The Caretaker: Ambiguity from page to stage

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Abstract

This paper will rivet on the specific techniques used by Clive Donner, the director of The Caretaker movie to underline the ambiguity on the screen stage. It is by analyzing the mise-en scene that we begin to see what are the meanings intended by the director. In other words, analyzing the camera movements, the zooming in and the zooming out, paying attention to the style of actors’ performance and how objects are placed in the scene would highlight the artistically elusive characteristics of the movie. The editing within the film and the spectators’ receptions are also very important to grasp the meanings of the work.

Keywords: The Caretaker, Mise-en Scene, ambiguity, Filmic techniques, Performance.
It is noteworthy to mention that in staging a filmic scene, any minor detail becomes meaningful as soon as it is captured by the camera, which is not the case in stage theatre. Film Studies assert that in order to study a film and deconstruct its meaning, we should pay attention to its mise en scene and examine how the film is constructed and shaped (Nelmes 14). In his book *Introduction to Film Studies: Critical Approaches*, Richard Dyer defines Film Studies as an academic field of study that approaches films theoretically, historically and critically. Actually, “Film Studies is less concerned with advancing proficiency in film production than it is with exploring the narrative, artistic, cultural, economic and political implications of the cinema” (1). In this sense, studying a film should not be separate from the textual analysis of its screenplay with its different cultural and political implications. A film is a complex historical event and it is not an invention or a mere industry. It is an artistic production in which a myriad of ideas is brought to the fore through the different components of its mise-en-scene. In the modern era, the growing of the Films Industry has resulted in an artistic movement that approaches films esthetically and not as commercial products. This has attributed to the success of certain absurdist plays when adapted into movies, *The Caretaker*, for instance. In this respect, this paper handles Clive Donner’s movie *The Caretaker*, a play written by one of the most prominent absurdist writers Harold Pinter. The paper offers a survey of the different dramatic techniques used by the director to highlight Pinter’s ambiguous instances.

Clive Donner’s movie *The Caretaker* shows the importance of the mise en scene in decoding its hidden meanings and in endowing the movie with its highly artistic traits. The film opens with an outside scene, with Mick smoking his cigarette in his car. In this scenery, the mise en scene is organized so that it appears that Mick is sitting in front of us with his somewhat hidden identity. This effect is partly dependent on the lightings, the construction of the image and the movement of the camera’s lens. In fact, all the elements placed in front of the camera in this scene are described by the term mise-en-scene. The car, the cigarette casted off on the street, the door of the house, the stairs, are all staged in a way that makes the location, at first sight, looks very familiar to the spectators.

The camera pays a close-up shot to the black car. A close up shot is a shot that makes an object appear enormously important on the screen when compared to the surrounding objects and it is the one which gains more attention. Clive Donner moves the camera extremely close up to the window of the car in a mid shot and hence, the spectators are introduced to the first actor of the movie Alan Bates. This deep focus technique creates the sharpness of the image and allows the spectator to identify the different components of the stage. Mick’s identity is partially revealed to the spectators as the camera lingers on the car, then it pays a mid shot with an eye-level movement to Mick sitting close to the window.

Indeed, what really matters in the filming process is “the way in which subjects and objects are framed within a shot [that] produces specific readings. Size and volume within the frame speak as much as dialogue, so too do camera angles” (Malkiewics and Mullen 22). For example in the opening scene of the movie, the mid angle shot in a medium close up on the car points to Mick’s mysterious identity because his face was partially hidden by the

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1 Shows some part of the subject in more detail while still giving an impression of the whole subject.
overwhelming darkness of the place. The mystery of Mick is reinforced by the overhead shot from a high angle when he ascends the stairs and the camera follows his movement without revealing his true identity. An overhead shot is a type of shots in which the camera is situated above head height. The movability of the camera in this opening scene, translates perfectly the unfathomable attitudes of Mick. In fact, from the very beginning of the movie and thanks to the camera movement, the spectators can understand that Mick’s character is a fluid one. He is always in a state of constant movement, in the same way the camera moves back and forth, from the left to the right and from a high to a low angle. Simultaneously, Mick gets out of his car, throws his cigarette and ascends the stairs. According to Steven Gale, a British movie critic explains the movement of the camera with the nature of the character itself. In his terms:

Mick’s movements are sending mixed signals, thereby intensifying the audience’s subconscious discomfort. A left-to-right movement across the screen is considered natural and comforting; movement across the screen is disturbing and suggests that the character does not abide by socially imposed restrictions. He determines his own course and limitations. The movement away from the camera is confusing because the threatening figure is retreating, but this movement likewise reduces the audience’s ability to verify the nature of the character. (Sharp Cut, 175)

The focus in and the focus out techniques created by the camera shots prove what Gale has said about Mick’s character. The camera pays a medium close up shot on Mick and on the casted off cigarette, and then it abruptly moves away in an aerial shot to focus on the surrounding large space. Consequently, Mick becomes off screen. All of that creates a feeling of discomfort amongst the spectators and maintains that Mick does not believe in social restrictions. He does not think that individuals should abide by it and follow the laws of their society. Mick is reminiscent of the anger youth generation of the 1960s who is characterized by heir constant move from one place to another and their ultimate objections to any rule or law that may restrict their sense of freedom.

There is a cut, in other words, an immediate transition from one shot to another. There is a transition from focusing on the outsider scene to focus on Mick while he is ascending the stairs. With a close up shot the camera lime lights on the circular form of the stairs and the quick movement of Mick which increases the spectators’ feelings of alarm and dismay. Again the camera movement works as a catalyst for the spectators’ emotions and as a reminder of the characters’ attitudes in the movie. When watching the different scenes of the movie, the good sit down scene, the invitation scene, the identity paper scene, the game scene...Etc, we deduce that Clive Donner uses the strategy of close-up camera movement, to achieve at least one thing which is that feelings of discomfort among his spectators. In the film review of Bosley Growther of The New York Times, the writer argues that, “the fact that Donner has chosen to have most of the scenes played very close, with the camera crowding rudely right up against the characters’ chests or poking right into their faces, as though they

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2 Focus in Technique is a technique which uses fast wide angle-lenses and fast film to preserve as much depth of field as possible in order to create the sharpness of the image (Hayward 87)

3 Focus out technique is a technique that uses camera angle to decrease rapidly the magnification of the image of a distant object by means of a zoom lens. (87)
were car Dreyer’s Joan of Arc, tends to cause a somewhat spotty pattern of individual emotions” (1). In other words, the employment of the close-up shots as their name suggests is to take us into the mind of the character and to create this intimacy between him and between the spectators. Therefore, the spectator feels either comfortable or uncomfortable when he or she goes beyond the image into the inner mind of the pictured character. The “good sit down scene” is a good example of the appliance of close up shots in the film.

The good sit down scene ‘s running time is approximately 25 minutes. It starts when Aston and Davies are still in front of the house and ends up when Aston leaves Davies alone in the room and goes out for a walk. The camera pays a full long two shots on the two characters while they are standing in front of the house. Then it lingers in a mid close up on Aston’s face while he is silently looking at one of the house’s windows, exactly that of the room where Mick is sitting. The facial expressions scanned by that close up shot indicate that Aston does already know that Mick is in the room. The close up shot unveils the inner thoughts of the character and brings to the light his hidden intentions. In keeping his eyes still whenever he looks to the window, Aston discloses his real intention behind bringing the old tramp into the house. He is either transgressing his brother’s will when he decides to share his dreams and thoughts with another person or everything is already planned by both of them to make fun of the new guest. Eyes are always formidable communicators of comfort or discomfort, feelings or thoughts; that is why Clive Donner chooses to use extremely close up shots of the eyes in this scene. In the play, for example, the reader cannot know from the beginning that Aston knows about the presence of his brother in the house, however, in the film and thanks to the camera movement things become clearer from the very beginning.

The camera’s graphic activity makes the spectators feel that the character is in front of them with all his minor details. So close does the camera get to him, so closer the character appears to the spectators, which increases consequently their preconceived depth. The camera’s extremely close up shot on Davies’ face draws the attention of the spectator to his miserable situation. In the play, Davies’ description underlines that the character is a poor old tramp looking for a shelter, but when the camera pays a long close up shot of him, the spectator might feel his unpleasant odor. Indeed:

So close the camera gets to him, so hotly does it breathe down his neck, that you see every detail of his squalor, his filthy and tattered clothes, his bad teeth, his beard all flecked with matter and the beady rheum in his eyes. After more than an hour and a half with him, you sense not only the dismal thing he is---a brazen, bullying, selfish, cowardly creature but also how horribly he smells. (The new York Times Review 2)

In the play, Harold Pinter’s depiction of Davies does really disclose his filthy nature but it is not in the same way the camera close up shot does. The focusing shot on Donald Pleasence amplifies these details and makes the spectator feel like he or she is in front of him. In the text, the stage directions read: “Davies wears a worn brown overcoat, shapeless trousers, a waistcoat, vest, no shirt, and sandals” (Act 1, 39). It is important to note that camera movements are used to depict and build up characters in the movie with graphic details. This is a part of the impact of the picture on the spectators which asserts that the visual is more powerful than the written.
Another effect of the camera movement is that it defines a mood of tension in the movie. The movement of the camera to the left and to the right in a quick manner as soon as Mick hears Aston’s unlocking of the door at the end of the “good sit down scene” increases tension and creates a mood of discomfort. According to Brian Baker:

There are two important shots of Mick. The first is from the room Mick has just entered: The camera is behind and to the right of him, looking over his shoulder to the landing and the other door which Aston unlocks, opens and enters followed by Davies. The second is from the position of the landing, the camera medium low-angled, looking at Mick peering from behind the door of the now shut over door, his face obscured partially by shadows. (184)

Mick enters quickly his room and through a half-way opened door he catches a glimpse of the two comers. The position of a medium close up shot represents him like a shadowy ghost or a malevolent person and creates feeling of discomfort and uneasiness.

In staging The Caretaker, not only are camera movements a vital part of the filmmaking, setting, space and décor are essential parts of the film’s mise-en-scene. They produce specific readings and say as much as camera angles do. It is remarkable that the opening scene of the film is set outside the brothers’ house, unlikely in the play where events start in a small room. The director added the outsider scene of the car to reinforce the realistic aspects of his movie. According to Harold Pinter, it is very important to the meaning of the work to add this realistic scene (qtd. in Gale, Sharp Cut 13). The link between the external and the internal world of the play that Clive Donner establishes in the movie makes the scenes seem less claustrophobic than they are in the play. In the play, the first Act opens with Mick in his small room, sitting on his bed. Stage directions read: “Mick is alone in the room, sitting on the bed. He wears a leather jacket” (Act 1, 39). To set characters rambling into the street or “off to a neighborhood café, for breakfast, adds action to the movie” (The New York Times Review 2) and it disperses the tensional mood of the play. Outsider scenes might be seen like an instance of relief in the movie easing the ambiguity and the elusiveness of the play. We notice two important outsider scenes; the opening scene and the car scene; they add action to the movie and reinforce its realistic aspects.

Despite the addition of some outside scenes to the screenplay to ease its mood of tension and discomfort, we notice that the organization of the stage screen with all its assorted junks in the room reestablishes the claustrophobic nature of the text. In other words, the way with which Clive Donner puts props and objects on stage brings into life the picture of the room as it is described in the play. The camera pays a long close up shot on the Buddha Statue picked up by Aston. The statue is put on a higher place when compared to the surrounding objects left on the floor. This significant arrangement would undoubtedly captivate the attention of the viewers and stimulate their sense of interpretation. There are three important close-up shots of the Buddha Statue in the film: The first is when Mick is sitting alone on his bed, then stands up and looks at the statue near the window. The second shot is when Aston shows the statue to his new guest as if he were a member of the family the new visitor should be introduced to and the final shot is at the end of the film when Mick looks at the statue and smashes it. In that scene, the camera pays an undershot angle to the pieces of the statue shattered on the floor.
In the first shot, the director’s simultaneous focus on Mick and the Statue of Buddha coincides with the coming of Aston and his new guest. It is noteworthy to mention that the statue is an object that Aston has picked up and brought to the house, similarly, Aston picked up Davies from a café quarrel and brought him home. Thus, the close up shot on the statue in this scene may signal the approaching of a new comer. In a sense, the Buddha could be considered as the symbol of Davies, for; both of them were brought to the house by Aston. “Buddha resembles Davies, who can also be seen as something useless Aston has picked up. The Buddha, therefore, could be a symbol of Davies” (Piquemal 9). This idea is highlighted by the second shot on the statue when Aston and Davies enter the room. As soon as Aston gets in the room followed by the old tramp, the camera pays an overhead close shot to the statue that sits atop the gas stove. In fact, all the objects cluttered in the room were picked up by Aston and his unfathomable look to the Buddha may indicate that he manages to pick up another object to be put up in the room. The third close up shot on the Buddha statue takes place when Mick breaks the statue into pieces. Mick’s smashing of the Buddha is one of the most important scenes, both in the play and in the film, for the Buddha is a symbol of complex meanings. Its destruction could be interpreted as Mick’s destruction of Davies’ plans to stay in the room. It could be interpreted also as Mick’s rejection of the type of life he leads. He does no longer believe that there is a God who controls people’s lives. Life is meaningless and God is like any other useless object. Besides, “The utilization of the statue can also be viewed as comment on human emotions. Throughout the play the characters were quite detached, both from each other and the outside world, however when Mick passionately breaks the Buddha (serenity), Davies is requested to leave and the order that has been displayed throughout the play is lost.” (Free Essays 5). The idea is that Buddha symbolizes a seemingly ordered world and because people are emotional by nature, this order can be easily broken in a moment of anger (Mick’s anger lead him to destroy the statue) or a moment of great happiness.

In the movie, “the closed in sense of the stage set is replicated by shooting through piles of junk” (Gale, Butter’s Going up 12). Obviously, the director has been able to replicate the same staging for the movie through the different objects and props he resorted to. The use of props is essential in adding meaning to the movie. The buildup of junk on the stage screen appears to stress the feelings of confinement amongst the spectators in the same way the play does. The sequences of separate close up shots on the disconnected gas stove, the step-ladder, the bed, the shopping trolley, the coal bucket and the kitchen sink bring to the fore the idea of separate human beings. The room is full of unconnected items that have been gathered over the years; similarly the world is full of different unconnected people who haven’t communicated with each other for years. Each object “is completely unrelated to the others, like people they are a mixture of things, and therefore, can be nothing but isolated” (Free Essays 5). The broken toaster is another essential prop in the staging of the movie. The camera pays an overhead shot on Aston at the very beginning of the movie while he is fixing the plug of the toaster, and then it lingers on the toaster in a close-up shot. The same thing happened in the final scene when Aston picks up the toaster to fix it again. Very similar to the play, this displays that nothing happens in the movie. The movie ends in the same way it starts and this highlights the idea that life in the modern world is becoming meaningless and futile.
The style of the actors’ performance is a fundamental component of the staging of the movie. Actors’ performance may add to it a bundle of meanings. In his review of the film, Stanley Kauffmann praises the efforts of the three actors, who, in his terms, have offered the world of cinema one of the best movies at that time. Accordingly, “the three actors of the original production are, like the play itself, even better in the film: Robert Shaw, Alan Bates, the younger brother, Donald Pleasence, who has the part of his life as the derelict and is, to put it in one word, perfect” (qtd. in Baker 22). Kauffman finds the film version much better than the previous theatre production as far as actors’ performance is concerned. It is noteworthy to add that Alan Bates and Donald Pleasence participated in the previous stage theatre productions, only Robert Shaw was the predecessor of Peter Woodthorpe in the film.

Commenting on his role in the movie, Alan Bates argues that:

The film version of The Caretaker was essentially a piece of theatre, but I don’t want to call it filmed theatre, because I think Clive Donner’s direction got far beyond that. Nevertheless, the speeches and the conception of the characters are to a certain extent stylized although the treatment was very simple and realistic. Since I’d done it in the theatre, there was some necessary adjustment for the film particularly in my part […]. The character is sinister anyway, of course, I think the closer you are the more sinister he is, because you see much more of his interior mind, whereas in the theatre, the emphasis was on funny lines. (qtd. In Gow 12)

Alan Bates asserts that his performance has entirely developed in the film version and all the adjustments that have been done particularly to his speeches were needed basically due to the filmic nature. These adjustments make him look more serious on the screen than he is on the stage theatre. His speeches on the stage theatre stimulate the audience’s laughter; however, on stage screen they become discomforting and threatening. The movements of the camera focusing on his mind’s eyes rather than his words along the whole film diminish the degree of humour and increase the actions’ seriousness.

For Donald Pleasence the movie was an opportunity to go beyond his competency and capacity as an actor and to show the spectators another performance different from his other performances on stage theatre. Donald Pleasence is a “very well established actor, nationally known for his television work, before the advent of The Caretaker, but with his portrayal of Davies during two years in London and New York, followed by the film, he gave one of the finest performances in living memory” (McFarlane 82). Donald Pleasence has a quite long experience with the role of Davies; he knows the character very well and this has undoubtedly contributed to his brilliant performance of the character on stage screen. In his interview with Gordon Reid, Donald Pleasence says:

I’d already played in the character for a long time on stage before we made the film and making the film was a luxury. I knew the character so well, I could improvise… I knew exactly what that character would do in any situation. In fact, when we were filming in Hackney, I used to walk about the streets in character. (qtd. in McFarlane 2)

In fact, Donald Pleasance’s experience with the role of Davies helped him improvise and add significant traits to the character in the film that is why his performance reached the pick of greatness and won the admiration of the critics.
In his book *Text and Performance*, the writer and the film critic Ronald Knowles praises the performance of Donald Pleasence, but as far as the role of Aston is concerned, he argues that Peter Woodthorpe portrayal of Aston on stage was very faithful to the play and better than that of Robert Shaw in the film. According to Knowles, “the part of Aston is the most difficult in the play. The characters of Mick and Davies necessarily have a variety of gestures-vocal and physical but Aston, partially numbed by his experience in a mental hospital, just has the toaster and the odd plank to occupy him” (78). In other words, the nature of the character is not that easy to be performed and that is due to the character’s psychological traumas which require a lot of effort from the part of the actor in order to bring them into life. In the terms of Knowles, Peter Woodthorpe has perfectly succeeded in unveiling the inner psyche of the character more than did Robert Shaw in the film; Peter Woodthorpe performance on stage theatre was “extraordinary formidable…a latent implacability…so powerful and so quite” (78). The best thing about his performance is that, “the oddity of Woodthorpe’s Aston came from within, inevitably, as a total condition, not an occasional aberration provoked by something external. Aston’s stillness was like a grotesque travesty of the statue of Buddha he has brought to the attic, as his long speech closing act two manifest” (78). In the stage version, Peter Woodthorpe attracted the appeal of the audience with his excellent playing of the role of Aston as he stuck faithfully to the description of the character pointed out by Pinter in the original text. However, in the film Robert Shaw plays in his role differently. Indeed:

Robert Shaw took a different approach. He recognized that the more normal he attempted to be as Aston, the more painfully contrasted his manifest oddity would be, Robert Shaw is in both manner and appearance, surprisingly normal…Peter Woodthorpe had an odder, more offbeat appearance and he did more to play the character’s eccentricities. (qtd. In Knowles 79)

Obviously, with the filmed version of Aston’s character, the normality of Robert Shaw has reduced the oddity of Aston’s character. This oddity has been better highlighted in the text of the play. In the text, Harold Pinter depicts Aston as a traumatized person who lives imprisoned to his pipe dream of building a shed, surprisingly, despite his psychological inconsistencies; he is characterized by slow and often meaningful utterances when compared to the other characters. Stage directions read: “Aston sits on the bed, takes out a tobacco tin and papers and begins to roll himself a cigarette” (Act 1, 40), “Aston crosses to the plug box to get another plug” (42), “Aston goes back to his bed and starts to fix the plug on the toaster” (42). This obsession with fixing the plug of the toaster occupying Aston’s life may seem to the reader a normal activity when he starts reading about the character. However, at the end of the play he or she becomes sure that the character’s odd activity suggests his strange behavior. The complexity of the character lies in this contradiction between how he appears and how he is in reality. His apparent normality hides his strange behavior.

In the film, the hidden oddity of the character is substituted by a certain visual normality due to the performance of Robert Shaw and due to Nicholas Roeg’s camera movements. Watching the first ten minutes of the “good sit in” scene, the first scene of the movie which sets the stage for Davies and Aston to have an exchange of words, we deduce that the camera cuts twice to Aston in a close up shot while he is listening quietly to Davies. The camera’s closing all the time on Aston’s face suggests to the spectator a quite normal person. Indeed, it is the power of the camera focusing techniques and not Robert Shaw’s
performance that shaped Aston’s character in the film. Robert Shaw’s performance was great but some of the filmic necessities have modified the text’s depiction of the character.

Significantly, we notice that there are no women in the cast of the film, despite the mentioning of two female figures in the play; Aston’s wife and the brother’s mother. Clive Donner could have worked on the idea of female figures in the movie, at least in the way Harold Pinter dealt with them in the play. In the play, female figures have a great impact on the other male characters, though they are absent in the scenes and actions of the play. Moreover, their descriptions are taken from the point of view of male characters (Aston and Davies), who, attribute to them a bad reputation. Indeed, “this theme is worth mentioning. The absence of something or someone might be revealing as its presence. This [movie] would certainly not please feminists since women are not only excluded but also ill-treated when referred to. Each character talks of a woman at one point in the play and in the movie” (Piquemal 30). Some feminists would find the play as well as the film very provocative in the sense that they eliminated the presence of female characters and they even dealt with them as minor figures in the process of events. “First Davies tells Aston why he left his wife; he says she was so dirty and untidy that she left her underwear in the saucepan (p.4). Then Mick uses his mother as a joke to destabilize Davies (p.52) (he says to him that the bed is his mother’s). Finally Aston says that his mother permitted the electroshock therapy, though he had written a letter to her, begging her to refuse” (30).

Surprisingly, Davies leaves his wife because she is dirty while he, himself, is dirty, untidy and evokes disgust with his unpleasant odor. Mick also has used all of his power and tricks to keep up his relationship with his brother out of the reach of the greedy guest, whereas, when he and his brother talked about their mother, they treated her badly. This will lead the spectators and the critics to wonder, “Why women are treated so badly. May be their absence stresses the characters’ loneliness; in a society where young brides are unclean, and where mothers let you down, you cannot rely on anybody” (Piquemal 30).

When adapting the play into the movie, one can deduce an obvious process of editing and modification that takes place, particularly, in the speeches of the characters. These adjustments facilitate for the actors the performance of their roles and add a realistic aspect to the staging of the movie. The camera’s close up shots has substituted many of the character’s words. Actually:

With Bate’s screen performance Pinter halved the celebrated speeches of Act two [pp. 40, 41, 44-5 ]; the first speech cut out, “had a marvelous stop-watch…to it was a funny business; the second cut “this chap…to the nag’s head”; the third line speech has 23 lines cut, including the lengthy final passage “on the other hand…won’t we?”. What Pinter did was to reduce considerably the theatrical nature of the speeches […]. In the film subtextual implication was replaced by close-up. (Knowles 74)

Due to the filmic nature which requires that some outside scenes should be added to the play, speeches should be re-organized to put up with the alteration of the setting. It is noteworthy to add that some lines are also removed from Aston’s hospital monologue. In the second scene of the second Act, Aston tells Davies about his experience in a mental hospital and how he managed to escape. The bitterness of this experience is highlighted through a
sequence of close up shots on the eyes and face of Aston rather than emphasizing the words of his monologue. That is why some sentences are removed from his speech. According to Steven Gale:

> Because some of the action now [in the film] takes place outside the room, dialogue must be added, cut or rearranged in order to accommodate the differences in setting. Partially, too, the dialogue alterations (e.g.) the removal of some lines from Aston’s hospital monologue, are necessary because of the kind of flow of action demanded by the film. As a matter of fact, the screen writer seems more willing to substitute pure actions for words in some cases” (*Butter’s Going up* 14).

This is quite clear in two scenes, the hospital monologue scene and in the “good sit in” scene when Davies enters the room for the first time and starts to look upon the place. In the play, the character says: “there is a good bit of stuff” (Act 1, 43). In the movie this sentence has been removed and substituted by two close-up shots on Davies and on the piled junk, “the piled junk seen behind him almost seems to be closing in” (Gale, *Butter’s Going up* 4). This endows the movie with a highly comic effect, due to the graphic movement of the camera.

The pathetic tone of the “hospital monologue” scene and the comic effect of the “good sit down” scene reinforce the importance of the spectator as the engine of the meaning-making. In his book *Film Theory: An introduction*, Robert Stan allot a critical importance to spectators in the filmic actions. Accordingly, “cinema ensures that the spectator is established as the active centre and producer of meanings. The events, people, landscapes and objects of the film, its fictional reality; are always and necessarily seen from a fixed point in its imaginary space, one that is occupied by the spectator” (79). Thereby, the movability of the camera in the visual space works as a catalyst and as a stimulus to the spectators’ reactions. However, stimulating the reactions of the spectators has nothing to do with whether the mise en scene of the film is realistic or not, actually, “the film does not judge mise en scene by how closely it mimics the world we live in, just as director might want to create a thoroughly wrapped suburban living room set with oversized furniture” (Sikov 6). The movement of the camera and the movement of the actors on stage screen stimulate either the spectators’ tears or spectators’ laughing. This does not have any relationship to whether the mise en scene is realistic or absurd. Let’s take the example of the hospital Monologue scene, a scene with a running time of nine minutes; Aston’s sentences are fragmented and even meaningless. He appears like hallucinating, however, spectators’ tears underline their compassion and identification with the character. Besides, in the opening exchange between Aston and Davies, Clive Donner stresses the comic nature of Davies. His filthy and untidy clothes as well as his manner of talking stimulate the spectators’ laughing, who start to recognize Davie as a comic figure. Moreover, as much as the spectators can laugh heartily when watching Davies’ character, they may feel menaced when watching the mysterious Mick in the opening scene. Mick is always in a constant situation of motion and change. Along the whole movie he hardly talks to his brother, however, surprisingly, he uses all of his power to evict the new guest who threatens his relationship with him. This unfathomable nature of the character creates feelings of doubt among the spectators. “The spectator begins to feel concerned” (Gauthier 112), yet for him/her there can be no complete explanation. Indeed, the spectator reviewer adds much to the rhythm of a stage screen production and he/she is a central component in the filmmaking process.
In order to understand how Clive Donner’s *the Caretaker* works out and reflects meanings to the spectators, an investigation in the term mise-en-scene has been conducted in this paper. Indeed, by analyzing the mise en scene of the movie we start to understand what those meanings might be. To conclude, the adaptation of Harold Pinter’s *The Homecoming* into a film has clarified some of the text’s ambiguities, yet, it has not altered the austere nature of the play. It is noteworthy to mention that even after the final blow of the film many questions remained unanswered and many details were left unexplained.
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