* 55).

After Stanley is taken away by the intruders, Meg, who misinterprets and misunderstands the events around her, is happily lost in idle thoughts: " It was a lovely party. I haven't laughed so much for years. We had dancing and singing. And games" (*Birthday* 81). Meg twists reality as there was no dancing at the party. She adds:

> MEG. I was the belle of the ball.
> . . .
> PETEY. I bet you were, too.
> MEG. Oh, it's true. I was.
> *Pause*
> I know I was. (*Birthday* 81)

Meg shows no sign of awareness of what has happened to Stanley. She is imprisoned in wishful thinking, which is encouraged by Petey. The ending shows "how far individuals are isolated, even when living in close proximity with others" (Nailsmith

55). In fact, they isolate themselves by escaping into the comforts and certainties of the past or, if it is assumed that their stories of the past are just fantasies, into illusory worlds in order not to confront the reality that surrounds them.

3.1.2. *The Caretaker*

In *The Caretaker*, Davies, Mick and Aston tend to distort reality and constrict their awareness of the self through lies and fantasies. They delude themselves and claim fake identities and self-confidence. They are deceptive and evasive since it is "necessary not only to misinform the *other* outside (survival being based on a policy of reciprocal misunderstanding) but also to misinform the *other* inside" (Almansi and Henderson 52). They retreat into various illusions, lie to themselves and pretend a past or invest future with fantasies in order to minimize the burden of alienation and bolster their self esteem.

Davies is the character who depends most on his fantasies and lies to cover up his low-self esteem and feel secure. He is unable to come to grips with his own identity. It is significant that after avoiding his true identity for years, he is incapable of giving any satisfactory answer to Aston's simple question about his birth place:

> 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. (*Caretaker* 23)

Davies's inability or refusal to respond suggests that either he wants "to hide the truth … or he no longer knows truth's truthful abode" (Almansi 71). His past is mysterious and vague. Nothing is certain about him. On the one hand he tries to avoid the menace accompanied with identity; on the other hand, he is haunted by his past which disappoints him. He creates an idealized past through which he can assert a respectable identity that may give him sense of security. To get Aston's respect, for example, he claims, "I've eaten dinner off the best plates. But I'm not young any more. I remember the days I was as handy as any of them. They didn't take liberties with me" (*Caretaker* 7). Like the characters in *The Birthday Party*, Davies retreats into a grander and worthier past, and he cannot or does not free himself from it. He

regards the universe and himself as a void; thus, he tries to fill that void with a satisfactory identity and past. Davies tells lies about his real name as well. He claims to Aston that he has been going around under an assumed name:

> DAVIES. You see, what it is, you see, I changed my name! Years ago. I been going around under an assumed name! That's not my real name!
> ASTON. What name you been going under?
> DAVIES. Jenkins. Bernard Jenkins. (*Caretaker* 18)

Davies seems to be making a confession about his real identity. However, while talking with Mick, he insists that his real name is Jenkins. According to Prentice, Davies's identity problem reflects how important the illusions and pretenses are for Davies to avoid the fact that he is a tramp (*Ethic* 89). Davies escapes his past and resorts to lies in order to avoid the self which renders him insecure and powerless in the face of a meaningless world. Like many of Pinter's characters who delude themselves, he does not want to confront himself and others authentically. Such characters' "secrets are so well hidden that they themselves have forgotten what they are and where they are. And no one else is likely to dig them out" (Almansi and Handerson 53). Davies restricts his awareness and distorts the reality to gain love and respect. Another example of this inauthentic response of him can be found in his lies about his relationship with women. When Aston tells about his experience at a café with a woman, Davies uses Aston's experience simply as a means to boast about himself, which implies his desire to make his manhood to be accepted:

> ASTON. Anyway, we were just sitting here, having this bit of a conversation…then suddenly she put her hand over to mine…and she said, how would you like me to have a look at your body?
> . . .
> DAVIES. They've said the same thing to me.
> ASTON. Have they?
> DAVIES. Women? There's many a time they've come up to me and asked me more or less the same question. (*Caretaker* 23)

To achieve dignity he also asserts that he will pay his revenge on the man who has mistreated him at the café: "One night I'll get him. When I find by myself around that direction" (*Caretaker* 8). However, Davies does not seem to find himself around that direction although he has the delusion that he is always on the move.

Davies lies since he suffers from the anxiety caused by his present identity and existence as a homeless tramp without a fixed abode, identity and verifiable name. "He defines himself according to momentary imperatives and other people's suggestions" (Billington 122). When Mick, the dominant brother, asks him whether he has been in the services, Davies claims that he has: "Oh…yes. Spent half my life there, man. Overseas …like…serving …I was" (*Caretaker* 48). He creates and assumes an identity according to the expectations of his addressee. His identity, is therefore, just a creation of him to fit the situation he is in.

Like his past, Davies' future is full of lies and fantasies. His greatest delusion is his plans to go to Sidcup where he has his papers necessary to recover or confirm his true identity. He asserts that he cannot move without these papers. He claims: "I'm stuck without them" (*Caretaker* 18). However, he procrastinates and finds several excuses for not going there. He either waits for the weather to change or complains about not having proper shoes to avoid going to Sidcup: "The weather is so blasted bloody awful, how can I get down to Sidcup in these shoes?" (*Caretaker* 17). He tries to conceal his helplessness deluding himself with the claim: "Oh, I got one or two things in mind. I'm waiting for the weather to break" (*Caretaker* 16). He places the blame and responsibility on anything or anyone other than himself. Although he expresses his disturbance with going around under a different name, makes references to some authorities who are after him and suggests that the assumed papers are crucially important to be saved from threatening results of loss of identity, he shows no effort to go to Sidcup for his papers.

Davies's fantasy of going to Sidcup holds a mirror to man's situation in the world. Man desperately tries to find a fixed identity which can reduce the anxiety caused by his non-fixed standing in the universe. However, he avoids confronting reality because "a reassertion of identity would mean a necessity to cope with the complicated demands of society" (Deleon 40). Like Stanley in *The Birthday Party*, Davies also retreats into a world where he can withdraw from responsibilities. Being blind to the fact that existence is identical with freedom to make choices and taking the responsibility of these choices, he craves for a secure shelter in which he will do nothing but exist. When he is evicted from the house, he desperately pleads with

Aston to take him back: "Listen…if I…got down…if I was to…get my papers…would you…would you let…would you…if I got down…and got my….*Long silence*" (*Caretaker* 76). The play ends with these tragic attempts of Davies signifying his helplessness and difficulty in deluding himself with the presence of his papers this time.

When Aston offers him a secure occupation as the caretaker of the house, Davies is hesitant in case it involves actual work. As a person who spends many years on the street doing nothing but struggling to survive, he avoids any kind of responsibility. He hesitantly states: "Well, I…I never done caretaking before, you know…I mean to say…I never…what I mean to say is…I never been a caretaker before" (*Caretaker* 40). Instead of expressing himself straightforwardly, he resorts to evasive language through which he can distract Aston and himself from confronting his escape from responsibility and denial of choice. When Mick complains about Aston's inactiveness, Davies comments: "I know that sort. I've met them" (*Caretaker* 47). His criticism ironically reflects his own inauthentic response of being inert.

While discussing the job offer with Aston, Davies gives his fear of the menace from the outside as an excuse for being reluctant to take the job:

> ASTON. I could fit a bell at the bottom, outside the front door, with "Caretaker" on it. And you could answer any queries.
> DAVIES. Oh, I don't know about that.
> ASTON. Why not?
> . . .
> DAVIES. I'd hear the bell, I'd go down there, open the door, who might be there…they'd have me in, that's what they'd do, I wouldn't stand a chance..then they'd find out I was going about under an assumed name. (*Caretaker* 41-42)

Davies avoids communication with the outside world. Because of his sense of insecurity, he wants to preserve his inertial existence and refuses to be known; otherwise, he might be at the mercy of the others. Davies "combines every anti-social characteristic imaginable. He is incapable of holding down a job or of forming a meaningful relationship" (Nailsmith 105). As a result, he can neither become the

caretaker nor let the other; Aston takes care of him. Lacking a positive identity, Davies is left alone with his existential dilemma.

Pinter's characters exist "at the edge of their living, where they are living pretty much alone" (Peacock 56). In *The Caretaker*, all of the characters are isolated from the society. In that sense, the room functions as a sanctuary for them. Both Aston and Mick alienate themselves from the society in their small house filled with useless objects and fantasies. However, they do not act to make their dreams come true. Like Davies's trip to Sidcup, Mick's and Aston's plans do not seem to be materialized because "[a]ll the characters believe in some miracle of rare device which will effectively transform their dreary present existence" (Alexander 41). Their behavior is repetitive, which inhibits any progress. Aston and Mick numb themselves by excessively busying themselves with physical objects and tools.

Aston tries to maintain himself with his plan of building a shed in the garden before decorating the flat. He justifies his inertia by saying: "Once I get that shed up outside…I'll be able to give a bit more thought to the flat, you see" (*Caretaker* 38). His plans seem unattainable considering the fact that he is constantly busying himself by trying to fix the electric plug or visiting shops to find other items which, he thinks, are necessary before he starts. All are excuses for remaining inactive. When Davies attacks his dream of building a shed, for the first time in the play, Aston becomes aggressive in an attempt to protect his dream: "That's not a stinking shed. *ASTON moves to him*. It's clean. It's all good wood. I'll get it up. No trouble" (*Caretaker* 66-67). All the characters struggle to reach their dreams which define who they are. "Yet the very attempt to secure those dreams, when protecting the illusory self, destroys even the possibility of attaining them" (Prentice, *Ethic* 89). Either they are so self deluded or their need for self-delusion is so great that they are completely ignorant of the unattainability of their own dreams. Davies, to illustrate, attacks Aston's dream by claiming that it is unattainable; however, he still holds on to his plan to go to Sidcup to get his papers.

Aston explains to Davies that he has withdrawn from life and other people due to the forced electroshock treatment he has received in a mental hospital. He claims that before the treatment he used to go out and mingle with other people: "I

used to talk to them. I talked too much. That was my mistake . . . I used 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" (*Caretaker* 52-53). It is implied that he used to have authentic ties as he had a clear understanding of him and his surroundings. His clear insight, true judgment, sensibility and authentic existence were taken from him to make him to "live like the others" (*Caretaker* 53). He claims that after the treatment, his understanding and connection with himself and the world have changed: "The trouble was …my thoughts…had become slow…I couldn't think at all" (*Caretaker* 55). According to him, he stopped talking to other people and turned in on himself. The monologue he delivers shows that "his discourse is not aimed at discovering truth so much as rehearsing blame he assigns to others for the loss of his true self" (Prentice, *Ethic* 90). He takes up the duty of decorating the flat for his brother and "like modern man who seeks security in everyday gadgetry" starts to collect useless items "limiting his search for satisfaction to within the four walls of his room" (Deleon 42). Aston puts the blame on his doctors for his supposed dreadful situation: "I've often thought of going back and trying to find the man who did that to me. But I want to do something first. I want to build that shed out in the garden" (Caretaker 55). His wish to find that man is similar to Davies' wish to take revenge on the man who has attacked him. Aston busies and numbs himself with insignificant tasks other than taking any action to confront and regain his self. He reduces himself to a collector of items for an uncertain future purpose. He takes Davies to home, takes care of him in order to avoid taking care of himself.

Mick expresses his discontent with his brother's inertness and passivity and he asserts that he himself is not passive: "Causing me great anxiety. You see, I'm a working man: I'm a tradesman. I've got my own van" (*Caretaker* 47). He seems to resort to false pretenses, trying to persuade himself with his own importance and worthy identity. While Davies is obsessed with his papers and Aston with his junk, Mick is preoccupied with his dream of turning the flat into a luxurious penthouse. His ecstatic description of his plans about the flat suggests that Mick compensates the lack of present action with future fantasies. He complains about Aston's habit of

collecting things and expresses his disappointment and anger with his brother by breaking the statue of Buddha. He passionately exclaims:

> Anyone would think this house was all I got to worry about. I got plenty of other things I can worry about. I've got other things. I've got plenty of other interests. I've got my own business to build up, haven't I? I got to think about expanding …in all directions. I don't stand still. I'm moving about, all the time. I'm moving …all the time. I've got to think about the future. I'm not worried about this house. I'm not interested. (*Caretaker* 72)

Mick is trying to distinguish himself from Davies and Aston who delude themselves with various self-deceptions and immaterialized dreams. However, Mick is also deluding himself with his plans for a future that do not seem to come true. He reminds himself of the authentic mode of living, which is freeing oneself from the chains of past and moving towards future. In reality, he is as inauthentic as the other characters and he is only desperately trying to persuade himself to believe in the opposite. Mick is imprisoned in his small sanctuary, busies himself with his plans about the flat like Aston. He is one of "the characters [who] are defined in relation to the room they all three occupy" (Deleon 41). He just tries to escape that impression. According to Prentice, in this play:

> Pinter places the microscope on the private level of human relationship to show once again the inevitable destruction that occurs when self-knowledge is absent, consciousness, unawakened, and characters are driven by a need to supplant any inner identity with an exterior label constructed of illusion. (*Ethic* 95)

They pretend to be active and involved in life, whereas they ward off reality and withdraw from life. They constantly repeat that they are involved in various tasks and future plans; however, it is "an effort to hide from the dread of powerlessness by making so much noise about doing that one cannot hear the hollow echo from contingency, and the point of the doing is utterly lost (Bugental 299). In *The Caretaker*, all three characters are unable to communicate or connect in an inhabitable chaotic environment, which displays man's existential predicament of isolation, aimlessness, and overwhelming threat. Thus, they give passive inauthentic response to cope with the anxiety caused by this environment.

3.1.3. *A Slight Ache*

In *A Slight Ache*, passive inauthentic responses manifest themselves in the characters' denial of the true source of anxiety and their retreat into a secure past and a fantasy world. In order to cover up their inadequacies and lack of emotional attachment, each character deceives himself/herself. Edward resorts to self-delusions, and Flora involves in a sort of wishful thinking.

At the very beginning of the play, Edward is portrayed as a withdrawn man who is absorbed in his newspaper and unconcerned about his wife's remarks about the garden. Edward fits Hartman and Zimberoff's description of an "avoidant individual": "They prefer objects and tasks to people . . . keeping others at bay, pushing interpersonal boundaries far away from them, and out to the person of the other" (14). Edward is not willing to have a close connection with his wife so that he can reduce the fear of rejection and abandonment, the risks found in close relationships. Their idle talk reveals much about the lack of communication between them:

> FLORA. Have you noticed the honeysuckle this morning?
> EDWARD. The what?
> FLORA. The honeysuckle
> EDWARD. Honeysuckle? Where? (*Slight* 169)

However, the absence of communication in true sense stems from the evasiveness of both sides. As Pinter acknowledges, "there is a deliberate evasion of communication … there is continual cross-talk, a continual talking about other things, rather than what is at the root of their relationship" (qtd. in Almansi and Henderson 22).They avoid facing their estrangement from each other and the dread caused by emotional disconnectedness. When Flora remarks that "it is the height of the summer today" (*Slight* 171), Edward is not interested in that information, either. Edward "has no knowledge of the passing of the seasons, of plants in his garden, or any growing things, and, by extension, of himself" (Prentice, *Ethic* 65). In other words, Edward is alienated not only from his surroundings but also from himself. He does not want to be bothered in his secure sanctuary as his disturbance by the intrusion of the wasp

illustrates: “You do know I’ve got work to do this morning, don’t you? I can’t spend the whole day worrying about a wasp” (*Slight* 173).

Edward’s psychological disturbance is marked in the physical ache in his eyes. He “wants his world to remain so uncontaminated by external influences that the slightest deviation from daily routines provokes a slight ache” (Deleon 30). When Flora asks about it and suggests that it may be caused by sleeplessness, Edward opposes:

> EDWARD. Of course I slept. Uninterrupted. As always.
> FLORA. And yet you feel tired.
> EDWARD. I didn’t say I felt tired. I merely said I had a slight ache in my eyes. (*Slight* 172)

Edward renounces the possibility that his sleep may be interrupted by an external force, and he claims that he is a secure person. Similarly, he obstinately refuses to admit his fear of the matchseller: “I didn’t say he wasn’t harmless. Of course he’s harmless. How could he be other than harmless”? (*Slight* 176). What he is trying to do is to diminish and ignore the threat. Next, when Flora finds Edward in the attic looking through the scullery window and peering on the matchseller, she asks him what he is doing there, but he gives elusive answers: “What would I be doing in the attic?” (*Slight* 176). He panics since he thinks that he exposes the fears he has been disclaiming. He claims that he has been digging out some notes for his essay on space and time. However, Flora states that she does not know he has been working on such a project. The doubtful existence of his essay reminds one of Davies’ papers in *The Caretaker*. It may be claimed that Edward avoids the threat and retreats to his work. As Cahn suggests, “this project seems the recourse of a man unable to deal with the daily challenges of life and seeking escape to less immediate questions” (14). Edward tries to remain oblivious to the challenge right in front of his eyes.

When Edward meets the matchseller, he becomes obsessed with his blindness and glass eye: “Do forgive me peering but is that a glass eye you’re wearing?” (*Slight* 185). His question foreshadows his loss of sight in the end. The matchseller reminds him of his fears of growing old, becoming blind and deaf. That is why he summons Flora to take him to the garden. When Flora asks how he is getting on with the matchseller, he avoids telling her the truth. He is anxious of the

possibility of finding himself in the same position with the matchseller: "We get on remarkably well. He's a little …reticent. Somewhat withdrawn. It's understandable. I should be the same, perhaps, in his place" (*Slight* 188). Edward instantly disavows that possibility claiming: "Though, of course, I could not possibly find myself in his place" (*Slight* 188). Thus, he renounces having any association with the isolation, loneliness, destitute that the man is experiencing. He tries to minimize the anxiety-arousing event or ridicule its importance. Ironically, in the end Edward finds himself in the matchseller's place.

Additionally, Edward tries to put the matchseller in a context and associates him with several identities to ward off the inexplicable. When Flora asks him whether he has found out anything about the man, he tries to use even the slightest impression he has got to make up a story about the stranger: "He's had various trades, that's certain. His place of residence is unsure. He's …he's not a drinking man. As yet, I haven't discovered the reason for his arrival here. I shall in due course…by nightfall" (*Slight* 188) Moreover, Edward wants to see him as a man who used to play cricket and establish a relation with him and a cricket player named Cavendish:

> I used to play myself. Country house matches, mostly. Kept wicket and batted number seven.
> [*Pause.*]
> Kept wicket and batted number seven. Man called –Cavendish, I think had something of your style.
> . . .
> Perhaps you don't play cricket.
> [*Pause.*]
> Perhaps you never met Cavendish and never played cricket. You look less and less like a cricketer the more I see you. (*Slight* 194).

These paradoxical attempts to uncover the stranger's identity by creating fake identities for him fail, and the menace remains ominous and mysterious. Ironically, while trying to discover who the matchseller is, he faces his own lack of identity.

What is more, Edward wants to see the man as impotent and powerless in order to attain more self-assurance. He keeps referring to the matchseller's weaknesses. As the play progresses, the ache in Edward's eyes gets worse and this time he keeps making excuses for his own physical weakness. He claims that his

sight is "excellent" (*Slight* 198); he blames "the change of air, the currents obtaining in the space between [him] and [his] object" for not being able to see clearly (*Slight* 198). Edward appeals to self-deceptions to maintain his equilibrium; however, his "undoing begins in his evasion and deliberate lies about himself and the other" (Prentice, *Ethic* 88-89). Like Goldberg in *The Birthday Party*, Edward boasts that he is in superior health in order to assert his confidence and feel secure.

Edward's another inauthentic response is retreating into past memories to escape from the painful experiences in the present. Since his experience with the matchseller renders him helpless, he reminisces. The past suggests strength, stability and certainty. However, one may not be sure about the accuracy of his memories. Pinter's characters "recognize that whatever they recall is true mainly for the present, however false it may be for the past" (Dukore 10). Deep longing for the past can be considered as an inauthentic response since it is a form of resistance to life. By longing for something other than what actually is, Edward distracts himself from what is real. He glorifies his past:

> Yesterday now, it was clear, clearly defined, so clearly … I could pour hot water down the spoon-hole, yes, easily, no difficulty, my grasp firm, my command established, my life was accounted for … my progress was fluent, after my long struggling against all kinds of usurpers, disreputable, lists, literally lists of people anxious to do me down, and my reputation down, my command was established. (*Slight* 195-196)

Edward recognizes his present weakness in front of "all kinds of usurpers" who want to take him and his reputation down. Thus, he tries to find a fixed point onto which he can depend. As noted by psychologist Judith Bardwick: "The person whose sense of self is not stable nor well-defined, who has not achieved self-esteem, will fear the unknown as potentially dangerous to the self-concept he has, and he will cling to old patterns of dependence" (qtd. in Cahn 16). Edward pities himself and his present situation in which he is overwhelmed by helplessness and powerlessness, and he tries to keep them at bay as much as he can.

Edward stops existing through his present actions which cause great anxiety, but he is "depending on artificial light dreams and memories, refracting from the claims of existence into an icy, protective sterility" (Deleon 81). He abdicates the responsibilities of an authentic existence which includes courageous confrontation

and self-awareness. He longs for a lost steadiness and admits his withdrawal from inner and outer conflicts:

> I remarked nothing, things happened upon me, then in my times of shelter, the shades, the petals, carried themselves, carried their bodies upon me, and nothing entered my nook, nothing left it [*Pause*.] But then, the time came. I saw the wind. I saw the wind, swirling, and the dust at my back gate. (*Slight* 198-199)

The shelter he has built in order to protect himself from the pain and uncertainties, is penetrated and his sense of security is shattered by the matchseller as "the dust at [his] back gate" (*Slight* 199). No matter how hard he tries to avoid, he encounters the menace that "suggests the universal trauma of man in the universe" (Dukore 27). As a result, Edward is thrown out of his shelter, blind to himself and others; he suffers from complete anomy. When he confronts his inauthentic existence, it is too late as he has already been overtaken by inauthenticity. "Edward remains sealed into the skin of his own persona … at one with his mask which he fails to perceive is not his best, deepest, or entire self" (Prentice, *Ethic* 69). He conceals his genuine self from others and from himself; he is unable to assess himself and his surroundings authentically, which makes his downfall inevitable. That may be the essential meaning of the title of the play. Harold Pinter shows that the strategy of avoidance, which is followed by people in the face of existential anxiety, fails. Edward, who avoids facing his true self and his weaknesses, confronts his ultimate loss of identity. A slight ache which causes minor disturbance and lack of sight eventuates in total blindness, which signifies the collapse of Edward's so-called secure sterile existence.

In the play, Flora also gives inauthentic responses. She is trapped in Edward's seemingly secure world. Her close connection with and devotion to the flowers in the garden can be associated with her need for a person with the help of whom she can assume an identity and assert her existence. Flora's inauthentic response reveals itself best when she attaches several roles to the matchseller, and in accordance with them she herself assumes the role of a whore, mother or wife. She treats the man as an entity to project her suppressed needs and emotional void which cannot be filled by Edward. Flora's projection of her desires and fantasies reveals her destitute situation. The striking dilemma is that while Edward loses strength by

the presence of the mysterious man, Flora gains strength from it since "in contrast to Edward, a figure of lifelessness, the matchseller, though dark and dirty, nonetheless embodies a renewal of love and life for Flora" (Cahn 19). When Flora goes outside to invite the matchseller to the house, she starts telling him about loveliness of the weather and her flowers in an animated manner: "Isn't it beautiful weather? It's the longest day of the year today. [*Pause*.] That's honeysuckle. And that's convolvulus. There's clematis. And do you see that plant by the conservatory? That's japonica" (*Slight* 181). Flora wants to arouse the man's interest in her garden and thus her need for emotional fulfillment.

When Edward is drained after the interview with the matchseller, Flora decides to have a talk with the old man assuring him that she "shall get to the truth of it" (*Slight* 190). Edward scolds her for being deluded and unfaithful, but Flora answers with dignity: "You should trust your wife more, Edward. You should trust her judgment, and have a greater insight into her capabilities. A woman …a woman will often succeed, you know, where a man must invariably fail" (*Slight* 190). She proves herself to be right in her claim; she succeeds in keeping the matchseller as a compensation for the emotional deficiencies in her life. Flora draws herself closer to the old man when she is humiliated by Edward, who is careless of her womanhood and affections and who dominates her with his masculinity. In contrast to her husband's aggressiveness to the intruder, she passively welcomes him. In fact, what she embraces is the possibility of the recognition of her being no matter which identity would be attributed to her.

Flora goes into the study room to talk with the matchseller. She needs another human being who can make her embrace life and interact with her. When she is confronted with the matchseller's silence, unlike Edward, she takes advantage of that silence. The old man functions as an object through which she can act out her fantasies. Flora deludes herself with the idea that they've met before and associates him with a poacher who raped her when she was young:

> Do you know, I've got a feeling, I've seen you before, somewhere. Long before the flood. You were much younger. Yes, I'm really sure of it. Between ourselves, were you ever a poacher? I had an encounter with a poacher once. It was a ghastly rape, the brute. (*Slight* 191)

No matter how brutal that experience is, her desire for "being" makes it quite meaningful. She establishes a physical closeness with the old man by mopping his brow: "I say you are perspiring …Is it the heat? Or the closeness?" (*Slight* 191). She leans over him and asks intimately: "Tell me, have you a woman? Do you like women? Do you ever…think about women?" (*Slight* 191). She is looking for someone who can appreciate her female needs such as intimacy, connection and attachment. In the play, it is suggested that Flora is deprived of an emotional and sexual contact with anyone. Edward's apathetic withdrawal denies even womanhood from her. She decides to call the matchseller "Barnabas", which denotes "Barnabas of the Bible which means 'son of consolation'" (Prentice, *Ethic* 71). Flora convinces herself that the man exists for her as a means of achieving actuality:

> My husband would have never guesses your name. Never. [*She kneels at his feet. Whispering.*] It's me you were waiting for, wasn't it? You've been standing waiting for me. You've seen me in the woods, picking daisies, in my apron, my pretty daisy apron, and you came and stood, poor creature, at my gate, till death us do part. (*Slight* 192-193)

She distorts reality by fanciful thoughts of what might have been and could be by appraising the matchseller as a savior. She believes that the man's motive for standing at the back gate is to be closer to her. She submits to the man who becomes the desirable combination of a child, husband and lover. She treats him as if he was a child: "And I'll buy you pretty little things that will suit you. And little toys to play with" (*Slight* 193). She projects her maternal and sexual needs on him and suggests that she has a deeper connection with him than she has with her husband. She embraces him as the new owner of the house and excludes Edward whom she defines as "too much heavy-handed in every way" (*Slight* 190). As Edward breaks down, Flora invites Barnabas to her garden: "Ah, Barnabas. Everything is ready [*Pause.*]. I want to show you my garden, your garden. You must see my japonica, my convolvulus…my honeysuckle, my clematis" (*Slight* 199). Flora dreads her loneliness and estrangement from human contact. Thus, she tries to convince herself that she has found the man who is interested in her body, soul and the flowers in her garden and who will save her from being non-existent.

While Edward's self-delusions end in chaos, solicitude and insecurity, Flora gains the emotional sustenance that she desires. " Her eagerness to bring him into her life and to share her garden and home suggests that … she retains a spiritual and emotional vitality that contrasts starkly with Edward's inevitable diminution of masculine power" (Cahn 20). She may resort to self-delusions by fantasizing about experiences that might be more pleasant than those occur in reality, but different from Edward, she embraces life to some extent. However, like her husband, Flora also restricts her awareness and distorts her being and reality by embracing a silent man whom she can mould into every shape she desires. In reality, Flora simply deludes herself with the idea that she has dispelled the awful feeling of isolation and loneliness. Her way of substituting for her inner emptiness is not effectual and authentic in the sense that she lacks connection with her own feelings. She avoids processing through her inner experiences and rushes into various distractions. The underlying fear is the terror of separation from human connection. Like Edward, Flora wards off the deep existential feelings of loneliness and detachment by finding practical but superficial and temporary solutions.

3.2. PASSIVE INAUTHENTIC RESPONSES IN EDWARD ALBEE'S PLAYS

Albee's characters are trapped in their isolated and confined environments which reveal the sense of imprisonment. In fear of the threats of the outside world and the annihilating power of death, his characters retreat into their small territories where they hope to preserve their rights and identities. They suffer under the weight of responsibility and surrender to the temptation of abandoning it. Thus, they suppress unpleasant things and escape into a self-created fantasy world where no realm of reality bothers them. They do not confront their essential selves honestly; instead, they numb themselves with illusions, fantasies, and alcohol and evade the pain of consciousness and awareness. "Illusions, denials and self-betrayals are the things used to reconstitute their previously arid world" (Roudané, *Fictions* 38). Closely paralleling Pinter, Albee claims: "So many of characters deal with the refusal

or the inability to communicate honestly … because communication is dangerous. It may open people up, which is terrifying to many. Again, this all ties in to the importance of raising one's consciousness" (qtd. in Kolin 199). Like Pinter, Albee presents his characters as holding themselves back from making decisions requiring actions but making such choices as withdrawal, conformity and denial.

3.2.1. *The Zoo Story*

In *The Zoo Story*, while Jerry shows active inauthentic reactions through aggression and violence, Peter acts as a foil to him in the sense that he escapes through passive inauthentic responses. As a more reticent character, Peter avoids engaging in life and numbs himself through mechanical life which is supposed to reduce the outer threats and consciousness of existential anxiety. He conforms to the rules dictated by the society with the right kind of habits without fully engaging in life. He remains inert and apathetic in order to escape the sufferings and risks of life, which underlies his lack of commitment and resistance to life.

In contrast to Jerry, who is "the antiestablishment, counterculture hero, fail stranger, the social outcast, the orphan, the Other", Peter is the representative of petty bourgeois society which is motivated by contemporary norms and mores (Kolin 19). Peter is a conformist in the sense that he is preoccupied with the responsibilities to the society, tasks, and daily matters. Unlike Jerry, he does not question ontological issues such as the meaning of life and his existence. He represents "[t]he modern individual [who] is lost in the crowd and at a loss without a crowd. The anonymity of man, his impersonal education in industrial society, and the abstract power of the state, change him into a phantom in the public (Golomb 40). Peter's individuality and autonomy are lost, and he is, to use Heidegger's term, in his "average everydayness", which means "leveling down of all possibilities of Being" (127). Peter has lost his touch with the appreciation of his unique being and its possibilities; he has withdrawn to his designated and isolated place in the society.

Peter is concerned more about the responsibilities to the society than the responsibilities he has to himself such as self-questioning and self-realization which are necessary in order to make hold of himself. In that sense, Peter's unquestioned and "everyday possibilities of Being are for others" (Heidegger 126). He is trying to

abdicate his individuality; he disposes of his freedom of choice by basing his actions on outer forces such as conventional rules. When Jerry learns that Peter is married and points that out, Peter's reaction implies his mechanical adoption of what society favors:

> JERRY. You're married!
> PETER [*with pleased emphasis*]. Why, certainly.
> JERRY. It isn't a law, for God's sake.
> PETER. No…no, of course not. (*Zoo* 160)

Peter refers to marriage as a duty that is expected to be carried out by each responsible member of the society. Peter gives up his freedom and lets ready-to-hand references make decisions for him. When Jerry does not agree with him, Peter yields to his opinion as he wants to gain Jerry's approval as well. Thus, Peter does not have any opinion of his own, and he forms his ideas according to the person sitting next to him. Peter's "pleased emphasis" while affirming that he is married indicates that he is pleased to be just a responsible member of the society. Later, he reveals that he has two daughters, though he wants a male child, two parakeets and two cats to take care of. He is a man of moderation who has a moderate number of everything and loyal allegiance to the borders dedicated by the society. Additionally, he reads *Time* magazine, "whose title and pithy aphoristic style underscores Peter's allegiance to conformity and deadlines, allowing for little expression of, or danger resulting from, individuality" (Kolin 20). Peter is a conformist, and he is an isolationist as well who wants to take shelter in a secluded place.

The play's recurrent themes, the loss of contact, loneliness and abandonment are apparent in Peter's inability or unwillingness to establish a human contact. He escapes through his reading in an isolated park bench where he can get a peace of mind and run away from the overwhelming chaos of the city and daily responsibilities. The bench is his refuge as Peter himself explains to Jerry when he is forced to give it up: "I sit on this bench almost every Sunday afternoon, in good weather. It's secluded here; there is never anyone sitting here, so I have it all to myself" (*Zoo* 180). He holds onto his sanctuary which is allocated to him and voluntarily isolates himself from the others. Like Jerry, Peter is secretly dreading hopeless loneliness, isolation and lack of relatedness. However, he is unconscious of

the fact that only through authentic relationship with others, which is based on understanding and compassion, self-realization and individual meaning can be achieved. While Jerry resorts to violence in order to evade his sense of isolation, Peter immerses himself in a deep sense of seclusion and distracts himself from his anxieties. Peter's reclusion is disturbed by Jerry, who wants to talk with him:

> JERRY. … Do you mind if we talk?
> PETER [*obviously minding*]. Why…no, no.
> JERRY. Yes you do; you do.
> PETER [*puts his book down, his pipe out and away, smiling*]. No, really; I don't mind.
> JERRY. Yes you do.
> PETER [*finally decided*]. No; I don't mind at all, really. (*Zoo* 160)

Peter teeters between two options: whether he should talk with the stranger who barges into his life or dismiss connection. He cannot make any decision without being confused because he has numbed his freedom by choosing blind conformity and becoming an object for the others. He lacks the courage to put his foot down. According to McCarthy, tension is created as "the comfortable public persona of Peter is faced with the unpredictable and consequently threatening outsider, Jerry" (45). Peter is uncomfortable with confronting himself or another person. So, he pretends to be willing to communicate with Jerry, who is, with his unpredictability, a more dominant character. Peter leaves no space for unpredictability in his life in order to dispel the fear of chaos and disorder in the universe. While talking to Jerry, he is trying to keep the conversation on the safe level as he does with his life. When Jerry forces him to reveal information about his private life, he shows reluctance:

> JERRY. … What do you do to support your enormous household?
> PETER. I …uh…I have an executive position with a …a small publishing house. We…uh…we publish textbooks.
> JERRY. That sounds nice; very nice. What do you make?
> PETER [*still cheerful*]. Now look here!
> JERRY. Oh, come on.
> PETER. Well, I make around eighteen thousand a year, but I don't carry more than forty dollars at any one time…in case you're a ….a holdup man….ha, ha, ha. (*Zoo* 162)

This conversation reveals a lot about Peter's reticent and isolated personality. He does not want to reveal his private life to a complete stranger who is a potential

threat to his security. He tries to cover his anxiety in front of Jerry by nervous laughs. Additionally, Peter is a stranger to what he is doing for living, which is apparent in his stammering while describing his job. When Jerry inquires about his favorite writers, he cannot answer directly, which is strange considering the fact that he is an editor:

> JERRY. All right. Who are your favorite writers? Baudlaire and J.P. Marquand?
> PETER [*wary*]. Well, I like a great many writers; I have a considerable …catholicity of taste, if I may say so. Those two men are fine, each in his way. [*Warming up*] Baudelaire, of course…uh…is by far the finer of the two, but Marquand has a place…in our…uh…national…
> JERRY. Skip it. (*Zoo* 164)

As Peter admits before, he cannot "express . . . [himself] too well" (*Zoo* 163). Peter is a man whose communicative attempts are constrained to idle talk "which discourages any new inquiry and any disputation, and in a peculiar way suppresses them and holds them back" (Heidegger 213). Peter refrains from the overwhelming fundamental questions regarding the meaning of life, the possibilities of his existence and future potentials. He complies with what is ordered and he does not devote himself to any kind of search for personal meaning. He is afraid of expressing himself freely; so, he adopts other's thoughts and voices them as if his own. He has not got a passionate commitment to anything in his life, which is necessary to involve in life authentically. As Nietzsche suggests, "[t]he secret of the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is to live dangerously"; however, Peter chooses to live within the deadlines of ordinary and mundane life experiences (qtd. in Olson 18). He is not aware of his own pleasures as they are also determined by society or his family.

Additionally, Peter's reading provides him with a fictional life as a substitute for his ordinary existence. Probably for that reason, Jerry manages to create a hypnotic effect on him while claiming that he is not forcing Peter to listen to his stories. He says to Peter: "You don't *have* to listen. Nobody's holding you here; remember that. Keep that in mind" (*Zoo* 170). Jerry's remarks also suggest Peter's inability to make a free choice for himself. Peter is irritated as he is forced to see that though he has freedom of choice, he does not have the courage and will to use it.

However, towards the end of the play he states that he listened to Jerry because he thought Jerry wanted to talk to somebody (*Zoo* 180). He covers up his failure by introducing it as an act of favor.

Peter cannot leave even though he is displeased with the content of Jerry's stories. In a child like manner, he is fascinated by Jerry's dramatic descriptions since they remind him of an extraordinary world. "Jerry inhabits part of underworld, where he resists and subverts the norm … Peter's bourgeois existence is so far removed from the world Jerry inhabits, that Peter can hardly imagine it"(Bailey 35-36). When Jerry tells him about his landlady's repulsive attempts of seducing him, Peter is shocked:

> PETER. It's so…unthinkable. I find it hard to believe that people such as that really *are*.
> JERRY [*lightly mocking*]. It's for reading about it, isn't it?
> PETER [*seriously*]. Yes.
> JERRY. And fact is better left to fiction. You're right, Peter. (*Zoo* 169)

Peter has difficulty in understanding the harsh realities that Jerry brings out as they are far removed from the conformist and contemporary society he belongs to. Jerry states: "I don't know what I was thinking about; of course you don't understand. [*In a monotone, wearily*] I don't live in your block; I'm not married to two parakeets or whatever your set-up is" (*Zoo* 177). He mocks the highly organized and prescribed life in which Peter blinds himself to the real chaos and threats of the world.

As Jerry is telling the dog story full of violent elements, Peter winces, but he stays there, hypnotized, anxious to hear the rest of the story. He listens to the story with the fascination of a child. Nevertheless, when the story finishes, he is horrified and disgusted upon what he hears:

> PETER [*numb*]. I…I don't understand what…I don't think I… [*Now almost tearfully*] Why did you tell me all of this?
> JERRY. Why not?
> PETER. I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
> . . .
> PETER. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE. I don't understand you, or your landlady, or her dog…. (*Zoo* 177)

Again in a child-like manner Peter tries to avoid the distasteful events. He can never accept the consciousness of real nature of life and his being. In his restricted and unconscious relationship with the world, he does not want anything to enter his shelter that could challenge his stable and unexamined life.

While Jerry is subverting Peter's pre-established order with his brutal stories and descriptions of the residents' unavailing lives, Peter is desperately trying to put Jerry in an ordered place in his mind. He is trying to make sense out of Jerry's absurd and confusing remarks:

> JERRY. Do you know what I did before I went to the zoo today? I walked all the way up Fifth Avenue from Washington Square; all the way.
> PETER. Oh; you live in the Village [*This seems to enlighten Peter*.]
> . . .
> JERRY. What were you trying to do? Make sense out of things? Bring order? The old pigeonhole bit? (*Zoo* 164)

What Peter is trying to do is dismissing the chaos that Jerry has brought into his life. However, he fails with Jerry who is unpredictable thus not easy to categorize. Jerry, by claiming: "You put things well; economically, and, yet…oh, what is the world" deactivates his attempts by displaying the chaos and meaninglessness of the world (*Zoo* 180). He is attacking and mocking Peter's dependence on second-hand experiences and ready-made solutions to deal with the meaninglessness and disorder. Thus, Jerry is right when he claims: "I suppose you don't quite know what to make of me, eh?" (*Zoo* 177). Peter is confused and annoyed by the "permanent transient" that turns things upside down for him (*Zoo* 177).

Jerry understands Peter's limitations, and he challenges him to confront with the impossibility of bringing order and maintaining security. Thus, he decides to usurp the only safe place for Peter, the park bench he occupies. When Jerry forces him to give up his bench, Peter declines by claiming that it is a rule that "people can have some of the things they want, but they can't have everything" (*Zoo* 180). Even in anger which is caused by the impulse for territorial protection, he acts according to the rules established by the society. He hides behind social masks and uses rules as excuses in order to avoid complicated relationships with people. Peter is gradually

revealing his actual dissatisfaction with his life, his lack of self-realization and self-inflicted inertia:

> PETER [*furious*]. Look, you; get off my bench. I don't care if it makes any sense or not. I want this bench to myself? I want you OFF IT!
> . . .
> JERRY. Why? You have everything in the world you want; you've told me about your home, and your family, and *your own* little zoo. You have everything, and now you want his bench. Are these the things men fight for? (*Zoo* 181)

Jerry in vain forces Peter to realize that he is dismayed and alone as himself. The bench is the symbol of his isolated place. In that sense Peter "lives in cages no less removed from human contact and communication than do the residents of Jerry's rooming house" (Kolin 23). As Jerry is aware of it, he tempts him more with the insults and mockery. He attacks Peter's inertia by calling him "vegetable" with no consciousness of his existence and his surroundings. He urges Peter to exert his individual will for the first time in his life:

> JERRY [*contemptuously*]. You don't even know what you're saying, do you? This is probably the first time in your life you've had anything more trying to face than changing you cats' toilet box. Stupid! Don't you have any idea, no even the slightest, what other people *need*?
> . . .
> PETER [*quivering*]. I've come here for years; I have hours of great pleasure, great satisfaction, right here. And that's important to a man. I'm a responsible person, and I'm a GROWN-UP. This is my bench, and you have no right to take it away from me. (*Zoo* 182)

The bench is crucially important to Peter, whose life is surrounded by females. It stands for his masculine independence. Additionally, he regards the bench and what the bench symbolizes as his rewards after carrying out his responsibilities which are expected from a grown up, such as founding a family, having children, or a respectable job and social status in the society. He stumbles in his unaware existence and ignores himself and others with dreadful indifference. Peter is motivated by withdrawal from connection so that he can close himself to new experiences and people.

As a final act Jerry impales himself on the knife that Peter is holding for self-protection, and he involves Peter in this violent act. Due to this experience, Peter

has lost his isolated territory because he will not be able to confront what happened by coming there again. Jerry tells Peter: "You won't be coming back here anymore, Peter; you've been dispossessed. You've lost your bench, but you've defended your honour. And Peter, I'll tell you something now; you're not really a vegetable" (*Zoo* 184). Jerry wants to shake Peter out of his apathy and withdrawal; he has the intention of "raising Peter from the level of a vegetable" (McCarthy 47). However, as discussed in Chapter II, Peter acts only to protect his isolated secluded place in the world, not out of compassion or with an understanding of Jerry's wake-up call. Peter's perception of life and existence is too limited and shallow to take a meaningful lesson from this experience. He has lost his bench as well as the possibility of taking action for an authentic life. Most probably, Peter will stick to his previous isolation even more and devote himself to withdrawal in order to avoid a similar experience with another stranger.

3.2.2. *A Delicate Balance*

In *A Delicate Balance*, the main thematic concern is man's tendency to abandon his responsibility and surrender his individual potentials. The characters yearn for madness, motherly affection and attachment all of which denote their dependence on others and desire to detach themselves from life. They try to submit themselves to others whom they choose as authority figures in order to get rid of the burden of freedom and choice. As Albee claims, "the play is basically about these people who have accommodated to their weaknesses and compromises, the adjustments they've made" (qtd. in Gussow 256). Through various kinds of self-deceptions, they keep unpleasant and uncomfortable realities at bay and avoid any kind of change that might upset the carefully constructed balance in their lives.

The play opens with Agnes' fascination with the idea of madness which indicates her desire for withdrawal from the sane world which overwhelms man with its chaos and harsh realities. Madness, for her, is an "escape from rootedness and order and the assumption of an outsider role that involves the rejection of all duties and commitments" (Nilsen 150). In madness she can also distance herself from the awareness of loss and emptiness. Agnes compares losing her mind to a balloon that is loosened of its moorings, which suggests tranquility:

> What I find most astonishing- aside from that belief of mine, which never ceases to surprise me by the very fact of its surprising lack of unpleasantness, the belief that I might very easily- as they say- lose my mind one day, not that I suspect I am about to, or am even…nearby … for I'm not that sort; merely that it is not beyond…happening: some gentle loosening of the moorings sending the balloon adrift-and I think that is the only outweighing thing: adrift; the…becoming a stranger in…the world, quite…uninvolved, for I never see it as violent, only a drifting. (*Delicate* 19)

Due to her self-control and allegiance to the duty of maintaining the routine, Agnes cannot easily lose her mind. However, she points out that she is on the brink of being susceptible to the terror of madness that may come uninvited and unexpectedly no matter how hard she tries to avoid. "Human life consists of a 'delicate balance' between the options of a consciously willed order and an abandonment of the self to the forces of chaos and dependence" (Nilsen 150). Agnes both fears and craves for disengagement and she tries to balance between sanity and insanity.

Agnes is pleased with the steadiness and smoothness of her life and she thanks Tobias for their peaceful shelter where they block out the unpleasant realities of the outside world:

> AGNES. … I can't even raise my voice except in the most calamitous of events, and I find that both joy and sorrow work their…wonders on me more…evenly, slowly, with*in*, than most: a suntan rather than a scalding. There are no mountains in my life…nor chasms. It is a rolling, pleasant land….verdant, my darling, thank you.
> TOBIAS (*Cutting a cigar*). We do what we can.
> AGNES (*A little laugh*). Out motto. (*Delicate* 22-23)

Agnes and Tobias are satisfied with less and they do not attempt to have more so that they can preserve their confined safe environment. As Agnes states later, they are numbed with "the gradual …demise of intensity, the private preoccupations, the substitutions" (*Delicate* 68). Like Peter's withdrawal in *The Zoo Story*, their isolation, evasion of commitment and privatism are self-inflicted. Their life is removed from intense and spontaneous reactions as they reside in predictability, "the complacency and statis that results from setting in and settling for less rather than challenging moral norms and the status quo" (Adler, *Cambridge* 88). Agnes believes that change, for better or worse, is unattainable for them:

> AGNES. You have hope, only, if growing even older than you are in the company of your steady wife, your alcoholic sister-in-law and occasional visits…from out melancholy Julia.
> (*A little sad*)
> That is what you have, my dear Tobias. Will it do?
> TOBIAS (*A little sad, too, but warmth*). It will do.
> AGNES (*Happy*). I've never doubted that it would. (*Delicate* 24-25)

Tobias sinks into a momentary sadness, which unfolds his sense of isolation and solitude resulted from settling for less. On the other hand, his contentment arises from the security of withdrawal and "capitulating into a sense of order which is in fact no more than mere routine" and denial of "the force and reality of loss" (Bigsby, *Critical* 294). Thus, both avoidance and confrontation culminate in isolation and estrangement. "Albee creates an experience of the tension between the risk of reality and the pain of withdrawal" (McCarthy 140). In fact, throughout the play, this dilemma between commitment and fear of taking action torments the characters.

Tobias's withdrawal dates back to their second child Teddy's death. According to Agnes, the connection among the family members was broken after this incident: "It was an unreal time: I thought Tobias was out of love with me-or, rather, was tired of it, when Teddy died, as if it had been the string" (*Delicate* 80). Tobias cannot recover from the pain of loss; as a consequence, he distances himself from all sorts of relationships, sexual and emotional, in order to reduce the risk of suffering from another loss. Agnes claims that she is left alone by Tobias in "such …silent…sad, disgusted…love" (*Delicate* 101). "Tobias's literal withdrawal during the sex act" with Agnes and his psychological withdrawal from connection end in attrition of commitment and love (Clum 66). Tobias moves to his own room without expressing his feelings or asserting his choice; he merely detaches himself. "In refusing to have another child, he turned his back on Agnes and reduces his family life to a cipher" (McCarty 81-82). Tobias's avoidance turns into deep depression and painful disconnectedness with his surroundings:

> AGNES (*Sweet; sad*). Well, my darling, you are not young now, and you do not live at home.
> TOBIAS (*Sad question*). Where do I live?
> AGNES (*An answer of sorts*). The dark sadness. Yes? (*Delicate* 96)

Tobias retreats into a protective place from which he can "look at it all, reconstruct, with such…de*tach*ment, see *yourself* you, Julia…Look at it all…play it out again, *watch*" (*Delicate* 95). Making himself utterly insignificant, he avoids taking responsibility and denies his potentials. "Tobias's passivity is choice, not due to some lack in his nature" (qtd. in Gussow 261). He chooses to repress his individual self in order to reduce the risk of failure and rejection. However, escaping from responsibility and confrontation is not particular to Tobias. Agnes, who regards herself as above everybody around her and takes the role of fulcrum of the family, fails to prove her claims as well.

Both Agnes and Tobias abstain from dealing with their daughter's problem with marriage. They are unable to come up with constructive solutions and ideas; instead, they try to evade the issue as much as they can. During dinner, Agnes uses the rules she has established as a means of escape from discussing the problem since "the table is not the proper place" for her (*Delicate 66*). She states: "Since nobody…*really* wants to talk about your latest…marital disorder, really wants to talk *around* it, use it as an excuse for all sorts of horrid little revenges…I think we can at least keep the table…unlittered of *that*" (*Delicate* 67). By not listening to her daughter, she avoids the unpleasant and nasty realities of life. Additionally, she is curiously indifferent to Julia's hysteric tantrums claiming that she does not have "the time for the four-hour talk, the soothing recapitulation" (*Delicate* 85). Although Agnes seems to be controlling the household, she is merely concerned about daily matters as she "runs the house, for what that's worth: makes sure there's food, and not just anything, and decent linen; looks well" (*Delicate* 96). Thus, "her desire for order eventually makes her deny the reality of what she sees" and avoid the responsibility for any deep problem in the household (Bigsby, *Critical* 295). According to Agnes, it is because of Tobias's failure to assert himself that Julia responds to the lack of authority figure by embarking on marriages: "Each time Julia comes, each clockwork time…do you send her back? Do you tell her, "Julia, go home to your husband, try it again?" Do you? No you let it…slip" (*Delicate* 100). Agnes places the responsibility of Julia's failures on Tobias whom she assigns the authority role at her will.

On the other hand, Tobias admits that he is unable to assert himself or give any consolation to appease Julia: "If I saw some point to it, I might-if I saw some reason, chance. If I thought I might…break through to her, and say, 'Julia…', but then what would I say? 'Julia...' Then nothing" (*Delicate* 38). Although he is aware of his failure in developing a satisfactory relationship, he "cannot overcome his inertia long enough to reach out to her in a meaningful way" and settle her problems (Paolucci 110). Tobias and Agnes's adhesion to the safety of routine and stability makes it impossible for them to show empathy; they "have turned their backs on participating fully in their own lives and therefore cannot participate fully in anyone else's life" (Albee qtd. in Gussow 257).

The family members manage to steer clear of the difficulties in the household with self-deception and denial in various ways. However, Harry and Edna's arrival causes each person to "strip away their balanced emptiness in a series of memories, fears, and desires linked to terror and reality" (Saraswathi 85). Agnes believes that the visitors should be removed because the family cannot survive the existential dread that they bring along:

> Ten centuries ago-and even less- the treatment was quite simple …burn them. Burn their bodies, burn their houses, burn their clothes-and move to another town, if you were enlightened. But now, with modern medicine, we merely isolate; we quarantine, we ostracize-if we are not immune ourselves, or unless we are saints. (*Delicate* 109)

Agnes refers to isolation and alienation as modern medicine with the help of which man evades the fear of annihilation. She believes that they should block the realization of loss and emptiness, to "[e]nsure the continuation of their death-in-life existence" (Adler, *Cambridge* 83). Heidegger remarks that "our everyday falling evasion *in the face of* death is an *inauthentic* being-towards-death"; whereas, authenticity requires courageous acceptance of the possibility of non-being (303). Agnes's statement provides a key to understanding the play's main thematic concern of erosion of consciousness, to use Albee's words: "how we lie to ourselves and to each other, how we try to live without the cleansing consciousness of death" (qtd. in Roudané, *Understanding* 23). Albee believes that redemption and living authentically are possible through full participation in life and awareness of our

finiteness. At that point, Agnes retreats from individuality and moral responsibility, and she states that she is dependent on Tobias's choice about the dilemma that disintegrates the entire household. She claims that she is not the one who "decide[s] the route" (*Delicate* 97):

> AGNES (*Quiet, calm, and almost smug*). We follow. We let our….men to decide the moral issues
> TOBIAS (*Quiet angry*). Never! You've never done that in your life!
> AGNES: Always, my darling. Whatever you decide…I'll make it work; I'll run it for you so you'll never know there's been a change in anything. (*Delicate*, 97)
> . . .
> TOBIAS. And you'll sit down and watch me carefully; smoke your pipes and stir the cauldron; watch.
> AGNES (*Dreamy; pleased*). Yes. (*Delicate* 100)

Agnes abrogates her moral responsibilities and hides behind the conventional gender role which dictates male authority. As Tobias claims, Agnes is "copping out" (*Delicate* 97). However, "each of them has surrendered an autonomy which was his or hers, a capacity to act and thereby to be" (Bigsby, *Modern* 145).

Harry and Edna, who are the escapees of the play, also run away from the terror of their own mortality. Harry tells their hosts in horror: "We can't go back there" (*Delicate* 47). They want to go to bed, lock themselves in Julia's room and stay there for a long time since they are too afraid to talk about the fear of annihilation and anxiety-ridden alienation. Harry and Edna seek for familial affection that is missing in their house and evade their frustrated loneliness. "Refugees from their own loneliness and loss, they come looking for the warmth and the sense of belonging which they have failed to create between themselves in their marriage" (Stenz 74). As Agnes states, thanks to familial ties, they can endure emptiness and loss of love: "But blood blinds us. Blood holds us together when we've no more …deep affection for ourselves than others" (*Delicate* 110). Harry and Edna believe that they can find the sense of attachment they need in Agnes and Tobias's house:

> If we come to the point…we are at home one evening, and the …terror comes …descends…if all at once we …NEED …we come where we are wanted, where we know we are expected, not only where we want; we come where the table has been laid for us in such an event …where the bed is

> turned down …and warmed…and has been ready should we need it. We are not…transients…like some. (*Delicate* 89)

They need a womb-like place in which they can discard their adulthood and its burden. The stage directions tell that "Harry and Edna are very much like Agnes and Tobias" (*Delicate* 19). Both couples evade their anxieties and do not want to confront the terrors. Their evasions lead to death-in-life manner of living. Like Agnes and Tobias, they settle for steadiness and routine which restrict their awareness of another way of life as Harry remarks: "Edna and I…there's …so much…over the dam, so many…disappointments, evasions, I guess, lies maybe so much we remember we wanted, once…so little that we've …settled for…we talk, sometimes, but mostly …no. We don't … "like" (*Delicate* 114). They are unable to get involved in their own and each other's life, which results in the deprivation of love and communication.

Julia and Claire show similar inauthentic responses in regard to their abdication of the burden of adulthood and infantile attitudes. They "settle for comfortable egoism" (Paolucci 107). They are obsessed with their own comfort and safety, which makes it impossible for them to coexist and establish authentic relationships with others. To illustrate, when Julia comes home and finds out that her room is occupied by Harry and Edna, she is not able to do anything other than showing childish hysteria. "Julia, the adult child who is unable to sustain a relationship outside her family is incapable of taking a step to alter and improve her relationships within the family. She waits for others to take action" (Gussow 262). When she suffers under the submergence of her self, she takes refuge in the familiar routine and authority figures to lead her way and take over the responsibility on her shoulders. At the root of her dependency, there is the inability to endure the burdens of adulthood and to express her own individual potentials. She chooses not to confront her problems with courage, and justifies her decision by regarding herself as helpless and without any choice other than coming back home:

> JULIA. Where else am I supposed to go?
> CLAIRE. It's a great big world, baby. There are hotels, new cities. Home is the quickest road to Reno I know of. (*Delicate* 61)

Ironically, her parents and childhood room fail to eliminate the burden of the great big world. "The paradox is obvious: home is a mirage, a long-lost dream, the dead past, and in choosing to return in, Julia is merely aggravating her already serious emotional difficulties" (Paolucci 110). She is shattered with the loss of her position and her sterile past.

Julia embarks on disastrous marriages with impossible partners such as gamblers, homosexuals, cheaters, which indicates "a tendency on her part to look for impossible partners so that she has to return to the womb of her parents' house which she cannot bring herself to leave" (Nilsen 153). She is dependent on her nest for warmth and comfort just like Harry and Edna are as Claire notes:

> JULIA. … What…what do they want? Harry and Edna?
> . . .
> CLAIRE (*Brief smile*). Comfort (*Sees* JULIA *doesn't understand*) Warmth. A special room with a night light, or the door ajar so you can look down the hall from the bed and see that Mommy's door is open
> JULIA (*No anger; loss*). But that's my room.
> . . .
> CLAIRE. Are you home for good now? (JULIA *stares at her*) Are you home forever, back from the world? To the sadness and reassurance of your parents? Have you come to take my place? (*Delicate* 73-4)

They all strive for a warm and comfortable place where they can lay off all the challenges and responsibilities, and dispel the anxiety of death and freedom. Claire and Julia, for instance, hope for a shelter away from sadness and ask Tobias: "Take us away, to where it is always good and happy". Tobias answers with a frowning face: "It's …too late, or something" (*Delicate* 60). Their resignation denotes the lost possibilities and opportunities.

Claire, who clings to Agnes and Tobias for reassurance, fears that her role as the infantile adult may be taken away by other visitors who also abrogate their adulthood. As an observer, she has clear insight into her and others' nature. Agnes puts forth: "Claire, who watches from sidelines, has seen so very much, has seen us all so clearly, have you not Claire. You were not named for nothing" (*Delicate* 81). Claire is the one who notices the threat animated through Harry and Edna and who gives voice to the family's escape from reality: "We submerge our truths and have our sunsets on troubled waters" (*Delicate* 75). However, she also withdraws with the

pleasure of detachment and defers any decision which can help solve problems. She acknowledges her weaknesses and retreats into the distraction of drink, distinguishing herself from alcoholics: "That they couldn't help it; I could, and I wouldn't. That they were sick, and I was merely…willful" (*Delicate* 35). Claire willfully restricts her consciousness of freedom and gets rid of her individual self altogether with its conflicts and burdens. She is self-complacent in her helplessness. Agnes refers to Claire's excuse for being inert when she claims: "The helpless are the cruelest of all: they shift their burdens so" (*Delicate* 85). Claire is not defenseless; in fact, she is the only one in the family who is immune to the terror:

> AGNES (*Eyes closed*). I am merely stating that there is disease here! And I ask you: who in this family immune?
> CLAIRE (*Weary statement of fact*). I am. I've had it. I'm still alive, I think. (*Delicate* 110)

Claire survives the existential terror, but "her liveliness is at the cost of being at an emotional distance from all the characters" (Clum 69). She is uninvolved and self-destructive, which unfolds that she has not recovered from nothingness in her life. She does not confront her conscience throughout the play and is determined to sustain her inauthenticity: "The drunks stay drunk; the Catholics go to Mass, the boundaries bound. We can't have changes-throws the balance off." (*Delicate* 105). Claire declares her inertia and claims that she contributes to the balance of the household by keeping her stance as it is. At the same time, she refrains from soberness which aggravates her pain and anguish. In fact, alcohol functions as a means of retreat and evasion of reality for all of the characters. They numb their consciousness through intoxication and the whole play is full of servings of drink even in the morning "to start the Sunday off" (*Delicate* 105). Agnes makes a little joke about their dependence on alcohol:

> AGNES. Well, I would seem to have *three* early-morning drinkers now. I hope it won't become a club. We'd have to get a license, would we not?
> TOBIAS. Just think of it as very late at night.
> AGNES. All right, I will. (*Delicate* 121)

They reinforce and encourage each other's illusions and substitutions for reality through simple denial and pretension.

The distorted balance is restored again when Harry and Edna decide to leave having realized that another house will not bring security and demands of friendship have limits. Harry asks Edna like a little boy: "Do they love us? Do they love us, Edna?" and Edna responds: "Well…as much as we love them…I should think" (*Delicate* 117). At that very moment, they understand that they would not let Agnes and Tobias stay if they were the one who retreated. They notice the lack of love in their relationship with their friends. Moreover, Agnes and Tobias's house is as insecure as theirs. Edna tells Agnes: "It's sad to come to the end of it, isn't it, nearly the end; so much more of it gone by…than left, and still no know -still not have learned …the boundaries what we may not do…not ask, for fear of looking in a mirror. We shouldn't have come" (*Delicate* 118). Edna and Harry acknowledge "that the one body you've wrapped your arms around…the only skin you've ever known…is your own- and that it's dry…and not warm" (*Delicate* 118). They have realized that each individual is isolated and lonely.

When Tobias is forced to emerge from his passivity, he is both reluctant and excited about exerting his decision for the first time in a long time. In fact, he finds an opportunity to compensate for his misspent years. Harry and Edna come downstairs; all of the women, who "have also abrogated their responsibility, have allowed their marriages and lives to dwindle", leave the room not only to give Harry and Tobias privacy but also to avoid the challenges of that encounter (Clum 67). Tobias does not know whether he should keep them in or throw them out. Harry makes it both easier and harder for Tobias to decide when he tells him that they are going:

> HARRY. No…we're …we're going, Tobias.
> TOBIAS. I don't know what help …I don't know how…
> HARRY. I said: we're going.
> TOBIAS. Yes, but …you're going?
> HARRY (*Nice, shy smile*). Sure.
> TOBIAS. But, but you can *try* it here…or we can, God, I don't know, Harry. You can't go back there: you've got to… (*Delicate* 113)

The conversation between Tobias and Harry indicates that the characters use language as a means of evasion of reality and concealment of betrayal. Like Pinter, Albee "experimented with . . . technique of devaluing language, his often illogical,

cliché-ridden repartee signifies the characters' banality" (Roudané, *Understanding* 48-49). Tobias tells Harry that they can stay only after he learns that they are going. In this respect, Albee establishes the relationship between the play and the title: "The delicate balance is between what we should be doing and what we ultimately decide we need to do to protect ourselves . . . I assume that's why I called the play *A Delicate Balance*" (qtd. in Gussow 256-257). Tobias does not want them in the house because they have brought the terror with them; however, he also does not want to feel guilty for failing to meet the sacred requirements of friendship. He cannot confess the fact that he does not want them in the house:

> HARRY(*Sad*). Do you *want* us here, Tobias?
> TOBIAS. You *came* here.
> HARRY. Do you *want* us here?
> TOBIAS. You *came*! *Here*! (*Delicate* 114)

Tobias is not comfortable with the burden of responsibility and he tries to get rid of it. He claims that Harry does not need any permission from him: "You don't need to ask me, Harry, you don't need to ask a thing; you're our friends, our very best friends in the world, and you don't have to ask" (*Delicate* 115). Harry tries to make Tobias acknowledge the fact that there is lack of love, the outcome of which is the inevitable isolation.

Tobias's decision to take action dwindles when Harry and Edna decide to leave voluntarily. Agnes's following speech explains Tobias's predicament:

> Time happens, I suppose. (*Pause. They still look*) To people. Everything becomes…too late, finally. You know it's going on …up on the hill; you can see the dust, and hear the cries and the steel…but you wait; and time happens. When you *do* go, sword, shield…finally…but there's nothing there…save rust; bones; and the wind. (*Delicate* 118)

When Tobias reactivates his decision making mechanism, there is nothing but "the wind" because he has nothing to implement his decision upon. Albee writes for the introduction of the play:

> The play concerns . . . the rigidity and ultimate paralysis which afflicts those who settle in too easily, waking up one day to discover that all the choices they have avoided no longer give them any freedom of choice, and that what choices they do have left are beside the point. (*Delicate Introduction* 14)

The characters nullify their authentic bounds with themselves and others through years of evasion, "no longer desiring communication, indeed fearing the vulnerability that it implies" (Bigsby, *Critical* 294). Tobias hysterically pleads Harry and Edna to stay:

> STAY!
> (*Softer*)
> Stay!
> (*Soft, tears*)
> Stay. Please? Stay?
> (*Pause*)
> Stay? Please? Stay? (*Delicate* 117)

He desperately tries to avoid failure and loss in his life and wants to make his freedom of choice worthwhile despite the fact that he does not want them in his house. He does not want to come under criticism for being neglectful, oblivious and insensitive. On the other hand, he craves for the peace of the routine. Paolucci suggests: "He has settled for the illusion of peace. The ordeal, the Terror, is reduced to conventional proportions and buried with all the other failures of the past" (116). Albee explains Tobias's motivations as: "When he says, please stay, he's not begging people to stay so that he can be nice to them, he's saying 'You've taken away my last opportunity to do something worthwhile in my life'" (qtd. in Gussow 257). Tobias tries to assert himself but it is too late; thus, he deceives himself with honesty: "I tried (*Pause*) I was honest. (*Silence*) Didn't I? (*Pause*) Wasn't I?" (*Delicate* 121).

Agnes is ready to provide Tobias and everybody in the family with the order and sanity that comes with the daylight:

> What I find most astonishing, I think, is the wonder of daylight, of the sun. All the centuries, millenniums-all the history- I wonder if that's why we sleep at night, because the darkness still ...frightens us? They say we sleep to let the demons out-let the mind go raving, our dreams and nightmares all our logic gone awry, the dark side of our reason. And the daylight comes again…comes order with it. (*Sad chuckle*) Poor Edna and Harry (*Sigh*) Well, they're safely gone…and we'll all forget…quite soon (*Pause*) Come now; we can begin the day. (*Delicate* 122)

Agnes wards off the realization of terror and chaos for the wellbeing of the family and announces the restoration of the routine and their balanced existence. “Albee’s recurrent theme of threat which is posed by reality” is dispelled and they eagerly embrace their self-deceptions (Adler, *Cambridge* 84). Ironically, the play closes with Agnes’ reference to her possible insanity. She thinks that maybe she has already lost her mind. However, she continues to devote herself to the maintenance of the barren order against the threats of insanity and nothingness.

At the end of the play, Harry and Edna leave promising that they will be seeing each other in the club as always and return to their banal existence. Tobias is relieved with the ordered balance and pleased that his momentary confrontation with reality is over. Julia is going to resume on filling the void with perpetual marriages since she is “fond of marriage” (*Delicate* 119); Claire will remain drunk to keep the balance and to block out consciousness. Thus, the end of the play does not suggest any change in characters’ inauthentic and homogenized existence which is “drained of meaning, bereft of threat” due to the absence of genuine feelings (Bigsby, *Critical* 29). Although change is possible for the characters in the play, they avoid it by hiding behind the cliché: “it is too late” (*Delicate* 60).

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This study has aimed at analyzing Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, and *A Slight Ache* and Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* and *A Delicate Balance* in terms of the inauthentic responses that the characters give in the face of existential anxiety which is caused by a vacuous existence. The characters in the above-mentioned plays are imprisoned in the midst of insignificancy and finiteness of their existence, the threat of dispossession and disintegration, and the fear of confrontation with one's self and freedom. This sense of helplessness and impotence triggers their need to resist life and protect themselves through active and passive inauthentic responses which help them confirm their existence and dispel the profound sense of powerlessness.

Pinter and Albee are both concerned with man's existential adjustment to the world. In that sense, their plays can be defined as representatives of human situation at large. They display the existential dilemma of the characters by presenting them as trapped in their so-called preserved territories. The characters cling to their territories and resist interacting with social world in order to gain a sense of inner security. This passive inauthentic response only leads them to a more profound sense of alienation, isolation and hence insecurity. In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley abandons himself to self-imposed isolation in a boarding house, which condemns him to an overwhelming state of disconnectedness and lostness, in *The Caretaker*, all of the characters hold on to a secure room where they can occupy themselves with unattainable fantasies to be protected from outer threats and in *A Slight Ache,* Edward's blind adherence to his territory obstructs his authentic understanding of his own self and others, which results in his downfall. Closely paralleling Pinter's plays, Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance* and *The Zoo Story* depict people who withdraw from human contact and interaction and resume their death-in-life existence within their territories in order to alienate themselves from the painful effects of

consciousness. “Alluding to a spiritual malaise that may psychologically anesthetize the individual, Albee suggests that full, dangerous participation in human intercourse is a necessary correlate to living authentically” (Roudané, *Necessary Fictions* 46). In that sense, both playwrights deal with the anguish of the individual caused by the deprivation of human contact and interaction which is indispensable for better self-government.

Since territorial protection is identical with the preservation of identity, security and autonomy, Pinter and Albee present their characters as “territorial animals” which are on guard against any intrusion or invasion from outside that may dispossess them of their refuge (Peacock 54). The fear of intrusion denotes the fear of non-being which is the basic threat to their already unstable existence. Both playwrights portray the destruction of the illusory sense of stability and security by introducing menace against which the characters start a territorial struggle, a struggle for power which is communicated through attempts of domination, aggressiveness and manipulation that can be defined as active inauthentic responses. In *The Caretaker,* Mick’s domineering and manipulative attitude towards Davies is motivated by his desire to exclude the tramp from his territory and maintain his inner security. Similarly in *A Slight Ache,* Edward desperately tries to control and dominate his surroundings against the threat which is embodied by the matchseller. In *A Delicate Balance,* carefully balanced family dynamics and sterile life of family members are subverted upon the arrival of guests who bring the terror of existential anxiety along with them. In *The Zoo Story,* Peter’s secluded park bench is usurped by Jerry who in an aggressive and domineering manner shakes Peter out of his apathy and reveals Peter’s animalistic instinct to fight for his territory.

In Pinter’s and Albee’s drama, menace does not only originate from without but it also resides within. Both playwrights deal with the menace that stems from man’s emotional and existential needs. In other words, menace is presented as a manifestation of the characters’ need to escape the consciousness of their insecure identity, unstable existence, and loneliness. Pinter’s and Albee’s plays are “psychological portrayals of individuals trying to create viable relationships with one another in attempts to fulfill the emotional needs which produce a threat to their

welfare" (Gale 19). The difficulty of establishing genuine human contact and asserting a true identity is accompanied with the terror of loneliness and isolation, which inevitably brings out the menace within. In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley attempts to dispel loneliness by withdrawing to the protection of a mother figure which he can easily manipulate but disintegrates in the end. *The Caretaker* displays how the characters in need of emotional attachment become the embodiments of menace for one another. In *A Slight Ache*, Edward's self-imposed sterility results in his failure to understand his own self and fulfill his wife's emotional demands and causes him to be threatened by the silent matchseller. In *The Zoo Story*, Peter avoids human contact in order to reduce the outer threats but is confronted by Jerry who tries to ease the pain of isolation by forcing others to establish contact with him. Similarly, *A Delicate Balance* displays the family members' fear of confrontation with lack of love and security which is triggered by intrusive guests who also seek for emotional attachment. Thus, the characters suffer from the dilemma that if they establish human contact they may be susceptible to outer threats; on the other hand, if they withdraw, they are more likely to disintegrate as a result of the loss of connection.

Another similarity between Pinter's and Albee's drama is the use of language. Language is not presented as a means of communication but as a weapon used to evade and assert power, which points to the characters' insecurity and isolation. As Pinter notes, "one way of looking at speech is to say that it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness" (qtd. in Cahn 4). Goldberg and McCann in *The Birthday Party*, Mick and Davies in *The Caretaker*, Edward in *A Slight Ache*, Jerry in *The Zoo Story*, and especially female characters in *A Delicate Balance* use language as a weapon to overpower others and assert their control over their possessions. With the help of verbiage, they try to assure themselves of a worthier identity; however, underneath their verbal assaults there are personal insecurities caused by aimlessness and powerlessness. Additionally, there is not inability to communicate but deliberate avoidance of genuine communication. By avoiding self-expression, the characters hide their true identity, secure their position, and escape the possibility of being susceptible to existential anxieties. In *The Caretaker* Davies evade the questions

about his background in order to deceive himself and others into believing in a false identity and in *A Slight Ache*, Edward resorts to evasive language in order to conceal his fear of the silent matchseller. In Albee's *A Delicate Balance*, similarly, language is used to distort the reality and conceal the lack of reciprocal love in the household. Albee and Pinter agree that "language is both the disguise and nakedness" (Bigsby, *Critical* 282). In their plays whether the characters use language of domination as an active inauthentic response or they use language of evasion as a passive inauthentic response, at some point they are stripped out of their pretensions of power and deceptions; lack of security and positive identity is not avoided for long. Consequently, they drift nearer to an emotional or psychological breakdown.

Pinter and Albee give voice to existentialist idea of freedom and consciousness in their plays. They both believe that existential redemption and authentic existence are possible through man's confrontation with the nature of his own being and his existential choices. In that sense, both playwrights aim to trigger personal insight into authentic living. They present illusions as alienating powers which increase the separation among human beings and one's sense of lostness. The message they try to convey is that escaping freedom and responsibility results in greater self-ignorance and disconnectedness. In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley, who tries to abandon his responsibilities, is bereft of his individual self and freedom altogether. In *The Caretaker*, Davies, who is motivated with self-created illusions about his identity and who tries to shift the burden of responsibility on others, is excluded from the alliance by Mick and Aston. Similarly, Edward in *A Slight Ache* who blinds himself with the illusion of power and superiority finds himself in the midst of rootlessness and loneliness. In *The Zoo Story*, Peter's self-imposed restriction of existential awareness is disturbed when he is forced to confront the most dreadful fear, which is the fear of non-existence. In A *Delicate Balance*, the characters retreat back into their illusions and become more disconnected after they deliberately ignore the awareness of emptiness of their existence. Thus, both Pinter's and Albee's suggest the impossibility of abandoning man's existential anxieties that haunt even his attempts to do so.

In addition to the similarities, there are also differences between Pinter and Albee in finding an expression for man's existential dilemma. One of the most important discrepancies is apparent in their manner of using storytelling. Pinter's characters tell stories in order to gain security and establish dominance in their relationships. In *The Caretaker*, Davies recounts his so-called grander past as a strategy to feel secure about his identity and to get a foothold in the house. Like Davies, Stanley in *The Birthday Party* and Edward in *A Slight Ache* resort to talking about their past successes in order to ward off the disappointments and sense of lostness in the present. While Pinter presents his characters recounting stories in order to deceive themselves in believing in the illusion of power and security, Albee makes use of story narrations in order to present the destructiveness of lovelessness. In *The Zoo Story*, Jerry's story about the dog summarizes the play's recurrent themes which include the growing isolation and impossibility of establishing human contact. Similarly, in *A Delicate Balance*, Teddy's story about his relationship with his former cat is a manifestation of the characters' failure of reciprocal love and human need to make contact. Thus, while Pinter's characters restrict their awareness and distort reality, which obstructs having a clear understanding of their own selves and other human beings, Albee's characters engage in a momentary confrontation with the conflict in human relationships and man's need to establish authentic relationships.

This points to another important difference between Pinter's and Albee's drama. Although both playwrights believe in the redemption through confrontation with reality and knowing one's self wholly and honestly, Albee seems to depict a more hopeful and affirmative vision of man's existential predicament. Both Pinter and Albee present their characters teetering between survival and destruction. However "[i]n Albee's plays characters are brought to the brink of change; transformations are implied but not realized. Indeed redemption and apocalypse seem to be possibilities with almost equal potential" (Bigsby, *Modern* 132). In Pinter's *The Birthday Party, The Caretaker* and *A Slight Ache*, the characters remain trapped in the midst of absurdity and they alienate themselves from existential growth due to their preoccupation with power relations. Especially for Stanley in *The Birthday*

Party, Davies in *The Caretaker*, and Edward in *A Slight Ache*, there is complete destruction and disintegration without any hope and quest for authentic existence. However, in Albee's drama, certain characters experience a momentary and painful consciousness of their false security and sense of responsibility. In *The Zoo Story*, Peter is brought to a point where he might be blessed with the cleansing effects of consciousness as a result of life-altering experience he has with Jerry, yet the possibility of awareness is lost as Peter fails to understand the "learning emotion" that Jerry tries to convey (Bigsby, *Modern* 137). In *A Delicate Balance*, the characters have the opportunity of abandoning their illusions and coming to terms with the existential anxieties they try to suppress, but at the end of the play they continue restricting their consciousness for the sake of maintaining their illusory security.

To conclude, it is important to note that neither Pinter nor Albee "offers [any] guarantee of order, comprehension, survival or love" (Roudané, *Understanding* 23). However, whereas Pinter's characters are not provided with any regenerative powers which might save them from their vacuous existence, Albee's heroes do not choose the path of renewal and authentic existence even though they are bestowed with the chance.

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