A STUDY OF DRAMATIC STRUCTURE
IN HAROLD PINTER'S STAGE PLAYS

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
April, 1972
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Date April 24th, 1972
ABSTRACT

Pinter has said that his main concern when writing a play is with structure, yet published criticism has so far paid little attention to this aspect of his craft. This study, therefore, examines the structures of Pinter's stage plays. The method followed is a chronological structural analysis moving from The Room through The Birthday Party, The Dumb Waiter, The Caretaker, The Homecoming, Landscape and Silence to his latest play, Old Times, first produced in London on June 1, 1971. The opening chapter discusses the terms which form a background to the subsequent description of the dramatic structures. The analyses demonstrate that there are at least three major features of his craftsmanship to emerge at this point in his career. The first is that whereas the stage plays up to the writing of Landscape share a common, almost traditionally sequential narrative structure, the three latest plays, Landscape, Silence and Old Times, have differently shaped structures relying heavily on the exploration of memory and abandoning a normal sequential ordering of incident. This marked change implies a different use of time which is the second major feature, and is a consequence of the exploration of the past. It is accompanied in Landscape and Silence by a shift from dialogue in the previous plays to an almost exclusive reliance on monologue. Pinter also moves from his earlier comic-grotesque manner to a cooler, more subdued mode which uses lyrical and elegiac language. The third major feature of
his craftsmanship is a certain rhythm of structure. This is a tendency to elaborate a one-act form into a larger structure, and then to take some feature or concern from previous work, paring down and compressing to make another one-act play, before building up and elaborating once more. Thus *The Room* is followed by the larger, three act structure of *The Birthday Party* to accommodate additional concerns. *The Dumb Waiter* shows the paring down process before the structural expansion in *The Caretaker*. *The Homecoming*, with its tighter two-act structure, is centrally placed, looking back to previously explored themes and anticipating the concern with memory in the three latest works. In the one-act *Landscape* Pinter abandons horizontal for vertical structure, explores cyclic rather than sequential time and uses monologue rather than dialogue. *Silence* illustrates a further paring down process in its even more austere denial of theatricality before the renewed building up process discernible in the two-act play, *Old Times*. 
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CHAPTER I

DRAMATIC STRUCTURE AND PINTER'S PLAYS

The history of Harold Pinter's rise to fame and eminence as a playwright can be described in the numerous reviews of the various performances of his plays and the rapidly growing number of articles, pamphlets, theses and books about them. From the obscurity of acting small parts in provincial towns, Pinter has fairly rapidly emerged as a playwright of considerable success and stature. His plays usually have a strongly communicable emotional pattern to which audiences can respond, while the obscurities are not distracting enough to destroy or weaken the emotional power; in fact if anything they tend to add to the sense of growing tension and menace which has become so much the hallmark of the Pinter play. Moreover, Pinter's dialogue is often so true to the particularities of the kind of speech one can hear among working people in England, especially the Londoners, that the recognition of the patterns and special tone of such speech is extremely pleasurable and often very funny. This is true of the early plays to the extent that it may be said that Pinter is very much of his age in having dramatized areas of lower-class life, that he is part of that movement away from the genteel world of the drawing-room and the cocktail party to the bleaker world of bed-sitters, basements and a very different kind of party. From another point of view, it can be seen that Pinter has had the merit of being intellectually in fashion; he may be linked with one of
the most intellectually fashionable phenomena of recent years — the so-called theatre of the absurd. But the biggest single factor in Pinter's success and the one which will decide whether his plays will endure must ultimately be the growing mastery of his craft as playwright. And it is here that Pinter belongs to a long and respected tradition — that of the all-round man of the theatre. He is actor, director and playwright. Furthermore, he is willing to experiment with many types of dramatic media besides that of the live theatre, namely television, cinema, radio and the animated cartoon.

Katherine Burkman has summed up very clearly this aspect of Pinter's interest as a playwright:

Pinter's own experience as an actor and director with radio, television, stage, and screen have doubtless contributed to his understandings of the economy necessary for each medium and for his unusual mastery of such a variety of forms. Despite his achievements, however, in the various entertainment media of our time, Pinter finds the theater "ultimately the most important medium," and he has suggested that he reserves his most important ideas for the stage. He finds writing for the theater the most difficult, the most restricted, "the most naked kind" of writing because "you're just there, stuck — there are your characters stuck on the stage, you've got to live with them and deal with them." All of Pinter's dramatic world exhibits something of this quality of dealing with life accurately and revealing it in its naked truth.1

Pinter thinks of his stage plays as the most important area of his work. It is also true that his main concern as a writer of plays is with dramatic structure. This study will therefore examine the structures of Pinter's stage plays: The Room,
The Birthday Party, The Dumbwaiter, The Caretaker, The Homecoming, Landscape, Silence and Old Times. Plays written specifically for radio and television, together with the several filmscripts, thus fall outside the scope of this enquiry. In omitting A Slight Ache, A Night Out, Night School, The Dwarfs, The Collection, The Lover, Tea Party and The Basement, I do not wish to imply that those plays are not interesting in themselves, or are lacking in structural charm or fascination, for this is by no means the case. Most of them, though written either for radio or television, have been staged with varying success at later dates. The Collection and The Lover, while being essentially television plays with brief, rapidly changing scenes, visual effects, and close-up shots, can be adapted for the stage because the words are still a very important aspect of their power. In Tea Party and The Basement, however, everything important happens in pictures rather than in words. The television medium is used to maximum visual effect. It is vital to have camera-work in Tea Party, for instance, when Disson sees two ping pong balls coming towards him while playing table tennis. Equally, The Basement demands camera-work to give instant shifts from one mode of furnishing in the room to the other mode. When Tea Party and The Basement were adapted for the stage and run as a double bill at the Duchess Theatre from 17 September, 1970 for a short while, the reviews, although Pinter was already famous and respected, were possibly the most unfavourable of his career. One reviewer concluded that the plays "...won't
transfer to the stage despite great performances in both by Donald Pleasence."

The revue sketches are very short, and since they are all designed as little items in the larger and more casual structure of the variety bill, they will not be considered for the purposes of this enquiry.

Since Pinter criticism has so far been mainly concerned with linguistic effect, imagery, theme and meaning, in this study I prefer to confine my attention, as far as possible, to the almost unexplored territory of his dramatic structures.

It is my contention in this thesis that close examination of the structures of Pinter's stage plays demonstrates at least three major features of his craftsmanship. The first is that whereas the stage plays up to the writing of Landscape share a common, almost traditionally sequential narrative structure, the three latest plays, Landscape, Silence and Old Times use differently shaped structures relying heavily on the exploration of memory and abandoning a normal sequential ordering of incident. This marked change implies a different use of time. And this is the second major feature. This shift in the use of time is a consequence of the exploration of the past, and is accompanied in Landscape and Silence by reliance on monologue rather than dialogue. The changes in technique in the latest three stage plays are accompanied by a change to a lyrical and elegiac use of language in which Pinter shifts from his earlier comic-grotesque manner to a cooler, more subdued mode. The third major feature of his craftsmen-
ship is a tendency discernible from *The Room* through the various stage plays to *Old Times* which may be called a rhythm of structure by which Pinter moves from a basic situation and its concerns in one-act form to an elaboration of it into a larger structure, either two or three acts; subsequent development then seems to depend upon taking some feature or concern from previous work, paring down and shearing away material and leaving some core of dramatically promising substance for one-act treatment, to be followed in turn by elaboration once more into a larger structure.

But what is dramatic structure? At least since Aristotle it has been felt that beneath the various embellishments and tricks of the trade drama is basically the imitation of an action — perhaps a series of actions — which will be ordered in some way. What Aristotle meant by "action" is problematic, but for our purposes here it may be defined as a situation which contains some human event, perhaps physical, emotional or intellectual or a combination of these. In real life such events exist in a continuum which is a seemingly infinite tangle of causes, effects, accidents, relationships and associations, without a clear beginning or end. They are, as it were, all middle. But the action or actions in a play have been selected by the writer and they are often structured in an obvious way. As Aristotle pointed out, the action can have a beginning, a middle and an end. This simple formula, of course, which may be seen to correspond to exposition, complication and denouement, is by no means simple-minded, for it raises
sophisticated artistic and philosophical questions about what exactly constitutes a beginning or, for that matter, an end. Aristotle has gone right to the heart of the problem of the dramatist. When the dramatist tells a story it is through the medium of performed action, and if he is to achieve drama rather than chaos, the action must be structured. This is the abiding problem of the dramatist, so that it is no surprise to find Pinter asserting

What concerns me most is shape and structure. 4

It is, though, a surprising fact that, in spite of the vital importance of structure to the dramatist and to Pinter himself, the critics of Pinter's plays have little to say except in passing about their dramatic structure.

Playwrights who work in close connection with theatres and theatre people soon acquire a feeling for the kind of structural elements which seem to work in the theatre and to which actors and audience can readily respond. Bernard Shaw was fully aware of these matters, and Strindberg went so far as to draw up a list of things necessary for a good play:

An effective play should contain or make use of:

hints and intimations
a secret made known to the audience either at the beginning or toward the end. If the spectator but not the actors know the secret, the spectator enjoys their game of blindman's buff. If the spectator is not in on the secret, his curiosity is aroused and his attention held.
an outburst of emotion, rage, indignation
a discovery
a punishment (nemesis), a humiliation
a careful resolution, either with or without a reconciliation

a quid pro quo
a parallelism
a reversal (revirement), an upset, a well-prepared surprise.5
We can recognize here structural devices which have continued to work on audiences since the time of Aeschylus. Fortunately the various elements of the playwright's craft can be used in a considerable number of ways with many different emphases and in an infinite set of combinations. If we describe structure as the way the action of a play is shaped from the start to the end, we can see that playwrights have made a variety of structures. Indeed, one of the fascinations of modern drama is the abundance of different structures that have been used since the plays of Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov.

Despite the fact that good playwrights find the means to shape their material in such a way as to produce an effectively appropriate and individual structure, unique and particular, it is possible to make certain generalizations about dramatic structure. It is as well to have these general notions in mind before going on to explore the individual structures of Pinter's stage plays in subsequent chapters.

In general, the action of a play will consist of a story (sequence of events) or situation which is shaped to produce a plot. In so far as their situations are shaped all plays have plots, though not all have stories. The situation or story of a play is usually only part of a wider situation or narrative. This narrative is the total circumstances, events or situations implied by, or recalled during, the play's action; thus some part of the narrative may have happened before the point at which the play starts, or after the point at which a play ends. In choosing a point of attack with which to start his action a
playwright already sets himself on the path to finding a structure. When he feels that he has written out the situation which can end the play he has made a further decision which will complete his structure. And the processes of writing in between these two points involve many choices about what to put in and what to leave out, what to enact and what to report, what to underplay and what to stress. All these decisions may involve language, character, spectacle, sound, silence, plotting of events: they are also decisions about structure. A recent theorist on dramatic structure sums it up in this way:

For skilled playwrights, form is structured action. And structured action — in all its clarity, emotive power, and dramatic beauty — is an active thing. It achieves actuality during the writing and remains actual, forever, in the play itself. As plot, a structured action stands as organization to all the other parts — character, thought, diction, sounds, and spectacle — and is both dependent upon them and inseparable from them. It is, however, the most necessary part of a play. Drama depends on language, for example, only as one means for expressing the action. A structured action is the heart of any drama.

Although in a finished play structure is inseparable from its various elements, it is possible in the discussion and criticism of plays to notice things about structure, to name them and discuss their effects. Of course, in a given play it is possible that many but not all the well-known structural devices will occur. In most plays the beginning will be a point in the narrative or situation where a balance of relationships exists having potentiality for further development or complication. A disturbance of the balance will then occur either in the form of a person or an event. Several of Pinter's plays begin in this way. In The Birthday Party, for example, the routine
of the skimpy breakfast in Meg's guest house is broken when Stanley finally appears, and further complicated by the presentation of his personality, his tensions and his fears.

In many traditional, fairly orthodox plays, a chain of causal relationships then becomes established in which the protagonist may be the main agent of the action, as in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, or may be largely passive, as is Aeschylus's *Prometheus* or *Agamemnon*. Whether the protagonist is an individual or a group of individuals, the play's chain of causes and consequences usually leads to some resolution or *denouement* where another state of balance has been achieved by means of an action which has led through *obstacles* which help to increase tension and force decisions, and through *complications*, the factors which succeed in altering the course of events unexpectedly but credibly so as to maintain tension, suspense and often surprise. Complications also amplify the story or situation. In an effective play there will also be points in the action where there is a conflict of forces with an uncertain outcome; these are the *crises*, and they, too, build tension, arouse suspense and often necessitate decisions by the characters. A crisis will build to its peak and moment of resolution, that instant when the conflict is settled, which we call a *climax*, and which may be immediate or postponed. A play will usually have a number of crises and climaxes which culminate in a major climax.

These elements in the plotting of the story will work in conjunction with character, theme, language, rhythm, time and
spectacle to make up the total structure. Characterization can work as a structural device by means of the extended meaning or allegorical import of the character. In *The Birth­day Party*, Stanley is presented as a certain person, a slovenly, neurotic, myopic failed musician. But the extended meaning of his character is that he is also a victim when he finds himself in opposition to Goldberg and McCann. From this point of view, one function of Stanley's characterization is to contribute to a structure in which an unpleasant domestic tyrant suffers a reversal, becomes a victim and is removed from the security he had known. Another way of using characterization structurally is to create groupings of characters, usually in opposition to each other. Thus in *The Birthday Party* we can see a structure in which the central figure of Stanley is set amid two groups — Goldberg and McCann, the powerful and mysterious guests, and Petey, Meg and Lulu who provide the environment of the guest house, and a relative degree of safety for Stanley. All are well differentiated as personalities, besides serving this structural purpose; indeed the differences in the safe group of characters have important structural consequences. Lulu claims to know what Stanley's tormentors are doing to him, but is angry with Goldberg and evidently feels that Stanley has forfeited her sympathy and help by his attack on her during the party scene; Petey is suspicious and acts as an obstacle, providing suspense until Goldberg silences him with a threat; Meg is oblivious of what has been happening to Stanley and does not realize that he has gone, thus providing a major irony in
the quiet resolution scene at the end.

The use of time in the structure of drama holds a special fascination. The last scene of Doctor Faustus demonstrates Marlowe's masterly exploitation of our sense that a given stretch of time can appear brief or endless. Faustus' last hour, the eleventh, takes only a few minutes of playing time. The compression serves to intensify the agony of his last moments, enforces the ideas that he has wasted his life and that all men waste their precious time, and enforces the contrast between a moment of time and the infinite stretch of eternity which is God's time. The performance time of so many hours or minutes is a basic structural element which can also be linked with a specific location in time for the action of the play — it may be set in past, present or future. But there is also a fictional period of time or time sector in the play. In Marlowe's play it is a portion of Faustus' adult years from the time of his pact with the devil until the moment of his death. This is presented as episodic time, in a series of short, unfixed episodes which jump about in time past — the time location we have been given by the Chorus. The fictional time in a play can be handled in a number of other ways as well. The most straightforward is the direct causal progression of sequential time. There can also be the diffuse sequence of time where the progress is interrupted by flashbacks, and this is commonly used in films. Beckett's plays Waiting for Godot and Play both use what may be called circular time, where time passes, events occur but there is no stress on causal relationships, and
the sequence can be repeated. Act II of Godot is basically a repeat of Act I, while the whole of Play's text is spoken twice in performance. In his latest play, Old Times, Pinter, as I hope to demonstrate later, uses a combination of circular and diffuse time. But all such uses of time are, as it were, contained within the time present and passing of the performance itself. In the plays of Chekhov and Beckett the dramatic structure contains little that can pass as action in the traditional kind of drama. This is also true of Pinter's plays Landscape and Silence. Like Waiting for Godot, they seem to present the experience of passing time in the absence of action of the old kind.

If the time taken by the performance contains the previously mentioned fictional time sector organized in a particular way, it also has a further implication which is structurally important: performance time itself unfolds in a rhythm of slower and faster scenes, developing a timing or pacing effect. This can be called tempo. It is a variable factor which depends upon the relation of one scene to another, and careful work by the performers themselves. The juxtaposition of longer and shorter scenes and variety of pace helps to enliven and intensify, to reinforce rather than establish emotional impact and meaning. Actors are particularly aware of tempo if they are good at their job. It is interesting that Pinter, who started his theatre career as an actor, is a playwright very much concerned to control tempo by means of directing many pauses and silences in his texts to an unusual degree.
Some modern playwrights have stressed spatial rather than temporal form in the plays. Shakespeare and Ibsen both repeated scenes with similar patterns and groups of characters in order to emphasize change during the passage of time. The procession of the court assembly near the beginning of Hamlet is calm and joyful; the next time the court assembles it is for the "mousetrap" and Claudius will cry for lights; the final assembly of the court sees the unmasking and killing of Claudius and the rest of the fatal denouement. We are made acutely aware of change. In Pinter's plays on the other hand, thematic material, the repetition of motifs of language or routine business, is stressed rather than the drive of a plot through a chain of cause and effect. Events and characters can obtrude without explanation. Thus the descent of the dumb-waiter or the arrival of Gus as a victim are not explained in normal plot terms. At the beginning of all plays, anything can happen. But in the traditional kind of drama, every act, obstacle, or complication as the plot progresses narrows the possibilities and confines us to what is probable and necessary. A recognizable logic of probability is at work. We can begin to assume things and make deductions. Pinter's plays, though, often seem to be characteristically proceeding by offering information and then denying any pattern of probability by offering different and contradictory information. Instead of reaching necessity and certainty at the end, Pinter's structures tend to keep the unexpected and the possible open. At the end of The Dumb Waiter, even, Ben does not shoot Gus.
The temporal form of structure with its beginning, middle and end in a causal chain is often described as horizontal, having a progress through conflict to a climax. The spatial kind of structure in which story is of little importance and tension often comes from stress, anxiety or dread within the characters themselves, is often called vertical. It starts, goes on and stops in a seemingly random or a broken "sequence." It is often the gaps rather than the connections between scenes which are important. In graphic terms this kind of structure often seems to be like a curve or a circle rather than a straight line. Pinter has been successful at creating structures which use resemblance to real life situations, characters and dialogue only to undercut the sense of the real in order to provoke uneasy tensions between the realistic and the inexplicable. Because the total structure and conventions of Everyman are allegorical, we do not find it inexplicable that Everyman should be accosted by Death on an errand from God. But in Pinter's plays before Landscape, we are often unnerved and puzzled by the intrusion of the unexplained into an environment we can recognize as an ordinary lower or middle-class English sitting room. Pinter's undercutting of probability and realism with such figures as the blind Matchseller in A Slight Ache, or Goldberg and McCann, is in fact a philosophical process, implying a view of life as insecure and uncertain, subject to threat and menace from unidentified forces, just as the episodes of Everyman, instigated by God and controlled by Death, imply a view of life as a quest leading to judgement, a journey through
sin and ignorance towards knowledge and the possibility of salvation through good deeds and God's grace. The dramatist's practices in the selection of his materials, the structural principles he uses to arrange them, and the total arrangement itself reveal his particular philosophy or vision — in short, his moral universe. When criticizing drama it is necessary to look at the total structure as well as particular passages:

No spectator can fully perceive the whole structure of a given play until the performance has ended, but it does not therefore suddenly emerge. Form, especially in a medium like drama, is in part a process of accumulation. The spectator in the theater is aware of a constant growth, a continual burgeoning into many parts. But the relationship that these parts hold to one another implies an ultimate unity whose nature stands fully revealed when the play has reached its conclusion. Thus a play's whole structure, though only an abstraction and not even a completed abstraction until the end, operates from the beginning to order the individual impressions and to control the spectator's manner of perceiving them.7

It is the final view of the structure in its completeness which allows us in drama to have a point of view more objective than merely the opinion of a central character. No one character can necessarily be identified with an objective point of view or a correct interpretation of life. It is only from the final overview that we get something like the omniscient narrator's point of view in fiction, or the manipulation of camera angle in a movie. In drama, this final overview may, in fact, coincide with the vision of a single character. In many plays, though, there is not one view but a double view, where two differing
attitudes are made sympathetic in varying ways to an audience so that they are forced to see reality as a tension between conflicting but persuasive forces. Thus, in The Caretaker, the expulsion of Davies may be seen as a cruel act but also as a means of protecting Aston from the tramp. Ambiguity is maintained too in our attitude to Davies; he is filthy, cunning, lazy and dishonest, yet Pinter manages to make him also a figure of pathos. In this double view structure we find the compassion which may not have been evident until the total structure had unfolded. Naturally, multiple views may result from certain structures so that we are forced to see life in terms not of lack of meaning, but as a complexity open to conflicting, differing but equally valid (from evidence within the play) interpretations. When there is not enough evidence within a total structure for arriving at a definite view or views, then we have an open structure; the play would be a riddle without an answer. The surface texture of Pinter's plays can sometimes be very puzzling, and The Dwarfs could be an open view structure, but Pinter is usually careful to provide within his dramatic structures a strong emotional pattern of a fairly orthodox sort, exploiting strong blackouts, curtains and endings. This is true of the plays before Landscape. He also provides plenty of laughs as well as menace. Although the plays are at times puzzling, they are not therefore frustrating, and this is because they provide a good deal of emotional release and entertainment.

This discussion of the structural elements of drama is
not offered as a rigid scheme or mould into which Pinter's plays will be fitted, come what may. It is, rather, a series of observations based on the examination of existing plays and the recognition of devices and terminology culled from the practice of the playwrights. It will provide a basis and a vocabulary for the empirical analysis of the structure of Pinter's stage plays. These structures may well modify or provide variations on the principles so far discussed. They may well ignore some of them. As Friedrich Hebbel noted in his *Journals*:

> Dramatic deeds are not the ones that go straight ahead like bullets.\(^8\)
CHAPTER II
THE THREE EARLY PLAYS

Pinter's three early plays, The Room, The Birthday Party and The Dumb Waiter, all written in 1957, embody the dual tendency of Pinter's craft as a playwright — the tendency on the one hand to explore a very simple, bare and perhaps fragmentary situation, and on the other hand to explore a fuller, more expansive situation capable of growth and complication. Since the two short plays, as might be expected, fall into the former category, this discussion will begin with them, before moving on to consider the larger pattern of The Birthday Party.

The Room was the first play Pinter wrote. It was made in response to the needs of a friend, Henry Woolf, the actor, who wanted a play at very short notice for production in the Drama Department at Bristol University. It was written in only four days, but grew from a basic image which had been in Pinter's mind for some time. In Time of 10 November 1961, Pinter is quoted as remembering how once at a party in London he had looked into a room to see two men, one of whom, a little bare-footed man, was carrying on a lively and rather literate conversation, and at the table next to him sat an enormous lorry driver. He had his cap on and never spoke a word. And all the while, as he talked, the little man was feeding the big man — cutting his bread, buttering it, and so on. Well, this image would never leave me.

In an article he had published a few months earlier, Pinter
revealed that this basic image had struck him with a sort of dramatic urgency:

This stuck with me for some time afterwards, and I felt that the only way I could give it expression and get it off my mind was dramatically. I started off with this picture of the two people and let them carry on from there.¹

The image proved to be a pregnant one, containing elements which Pinter could develop and use again: the room itself as a haven; the unexpected arrival at the door; the power of a silent individual; the vulnerability of solicitous talkers; the acceptance of a given, unexplained situation and characters; the direct acceptance of working-class characters as fodder for the dramatic imagination, rather than as mere comic stock characters or objects of social concern. It is noteworthy, too, that he was not in The Room interested in developing the suggestion of a homosexual relationship between the two men, but instead made them into a married couple, Rose and Bert Hudd. The lorry driver has become Bert, the van driver; despite this slight change, driving is retained in the play as an important part of Bert's characterization, suggestive of his sexual and aggressive urges, and crops up as a motif in later works.

Finally, the people in the room were having a one-sided "conversation," presenting a spectacle with gave Pinter a starting point for the structure not only of The Room, but also for other plays, that of two characters, one of whom is silent while the other keeps up a monologue.

In order to discern the structure of a play it is convenient to divide it into its "scenic units." The scenic unit
is a portion of the play in which a piece of business, or a mime, or the spoken lines present us with an emotion or an idea, or series of these, which we can recognise as forming a kind of self-contained episode with its own purpose or purposes in the total structure of the play. There may be several such units in a one act play, or in a long scene from a larger play. When rehearsing, directors and actors often find it useful to think of a scene being built from such units or sequences which will present some human situation — a quarrel, an attempt to borrow money, a piece of love-making — and the emotions that go with it. It is from these that the play as a vehicle for performance emerges. The performers deal in the dynamics of emotional tensions, climaxes and crises, the gestures and inflexions which make us accept what we are watching as interesting and pleasurable, and perhaps significant. It is from the vital image of the performance that interpretations and meanings may be suggested, leading to a study of the text and the further elaboration of meanings in a reader's mind. However many abstract notions or critical statements they have read about a play, the performers are usually intent not on trying to teach these to the audience through the medium of the play, but on conveying in as lively and convincing a way as possible the actuality of the human situations through the medium of the events within the sequence of scenic units.

In The Room one can find thirteen such units. They can be described as follows:
1. Bert reads a magazine and eats his meal during Rose's fussy opening monologue which ends with the knock at the door and a pause.

2. Mr. Kidd opens the door and enters for a dialogue with Rose while Bert remains silent.

3. Kidd exits, Rose gives us a laugh line — "I don't believe he had a sister, ever." (p.16) — resumes her monologue and ministers to Bert who has stood up for the first time in order to go out for a drive. He exits.

4. Rose is alone; stage business; she takes rubbish to be thrown away, but when she opens the door, she is startled to find Mr. and Mrs. Sands standing there.

5. Dialogue between all three characters during which Rose invites them into the room and they begin to feel at ease until Toddy, the husband, "perches on the table" (p.22).

6. Toddy and Clarissa Sands quarrel over whether he was sitting or perching until she sits again and he stands, both of them muttering.

7. Rose resumes her questions about the man in the basement, introducing Mrs. Sands' long climactic speech and the subsequent dialogue which raise the question of a threat to Rose's tenancy of the room. The Sands go out.

8. Rose is alone. This time she decides not to go out, but sits in the rocker.

9. Kidd knocks and enters; he persuades Rose to accept the mysterious visitor from the basement while Bert is out, and exits.
10. Rose is alone just a moment before the door opens and a blind negro enters. There is a dialogue with Rose, very abusive, doing most of the talking until the negro, Riley, delivers a message, "Your father wants you to come home." (p.30) There is a pause.

11. A passage of short monosyllabic lines in which Riley calls Rose by another name, Sal; she admits to dissatisfaction with her life for the first time in the play.

12. "She touches his eyes, the back of his head and his temples with her hands." (p.31) Bert enters and then draws the curtains to reveal that it is dark outside.

13. Bert speaks for the first time, delivering a monologue about his driving; he beats and kicks Riley and Rose tells us she can't see; blackout, then curtain.

These thirteen units show us a single character, Rose, who is the constant thread linking the various episodes, making the best of her dingy room and her morose husband. Her fragile security vanishes soon after Bert's decision to go out. Her tenancy is threatened and the blind negro, a messenger from her past, precipitates her realization that her life is boring and restricted:

The day is a hump. I never go out. (p.31)

Having responded to the gentleness of the negro, she goes blind as if to shut out the grossness and violence of Bert. This provides the major climax of the play. The last four units, indeed, build up an interesting triangle relationship between Rose, Riley and Bert. The woman responds to a gentle, loving
man and develops a handicap to insulate her from her present, violent man, thus foreshadowing the triangle relationship of Landscape where Beth, preoccupied with memories of her past lover, a gentleman, assumes a kind of deafness, ignoring Duff's remarks and attempts at contacting her. Duff in his account of a violent sexual encounter provides, like Bert, the major climax of the play.

The episodic structure of The Room is simple enough to preserve unity of action, place and time, the time of the action corresponding exactly to the time taken by the performance. The time scheme of the play is sequential, one thing following another in chronological order, and thus very straightforward, right up to the climactic arrival of Riley. In the strangely disturbing pathos of the blind negro, Rose's past life suddenly catches up with her. Time past is squeezed into two brief words, "home" and "Sal"; life in the room has been invaded not only by people, but by the past itself. This is the first brief appearance of that preoccupation with the past which crops up again in Pinter's subsequent work and, indeed, becomes the overall concern of his latest three plays for the stage, Landscape, Silence, and Old Times.

Although the structure of The Room is very simply a rising curve of menace, relaxing briefly with Rose's tender "laying on of hands" routine with Riley, before the climax of Bert's violence and Rose's cry that she is blind, our responses are by no means simple. Pinter has provided a strong, melodramatic ending in which the blackout before the curtain can
suggest Rose's blindness. But he has left us with an open verdict and unresolved questions which allow the powerful little play to grow in the mind and trouble our thoughts. The balanced situation of the first three units which give us the domestic scene and a landlord who may be deaf and approaching senility but is not unkind, gives way to a series of shocks for Rose. The Sands are startlingly discovered; they question Mr. Kidd's identity as landlord; Mrs. Sands tells of the startling voice in the basement coming out of the dark and asserting the existence of the vacancy which Rose disputes; the discovery that the vacant room is her own, number seven; the re-entry of Kidd to tell of the visitor who has waited for Bert to go out all week-end before coming up; the appearance of the visitor himself and his message, providing a major crisis; and finally, Rose has to face the onset of her own blindness. But here the play ends, so that the normal expectancy of the resolution of a developed complication is denied. The triangle of Rose, Riley and Bert could have been developed, but is instead arrested by swift and violent action from Bert, and by the imagery of darkness and blindness. What we have, it seems, is a striking first act. A further act or acts would pursue and develop and restore the balance in a more orthodox playwright.

Pinter's structure, though, offers something instead. He uses various means to keep our minds on the disturbing image he has offered us. Firstly, an air of completion is achieved by the structural device of giving a framework to the play through the character of Bert. He provides the unspeaking
anchor of the first three units, a force to be cajoled, flattered, particularly about his driving, and kept in the room as long as possible by his fussy, motherly woman, ten years his senior, who dresses him for his eventual exit as if she is sending her son off to school or to work. Bert does not re-enter until the last unit. But now he has changed. He speaks for the first time. Rose is subdued, as if in a trance, speaking monosyllables, whereas Bert now has a virtual monologue, a kind of messenger speech, in which he obsessively reports on his icy driving exploit and boasts of his mechanized violence:

There was no cars. One there was. He wouldn't move. I bumped him. (p.32)

The rival vehicle is seen as male, whereas Bert's is female, a recipient of brutality and a compliant sexual aide:

I caned her along. She was good...She went with me. She don't mix it with me. I use my hand. Like that. I get hold of her. I go where I go. (p.32)

The speech sums up the sex and violence of the play's situation, and the possible jealousy of Bert when he finds another man with Rose, in its image of Bert's car as a woman and another car as a rival male.

There are further symmetries within the overall structure of the play. Units 5, 6 and 7 present the Sands as a couple who parallel the Hudds. They are in some ways a younger version of Rose and Bert: Clarissa is loquacious and convivial as is Rose; both women have a sense of the little politenesses of social intercourse; Toddy and Bert, on the other hand, are men of few words and no social graces. It is true that Toddy
has more lines in fact than Bert, but his manner is gruff, rather morose, and when he and his wife leave, he cannot muster the savoir faire to make his farewell to Rose, being content merely to say to his wife, "Come on" (p.24).

The use of a series of longer speeches makes a further pattern within the structure. Rose begins the play with her long monologue in unit 1. Her speech is crucial to our understanding of her and of her relationship with Bert, and as such it can be seen as a kind of anchor which we can hang onto and recognize as a weighty piece of evidence amid the contradictions and inconsistencies of the text. We recognize it as important even if we do not know how far it is the truth about a character or situation. Such speeches will be called "anchor" speeches for our purposes here. Rose's anchor speech keeps up a semblance of optimistic chatter above her basic fears — of the basement, of illness, of the ice on the roads, of, above all, Bert's going out (her monologue after Kidd's first exit gives the hint that she wants to delay Bert's going out, even if it can be only for a moment). The next anchor speech is Mrs. Sands' account of the basement of the house and the polite voice which comes out of the darkness. If Clarissa was startled by the voice she heard, Rose herself is disturbed by the speech, for she is on her guard enough to notice that, whereas at the beginning of the visit Clarissa had told her they had just come up the stairs, she now finishes her speech by asserting that they were on their way down when they stood outside Rose's door. Rose's uneasiness about the Sands and their
search for a room is confirmed in a moment of awful realization just after the anchor speech when Mr. Sands reveals that the vacant room was said to be number 7, the one occupied by the Hudds. Besides contributing to Rose's sense of insecurity and rising fear, the anchor speech also prepares us for Mr. Kidd's next appearance to tell Rose more about the man in the basement and sets up the possibility that the landlord is not Kidd at all, but either the man in the basement or even a further, unspecified man. Moreover, the polite voice Clarissa hears deliberately fails to prepare us for the appearance as a blind negro of the basement dweller who must wait for Bert to go out before contacting Rose. Yet when he woos her gently towards the end of the play, we can see why Clarissa had described his voice as polite. The third and final anchor speech of the play is, of course, Bert's monologue of sex and violence. Where Rose's monologue was homely and comforting, and Clarissa's provided an element of menace, Bert's completes the pattern by reaching out into the climactic beating, which totally reverses the feeling Rose had tried to establish at the beginning of the play. This reversal is echoed on the level of symbolism — never very clear in The Room — when the blind man tells Rose, "Now I see you." (p.31), and when, after the beating, Rose changes from a sighted to a blind person.

There is also a significant parallelism of gesture in the play when Rose fusses with getting Bert wrapped up for his drive; this is a little routine expressive of her protectiveness towards him and of her possession of him. It comes just before
he exits. Rose's parallel business is her routine (recalling the ritual laying on of hands) when she tenderly touches Riley with gestures expressive of healing and love. This comes just before and during Bert's re-entry. The force of this symmetry is apparent. Rose has transferred her concern and attentions to Riley. But it is too late. He is beaten, possibly killed, and she is left with a man she cannot bear to look upon.

Such physical gestures, having a further meaning or pattern in the total structure, are used again by Pinter in The Dumb Waiter and The Birthday Party as we shall see later in this chapter.

A further symmetry (that of Rose's diminishing action between episodes) in the structure of the play arises from its episodic nature, but this has been seen as a definite weakness:

Pinter's first play, the one-act The Room, was rather crudely constructed on the principle of a many-layered sandwich. Rose remains stationary in the room, while other characters, Mr. and Mrs. Sands, Mrs. [sic] Kidd, and finally Riley, come and go three times, leaving her awkwardly on stage, filling in time with trivial stage business between visitors.2

But the point about Rose's trivial stage business between visits is that it is functioning theatrically. First, her moments of loneliness give the actress an opportunity to express the air of housewifely attention to the living quarters which contrasts with the sudden shock of the Sands' appearance when Rose opens the door. Secondly, there is a deliberate diminish-
ing of her activity and a contrast between these interludes when Rose is alone. Where the first is quite long and shows her making to take the rubbish outside the room, the second interlude is shorter. Rose does not now think to venture outside. She is too disturbed by the knowledge that others may be after the very room she lives in. The directions now indicate uncertainty, nervousness and tension:

ROSE watches the door close, starts towards it, and stops. She takes the chair back to the table, picks up the magazine, looks at it, and puts it down. She goes to the rocking-chair, sits, rocks, stops, and sits still. There is a sharp knock at the door, which opens. Enter MR. KIDD. (p.24)

Rose is not merely left awkwardly alone. She is actually disturbed, with a growing sense of danger. This is similar to the technique of the thriller, except that in Pinter's play we do not know what the danger is, nor its source. When Rose is next left alone after Kidd's second exit, it is only for a few moments, so that she barely has time to sit down. We have time to realize that her next visitor will be the strange, unseen man from the basement who may be coming to take her away. Rose's agitation may make us fear for her safety. His appearance as he opens the door — this time there is no knock — is unexpected and chilling. Very economically Pinter has prepared for the reversal we undergo as the blind man becomes a moving and defenceless victim. But this structural point about the diminishing actions of Rose after Bert has left the room has a further aspect. It works on the level of ordinary human behaviour. After her man has gone out, Rose has little to do.
Her life consists of tending to his needs. Because of such parallelisms and symmetries as I have described, the structure of the play has more than a simple linear stringing out of episodes rising to crisis and climax; it has a certain density of weave, a system of reference back into itself, which works in conjunction with a tendency to undercut and deny information given. We do not know whether the Sands were coming up or going down, whether Kidd is or is not the landlord, whether Rose really is Sal. Although the structure has reached a definite conclusion in terms of physical action, in terms of meaning it is by no means final, and could be described as an open-ended form. This denial of verification will be repeated by Pinter in other plays, as will such motifs as the fear of losing a woman, the struggle for a place, the question of identity, the argument over usage as when the Sands argue over whether Toddy perched or sat, the preoccupation with the stillness and silence of a character, the use of anchor speeches, and the mysterious headache and blindness.

Another recurring device, one that will appear in all Pinter's work, is the very frequent use of the pause, and the silence. A pause in dialogue can signify the natural silences amid conversation, in which little everyday actions may be taking place. Rose's monologue at the beginning of The Room has some of these pauses in it. While Rose busies herself with ministering to Bert, we get the impression of her train of thoughts continuing, and occasionally jumping to the surface to find utterance. The pauses suggest the continuing thought
processes which connect the spoken phrases, the thoughts, the associations and the sense impressions. But Rose's pauses also tell us about her relationship with Bert; she is talkative while he is morose. The power seems to be with him, the silent one. She has to cajole. She continually offers questions and statements which give Bert a chance to reply, enter into conversation, confirm his relationship with her, and each time he will not reply. The pause gives us the history of her failure and of his failure; the failure in conversation mirrors the failure of a relationship.

At other times the pause or the silence may be a way of establishing through movement and mime and stage business a definite kind of silence with its own mood, or atmosphere; its own suspense or tension. When Rose is alone just after Bert goes out, the mood is fairly relaxed; when she is silent before the negro appears, there is a definite sense of expectancy and suspense. On the other hand, the pause can operate in a fairly naturalistic imitation of the awkward pauses of real conversation when there seems little to say. We can get the impression of the character making conversation, thinking up the next polite remark. And this may have a kind of comic force. Yet at the same time Pinter usually has an ulterior purpose for such pauses:

MRS. SANDS. Maybe there are two landlords.

Pause.

MR. SANDS. That'll be the day.
MRS. SANDS. What did you say?
MR. SANDS. I said that'll be the day. 

Pause.

ROSE. What's it like out? (p.19) 

The dialogue has raised one of the unresolved questions of the play — the status of Kidd as landlord — and left us a pause in which we may see Rose taking in a startling new aspect of the building she inhabits, and in which we may ourselves wonder about the assumptions we have been making about the situation which is unfolding before us. And then we are struck by the humorous accuracy of Pinter's observation of speech habits. The second pause allows too for our laughter. It also allows for Rose to feel the threat of the implications of the Sands' visit in search of a room. Perhaps she wishes they were gone; perhaps she wants to remind them that there is an outside which they ought to be going out to brave; she diverts the conversation after the pause. She drops a hint. The Sands fail to pick it up. A few speeches later, Rose drops it again, after another pause. The pauses and silences can therefore vary in importance, but one of their constant functions is to let the implications of an action, a remark or a hint sink into the audience's minds, or into the minds of the characters themselves.

If the pause and the silence can convey the awkwardnesses and inadequacies, the general inarticulateness of some of the characters, it can also be a deliberate change of subject for the purposes of evasiveness or deviousness or a mere reluctance to be pressed. When Mr. Kidd recalls his sister, we find
him using the pause and evasion as a kind of rebuke of Rose's inquisitiveness:

MR. KIDD. She had a lovely boudoir. A beautiful boudoir.

ROSE. What did she die of?

MR. KIDD. Who?

ROSE. Your sister.

Pause.

MR. KIDD. I've made ends meet. (p.15)

Since the frequency of pauses and silences has become one of the trademarks of Pinter's dramatic style, it is worth thinking of it in a wider context. The pauses certainly help to involve the audience, making them concentrate on the tensions and implications of the situations and the relationships being developed onstage. They also act musically, as a kind of pacing device. Pinter can fairly accurately slow the pace or speed it up, provide silence as a contrast to voice, and offer hints to the director and performers who see the text as in part a score for the melopoeic aspects of the performance. To elaborate further, the possibilities of the pause as a kind of theatrical spark gap are also exploited by Pinter. It can be used to present a statement which is then followed by its opposite, or at least by a modification or even refutation of the first statement. It is an old trick in comedy:

MR. KIDD. I don't know what to think.

He sits.

I think I'm going off my squiff. (p.27)

But at other times, Pinter can use this kind of spark gap between statements with the stunning effect of climax, cutting
the ground from under us. We have grown used to accepting Mrs. Hudd as Bert's wife, Rose, inhabitant of room number seven. But we are suddenly robbed of all that when the blind negro calls all in doubt:

RILEY. Come home, Sal.

Pause.

ROSE. What did you call me? (p.30)

We are pushed into another dimension. Pinter supplies a pause for the new name to sink in. Our expectations are once more denied. We thought we knew a good deal about Rose. Suddenly a vista of past experience is flashed to us by the pause. The spark gap of connections or contrasts, of expectancies or denials, the associations or evasions which provide the tensions of Pinter's theatrical pauses may perhaps be compared with the technique of meaningful contrast or association in the cross-cutting techniques of the film-maker. It is interesting to note that Grigory Kozintsev speculates on the analogy which might be drawn between the cross-cut and the pregnant hiatus between rhymes in poetry:

Is it possible to compare the peaks of visual imagery with line-endings in poetry? Perhaps not. In Lear it is not the key-stones which connect the scenes, but rather the interplay of contrasts; thus what has gone before is refuted by what follows. If we were dealing with rhyme, then there would be "a mine of semantic possibilities in between the lines" (Marina Tsvetayeva).³

A possible weakness of the pause and silence as a structural device, however pregnant, is that it could impose a deadly
lack of pace, a series of gaps which merely supply a mounting boredom in which nothing happens. Jean-Louis Barrault, when rehearsing his spectacular "dramatic game," Rabelais (first performed at the Roundhouse, London, 18 March, 1971) told his cast:

Do not pause. If you pause there is a hole. Instead of a pause, change the texture and pitch — pitch? Yes? — of your voice.¹

In his notes session, the day after a preview performance, Barrault explained further to his cast, with sound theatrical sense, the actor's rationale for distrust of the pause:

No pauses. When one actor is speaking, the other is listening, and he is beginning to make his answer with his body, and the words are coming inside him, so that when it is time to speak, there is no pause. He is ready to say what he wishes. You must hook — that is right, accrocher — good — you must hook your word, the first word onto his last. You do not pause to think, you are thinking while he is speaking.⁵

Barrault's remarks are absolutely correct for achieving pace and authenticity of conversational effects; they would apply equally to rehearsals of many stretches of dialogue in Pinter's plays. But Pinter's pauses, we can add, depend for their effects on the contrast they make with the kind of fluency Barrault wants which is operating elsewhere in Pinter's texts. Moreover, the pause and the silence in Pinter are not mere gaps or holes in the texture of his dialogue. The uses of pause we have already discussed make it obvious that they offer not gaps but moments when the tensions of the characters may well find bodily expression or achieve a special kind of emotional or
mental spark gap filled with intense activity attested to perhaps even by the quality of stillness or gesture an actor exhibits. And, finally, Pinter's plays show that the pauses range from the slight hesitancy expressed by a few dots between words to the longer silences denoted by the word "pause," to the longest silences denoted by the word "silence." The timing of these moments relative to each other is an intricate business which depends on the overall sense of the significance of each occasion for pause within the total structure of the play, the sense of timing of the actors involved, the quality of attention their stage presences can command and the nature of individual audiences at specific performances. A pause or a silence is not a nothingness in a Pinter play; it is an occasion for great concentration on the part of actors and their audiences. It is a structural device which will persist through his career up to and including his latest stage play.

The Room, then, reveals a structure which proceeds from a balance through several disruptive episodes to make a rising curve of tension ending in a crisis and climax of violence. There is no denouement, but instead a blackout which leaves us with an open ending, as well as completing in theatrical terms the imagery of darkness and blindness in the play. Within this structure there are parallels and other symmetries which lead us back into the contemplation of the text. We have not a well-made play, but a structure of climax such as can be found in other one-act plays — The Dumb Waiter, for example, and some plays by Strindberg and Yeats. The Room suggests or hints at
various types of play: the thriller, exploiting suspense or menace; the parable, but with an uncertainty rather than a specific message; the miracle play in which a man is cured; the play which is based upon a ritual sacrifice; yet in parable, miracle and sacrifice there is no religious element as Pinter writes them. And finally, we may discern two triangle situations. The first is a triangle which holds the tension of rivalry about place: the Hudds have a room, the Sands want a room, and the landlord (there may be two landlords — one favourable to the Hudds, the other encouraging the Sands) has the power to grant or deny them the security of a room. The second, of course, is the triangle of sex between Rose, Riley and Bert. This triangle situation, so familiar in the history of human relationships and therefore of drama, is one which Pinter uses again and again.

After finishing The Room, and before he had even seen it performed, Pinter began writing The Birthday Party. It, too, sprang up out of an actual experience in his life:

Then I went to see The Room, which was a remarkable experience. Since I'd never written a play before, I'd of course never seen one of mine performed, never had an audience sitting there....I was very encouraged by the response of that university [Bristol] audience, though no matter what the response had been I would have written The Birthday Party, I know that....It was sparked off from a very distinct situation in digs when I was on tour. In fact the other day a friend of mine gave me a letter I wrote to him in nineteen-fifty something, Christ knows when it was. This is what it says, 'I have filthy insane digs, a great bulging scrag of a woman with breasts rolling
at her belly, an obscene household, cats, dogs, filth, tea-strainers, mess, oh bullocks, talk, chat rubbish shit scratch dung poison, infantility, deficient order in the upper fretwork, fucking roll on...' Now the thing about this is that was The Birthday Party — I was in those digs, and this woman was Meg in the play, and there was a fellow staying there in Eastbourne, on the coast. The whole thing remained with me, and three years later I wrote the play.

But this experience, unlike the momentary glimpse into the room, was a prolonged one. Pinter doubtless felt the need to make much more out of it. The Birthday Party turned out to be his first three act structure, and it is a fairly orthodox one at that, having strong curtains at the end of the first two acts. It presents us with a state of balance in act one, complicates it with the introduction of Goldberg and McCann, develops the situation surprisingly in act two and achieves a new, precarious balance in act three. We are not given an orthodox denouement because too many questions are left unsettled. The last snatch of dialogue between Meg and Petey is delivered under the shadow of the irony that she must discover sooner or later her loss of Stanley. That is a situation capable of further dramatic development. The play could have a sequel. But Pinter leads us back into the situation of the play's opening when we see Petey reading over the breakfast table at the start of act three. This repeat is a sobering and ironic echo. Meg is not so much anticipating Stanley's levee with relish, but is anxious about him and suffers from a hangover headache.

The pattern of the play is not only larger than that of
The Room, it is much more interesting because it is more inventive. The basic situation is more complicated. Stanley, an unwholesome lodger of Petey and Meg, is spoiled and wooed by Meg. Two strange men meet Petey and also become visitors. They organize a birthday party for Stanley, but contact with them results in Stanley's "re-birth" as a violent, unhinged and inarticulate creature with no will of his own. In worse mental shape than he was at the beginning of the play, yet now dressed in his best clothes, Stanley is taken away, ostensibly to a doctor, though Petey is reluctant to let him go with the two men, Goldberg and McCann, and then lets Meg believe that Stanley is still in bed. We have witnessed the regression or the destruction of a human being. Alongside this main situation is the subordinate figure of Lulu, not central like Meg, but nevertheless important for showing Stanley's lack of real sexual power immediately before the advent of Goldberg and McCann. Lulu's last line in her dialogue with Stanley in which he realizes there is nowhere he can go to with her to escape his own misery and inadequacy is very simple, very candid and absolutely devastating:

LULU. You're a bit of a washout, aren't you?

(p.26)

The effect on Stanley is to make him buck up; he starts to wash his face. Significantly, it is precisely at the moment when Stanley has been criticised and rejected that Goldberg and McCann arrive. The arrangement of the episodes in this way uses structure to make a thematic point. Lulu's words have a positive
effect on Stanley; the words of his two tormentors have a
destructive effect on Stanley's personality. Lulu plays an
important part in the party scene, too, for she becomes the
victim of Stanley's crazy assault, and the object of Goldberg's
middle-aged lust. Her revelations about Goldberg's lascivious-
ness after the party give us horrible proof of the hypocrisy
of this spokesman (in his cross-examination of Stanley) of
*petit bourgeois* values. Importantly too, Lulu reacts honestly
and with some disgust to Goldberg and McCann, providing a
simple human norm to set against their activities:

I've seen everything that's happened. I
know what's going on. I've got a pretty
shrewd idea.

I'm going. (p. 81)

*The Birthday Party* is structured from 26 scenic units,
10 in Act I, 7 in Act II, and 9 in Act III. In Act I, the first
unit gives us a balance-situation with Petey as the newspaper
reader, monosyllabic and taciturn. The last unit of Act III
returns to this calm routine. Within this framework the action
of the play unfolds. That Pinter presents the newspaper or
magazine reader so often is perhaps a way of insisting that
his plays are rooted firmly in the reality of our lives, and in
the kind of "reality" that we read about in the newspapers, the
disasters, accidents, murders, madmesses which make up the
debris of our world. But here, the newspaper routine is a quick
and economical way of establishing the unintelligent Meg's
private disappointment; she has no children. She over-reacts
to the news item Petey reads about Lady Splatt's new baby.
Stanley, we realize very soon, has become for her a surrogate son as well as a lover.

In his first act, Pinter very efficiently introduces and establishes all the characters necessary for the ritual which makes up the central event of the play. The relationship between Stanley and Meg is built up. We see his disgust at her mixture of motherliness and unseemly sensuality. He slams out of the house, but there is a swift reversal as he returns. This physical reversal in terms of actual movement across the stage is an equivalent of the psychic reversal which occurs as soon as Meg lets slip the information that two men have been looking for rooms. Stanley has appeared hitherto as cock of the walk in the squalid boarding house; now he is shaken. He cross-questions Meg, and the pace quickens during the crisis of Stanley's fear, suspicion and doubt until the climax of his identity crisis in which he vainly attempts to present himself as a strong and significant person, and then breaks down, defeated by his own self-knowledge:

I want to ask you something. (MEG fidgets nervously. She does not go to him.) Come on. (Pause.) All right. I can ask it from here just as well. (Deliberately.) Tell me, Mrs. Boles, when you address yourself to me, do you ever ask yourself who exactly you are talking to? Eh?

Silence. He groans, his trunk falls forward, his head falls into his hands. (p.21)

Stanley's bravado attempt at self-esteem which then breaks down is the climax to the cross-examination dialogue. The swift reversal in his sense of security provides then a prefiguring
of the cross-examinations which he himself will later suffer; his bravado and his break-down likewise prefigure the central ritual of Stanley's victimization. This can be a remarkably arresting moment in performance, and it is fitting that this should be so, considering the structural importance of the passage. Then Pinter builds us to the next climax, which is the anchor speech revealing Stanley's account of his past as a promising and talented musician, persecuted by powerful and antagonistic opponents. One recognizes the paranoia of the neurotic performer; all this could be a true account of Stanley's past, but there is no need for us to take it as anything more than the sad day-dream of a mentally sick young man. The unit which follows the anchor speech cuts brilliantly across the previous tone. We hear Stanley's assumed light and casual tone as he cruelly and pathetically tells Meg that "they" are coming with a van containing a wheelbarrow to take Meg away; we recognize the disturbed memory of ambulance and wheeled stretcher in the imagination troubled by dread of mental illness, and the neurotic projection of Stanley's own sense of his likely fate onto Meg.

The knock at the door, coming straight after this unit, delivers a shock. We expect the two men. But it is only Lulu. She completes the circle of safety characters, Petey, Meg and Lulu, which now surrounds Stanley. After Lulu's exit, Pinter uses a good deal of dumbshow to give due weight to the entry of Goldberg and McCann who provide the circle of danger from which Stanley will not escape. Goldberg's anchor speech ('The secret
is breathing') follows quickly. The speech is a bag of clichés humorously establishing Goldberg's character and background, fixing him by his idiom as from an uneducated and lower-class family, but with pretensions to cultivation, "class" and respectability. The pretensions are comically at odds with the vulgarity of Goldberg's idiom, which reaches a climax in the hastily inserted and slightly defiant rhetorical question meant to deflect a feared contradiction:

Respected by the whole community. Culture? Don't talk to me about culture. He was an all-round man, what do you mean? He was a cosmopolitan. (pp. 27-8)

Goldberg's fresh air ethic, typical of such self-congratulatory cliché systems of morality, anticipates on a realistic level the ritual acting out it receives later in the play when the exhausted Goldberg asks McCann to blow in his mouth. His deep breathing of his companion's stale breath revives him. It is after the "job" that Goldberg needs this attention. By contrast, McCann, like Gus in The Dumb Waiter, is nervous beforehand, needing a bolstering parody of a military briefing speech:

The main issue is a singular issue and quite distinct from your previous work... (p. 30)

Pinter's presentation of Goldberg and McCann establishes them as having come to the house on a "job." We see them as the men who were on the beach. Stanley's reactions have built a sense of their menace for him, and they are established in our minds as representatives of Jewish and Irish Catholic ethical systems in a very crude and lowly sense as they might be seen to exist in the vague distortions of the popular imagination.
Though in their dialogue with her, Meg can accept them as two nice gentlemen guests, our sense of their sinister purpose increases when they cross-examine her about her guest whom they have not yet even seen. Meg's account of Stanley's past as a pianist gives a comic and realistic demonstration of her poor intelligence and memory, the unreliability of "evidence." Meg, pathetically, cannot comprehend Stanley or his problems, but in telling of a caretaker who locked him in the concert hall, she reveals a fear that he may become unstable enough to be locked up. His big outburst has obviously shaken her.

After planning the party to "bring him out of himself," Goldberg and McCann leave to settle in. Now it is Stanley's turn once more to cross-examine Meg, thus providing the third such stretch of dialogue. These cross-examinations are later paralleled by the parodies of the "third degree" grilling which Stanley suffers. But Stanley's questions to Meg elicit very little until he learns the name Goldberg. Pinter then breaks off the dialogue, the pace slows, as Stanley sits. He goes into a slow, monosyllabic phase. The pace is now almost somnambulistic until the opening of the parcel and the unexpected revelation of the drum, Meg's simple, well-meaning attempt to boost Stanley's "musicianship"; but Stanley is now regressing. In this context the drum is not only a toy, it is a toy which Stanley will handle as if he is a child who gets excited and loses control. The dumbshow provides a stunning and horrifying climax to the act. It heralds the move from the routine of ordinary life to a chilling ritual of sacrifice,
with Stanley as the human victim and scapegoat. The symbolism of music is shaped into a climax expressive of the loss of harmony.

Where routine is a repetition of activities in a certain order, ritual is distinguished by the fact that it is a pattern of actions expressive of some myth. The myth at the heart of The Birthday Party could be seen as the sacrifice of the hero (in this case an anti-hero) as a scapegoat. Stanley's attempt to strangle the motherly Meg and his sexual assault on Lulu are paralleled by McCann's violence and by Goldberg's sexuality. Stanley is punished, it seems, for crimes of which these two representatives of "normal" social conscience are themselves guilty.

Within the framework provided by Petey, then, there is a ritual of the destruction of Stanley. Within the broad bounds of this ritual, delimited by the two occasions on which McCann tears strips of newspaper, there is the ritual of the birthday party itself. Within this, there is the game of blindman's buff, itself perhaps the survival of some ancient ritual, and within this there is the spread-eagling of Lulu on the table like a victim on an altar — but the leering Stanley has in fact become the sacrifice now. It only remains for Goldberg and McCann to get him up to his room.

McCann's tearing of the newspaper into strips is a good example of Pinter's ability to handle symbolic actions within his realistic scenes. On a realistic level, it is a surprising yet beautifully right expression of the tensions within McCann
the strong-arm man. His nervousness on the job comes over well. On another level, it is an action which fascinates Stanley and keeps him in the room too long, so that he is trapped. Insofar as it is an enactment of the destruction of Stanley — there is a common expression "to tear a strip off" somebody, meaning to humiliate and reduce him in some way — it shows the fascination of the victim with his own fate. On yet another level, it is good stage business. It gives the actor playing McCann the chance to build up for the audience an impression of the tensions and neurosis of the character, or perhaps provide the comic vignette of the kind of bothersome person who always seems to get the newspapers into a mess in any household. The use of little realistic touches suggestive at the same time of greater significance is typical of Pinter's art.

The rising tension and suspense of this act is handled in a masterly way. Stanley and McCann spar verbally as McCann blocks Stanley's attempts at escape and conciliation, until the moment of physical violence when McCann hits his victim. The whistling routine which introduces this sparring dialogue is peculiarly comic and appropriately expressive of the balance of forces at this point in the situation. The entry of Goldberg with Petey relaxes the tension somewhat until Petey announces that he must go to his chess match. The encounter between Stanley and Goldberg and McCann which then follows proceeds rather like a chess match. Stanley immediately launches a verbal attack on Goldberg. With the re-entry of McCann, Goldberg
tries to get Stanley to submit symbolically by sitting down. The wary, mock weary circling of the three men in their struggle for psychological mastery provides a curious comedy of tension which parodies the mock-politeness of thugs in some gangster movies with their deliberate charade before the outbreak of violence. It is a cliché of the cinema, yet it is also suggestive, after Petey’s remarks, of the wary gambits of chess. The three chunks of dialogue (pp. 46-7), which present this struggle and lead to Stanley’s cocky whistling again of The Mountains of Morne before he eventually sits, amount to a very funny and very brilliant comedy of animal suspicion. The theatrical logic of this is impeccable. Tension is relaxed by the laughter. The silence before Stanley sits allows for just the right timing from the actor to get the audience’s expectancy. And then the tension can be built again through the long and mounting frenzy of the interrogation speeches in which Stanley is accused in every way of guilt. The dialogue is cleverly structured to build through attacks on Stanley’s behaviour in the household (how do they know about it?) what he wears, his dropping-out of the organization, his betrayal of his mother, his personal identity, his place of origin, his lack of personal cleanliness and his short-sightedness. At this point his glasses are seized. The interrogation can now build to a further climax through the accusations of wife-murder, the confession that his mother is in a sanatorium, and the further accusations of jilting, (original?) sin, ungodliness, philosophical ineptitude, lechery, nose-picking. The cross-examination continues with a list of
of absurd accusations in the manner of Ionesco (whom Pinter had never heard of at the time of writing this play) mounting to the ultimate religious and teleological question of the chicken or the egg, at which point Stanley screams.

The third degree now becomes a kind of verbalized torture:

McCann. Wake him up. Stick a needle in his eye. (p.52)

Goldberg and McCann have reduced Stanley to a crouched "odour" in his chair. They are confident and commanding, disgusted by their degraded victim. But there is a very swift and surprising reversal as Stanley suddenly kicks Goldberg in the stomach. Stanley and McCann are now wearily circling again, but this time they are wielding chairs. Thus the whole sequence can be seen as a unified sequence, a chess battle which begins with Stanley attacking, then a major offensive by Goldberg and McCann, with a last minute recouping by Stanley to give an uneasy check. It is at this stage that Meg beats on the drum and makes her entry for the party.

Meg's and later Lulu's presence at the party requires a surface geniality from Goldberg, and this is a particularly subtle and effective stroke. For just as the party structure overlays the ritualistic destruction of Stanley, so the geniality offsets the grimness and menace, giving an exquisite twist to the suspense and tension. The circles of the defensive and offensive characters around Stanley have become concentric. Now Goldberg can deliver covert threats in the guise of party bonhomie. McCann's party turn, his Garden of Eden song, can also
be seen as a gloating reminder that Stanley has lost his slatternly Eden in Meg's house. The game of blind man's buff is a good party game, but it provides McCann with another opportunity to humiliate Stanley by gratuitously breaking his glasses and by tripping him up with the drum. The game goes bad when Stanley attacks Meg, and there is a blackout relieved only by the gleams of the flashlight. Pinter develops to the full the theatrical possibilities of the situation, providing a startling climax of sudden horror and frantic panic. It is a brilliant reversal again; once more Stanley at the moment of degradation lashes out. He now plays a kind of cat and mouse game in the dark until the next horrific moment when the torch is shone at him as he is bending over Lulu and begins to giggle. His awful madness provides one of the most powerful end-of-act climaxes in the modern theatre. The idea of the head, grotesquely illumined by the flashlamp, trapped in a circle of light, is a brilliant theatrical idea, an equivalent for a check-mate, a leering image of madness. In stagecraft terms it is a powerful enough idea for Beckett to have been able to use it for the three heads in his Play. In a sense, it is also a metatheatrical scene insofar as it self-consciously refers back to the theatrical heritage — we remember another famous scene, in which a villain calls for lights. The game of blind man's buff has become a mouse-trap scene in which the trappers meet unexpected violence and trouble; but it is Stanley's fight for his freedom which ironically exposes him as irretrievably mad. A further subtlety of the scene is that if the victim can
be sometimes very cunning and vicious, the tormentors can also become victims. The ordeal of their struggle shows. In act three we find that Goldberg gets rattled by McCann's tense and nervous (as he supposes) tearing of the newspaper into strips. McCann is reluctant to go up to Stanley's room again, and then pretends that he has never expressed that fear. Goldberg begins to lose his grip on his own sense of identity and purpose and good health until he seems lost in some private nightmare:

Because I believe that the world... (Vacant.)...
Because I believe that the world... (Desperate.)....
BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT THE WORLD... (Lost.)....

He sits in chair. (p. 78)

He manages to talk himself back into his conventional cliché world

... Work hard and play hard. Not a day's illness. (p. 78)

but nevertheless needs a curious mouth to mouth resuscitation to get back to his old confidence. Goldberg's loss of power in the last act is a subtle point in the power balances of the relationships, but it is a disadvantage in sheer theatrical terms; he loses much of his humour, too, so that the third act suffers from a lack of laugh lines and funny situations. Add to this the fact that there is no end-of-act mounting tension and powerful climax, and the impression we get, if the play is not skillfully directed and performed, is that it is a weak act lacking in interest. Yet every episode is necessary. The flatness and routine of life going on after the party; the revelation that Goldberg is not impregnable; Lulu's censure of what is happening; Petey's mild and unsuccessful attempt to
intervene; Meg's obliviousness and ironic ignorance of Stanley's departure; and Stanley's final entry, as a climax before the end, his appearance altered for the worse — all these provide interest, and amount to an examination of what happens after a man is broken. We see the responses of the rest of the household, the aftermath of emotional strain. The relative quiet of the last act counteracts unwanted effects of melodrama; the lower level of tension cuts out any hope for a reversal. Stanley cannot be "saved." We are given a sense of the inevitability of his fate. In view of all this, and not least the theatrical coup of Stanley's new appearance and infantile incoherence, the third act may be seen as a quietly effective completion of the total structure. In performance it can work well without sagging. Meg's silly vanity as "belle of the ball" in her memory and her pathetic vulnerability in ignorance of Stanley's fate can give a moving curtain. The third act is also viable from an emotional point of view, for it completes a rising curve of emotion which moves from calm and routine through horror and laughter and hysteria to the exhausted calm of the ending.

The Birthday Party showed Pinter's ability to elaborate a large structure welding several motifs: the blindness of The Room turns up in a milder form in Stanley's short-sightedness and Meg's "blindness" to what is going on; again the past catches up with the present; there is also emotional regression and the emasculation of Stanley; the menacing invasion of and the defence of one's place recurs. The large new themes of mental breakdown, a mysterious and vicious organization, and
dangerous power games between people appear. Finally, a certain self-consciousness appears — the game within the party and the darkness echoes Hamlet's play within a play construction. There is a further literary echo in the title, the construction around a party and the theme of mysterious agents who preside over the fate of a character. Strangely enough this has not to my knowledge been pointed out before, but Pinter's play seems to cast a backward glance at T.S. Eliot's The Cocktail Party. In that play Celia Copplestone goes to meet a dreadful death by crucifixion on an anthill; she is acting under the influence of Harcourt Reilly, a psychiatrist, and one of Eliot's mysterious Christian Guardians. Although ostensibly benign, these Guardians have been seen as unintentionally sinister figures offering advice which helps an individual in their care towards spiritual life, but exercising an alarming amount of control over their charge's will. Pinter seems to parody this concept in Goldberg and McCann (the unfrocked priest) who provide a more sinister and lower-class distorted mirror image of Eliot's urbane characters. The cocktail party has become a dubious birthday party. At the end of his play, Pinter's strong rhythms and language even seem to derive partly from Eliot's verse plays:

But we can save you.
From a worse fate.
...
From now on, we'll be the hub of your wheel.
We'll renew your season ticket.
...
We'll watch over you.
Advise you.
Give you proper care and treatment.
Let you use the club bar.
Keep a table reserved.
Help you acknowledge the fast days.
Bake you cakes.
Help you kneel on kneeling days.

(pp. 82-83)

But where in Eliot the hero achieves a spiritual rebirth which is seen as desirable, in Pinter it is an experience which carries with it the horror of nightmare. Where in Eliot it is an occasion for solemnity and sophisticated levity, in Pinter it is accompanied by seedy realism and coarse belly laughter.

After the relatively elaborate The Birthday Party, Pinter's next play is a surprise in that its structure reveals a drastic paring down. The Dumb Waiter goes right back to the germ situation of the two men in a room. One talks restlessly while supposedly making tea, while the other is less talkative, and more interested in his newspaper than in his companion. But where The Room had explored the domestic possibilities of the situation, The Dumb Waiter explores the new interest that had emerged in The Birthday Party — the mysterious hirelings of an anonymous and dubious organization.

The Dumb Waiter has a somewhat similar structure to that of The Room, but reveals a tendency to cut out characters and incidents, to pare down and to concentrate. Yet the play is longer than The Room. Although it has only two characters, it covers, partly by implication, a wide range of experience. Where the main concerns of The Room were the personal relationships between the characters, the desire for a secure place of one's own, the strong pull of family and past relationships, and the sudden eruption of physical violence, the main concerns of
The Dumb Waiter are less domestic — the relationship between Gus and Ben raises the weighty question of man's willingness to kill simply because he has been contracted to take orders and ask no questions. This has been the central political question of our time ever since the Nuremberg trials. The very title of the play emphatically reminds us that the hired killers, Gus and Ben, perform a function similar to that of a dumb-waiter. They are a kind of mechanical device in a murder organization. They must go up and down the country carrying orders. Like machines, their function is not to think but to serve. Moreover, insofar as Ben is content to wait for the kill without much thought or talk he is a dumb waiter; insofar as Gus is silly enough to become a victim himself by thinking while he waits, he is a dumb waiter. The punning ambiguity of the title captures the grim farce which emerges as the play progresses. The sudden descents of the contraption with its orders for exotic foreign dishes ironically at odds with what Gus and Ben can really supply, and their frantic efforts to follow orders, result in very funny sequences of action. Yet at the same time, while Ben and Gus are lucky if they can get a cup of tea — they never in fact manage to — the unspecified powers-that-be above are probably well-fed. Gus suspects that

They've probably got a salad bowl up there. Cold meat, radishes, cucumbers. Watercress. Roll mops.

Pause.

Hardboiled eggs.
Pause.

The lot. They've probably got a crate of beer too. Probably eating my crisps with a pint of beer now. Didn't have anything to say about those crisps, did he? They do all right, don't worry about that.

(PP. 63-4)

This is not merely the voice of a tired killer. It is the voice of class discontent; it is the voice of the army private, the National Serviceman talking of the Officer's Mess, the voice of the angry generation of the fifties, tired of austerity and the demands of an hierarchical, imperialistic power which was on the wane. It is the voice of the universal under-dog. In its immediate context it is very funny. In the overall context of the play, it has a critical force akin to that social and political conscience we hear in Pope's "And wretches hang that jurymen may dine." It is perhaps no accident that when Pinter wrote the screenplay for The Quiller Memorandum, a deliberately unglamorous film in the spy thriller genre, he contrasted the modest sandwich lunch of the seedy underling, actually on the job in Berlin, with the gourmet fare of the cultivated top planners in Whitehall.

The political meaning of the structure is completed by the final ironic reversal, where Gus the hired killer appears as Gus the victim. Those who question the purposes of power, those who can no longer kill with cold determination, those who dare to defy the demands upon them by confessing their inability to supply what is needed, become merely a superfluous inconvenience and must be removed. Pinter's play gives us an
exemplary parable of this situation; but his structure, like that of The Room, is open-ended. We do not see whether Ben shoots Gus. Pinter does not commit himself to political optimism or pessimism. But Pinter's second short play is also more self-consciously wrought than the first. It shows signs of being deliberately a sort of cockney's eye view of Waiting for Godot. Beckett-like, Pinter begins his action with comic business over a boot and ends his action with an invitation to make a decision which the characters do not actually take. Pinter's Gus and Ben are not tramps, but their job keeps them travelling, with long spells of waiting, on the journey towards death. They owe allegiance to a powerful, unspecified and elusive boss. Their vigil, though, is enlivened not by a Lucky reduced by Pozzo to a sort of machine, but by a machine which emphasises that Ben and Gus can be seen as reduced by their job to machine status — and Gus, like Lucky, begins to think.

The structure of The Dumb Waiter is also very much a farcical variation on the suspense thriller. Two killers await a victim while various incidents intervene before the climax. The "whodunit" question is diverted by the revelation of killer as victim. Furthermore, the similarity of Beckett's Molloy has been noticed by at least one critic:

...the whole conception of the play seems to owe a great deal to Beckett's novel Molloy. The pattern is the same — two men, one with authority over the other, in pursuit of a third man — and in both plots the quantity of unknown facts is overwhelming. Moran, the 'agent' in Molloy, knows little about the organization that he's working for and much of the comedy hinges on the discrep-
ancy between the gravity of the mission (vague though it is) and the triviality of the distractions that get in the way of carrying it out. In The Dumb Waiter, Ben and Gus know what they have to do, but they don't know why, they don't know who their victims are and they don't know what advantage their deaths are to the organization that employs them.

It is worth noting also that Pinter, through his idea of making Gus a victim, has succeeded in tightening the plot by eliminating the third and long-awaited person.

Whereas The Room had used the intrusion of various minor personages, these are cut from the later play and replaced instead by the dumb-waiter device, a development of the serving hatch which was an important part of the setting of The Birthday Party. This mechanical device, together with the other mechanism — the deficient ballcock in the lavatory — provides the diversionary episodes deflecting Gus's questioning of the purpose of the jobs he and Ben are commissioned to perform. The plot leads us through carefully placed farcical episodes until the climax of rebellion when Gus shouts defiantly at the unseen manipulator of the machine. The tension then drops while, in the penultimate scenic unit, the main motifs of the play are repeated in a condensed form. In the final scenic unit, the play mounts rapidly to its last-minute reversal, which reveals Gus as the next victim.

This structure is neat, concise, economical and works powerfully in performance on the stage. But, like that of The Room, it has within it certain interesting symmetries. I discern twenty-one scenic units. The first two units establish
what has become by now Pinter's convention for beginning a
play: two people in a room, one reading a newspaper or
magazine. The sleepy, befuddled Gus goes to the W.C. and re-
enters scratching his head (in a Stan Laurel/Oliver Hardy
relationship this gesture became a motif) and then Ben reads
the news item about death to the accompaniment of feed lines
from Gus, his "stooge." Unit three then repeats in compressed
form the substance of units one and two.

The dialogue in the play is not as continuous as it is
in The Birthday Party, but is cut up into chunks punctuated by
many silences and the frequent exits and entries of Gus. These
little journeys serve also the purpose of getting laughs from
the fact of the deficient W.C., establish Gus as highly nervous
about the job he has to do, emphasizing the restlessness in
Gus which vexes Ben, and create a structure in which we accept
as normal his going out and returning, so that when we get to
the end of the play and Gus finally re-enters as victim, it
comes as a shock, even if it is not a total surprise. The
snatches of dialogue do not necessarily follow on logically in
a cause and effect pattern from one to another. Instead we find
little self-contained linguistic "circles." Ben's astonished
readings from the paper with Gus's dutiful ejaculations of
wonder are an obvious case. There are effective repetitions
of this routine: Ben reads about a man of eighty-seven run
over when crawling under a lorry; later he reads that a child of
eight killed a cat; at the end of the play, just after Gus's
outburst shouted up the speaking tube, and Ben's hitting him
across the chest, Pinter makes them ignore the hatch when it falls back into place and instead repeat the newspaper routine—but this time Ben gives Gus no information whatsoever about what he is reading, while Gus's reactions are merely dull. As at the beginning of the play, he rises and goes out. All is back to normal, save that it is an empty ritual of companionship, having no content and no real inter-relationship, no matter how tenuous. Gus goes out for a drink of water, and we assume from the lavatory flush, to go to the W.C. again just as he did before. And then we get the swift climax—the spring of the beast. But the newspaper dialogues in the play also provide laughter, together with a certain sardonic appropriateness. The news items are about death, and Gus uses his criminal instinct to solve one crime:

GUS. I bet he did it.
BEN. Who?
GUS. The brother.
BEN. I think you're right.

Pause.

(Slamming down the paper.) What about that, eh? A kid of eleven killing a cat and blaming it on his little sister of eight! It's enough to—(p.38)

The tones of disgust as the popular mind reacts to the stunning perfidy of human nature are perfectly caught so that we can revel in the loving fidelity of Pinter's ear for popular idiom. In retrospect, the lines ring with irony when we later realize these men are themselves professional assassins.

The circle of language is not only funny but a paradigm of a trap. In The Birthday Party, three circles of language
mark the comic struggle of the chess-like manoeuvres to make Stanley sit down and thus fix him steady for cross-examination. In *The Dumb Waiter*, a circle of language turns up in the football conversation:

> BEN. (tonelessly). They're playing away.
> GUS. Who are?
> BEN. The Spurs.
> GUS. Then they might be playing here.
> BEN. Don't be silly.
> GUS. If they're playing away they might be playing here. They might be playing the Villa.
> BEN. (tonelessly). But the Villa are playing away.

Pause. An envelope slides under the door, right. GUS sees it. (p.44)

It is funny in itself. It fixes the locale of the play as Birmingham or its environs — Aston Villa is a local team there — and as the last line of dialogue closes the trap of the circle, so the mysterious power outside the basement room begins to close the trap around Gus by making its presence felt with the envelope which is slipped under the door. The next linguistic circle is more extensive, but it works in basically the same way. It is the argumentative dialogue about lighting the kettle or the gas. It becomes a highly fraught quarrel in which Ben feels his leadership as "senior partner" to be challenged. It provides the first big climax of the play when Ben grabs Gus by the throat. The circle seems to have been completed as Ben wearily says

> Put on the bloody kettle, for Christ's sake. (p.49)

He has said what he has previously denied is ever spoken. But
this is a delayed action trap. At the end of unit sixteen, almost at the end of the play, Ben's linguistic usage is confirmed by the voice on the other end of the tube:

BEN. You know what he said? Light the kettle! Not put on the kettle! Not light the gas! But light the kettle! (p.62)

This sets off another circle — almost. But not quite. They cannot follow the order because Gus points out that there is no gas. The order from above was for tea, and this really annoys Gus:

GUS. He wanted a cup of tea! What about me? I've been wanting a cup of tea all night! (p.63)

We are reminded of the previous attempts of Gus to get the tea made; we are forced to realize that nothing much has yet happened; we are invited to compare the relative positions of boss and under-dog. It is now that Gus reveals the extent of his discontent with the system in which he works as a killer (cf. the armed forces as hirelings of the nation); because he thinks too much, he must be the next victim.

The device of the parody of cross-examination in The Birthday Party is not used in The Dumb Waiter, but a similar parody structure appears instead. It is a parody of the military briefing in the passage where Ben and Gus rehearse their killing procedure. But in this, too, there is a clue to Gus's fate, since Ben forgets that Gus will have to pull out his gun. This, when considered together with the fact that Ben stopped at night in his van for some obscure motive connected with a previous occupant of the room and the fact
that it is he who receives the final message over the tube, suggests that Ben could know that Gus will be the next victim, and that the previous occupant who has sullied the sheets is perhaps the man who slips the envelope under the door, operates the dumb-waiter and even manages to play the grim joke of flushing the toilet, with satisfying success. Yet the end of the play suggests Ben does not realize Gus is to be offered as the next victim. He calls to him to hurry.

Such questions however do not ever become resolved in the play. The hint-wait pattern of mounting suspense poses these questions together with the questions as to who is the victim, when will he or she appear, who is the boss, and what is his organization. Only the questions about the victim are answered. The end of the play in fact finds its climax in a tableau which poses the further, overwhelming question of whether or no Ben will shoot his partner. The structure is one of posed and deflected questions, of menace dissolving into laughter and laughter hardening into tension. The murder routine the killers rehearse is a sort of nasty trick; yet throughout the play they become the butts of ironic tricks — the faulty lavatory plays them tricks, the dumb-waiter sets them ludicrous tasks while their own culinary capers cannot extend even to a cup of tea for themselves. The game they discuss is the working-class game of soccer; but the room contains a photo of a first eleven of cricketers — Ben and Gus as killers certainly don't play cricket. The basement room setting of the play and the domination of the characters by a power above makes the structure
suggestive of the way men find themselves to be reduced to playing standard parts in a power structure; hired killers must obey the boss in all things without question; but so must servicemen in the armed forces; and so must man submit to the gods — in this case a very amusing parody of the *deus ex machina*. The quirky humour of fate's tricks and the awful, disturbing joke of death itself provides a pervading sense of irony, an irony which is built into the very structure by its clever use of delayed exposition. The ironies increase as we learn that the two men are killers. We remember Ben's grisly interest in news of deaths, and Gus's suspicions about the cat murderer. Ironically, Gus was upset by the killing of the girl whose death made such a mess. Killers are menacing people; yet this pair are reduced to making fools of themselves with a dumb-waiter. Pinter manipulates with great sureness our sense of the farcical and our sense of the macabre. Killers become kitchen hands. People who obey orders unquestioningly may become anything. Characters in a play can become anything that their "boss," the author, desires. But whereas some characters do as they are told, performing a plot function, other characters seem to develop a roundness, a waywordness of their own. The last question of the play is this: will Ben shoot, i.e. will he complete the plot, or will he refuse to complete the plot? Will he obey the boss or not? Will whatever he may or may not do make him a developed character? And of course the question is never answered, because the writer himself has found a sufficient climax in being content to pose
this riddle in startlingly visual terms. The open-ending of the play's structure is at once intensely theatrical and also a subtle comment on the problems of the dramatist's power and art.

Like *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter* starts at a leisurely pace which gathers momentum to reach a very sudden final climax at the end. In *The Room* the pace becomes very fast from the moment Rose decides to see the visitor. But in *The Dumb Waiter*, the pace reaches a farcical peak in the symmetrically repeated descents of the clamorous dumb-waiter. The pace then quickens again towards the end. The play holds our interest through its varied incidents despite the fact that there are but two characters revealed to us. Pinter's one-act structure in *The Room* was expanded in the three-act structure of *The Birthday Party* to accommodate additional concerns, such as the relationship of the characters to a social context, and to moral conventions. Returning to the one-act structure in *The Dumb Waiter*, Pinter was able to construct with great clarity and interest, making use of symmetrical arrangements, compressed repeat scenes and linguistic circles, and at the same time reveal an increased awareness of his own artistic processes. The paring down and concentration on the question of what kind of play could be written on a pair of agents of a mysterious organization seems to have been a deliberate exercise in his art. The exercise seemed to be a lesson in economy of means. Thus the tendency of Pinter to build up and expand in order to see how far a situation could be developed, and the opposite
tendency to take an aspect or idea and keep it small and controlled, achieving maximum effects from drastic economy, both these are exemplified in *The Birthday Party* and *The Dumb Waiter*. But if this is true, and it is to be called a tendency, it must be repeated again in the rest of his stage plays. After *The Dumb Waiter*, then, we should expect to find another expansion of structure. This turns out to be precisely the case when we come to examine the next stage play, *The Caretaker*. 
CHAPTER III
THE CARETAKER AND THE HOMECOMING

Although The Caretaker was Pinter's next stage play, opening on 27 April, 1960 at the Arts Club Theatre, London, he had written meanwhile the radio play, A Slight Ache and the television play, A Night Out. He had also come up with a couple of review sketches, Trouble in the Works and The Black and White. Since these four items are not stage plays, they are not properly part of this enquiry, yet the use of lighting in the structure of The Caretaker suggests the influence of using fade-outs when writing for radio and television. It seems fitting, therefore, that the radio and television play should at least be mentioned here before we consider the structure of The Caretaker in detail.

It is worth remembering too that The Caretaker was Pinter's first stage success. Where The Birthday Party had been demolished by the reviewers (save for wily Harold Hobson), The Caretaker was favourably reviewed in London and New York, and ran well in both cities. The London success may have had something to do with Harold Hobson's influential liking for Pinter's work; it could have had something to do with the theatrical fashion for plays set in seedy rather than distinguished rooms, the trampish character of Davies brilliantly created by Donald Pleasence and the fact that Pinter had developed a loving ear for the vivid humour and pathos of a certain kind of popular idiom; it must have had something to do
with the fact that Pinter had written a play which could work at both a fairly unsophisticated level, giving a picture of recognizable lower-class types in a situation full of strong humour and strong feelings, and at a very sophisticated level indeed, giving plenty to occupy the minds of a most cultivated audience; finally, its success on the stage in terms of box office was doubtless assured by the fact, astonishing though it may seem, that *A Night Out* was incredibly successful in its television production just three days before *The Caretaker* opened in London.

Pinter is compulsive viewing for the mass audience as well as fodder for the intellectual, and it is a sign of his major talent that we may share the dramatic experience he offers at the level of our choice. *A Night Out* obtained the top rating of all programmes of all kinds transmitted during the week of its production. Popularity of this order for such oblique drama is hard to credit in an age of divided culture.  

But when all this has been said, we must not forget the one significant change in Pinter's manner which made it easier for *The Caretaker* to be understood and accepted by the audience. Pinter had avoided those totally inexplicable motifs which were a feature of his earlier plays. We are puzzled by Mick's presence and Aston's calm acceptance of him, but it is soon explained when Aston reveals that they are brothers. Davies presents a totally compelling and convincing portrait of a particularly unpleasant vagrant. British doss houses and Salvation Army Hostels are full of such pathetic failures. Aston's behaviour is explicable in terms of genuine good nature
and the simplicity and almost soporific calm attendant upon his mental illness and its dreadful treatment by electric shock. On a more literary level, he is, too, readily recognizable as another version of the holy fool — but one which stops short of sainthood, although he achieves a moving and genuine charity towards Davies. Mick's antics, it is true, are pretty unpredictable, but they can without difficulty be seen as consistent in this respect: Mick has a good relationship with his brother Aston, and so tests Davies to find out whether he is likely to harm him. Mick seems to accept Davies' presence as a welcome sign that Aston is easing his way into the normal world again, establishing contact with other people. But Mick is justifiably angry and suspicious the more he learns about Davies, and is pleased when Aston eventually manages to give Davies his marching orders. Although he manipulates Davies into revealing his self-centred and ruthless denial of the friendship Aston has shown him, Mick is sensitive and subtle enough not to throw Davies out himself, or to risk upsetting Aston by telling him prematurely to get rid of Davies. Pinter, the only child, gives us a convincing study of two brothers. This sense of family relationships is vital to the structure of the play, and, interestingly, it is a theme Pinter developed further in his next stage play, The Homecoming.

The Caretaker's structure is larger, looser and less obviously symmetrical than that of the previous stage plays, but it can be seen that there is a double cycle of relationships at work, each involving one of the brothers. Arlene Sykes²
has shown that the basic pattern of the play follows a fairly common absurdist schema, a two-fold cycle of breakdown in communication. In each cycle one man turns to another with hideously mistaken trust, and fails to see, until it is too late, that his "confidant" regards him with detachment, and contempt, desiring only to expel him from the house. In the first of these cycles, Aston gradually unfolds himself, befriending Davies through a series of unself-conscious acts of charity: he has rescued Davies from a violent Scot, brought him back to the house and permitted him to stay, given him items of clothing, retrieved Davies' bag supposedly, and given him money. In the middle of Act II Aston's protection of Davies reaches its climax when he offers him the job of caretaker. By this time a context has evolved in which this offer comes as a powerful dramatic irony, for at the end of Act I we had seen Davies, alone in the room, biting the hand that fed him by prowling around looking for something worth stealing from his benefactor; he is oblivious of the fact that his contemptible behaviour is observed by Mick, who has seen enough to put two and two together:

MICK comes in, puts the key in his pocket, and closes the door silently. He stands at the door and watches DAVIES.
What's he got all these papers for? (DAVIES climbs over rolled carpet to the blue case.) Had a sheet and pillow ready in here. (He opens the case.) Nothing. (He shuts the case.) Still, I had a sleep though. I don't make no noises. (He looks at the window.) What's this?
He picks up another case and tries to open it.
MICK moves upstage, silently. (p.28)

Our sympathy for Davies is very low; there is a tense glee as
well as the fear of violence in us during these last moments of Act I. Pinter makes the utmost out of the moment of confrontation, the shock and humour of Davies almost jumping out of his skin with surprise, the question of Mick's identity and why he has a key to the room, the threat and tension of one of Pinter's simplest and most effective curtain lines:

MICK. What's the game? (p.29)

Davies has been shown to be a petty thief, and Mick has been shown observing the fact. Ironically, Aston will ask Davies to be caretaker. But alongside his giving, Aston shows his trust in Davies by becoming less monosyllabic, increasingly talkative. At the beginning of Act I, after Mick's bit of silent action, Davies and Aston enter, Davies conducting a virtual monologue while Aston replies minimally and only occasionally. Pinter has given his silent character this time not a newspaper to occupy himself with but the rolling of a cigarette and the fixing of a toaster. The activity is convivial rather than screening, and the aspect of the monosyllabic Aston is not one of suppressed violence as in Bert Hudd or Ben the gunman, but of gentleness and a willingness to share with a fellow human being. By the time we have reached the end of Act II, Aston has provided the climax to the act by his extraordinary anchor speech in which he reveals to Davies that he has been in a mental hospital and undergone electric shock treatment. This is the climax of trust in the first cycle, and lighting has isolated Aston, Davies being lost in shadow as if he is unfeeling, and unmoved by what he hears. The speech is
brilliantly placed to contrast with the climax of betrayal we saw at the end of Act I. It is now horribly inevitable that Davies will betray Aston's trust again — and in Act III he does just this, by using Aston's mental condition as a weapon in a bid to establish himself in Mick's house (he believes Mick now to be the owner) and oust Aston. It is at this point that Davies is most contemptible, attempting to set brother against brother. Davies' long taunting speech becomes one long act of verbal sadism and betrayal, a horrifying prologue to his drawing his knife on the defenceless Aston:

You think you're better than me you got another think coming. I know enough. They had you inside one of them places before, they can have you inside again. Your brother's got his eye on you! They can put the pincers on your head again, man! They can have them on again! Any time. All they got to do is get the word. They'd carry you in there, boy. They'd come here and pick you up and carry you in! They'd keep you fixed! They'd put them pincers on your head, they'd have you fixed! They'd take one look at all this junk I got to sleep with they'd know you were a creamer... You think I'm going to do your dirty work? Haaaaahhhhh! You better think again! You want me to do all the dirty work all up and down them stairs, just so I can sleep in this lousy filthy hole every night? Not me, boy. Not for you boy. You don't know what you're doing half the time. You're up the creek! You're half off! You can tell it by looking at you. Who ever saw you slip me a few bob? Treating me like a bloody animal! I never been inside a nut-house!

ASTON makes a slight move towards him. DAVIES takes knife from his back pocket.

(p.67)

Aston's moving anchor speech at the end of Act II is thus sandwiched between the attempted theft of Act I and this vile revela-
tion of Davies' sadism when he thinks he is secure in the job which Mick has by now offered him as caretaker; he is retaliating for Aston's having merely awakened him to stop his nocturnal groans — a revenge out of all proportion to Aston's mild action. Davies has reached the lowest point of nastiness in the play; his speech shows in action a man who is both disgusting and vicious. It prepares us for Mick's later speech in which he anatomizes Davies as little more than a wild animal. It is clear, then, that Aston's big anchor speech at the end of Act II is closely bound up with other speeches and situations vital to the structure of the play; it is by no means the incongruous effusion which Hayman takes it to be. As first performed by Peter Woodthorpe at the Duchess Theatre (30 May 1960) it struck John Russell Taylor as "out of context, being made into a direct self-pitying appeal for sentimental sympathy," but this was an impression caused by the acting, for the style of the speech is in keeping with the rest of Aston's remarks. It invites a dull, impersonal delivery, such as Robert Shaw gave it in the film of The Caretaker. Then it becomes "legitimately the climax of horror in the play." Robert Shaw's Aston was so powerful that the role maintained its legitimate balance, too, against that of Davies, which is, after all, the richest part in the play, and, moreover, which had the benefit of Donald Pleasence's magnificent performance. This balancing of powerful roles is a new departure for Pinter. His previous stage plays presented central characters with minor roles surrounding them. But Aston's part has enough power and magnitude to make his quiet, toneless dis-
missal of Davies so extreme an understatement as to be grotesquely funny, desperately sad and utterly final:

ASTON. I...I think it's about time you found somewhere else. I don't think we're hitting it off.

(p.68)

Amazingly, Pinter invests his numb mental case with a rueful dignity, a saddened determination, as he picks up his "friend's" miserable belongings to send him on his way. He has done what only a fool can do, take on the unholy burden of a man nasty, brutish and stinking (as if of sin), and found it, regretfully, too heavy. He retreats again into monosyllables and silence.

The second cycle of relationship and break-down of trust is the interplay between Davies and Mick. Act I presents us with a structure showing the friendly treatment of Davies by Aston within a framework provided by the appearance of Mick very briefly at the opening, and his stealthy reappearance at the climax when Davies is attempting his petty pilfering. The Davies/Mick cycle begins at the moment of confrontation between the two, Davies guilty and scared, Mick threatening and knowing; yet, as it turns out in Act II, Mick reverses his attitude swiftly from direct accusation to oblique menace and teasing, a calculated cat and mouse game. Just as Davies, from the beginning of his relationship with Aston, has merely been using him and deceiving him, so Mick, having seen Davies' "game" as petty thief in action from the beginning of their interplay, deceives Davies, merely observes him and encourages him to confirm his suspicions and knowledge of him, discovering
the extent of his dangerousness, untrustworthiness and thanklessness. The Mick/Davies cycle follows behind the Aston/Davies cycle all through the play. Mick's parallel verbal onslaughts (he is given three big speeches) and two teasing actions (flicking the trousers and grabbing the bag) which interlock and provide the main action of the first half of Act II, amount to an ordeal of nerves for Davies and reveal Mick's contempt for and insight into his lies and actions:

MICK. You're stinking the place out. You're an old robber, there's no getting away from it. You're an old skate. You don't belong in a nice place like this. You're an old barbarian. Honest. (p.35)

Mick has summed him up correctly. His vicious teasing of the old man not only exhibits Mick's thorough knowledge of the tramp's "game," it also reveals certain aspects of Mick's own nature, his fantasy, his tendency to be a bit of a joker, his irony and superior craftiness, his cruelty and violence, and his overall willingness to use these powerful resources in defence of his own property and the interests of his brother. Structurally, the teasing ordeals form a series set in contrast to the little acts of charity performed by Aston. These two contrasting series become joined at the point where after some teasing horseplay Aston gives the bag to Mick so that he may then at last return it to Davies. Mick evidently will not tease Davies if it is going to upset Aston. (p.39)

Mick's next encounter with Davies occurs in the dark. It is vaguely reminiscent of the game of blind man's buff in The Birthday Party. Goldberg and McCann, by frightening and
humiliating Stanley, precipitate his breakdown and drag his madness out of him into the light. Mick, by terrifying Davies with the electrolux vacuum cleaner, forces him to bring out all his defences. The trick is effective, for it reveals that Davies carries a knife. It also bears a symmetrical relationship to the previous climax of fear when Mick had jumped out on Davies in Act I. Mick now works on Davies more subtly, by implication and irony. He rubs in the fact that Davies is merely a visitor, and should ordinarily pay rent:

MICK. I'm sorry if 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 nose. How long you thinking of staying here, by the way? As a matter of fact, I was going to suggest that we'd lower your rent, make it just a nominal sum, I mean until you get fixed up. Just nominal, that's all.

Pause.

Still, if you're going to be spiky, I'll have to reconsider the whole proposition.

(p.46)

Mick's bitter humour is either lost on Davies, or else he feels too secure in his ability to manipulate the trustful Aston, who has already offered him the job of caretaker, to be sent packing this easily. Mick now cunningly changes his tactics, and feigns admiration of Davies' sturdy self-defence; he offers him food, encouraging him to feel secure. It works. Davies begins speculating about Aston. Mick is quick to see an opportunity to bring out Davies' true attitudes, and so asks his advice about Aston, appealing to the tramp's vanity with irony
when he calls him "a man of the world." His ironic analysis of Aston as work-shy which elicits Davies' sagely hypocritical agreement is a comic gem. Mick's offer of the job of caretaker now comes out, making another contrasting parallel with the earlier offer in the Aston/Davies cycle. Mick's offer is backed by the assurance that he is the real and legal owner of the premises. Davies has recognized that Aston is mentally disturbed and unworldly, whereas Mick is, though unpredictable, strong and obviously in command. Where he had not trusted in the offer when it came from Aston and had replied evasively, when it comes from Mick he sees it as a real eventuality, credible enough to accept. Mick enjoys giving Davies a parody of an interview, with talk of references, stipend and solicitor. Mick seemingly trusts Davies. Davies is deceived into trusting Mick. When Aston comes in and ends the act with his madhouse speech he is at the peak of his trust of Davies. The two cycles reach a climax of trust and deception in Act II and interlock in a particular way: Aston trusts Davies who trusts Mick; Mick deceives Davies who deceives Aston.

In Act III Davies feels secure enough in his disastrously misplaced trust to bite the hand that feeds him by criticising Aston to Mick and trying to oust him in whining volleys of complaint. For the offer of help as caretaker and now decorator he expects Mick to accept his denial that Aston is his friend, his charge that Aston has no feelings, and his suggestion that Mick should "talk to him." When the door slams, Mick rises and exits quickly with an ambiguous line which shows that he may
well talk to Aston, but not in the way that Davies imagines:

**MICK.** Yes...maybe I will.

A door bangs.

**MICK rises, goes to the door and exits.**

**DAVIES.** Where are you going? This is him!

Silence. (p.64)

Pinter thus makes it possible for us to imagine that Mick has indeed gone to warn Aston briefly that Davies is thoroughly untrustworthy, or else that he is simply getting out of the way quickly so that Aston will encounter Davies alone. In any case, by juxtaposing the two systems of trust and deception Pinter achieves moving irony. After Davies' wretched behaviour with Mick, Aston now comes in with another pair of shoes he has managed to obtain for his "friend." Davies is predictably ungrateful. Aston's dismissal of Davies forms the climax and turning point of the first part of Act III, leads to the next reversal as Davies reveals he is Mick's caretaker, plays on Aston's feeling for Mick and contemptibly hurls the "shed insult" at Aston. This phase of the Aston/Davies cycle is now followed by the corresponding phase in the Mick/Davies cycle. Davies now takes his further complaints to Mick who gives him enough verbal rope to throttle himself, and plays cat and mouse again until Davies has asked him to throw his own brother out, and send him back where he came from because he is "nutty."

Mick's controlled rage, shackled by irony, is coolly effective as he speculates on the **legal** relationship between himself and his brother as landlord and tenant, toys with Davies' potentiality as a decorator and then finally unleashes all his loathing for the miserable little man in the brilliant cynicism of the
anatomy-of-a-tramp speech. This is a sort of infernal parody of that ancient hymn to man's nature which arises in Sophocles' Antigone, and reappears in Renaissance guise in Hamlet's famous "What a piece of worke is a man!" Pinter's tone is virulently colloquial, and deceptively simple. The speech, like the simple triangle situation of the play itself, raises enormous questions about the nature of man, and the extent to which we can ever be our brother's keeper, and, ultimately, whether in order to be good we need to be a little mad, together with the converse that self-protection demands a certain ruthlessness:

MICK. What a strange man you are. Aren't you?
You're really strange. Ever since you came into this house there's been nothing but trouble. Honest. I can take nothing you say at face value. Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies. You're violent, you're erratic, you're just completely unpredictable. You're nothing else but a wild animal, when you come down to it. You're a barbarian. And to put the old tin lid on it, you stink from arse-hole to breakfast time. Look at it. You come here recommending yourself as an interior decorator, whereupon I take you on, and what happens? You make a long speech about all the references you've got down at Sidcup, and what happens? I haven't noticed you go down to Sidcup to obtain them. It's all most regrettable but it looks as though I'm compelled to pay you off for your caretaking work. Here's half a dollar. (pp. 73-4)

The speech is crude on the surface. But beside the implications already discussed there is the subtlety that Pinter does not make Mick refer to the way Davies has taken advantage of his brother, Aston. And there is the one word sentence "Honest" again — that colloquialism which had appeared at the beginning of Act II when Mick told Davies exactly what he thought of him.
for his attempt at theft. The word links the two speeches, and gives us the opportunity to remember the previous speech and how right Mick's first impressions had been. Mick picks up the statue of Buddha. At the beginning of the play it had made Davies evidently feel uneasy when he encountered it among the debris of the room, prompting his emphatic assertion that he had dined off the finest plates. Beneath his line, one feels the discomfort of the lowly among the productions of high civilization. The statue suggests high art, and also moral goodness. If the jumbled debris of the room is a paradigm of Aston's being, the Buddha is that amiable charity we see in him. When Davies' cringing, ingrate tones strike Mick's ears, his violence is unleashed, he throws down and smashes the Buddha. Calm, repose, goodness have gone. Aston's charity has gone, as we saw when he told Davies to go. Mick emotionally gives up his ownership of the house, as it were, to Aston and thus neatly reverses the power balance. Davies is now "unemployed" and abandoned to Aston's decision. The Mick/Davies cycle is at an end too. After the emotional release and climax, there is a significant but very brief encounter between the brothers; it is a speechless moment, demonstrating silent understanding and kinship:

ASTON comes in. He closes the door, moves into the room and faces MICK. They look at each other. Both are smiling, faintly.

For a moment one senses a perfect complicity. The repose of the Buddha seems to be in them, and in their feeling for each other. Words are not now necessary between them, and Mick's
voice trails off into silence as he goes out.

Both cycles meet thus at this point of stasis in the structure. All that remains to the end of the act is a sort of coda in which the brief exchanges between Aston and Davies about the beds and the shed both end in rebuffs for Davies. They are symmetrically placed between the two monologues of Davies which frame the scene, the first a tentative overture during which he gains enough hope and confidence to try, even now, to get Aston to sleep in the draughty bed, thus getting out of his depth again; the second a plea for sympathy which gets slower, more self-pitying, more painful until it breaks off, unfulfilled, into long silence and a tableau of rejection which is the precise opposite of Aston's kindness at the beginning of Act I.

Another kind of balance exists between the beginning and the end of the play, and it is an important one, because it involves time. Like The Birthday Party, the time of day for the beginning of Act I is the same as the time of day at the end of Act III. Where it was morning in The Birthday Party, it is evening in The Caretaker. But there is a more important aspect of the use of time in the structure of The Caretaker, for it is an innovative one. In the earlier stage plays, Pinter observes unity of time in The Room and The Dumb Waiter to the extent that the time of the action is sequential and exactly coincides with the performance time. In The Birthday Party, time is again sequential, and there is only a passage of a few hours between each act, so that the
total action is within the limits of the old twenty-four hours rule for unity of time. According to this convention, we easily assume that during the brief minutes of the intervals, long hours have elapsed within the artificial world of the play. But in *The Caretaker* Pinter has structured his act breaks in a surprising way. Between Acts I and II only a few seconds have elapsed in the ten or fifteen minutes of our time, while between Acts II and III, our interval represents a gap of two weeks. This deliberate contrast draws attention to the disparity between stage and real time. Acts II and III of the play are also distinguished by the fact that each is cut into three parts by two parallel lighting effects. In Act II there are the two fades to blackout which occur after key speeches by Davies, the first when he reveals that his name is assumed, the second when he begs Mick to bring him a pair of shoes after he has been appointed to and accepted the job of caretaker. In Act III there are two quick blackouts, both of which follow lines by Davies, the first emphasizing the fact that Aston has gone leaving Davies talking to himself, the second marking a reverse situation when Davies exits angrily darkly threatening to revenge his expulsion with the line "Now I know who I can trust." (p. 69) These fades and blackouts all mark the passage of time within the acts. In Acts I and II, moreover, there are fades to blackout marking the passage of time from night to morning, which more traditionally might be expected to occur at an interval. Pinter has needed to shuttle his characters in and out as the two structural cycles make ironic counter-
point, and the time sequences have not been amenable to tidy progression within the acts. Yet the blackouts are not merely a substitute for the more conventional scene division. They seem to owe something to the fades and dissolves and cross-cuts of the media of radio and television drama. It may be objected that the act divisions thus show a certain unsureness and a lack of structural cohesion. The double cycle has taken not two acts but, surprisingly, three in which to unfold. The break on Mick's question at the end of Act I seems a curious one — it would perhaps have been more logical to have the break elsewhere. But the moment is a subtle one, the audience is given an interval in which to take it in and live on the suspense entailed in the line, and in the situation, and the question of Mick's identity. It seems like the same old Pinter; then we return to our seats and find that instead of leaving us mystified, Pinter explains Mick's presence. We recognize a movement away from the early kind of mystification towards an interest in the rich implications of the situation and the relationships for their own sakes, though we are still in the world where we cannot believe everything a character says.

In The Caretaker, as the title implies, Pinter's structure succeeds in dramatizing the shifts of psychic conflict in a strange triangle of guardianship, where Mick acts as a brotherly watcher over Aston, and Aston watches over Davies, while Davies tries to watch out for himself by playing up to each brother in turn and pretending that he could become a caretaker, watching over the room. Mick's strain at watching over Aston perhaps
comes out in his speech in which he tells Davies he will no longer bother with the house and its mess; this contrasts starkly with his grandiose schemes for an interior decor in the manner of Homes and Gardens magazine. Davies' expulsion from the triangle relationship is comparable to the appearance of the same syndrome in A Slight Ache and The Dwarfs, and, moreover, it foreshadows the latest of Pinter's plays for the stage, Old Times.

Another structural feature of The Caretaker is the large number of longish anchor speeches. These attest to the way the power conflicts between the characters operate in terms of language and silence. Aston is at his weakest in his relationship with Davies when he confesses about the mental hospital. Davies is silently thinking, and uses his knowledge later. Mick is able to demolish the cringing Davies, on the other hand, with his torrents of exuberant language, providing a series of comic tours de force which have become justly famous, and which in their surreal flights anticipate The Homecoming. Aston's silence at the end is more powerful than Davies' words. Davies' words become a weapon which Mick simply turns against him. The words reveal Davies; but Mick uses them to hide behind. The silent smile between the brothers reveals the strength of the bond which holds them together.

The structure of The Caretaker is a striking change from the tight one act form of The Dumb Waiter. The thriller element has gone, and the crazy violence of The Birthday Party has been toned down, though the mental disorder still remains. The struggle for the room between the three male characters is complicated by the factor of family kinship. Out of this basis
Pinter elaborates an interesting double cycle structure which stretches, perhaps a little too diffusely, over three acts. But the third act of *The Caretaker* is not fairly evenly anti-climactic in effect as is that of *The Birthday Party*. The cycles of breakdown of communication inter-connect to provide pivotal ironies and reversals, and are accompanied by a new element in his work for the stage: the experimental manipulation of time shifts and lighting which may owe something to his work for radio and television. There is thus revealed a tension between real and illusory time. The illusory world of the play is, in fact, Pinter at his most realistic, so this slight emphasis on illusion forms a kind of counterweight. Within this play, we realize, Pinter has built up and explored through their various inter-relationships three characters each of whom nurses an illusion. Davies nurses the illusion of getting himself sorted out once he can get to Sidcup, or once he can become caretaker; Aston wants to build a shed; Mick wants to turn the slum flat into a glossy penthouse apartment.

Pinter's next stage play after *The Caretaker* did not appear for another five years. Apparently he had difficulty in writing it:

> I did a lot of things in the meantime, but writing a stage play, which is what I really wanted to do, I couldn't. Then I wrote *The Homecoming*, for good or bad, and I felt much better. But now I'm back in the same boat — I want to write a play, it buzzes all the time in me, and I can't put pen to paper.

... Do you think you'd ever use freer techniques as a way of starting writing again? I can enjoy them in other people's plays — I thought the *Marat/Sade* was a damn good evening, and other very different plays like *The Caucasian*
Chalk Circle I've also enjoyed. But I'd never use such stage techniques myself. Does this make you feel behind the times in any way? I am a very traditional playwright — for instance I insist on having a curtain in all my plays. I write curtain lines for that reason! And even when directors like Peter Hall or Claude Regy in Paris want to do away with them, I insist they stay. For me everything has to do with shape, structure, and over-all unity.

Clearly he is still concerned above all with structure and the kind of fairly orthodox stage techniques within which he makes his fascinating dramatic images. Despite the years of working in different media which separate The Caretaker and The Homecoming, Pinter still has his eye firmly on the special exigencies of writing for the stage, The Homecoming proving to be a tour de force in the theatre. The five year period between The Caretaker (1960) and The Homecoming (1965) was a very active and successful one for Pinter: in July 1960 Night School was televised; in December 1960 The Dwarfs was broadcast on the B.B.C. Third Programme; in May 1961 The Collection was televised; in November 1962 Losey's film The Servant (screenplay by Pinter) opened in London; in December 1962 Pinter started work with Clive Donner on the film of The Caretaker; in March 1963 The Lover was televised; in the period of February to March 1964 the B.B.C. Third Programme broadcast nine short sketches by Pinter; in 1964 Jack Clayton's film The Pumpkin Eater (screenplay by Pinter) appeared; and finally, in March 1965 Tea Party was televised by B.B.C. I, for British and European-wide audiences. Pinter won awards for his screen-
plays of both _The Servant_ and _The Pumpkin Eater_, and two television awards for that superb piece of work _The Lover_. It is clear, then, that in those years Pinter learned to master the art of writing for filmic media. His ability to grasp very rapidly the essentials of this kind of writing as opposed to stage writing was revealed when he worked at making a film of _The Caretaker_. Pinter was at first very reluctant to work on a film of the play because he feared complicated aspects of film production, and had been too closely associated with the play in its stage productions. He wanted a rest from it. But Pinter was persuaded, and soon became excited by looking at his script from a different point of view, that of the film director, Clive Donner:

...we had to see it and work on it in terms of movement from one thing to another...It seemed to me that when you have two people standing on the stairs and one asks the other if he would like to be caretaker in this house, and the other bloke, you know, who is work-shy, doesn't want in fact to say no,...but at the same time he wants to edge it round...Now it seems to me there's an enormous amount of internal conflict within one of the characters and external conflict between them — and it's exciting cinema.

... You can say the play has been "opened out" in the sense that things I'd yearned to do, without knowing it, in writing for the stage, crystallised when I came to think about it as a film. Until then I didn't know that I wanted to do them because I'd accepted the limitations of the stage.7

In the same interview Pinter went on to comment on differences between films and stage work, taking into account differences in acting styles:
I'm not sure I agree that the cinema will be able to gain in subtlety. I think that when one talks in these terms one thinks of a stage miles away with a vast audience and the characters very small. But I think you can be as subtle on a stage as you can in the film. You just do it in a different way.

Pinter enjoyed the fact that in making the film on location in an old house in London the actors and crew were working amid reality rather than amid the artificial world of a stage set. He was fascinated by the total process of filming and followed it keenly through the very important editing processes. Stage performances must go through complete each time the play is done, and the director at the moment of performance has no further control. The film director is far more in control of his actors' performances, and once he has footage of the performances of scenes as he wants them, he has the further control of the editing room if need be. Pinter was quick to grasp this distinction and see important implications which Donner emphatically agreed with:

Well, this editing stage was for me, of course, completely new. It was the first time, and an absolute eye-opener.

...It's great that one can move from one thing to another, or duplicate it, or cut it out, the wreck that can be wreaked in editing.

He recalled the moment in the last act of The Caretaker when Mick and Aston stand and exchange a smile, before Mick goes out. This moment he explained, was not the same on film as it was on the stage because

...You don't get the complex thing which makes it so much of a moment on the stage. The distance, the separation cannot be the same.
The balance, the timing, and the rhythm to this, the silent music, as it were, are determined in so many different ways, and I know we both felt, Clive and I, there was something to come there. I said something, I don't know what, and Clive said, 'We want to go from one to the other, one to the other, to the other.' Now the balance of the whole thing is that if you don't go to the other then there's no point made, but if you go from the other back to the first then the point is overmade. The balance, the editing balance, is crucial, as everyone knows, but it needs an eye and a relaxation which the film affords you, and no other medium can. You can sift it, you see, and the sifting is of value. Of course, on the stage, you can say to the girl, 'Go out, this won't do, try another one...' and if you make a decision and you're proved wrong you correct it. But in films you're dealing with something that's going to be finished once you make a decision. You cannot go on changing ad infinitum, and you may make a decision and six months later you say, 'That was entirely wrong.'

This practical grasp of the differences between film and stage evidently enabled Pinter to dramatize in The Homecoming certain concerns of his which cropped up in the films and the television plays without compromising that theatre technique that he had developed in the previous stage plays.

The ambiguous treatment of woman as mother and whore which appeared in A Night Out and later in Night School, The Collection, The Lover and Tea Party, and the middle-class characters of the last three of these plays find their echoes in Ruth and her husband, Teddy, the lecturer in Philosophy. In slicing away the woman as mother/whore theme for development in The Homecoming, Pinter did not bring trailing with it a bundle of T.V. and film techniques. He went back to The Caretaker's pondering of a relationship involving brothers,
and the resistance to and acceptance of a stranger. In *The Homecoming* the family living room is the environment in which these two major concerns are explored. The dead Jessie and her living counterpart, the daughter-in-law, Ruth, are the ambiguous females hated and adored in the male household. The eldest son, Teddy, and his wife, Ruth, are the guests. While Teddy visits, remains pretty well aloof and departs; Ruth is not only accepted into the family but stays as its most powerful figure, dominating the remaining males. We can see that the concern with family and guest in *The Caretaker* is thus taken up in *The Homecoming* and elaborated by the addition of the concern with the female. Whereas Davies was guest and perhaps father surrogate rolled into one, now there are two guests (Teddy and Ruth); two separate fathers (Teddy and Max), who are also father and grandfather respectively; and there are two mother figures, Ruth and the memory of Jessie. The two brothers of the earlier play have now multiplied to three: Teddy, Lenny and Joey, besides the two brothers of the older generation — Max and Sam, not to mention the three little boys we learn Teddy and Ruth have produced, making a mirror image of the family we see. But if Pinter has elaborated on the concerns of *The Caretaker* in this way, and produced a play three pages longer, he has at the same time tightened the structure, arranging a two-act pattern as opposed to the three acts in the earlier play. Furthermore, unity of time is achieved in that the momentous events of the play all occur in the twenty-four hour span between successive evenings. Add to
this the fact that the present happenings reflect the past and perhaps foreshadow the future; in the past Jessie had betrayed Max, leaving three motherless boys, just as the ailing Ruth leaves Teddy and her three boys. Take into account also that the structure of The Homecoming is in some respects a compressed version of the Ibsenesque structure (as in Ghosts) of exposition, development, withheld facts revealed in a climactic scene (Sam's collapse) leading to a resolution. All this adds up to a play of dense texture, Pinter's subtlest and most complex piece of craftsmanship for the stage up to that point in his career. Paradoxically, this subtle and complex fashioning was the means of controlling the most barbarous of material, the diseased imagination.

The core idea of the play, that the male members of the family should use one woman in common as whore, housekeeper, mother substitute, surrogate daughter, and sister, is by normal standards disgusting and utterly taboo in our society. It is a product of the diseased imagination. Max's house and family are a spatial and animate image of the diseased rather than the normal imagination; the first six scenic units up to the first blackout in Act I build up this image, an almost demonic inverse of filial love and family solidarity. Max's opening monologue gives us the opposite of a father ideal — we listen to a memory of gangsterism and violence, sense the spark of hatred for the mother Jessie and the friend, Mac, which leaps from the subtext in the pause
Max. He always had a good word for her.

Pause.

Mind you, she wasn't such a bad woman.

(p.9)

and then the comic reversal of idealized motherhood becomes a raucous blasphemying laughter of Swiftian intensity as "motherhood" is torn apart by bitterness, and the son tears apart the honour due to fathers

Max. Even though it made me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bad bitch. I gave her the best bleeding years of my life, anyway.

LENNY. Plug it, will you, you stupid sod, I'm trying to read the paper. (p.9)

The father curses the son, and curses himself; the son coolly reminds him he is going mad

MAX. Listen! I'll chop your spine off, you talk to me like that! You understand? Talking to your lousy filthy father like that!

LENNY. You know what, you're getting demented.

(p.9)

The altercation is shockingly, horrifyingly funny, and it is an example of the violent language which is the mode in this family and which expresses their power struggles. It gives us the deeply ambivalent attitude of Max towards the dead Jessie, and it suggests in little the diseased imagination which seems an hereditary factor in this world. Max's imagination fixes upon horses, and he fancies he can look into the eye to tell which filly is a "stayer." He seems to connect horses and women; he also, in his swearing, connects his family with female animals,
bitches. Worsted by his son, Max turns to bullying his brother, Sam. He taunts him with having illicit sex in the back of the car he is paid to drive. When Sam objects that he doesn't mess up his boss's car, and adds darkly not "Like other people," this seems to touch a raw nerve in Max, as if his life at one point was contingent on back-seat love-making. It is at this point that Max's imagination comes up with the best desecration of his brother's sexual life he can think of:

MAX. When you find the right girl, Sam, let your family know, don't forget, we'll give you a number one send-off, I promise you. You can bring her to live here, she can keep us all happy. We'd take it in turns to give her a walk round the park.

(p.15)

This is the core idea of the action which will follow in Act II, it is the expression of Max's diseased imagination. At this point it is an elaborate sexual taunt, a blow at Sam for reminding him of what was (as we find out from Sam in his revelation before collapsing) the painful part of Max's relationship with Jessie, her infidelity with Mac in the back of Sam's car. The Max, Mac, Jessie triangle of lust and violence is counterbalanced by a Max, Sam, Jessie relationship of affection and respect. Max's diseased idea for Sam's sexual life becomes, ironically, a reality for Teddy and his wife, Ruth; when Max suggests the "plan" in Act II he elaborates his barbaric scheme, taking into account "the human considerations" which must take care to give Ruth the material conditions she is accustomed to. The other members of the family add their ideas and contribute to the working out and making "real" of the
situation. Ruth coolly agrees, transferring the diseased and raucous family conference onto a calculated business level ensuring her personal comfort, taking over the role of communal whore in a way which makes her a centre of power and a focus of lust. Sam's reaction to the situation which has developed is a sense of outrage which prompts his revelation of Jessie's infidelity. The shock is too much for him. Max and the others regard him as an unfortunate interruption. Max projects his own diseased imagination onto his brother, treating him as a sort of madman, denying the revelation by insisting it is merely a product of Sam's mind. But the core betrayal and suffering which is at the heart of this graceless circle of malice, this ironic reversal of "home sweet home," is surely Jessie's betrayal of Max. This seems to be the invisible worm which has flown into Max's imagination and poisoned it. The final scene leaves us with a bitter parody of the family group photograph; and, ironically, the tyrant father whose imagination has run its course faces a situation he had not envisaged: his power has gone, the object of his lust now reigns serene above the family, and he is sobbing because of the tyrant age and half-begging, half-demanding even a kiss, albeit an incestuous one. Pinter, moreover, has not only made the action of his play out of the exploration and realization of Max's diseased imagination, but has emphasised that the action is enclosed by the terrible figure of Max. The opening and closing scenes of the play are his monologues (Lenny barely bothers to speak at the beginning, and no one responds to his words at the end), so
that it is Max's imagination that encloses the total action. Ironically again, this is only fitting, for was he not the head of the family?

Pinter has unflinchingly followed Max's diseased imagination into a dark night of the soul, beginning Act I at evening and emerging from Act II the following evening. It is his distinction to have presented one of the most detestable of dramatic personages, and, without recourse to moralising or lapses into sentimentality, forced from us our compassion, in the final scene, for this snivelling ruin of a man. In life we would need to be saints. In art, everything, almost, is possible.

It may be objected that The Homecoming is a horrifying portrait of a family which not only lacks a mother but also lacks, and this is the writer's fault, a moral centre. In defence of the play one can argue that the structure is an austere one. Pinter controls his disgusting material and shapes it impeccably. The portion up to the first blackout in Act I introduces all the members of this anti-family, giving us an ironic picture of home life. After the blackout it is night-time and we see Teddy and Ruth arrive. He wants to stay, she wants to go. By the end of Act II these attitudes have, ironically, been reversed. The second brother, Lenny, appears, but instead of a family welcome, Teddy and Ruth receive a non-welcome. When Lenny and Ruth are alone, they do not speak as brother and sister-in-law, but as hostile adults trying their sexual strength, Ruth emerging as dominant. After the next
blackout the idea of the family is restated, further elaborated; but when Teddy and Ruth come down the meeting is a tableau of stunned silence rather than embraces. The father greets his daughter-in-law by ignoring her, then refers to her in the third person as a diseased prostitute, later implying that her children may not all belong to Teddy. His hostility to the woman is at its greatest, and then he turns to his son and wants to kiss and cuddle. It is an infernal version of fatherly affection, loathsome in its misogyny, exploitation of filial emotion, thinly veiled homosexuality, and crowing, gleeful, gloating contempt. It provides a brilliant reversal of feeling, an implication of Max's insecurity in that he needs to test his returning son's loyalty in this hideous way, an horrific climax to the act and, in five resonant words, one of the most powerful curtain lines in the drama of the last two hundred odd years: a father's blessing is made to seem like a curse:

MAX. You still love your old Dad, eh?

They face each other.

TEDDY. Come on, Dad. I'm ready for the cuddle.

MAX begins to chuckle, gurgling.
He turns to the family and addresses them.

MAX. He still loves his father!

Curtain (p.44)

So much is going on at once, and all is ultimately to be held in the iron grip of Pinter's dramatic irony; the end of Act II shows Max defeated by the daughter-in-law and deserted by his eldest son.
The second act opens with a brief moment of balance in which the cigar smoking males seem content and expansive. Max's maudlin reverie is pulled up short by Ruth's simple question about the group of butchers. The mood is lost, the balance is upset, nor will it be properly restored. The mood has reversed completely from geniality to bitterness; we are back in the realms of disease, disillusion and the struggle to keep a family surviving:

My mother was bedridden, my brothers were all invalids. I had to earn the money for the leading psychiatrists. I had to read books! I had to study the disease, so that I could cope with an emergency at every stage. A crippled family, three bastard sons, a slutbitch of a wife — don't talk to me about the pain of childbirth — I suffered the pain, I've still got the pangs — when I give a little cough my back collapses — and here I've got a lazy idle bugger of a brother won't even get to work on time. (p. 47)

Despite the female reference, it is unmistakably Max speaking. All his venom and his self-pity are there; so too is his tendency to push his fantasy as far as he can take it or is allowed to go. All the shows of strength between the characters are a kind of game of dare. It tests how far one can go in painful insult before the opponent gives in, or cracks. This curious psychology is a fact of life, not merely an invention of Pinter's. Thus such moments of climax as the spitting incident and Max's explosion into physical violence in Act I are palpable forerunners of the extended, more cerebral example of this game which begins to take shape in Act II. The members of the family all play the game, Ruth quickly adjusting back into the environment she has known since childhood. Max's outburst of rage and insults against his brother are not register-
ed in any decisive way by the rest of the family. No one inter-
venes. They all ignore it and when it is over, carry on as if nothing had happened. Max and Teddy enact a normal meeting and re-union at ironic odds to the savagery of the preceding scene:

MAX. Well, how you been keeping, son?
TEDDY. I've been keeping very well, Dad.
MAX. It's nice to have you with us, son.
TEDDY. It's nice to be back, Dad. (p.48)

And now the way is clear for Max, like a true father, to give his blessing to Teddy and his wife. The scene contrasts with the climax of mockery at the end of Act I. But it is followed immediately by Max's boast about his son, which has more than an edge or irony:

MAX. ...How many other houses in the district have got a Doctor of Philosophy sitting down drinking a cup of coffee?

Pause. (p.49)

We can feel in the pause the inevitability of irony becoming fierce battle sooner or later. But Ruth initiates the next scene, and here we have the turning point of the act and, indeed, of the whole play. For Ruth begins to remember her old life.

RUTH. I was...different...when I met Teddy...first.
TEDDY. No you weren't. You were the same. (p.50)

The contradiction is the crux of the play. For Ruth her memory of life in these London slums and her experience as "photographic model" with trips to country houses becomes more compelling and more important than the sterility she feels in her marriage to Teddy, despite her three sons; the desert of her marriage is fixed in her memory of America as a barren
land. Her English experience is rich in the memory, thirst-quenching, imaged by water and light. It is set against the conventional image of happy wife and mother which Teddy presents in his version of their marriage. The style, and the slow, hesitant delivery of Ruth's memories are interesting too in that they anticipate the style and manner of the memory monologues in Pinter's next stage plays — the short Landscape and Silence.

RUTH. That was before I had...all my children.

Pause.

No, not always indoors.

Pause.

Once, or twice we went to a place in the country, by train. Oh, six or seven times. We used to pass a...a large white water tower. This place...this house...was very big...the trees...there was a lake, you see...we used to change and walk down towards the lake...we went down a path...on stones...there were...on this path. Oh, just...wait...yes...when we changed in the house we had a drink. There was a cold buffet.

(p.57)

By the end of the act we have realized that it is Ruth's homecoming, not Teddy's, that we have witnessed. She grows in memory and self-awareness and power. She literally embodies the truth of female power. Her argument is irrefutable.

Look at me. I...move my leg. That's all it is. But I wear...underwear...which moves with me...it...captures your attention. (p.53)

Woman, and man for that matter, embodies truth. Intellectualizing, such as Teddy's lectures may be supposed to contain, and
the bait-the-philosopher-game Lenny plays, are brought to a halt and silenced by Ruth's physicality. Her evocation of her own desirable body is contrasted with the wasteland of rock and sand in America. As Ruth's return to her home country builds up her self-awareness and power, so Teddy realizes the danger, and tries to take her away. But it is too late. Ruth's dance with Lenny and kiss of acceptance follow swiftly. Joey and Max join in the game of making Teddy jealous. But Teddy and Ruth's marriage was over at the beginning of the play, as the America speeches make clear, and so Teddy can leave the family very casually, his pain implied only by his neglecting to take his farewell of Ruth. His coolness is invulnerable, but it has been achieved at a terrible cost — the cutting away of emotional involvement. His intellectual aloofness is terrifying:

You're just objects. You just...move about. I can observe it. I can see what you do. It's the same as I do. But you're lost in it. You won't get me being...I won't be lost in it.

BLACKOUT. (p.62)

The blackout signifies more than the passing of a few hours. The current of Teddy's feeling has failed. After the blackout Lenny tests Teddy's boasted lack of involvement. He ironically places the stealing of his cheese roll on a far more important level than the stealing of Ruth. But Teddy cannot be broken. At the end of Lenny's harangue, invoking the sense of family solidarity in the image of them in "the backyard having a quiet gander at the night sky," when he triumphantly finishes with
the sarcasm of rhetorical questions, Teddy times a perfectly cool laugh line:

LENNY. But do we get it? Have we got it? Is that what you've given us?

Pause.

TEDDY. Yes. (p.65)

Teddy's ruthless, cold nature seems to be signalled and measured by the way he can calmly allow himself to be rendered Ruth-less by Lenny and Joey. Not even the grotesque discussion in front of him by Joey and Lenny about Ruth's sex play in bed can enrage him. The humour is grotesque and linguistically very funny:

LENNY. Don't tell me you're satisfied without going the whole hog?

Pause.

JOEY. I've been the whole hog plenty of times. Sometimes...you can be happy...and not go the whole hog. Now and again...you can be happy...without going any hog. (p.68)

The verisimilitude of the speech patterns, the repetition of the proverbial and telling animal image, the timing of the pauses, and the confrontation of the sharp Lenny by the nettled Joey is masterly. And the humour leads right into the building of suspense as the game rises to its amazing climax when Max elaborates the plan to keep Ruth, which in turn builds to the crisis of whether Teddy or she will react, which leads to the further climax of her decision to accept the proposal. The game reverses. Ruth holds all the trumps. She has played the family game and won. Teddy has gone. Sam has collapsed. Ruth dominates while it pleases her to do so. The structure twists in a final ironic reversal to show us Max, losing. An interest-
In the end, when you are on your knees to her, the game has broken down?

Oh, yes, in the sense that she's accepted and I didn't expect her to accept, and he's gone and I didn't expect him to go. As far as I, Max, am concerned, the end of the play is far more shattering than it is to any audience. It is completely and utterly and catastrophically unexpected. But the game is still proceeding when Max is talking about the photograph, which he knows is outrageous...

So the question is whether it's going to be your defeat. Will she kiss you? That is the first time you are really "down."

Harold doesn't know what happens after that; neither do I. That's where Harold chooses to leave us. Max is in a moment of absolute defeat. Yet it was Harold's wish that you should feel the aggression, so that the words are a demand, not a request...
And there's something that you haven't seen before in the play, and that's fear. Max is afraid and it's expressed in the words "I'm not an old man," which actually is a very simple expression of an emotion that is so complex that you couldn't express it, and at the same time there's this absurd awareness that physically he's going.

This tight structure which rises to a great climax at the end of each act holds together, as we have seen, a system of power games and shocking, ironic juxtapositions of feeling. Over all, there is the moral dimension of laughter. Why can we laugh at the situations and words of the play? In general it is because the image of the family on the stage is all the time incongruous-ly at odds with what we expect from our conventional idea of a
family. The amorality and immorality we see is at odds with our norms. And yet, ultimately we are linked to this family insofar as we are forced to accept it as part of our moral universe as human beings — we can recognize the hatred Max has grown up in and which goes far to explain the hideousness of his family; we can recognise the family solidarity between the men, despite their eternal sparring; we can feel compassion for their need for love, and acknowledge the curious and cruel but very real love-bond which exists in the family as they sit quietly in the backyard, or when they disgracefully conspire to get Ruth. Ruth, after all, rediscover herself and prefers to stay with them, at least for the eternal time being of the final tableau, rather than with Teddy. It is this self-discovery which becomes the most important factor in the resolution of the play. Ruth travels upwards to become queen of the "nest," while Teddy travels through on an even keel and Max plummets down, a fallen king. The patriarchal order has become matriarchal. The rejected male, Teddy, must journey back into the sterile wasteland that is America in Ruth's imagination and memory.

Pinter's structure gives us a powerful fusion of realistic surface and archetypal dream. It is easy to see the Oedipal desires for Ruth as a mother figure and counterpart of Jessie in the male household. Max and Teddy are the fathers in the play. It is they who lose Ruth. But the thematic extensions of the situation are not stated so much as embodied in the realistic situation itself. Pinter's art is like Ruth's body.
It is itself, a show which is its meaning. Pinter is one of those artists who, like W.B. Yeats, a favourite poet of his, feel that man can embody truth rather than know it. There are many things we cannot know about the characters in *The Homecoming*, yet what is there for us to see is clearly, economically articulated, words and silences, alive with a vigorous sub-text which makes the play an exciting one for actors. The structure is tight and compact: there is a vigorous clarity about it, and yet it is still mysterious. What isn't said is often as important as what is said — and in this aspect of the structure, moments such as Sam's eating an apple in Act I after Max has bullied him sexually, Lenny's standing and looking silently at his elder brother for the first time in six years, without greeting him, Ruth's draining of the glass of water, Max's silent contemplation of Teddy and Ruth when they appear in the morning, the play finds some of its most telling theatrical effects. Nor are these silences to be mistaken for inarticulateness; the characters know each other of old, and Ruth has been raised in this area. She too knows the idiom. The challenges, insults, conflicts and baitings amount to a complete language, a mode every implication of which the characters can pick up. The long harangues, and the structure is rich in them, do not shock the characters as they shock the audience. Lenny's boasts about his violence, such as his beating of the whore under the arch, do not disturb Ruth. She is used to this kind of talk. She merely asks a simple question which punctures the whole thing, as she does with Max's butcher speech. She knows how to
deal with these men. She can even prevent Joey from going "the whole hog" and convince him that it is not so bad after all!

The structure is, as we have seen, rich in ironies and contrasts. One binding, overall contrast is that between the cool detachment of the philosopher Teddy and the unreasonable, pushing, almost yahoo natures of Max and Lenny and Joey. There is also the large effect of the deliberate juxtaposition of present with past time, of Ruth with Jessie, of Teddy with Max, of Ruth's three sons with the three sons of Jessie. And all this emphasis on generation and time is held concretely in the image of Lenny disturbed by the ticking away of time in the night so that he cannot sleep and must find a way to "stifle" his clock in Act I, and in the image of Max bitterly denying the fact of his old age in Act II. What connects the present and the future with the past is memory. It is memory which sends Teddy back to America, memory of what he likes there; it is memory which keeps Ruth in London and induces the crucial decision of the play. Memory is built into the structure of the play, then, as a powerful theme, a force in the characterization, and a crucial factor in plot reversal. Whereas the notion of family bonds had been explored in The Caretaker and Tea Party, and the sexual power of the female and the ambiguity of male attitudes to her had been worked over in such plays as The Birthday Party, Night School, The Collection, The Lover and Tea Party, Pinter had never before made memory such an important and crucial structural force in his work. In this respect,
The Homecoming leads on to the three latest stage plays, Landscape, Silence and Old Times.

The Homecoming is, then, centrally placed within the Pinter opus to date. It looks back to previously explored themes, and anticipates the major concern of the last three works. It is also the most powerful and shocking of his works so far. And the shocks are so powerfully conveyed because of his mastery of that fairly traditional realistic structure which he could invest with a disturbing ambiguity out of Kafka and Beckett. The Homecoming is his masterpiece, holding terror and compassion for our basic human condition in the grip of tough irony and laughter. It is the peak, the maturity of his early method. Where could he go next? His answer was once more to slice away and explore a new concern, memory, paring down as usual; but this time with a radical change in structural method.
CHAPTER IV

THE PAST IS ANOTHER COUNTRY: LANDSCAPE, SILENCE AND OLD TIMES

I felt that after The Homecoming,...I couldn't any longer stay in the room with this bunch of people who opened doors and came in and went out. Landscape and Silence are in a very different form. There isn't any menace at all.1

The marked change of shape and manner in Pinter's work was noted by the reviewers as well as by the writer himself. The journalists noted by and large the drastic change to a smaller kind of play owing something to Beckett in the narrowing of dramatic experience into a bare, elegiac lyricism. Most reviewers of the double staging of Landscape and Silence found that the former was the more substantial play and the better of the two. Indeed, Irving Wardle in The Times (3 July, 1969) referred to these "Theatrical Twins in Pools of Solitude," calling Landscape "a short masterpiece," while admitting that Silence left him cold. The majority of critics approved of the plays within their limits, yet there were some dissenting voices. Pinter's new, more stringent economy, whereby greater stress was placed on language and far less on theatrical effects, was seen as a retrograde movement to a position where less and less was being said about more and more,2 while Walter Kerr, who saw the inferior New York production,3 noted the break with all that Pinter had done previously, and lamented this new dramaturgy in which nothing happened in a stasis à la Beckett.

It was a mistake, Kerr argued, for Pinter was less of a poet
than Beckett and more of a dramatist. But if the affinities with Beckett were noticed, so also was that manipulation of time past, the play and interplay of memory, which perhaps owed something to Joyce, Proust and Ibsen. It might have been as much to the point to recall that influential and widely acclaimed radio play, Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood, in which characters dream out fragments from their past. One reviewer, indeed, neatly distinguished Ibsen's retrospective exposition technique for dramatising the loom of the past from Pinter's very different "collage of the past." Pinter confesses to a liking for the works of Yeats: it is tempting to think of Pinter's fresh pre-occupation with the dreaming back over past experience as owing something to Yeats's theory of the purgatorial dreaming-back of ghosts. Yet this cannot be stressed, for the plays are totally unlike Yeat's, which have a far more sensuously theatrical surface of costume, mask, music, song and dance. And Yeats's poetic resources are far greater than the smaller effects of Pinter's prose.

The search for a definition of Pinter's new dramatic idiom in both Landscape and Silence, it seems, had best start in an examination and description of structure. If these plays are, as several reviewers believed, interesting as technical exercises in a refined, evocative prose, often lyrical in effect, they are also interesting for their new limpid, insistent musicality of contrasting styles and characters; there is gentleness as opposed to violence, and coarseness rather than
overt brutality. This new gentleness had been anticipated by the blind negro of The Room, but gentleness now constitutes a dominant mood, bringing a moving poignancy to the hesitancies and silences, and a subtle sense of irony to the dramatic situation in both Landscape and Silence.

Although Landscape was first performed on the radio in England it demands a stage production if the audience is to be fully aware of its situation, for this is summed up in a striking and unchanging visual tableau. Beth, a woman in her late forties, sits in the kitchen of a country house with Duff, a man in his early fifties:

- **BETH** sits in an armchair, which stands away from the table, to its left.
- **DUFF** sits in a chair at the right corner of the table. The background, of a sink, stove, etc., and a window, is dim.
- Evening.

**NOTE:**

- **DUFF** refers normally to BETH, but does not appear to hear her voice.
- **BETH** never looks at DUFF, and does not appear to hear his voice. (p.8)

The "relationship," such as it is, of Duff and Beth is figured forth in the positioning of the characters (separated by a long table) and their respective attitudes (Duff addressing himself to Beth, yet apparently unhearing, and Beth seemingly totally indifferent to Duff). Beth's unawareness of Duff makes it apparent to a theatre audience that they may be hearing, in her speeches, the internal monologue of her wistful thought. Duff's image is that of a man continually trying to start a conversation, elicit a response, though never managing to succeed.
and never able to imagine what is going on in her head or in the words she speaks. Thus we are presented with the image of the loquacious partner and the withdrawn partner again. Duff has 226 lines, while Beth has 168. But in the earlier, more realistic plays, the withdrawn partner was silent. Now we are taken inside that silence, to hear the voice within the skull.

From this visual tableau and this situation follows the total structure of the play, for it consists of two monologues, one internal, the other external; one self-contained, fragile, ruminative, the other out-going, offering contact, but factual; one obsessed by gentle love-making lost in memory, the other coarse, faithless, brutally sexual at its climax. Thus the play does not use dialogue but a double monologue pattern. The monologues can be seen to have cross-references to each other at certain points, like rungs joining the two uprights of a ladder. As the play progresses and we climb this ladder of monologues we catch hold of rungs of irony running between the speakers. One such rung is Duff's description of Beth as "grave," which connects him with the very word she remembers her gentle lover having used of her. Perhaps Duff was this lover. Both speakers are sitting together in the kitchen as servants in a country house, but we learn that they have apparently inherited it from the owner, Mr. Sykes. Beth is a servant, yet she remembers her genteel skill with the sketchbook. This contrasts with Duff's prowess as cellarman. The speakers are perhaps married, and have at any rate lived together
for a long time, yet they have made little contact with each other for years. Duff sees Mr. Syke's liking for Beth in a blue dress as a means of showing off a little to impress guests with a smart, attractive servant, yet we suspect that as Beth's possible lover, Mr. Sykes liked her to wear blue for his sake. Beth happens to be thinking about the time she and her lover thought of going to a hotel for tea or else a drink, just as Duff launches into his talk about a "nut" who came into the bar and called the beer nothing but "piss". This is typical of the ironic tension and pattern of association which operates between the two monologues. The final rung of irony is the culminating attempt by Duff to establish a rapport again with Beth; instead of gentleness he remembers and reminds her of her neurotic routine amid the disorder of the housekeeping:

It's bullshit. Standing in an empty hall banging a bloody gong. There's no one to listen. No one'll hear. There's not a soul in the house. Except me. There's nothing for lunch. There's nothing cooked. No stew. No pie. No greens. No joint. Fuck all. (p.28)

Coarseness and tension and suppressed sexuality well up in Duff's final speech to give the play a climax of verbal brutality in which he remembers the occasion when he thought Beth would come to him to make love. But, evidently, she did not, and his frustration mounts in the conditional tense, "I would have had you...," into a vision of a comic, grotesque, violent rape, a fantasy which ends with the horribly peremptory word "slam," the sentence bitten off in pain, loss, rage, frustration. Silence follows. We feel for Duff. We realize that he
could well have been her lover on the beach. This possibility makes us feel the pathos of a man once young and sensitive now trapped in the coarseness which has come to him in middle age. Will Beth pity him, coming out of her dream to look into his all-too-human eyes? Beth speaks. Ironically, after the tension and pain of his speech, hers is a tender, gentle sublimation of her experience. Memory comes as a vision of sweetness, silence, softness; it is a love lyric which shapes in her mind:

He lay above me and looked down at me. He supported my shoulder.

Pause.

So tender his touch on my neck. So softly his kiss on my cheek.

Pause.

My hand on his rib.

Pause.

So sweetly the sand over me. Tiny the sand on my skin.

Pause.

So silent the sky in my eyes. Gently the sound of the tide.

Pause.

Oh my true love I said. (pp. 29-30)

This ending, built from a climax of harsh, ironic contrast is as moving as anything in Pinter's work so far. We feel compassion for Duff, the simple, coarse, man's man who cannot connect, as well as for Beth, locked in a dream of love which
insulates her from the reality of a life she cannot face, a childless and loveless old age. Significantly, among her memories there is no sign of Duff's infidelity. It is either so painful that it has been suppressed, or she has accepted it (she kissed him after his confession) as a salve to her own conscience for her own infidelity and continuous memory of it. It is also ironically an ending which, while affirming love, is nevertheless mercilessly bleak: Duff has tried to reach Beth, but we have seen that he fails, while she dreams her memory, seemingly oblivious of his frustration. At the beginning of the play we have perhaps been thinking "only connect"; by the end of the play we are perhaps thinking "can one connect?"
The male and female principles in the play are contrasted to yield a further irony. Duff thinks of sexuality, while Beth seeks to relive a love relationship; yet it is Duff who feels a quiet contentment and seeks to relate to Beth now, even though she is neurotically withdrawn, passing the child-bearing age, ignores him, and, like some sort of cripple, will not go out. Duff comes across as the protector of an injured woman. Beth, dreaming of love-making and fertility, seems in the play to be frigid and perhaps sterile. The non-action and the non-dialogue of the structure springs logically from the fact that the characters are locked in a situation which is a non-relationship.

There is a total lack of physical action for the first time in Pinter's work, and there is no real confrontation, no struggle for power. There is no exposition which leads to
complications, pointers, hints and pauses, reversals, recognitions, crises and climaxes in a logically connected chain which is rounded off by a jolly, or dismal for that matter, denouement. Instead we find a time present of the performance which unfolds from Beth's first words, a wish

I would like to stand by the sea. It is there. (p.9)

This wish is fulfilled only by memory. And so we enter a tattered fabric of the past. We are not invited to piece together a complete life for Beth and Duff. Instead we glimpse intense moments from Beth's love-life which could have occurred on as many as eight different occasions, or on just four days — a day she was on the desolate beach, a day she was on the crowded beach, a day she was catering for a dinner-party, and the morning afterwards. We cannot accurately place her memories in a sequential order. Duff starts his monologue with a direct address to Beth in the present, but couched in the past tense:

The dog's gone. I didn't tell you. (p.10)

When we have heard his last speech we realize that this remark is an attempt at pleasing Beth, who would probably be glad to be rid of the dog. Duff's speeches are much nearer to the present. He refers to yesterday's walk and downfall, he attempts direct conversational advances to Beth. The many rebuffs (on account of her obliviousness) begin to exasperate him, and it is the mounting vexation and frustration in his speech which provides the one real climax of the play as he tries to break through Beth's shell with his gong-banging rape
speech, perhaps to contact her, perhaps to torment her with traumatic memory, perhaps to warn her, perhaps merely to relieve his own pent-up emotions. But all the normal dramatic conflict and crisis belongs to the past before the opening of the play. Our structure is almost totally retrospective exposition and the failure to renew a lost relationship. Beth and Duff are two points of a love triangle which may be expressed as follows:

- Mr. Sykes
- Beth
- Unnamed girl
- Gentle
- Silent
- Young Duff
- Unnamed lover
- Duff
- Coarse
- Loud
- Past
- Present
- Past

The triangles emerge as our minds are led into the lives of the characters from the time present of the elapsing performance by means of excursions into the country of the past, which may be as near as yesterday, as far as youth. It is a landscape of lost relationships, lost happiness.

Ruth in *The Homecoming* had argued decisively by drawing attention to her female physical presence:

RUTH. That's all it is. But I wear...underwear...which moves with me...it...captures your attention. Perhaps you misinterpret. The action is simple. It's a leg...moving. My lips move. Why don't you restrict...your observations to that? Perhaps the fact that they move is more significant...than the words which come through them. (pp.52-3)

Beth uses a more genteel, but equally sexual version of the same argument:
BETH. All it is, you see...I said...is the lightness of your touch, the lightness of your look, my neck, your eyes, the silence, that is my meaning, the loveliness of my flowers, my hands touching my flowers, that is my meaning. (p.24)

Where Ruth makes clinical statements devoid of love, as befits her role as whore, Beth's words amount to a lyrical evocation of tender loveliness. Where Ruth is seen embracing the coarse and brutal men of *The Homecoming* and finding them worth staying with while her more gentlemanly (though cold and callous) husband has to leave for America alone; Beth is seen to be living with a coarse man she no longer relates to, while longing for the gentlemanly lover of her youth. This tension between the gentle and the coarse lovers in a triangle relationship appears again in Pinter's next play, *Silence*, and in the struggle of the female and male lovers of *Old Times*.

The new dramatic style Pinter adopted in *Landscape*, though obviously indebted to other writers, as the reviewers were quick to point out, was at the same time another drastic example of the strategy we have come to expect of him from the study of his structures. After a movement of complication and building up (*The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming*) we can see the paring away from earlier work of some rich or fruitful concern — in this case the dramatic use of memory in a coarse-gentle love triangle — which is then presented in simple one-act form. In the case of *Landscape*, the use of memory affected the whole use of time, and the broken relationship of Beth and Duff precluded dialogue resulting in the ladder of monologue.
structure already described. Pinter had been content to sketch in the Beth/Duff line of the triangles leaving the lover on the beach and the unnamed girl as uncertain memories, the former obviously far more important than the latter. In *Silence*, his next play, Pinter gives us all three points of the triangle in the characters Rumsey, Ellen and Bates. All three have monologues, so that the pattern is complicated a little. It is further complicated by the fact that the characters do not only recall the past in their parallel monologues but also enact crucial scenes from it. At the same time, *Silence* is structured in a more complicated way than *Landscape*, using a pattern which focusses our attention on the nature of memory and the whole question of the verification of the past. The austere immobility of the characters and the refusal of theatrical elements above the bare minimum of the positioning of the characters on the stage which we found in *Landscape* is relaxed a little in *Silence*, Pinter allowing movement and dialogue on three occasions in the play. Yet despite these elaborations on the style and situation of *Landscape*, *Silence* is shorter and even barer linguistically.

Thus, as with the relationship of *The Homecoming* to *The Caretaker*, *Silence*, on a much smaller scale, is at the same time elaborating and compressing to achieve its variation on the concerns of the earlier partner.

These miniature plays, seemingly little more than exercises in drama at its minimal limits, are nevertheless among the most tightly and carefully wrought of Pinter's works. Their
brevity is perhaps partly on account of that, and partly a result of the more careful attitude to his writing which Pinter has adopted as he has matured. Pinter described the writing of Silence in this way:

It was one of those happy things that rarely happen with me...I always feel after completing something that I'll never write again, but then came Silence. It took a long time to write — longer in fact than any full-length play of mine...My plays are getting shorter...words are so tender. One act plays are all I seem to be able to write at the moment. I doubt if I will ever write something mammoth...I think evenings in the theatre tend to go on too long. I feel the audience will have quite enough with mine...They'll be glad to get out. They won't want any more...7

It is clear that Pinter himself took very seriously the task of writing this play; it was important to him, obviously, in terms of language. It was also important in that it was structured in an entirely new way for Pinter. Where Landscape's ladder of monologues dramatized the aftermath of action, it yet achieved a rhetorical climax in Duff's last speech which was analogous to the major climax of the earlier Pinter plays. Beth's last line was as moving a line, and as much a curtain line, as several in the earlier plays. Yet in Silence we find a structure which is organized in such a way that the three monologues build up a collage of memory, statement and shifts to dialogue, which Ellen's perception of her own memory patterns completes about two thirds of the way through the play. The rest of the play repeats the previous part but not in full, giving the effect of half-remembered memory fading into silence. The structure is
deliberately anti-climactic, and the numerous silences which punctuate the closing lines deliberately make the audience uncertain as to which is the last line until the lights fade after a final long silence. This is the denial of the curtain line. It is an ending device more usual in the concert hall than in the theatre.

A closer examination of this structure will reveal that it is not merely a copy of the wholesale repetition that obtains in Beckett's Play. Silence proceeds by means of monologues from the three characters, Ellen, Rumsey and Bates, together with three episodes of enacted dialogue. The sections of monologue and dialogue are interrupted by silences. The Methuen hardback edition, first published in 1969 and the Grove Press edition, first published in 1970, contain two extra speeches by Ellen which have been cut from the Methuen paperback edition first published in 1970. The fuller structure can be seen in the following diagram:

**STRUCTURE OF SILENCE IN METHUEN HARDBACK EDITION, 1969**

The Arabic numerals represent the 35 scenic units of Silence which are cut off from each other by silences (the vertical lines). The green line marks the silence after which the
monologues of Rumsey and Bates begin to repeat isolated lines from unit 1. The lower line of numerals shows which units are being repeated. The black horizontal lines show who is speaking in each scenic unit. When the lines are red, the speakers are repeating selected lines from their earlier speeches in the play. Thus, in units 1 and 2 we can tell that all three characters are speaking monologues we have not previously heard; in unit 15 Rumsey and Bates are speaking monologues made up of lines from their respective monologues in unit 1; in unit 17 all three characters are doing this; in unit 32 Rumsey speaks a line of monologue which first occurs in unit 1 and which is repeated in unit 15 (this double repetition is denoted by two horizontal red lines). In units 3, 7, and 11 the speaker lines are equipped with arrow heads to represent that they are dialogue not monologue units. The large arrow head in unit 5 represents the curious, interlaced, lyrical monologues which suggest love-making between Rumsey and Ellen. The pattern of structure for the hardback text is extremely symmetrical. The pattern of speech in units 1 - 14 is repeated precisely in units 18 - 31, except for the fact that Pinter has given Ellen a line repeated from unit 1 in both unit 23 and 30. The extra line is in each case significantly placed: in 23 Rumsey and Bates repeat crucial phrases describing respectively unsure eyesight and a feeling of disintegration within the head — Ellen simply has "I look them in their eyes." — Pinter's recurring image of a slight ache and loss of eyesight is thus emphasized; in 30 Bates repeats his line from 13, "Sleep? Tender love? It's of
no importance.", but by adding Ellen's line from 1, "I kiss them there and say," Pinter subtly enriches the moment by ironic juxtaposition and reminds us of a younger Bates eager for Ellen's love. Units 15 - 17 can be seen to provide a bridge between the repetition of the pattern made up of Rumsey and Bates monologues repeating some lines from their speeches in 1, and an Ellen monologue of new material emphasising her awareness, her isolation, her uncertain memory, and a casual acknowledgement that she has been married. The surprising casual tone here is a kind of climax; the thoughts about memory, its uncertainty and its tendency to fade away provide an introduction to the enactment of this very theme in the second part of the play:

It is only later, in my room, that I remember. Yes, I remember. But I'm never sure that what I remember is of to-day or of yesterday or of a long time ago.

And then often it is only half things I remember, half things, beginnings of things. (p.46)

The selection of crucial lines from the earlier units in the second part of the play renders this sense of the effort to remember, the way the memory clings to insignificant and crucial scraps of our experience. The device, of course, draws in the audience's experience too, for as we hear the scraps repeated we begin to remember bits of the earlier speeches and realize that the characters are like old people whose minds run over past experiences. The effect of the dramatic structure would be totally missed if it were not for the functioning of that very mechanism of memory in the audience.
Units 32 - 35 form a coda in which Ellen's last line in 34 completes the total pattern of repetition by recalling the climactic wedding information of unit 16, while Rumsey and Bates in 32 and 33 recall minimal trivia from 1 and 15 reduced to a mere two and three words; and in 35 their double repetitions begin to build again to significant memories, Rumsey walking with his girl and Bates in the crowded market place of the town. The lines they repeat are, in fact, the first lines of their first monologues in the play, thus hinting at a circular structure and a tendency for memory to build up again after reaching a minimal point. This sense of renewed build-up is, though, hinted at only, for in performance the increased silences which occur in the second part of the play give the last 7 units a marked sense of rallentando and attenuation. If the silences are slightly lengthened towards the end to mount to the final long silence, and the lines are dropped sensitively and quietly into the silences, the atmosphere becomes tense with feeling, and the ending works beautifully.

As it stands, this seems to be the most perfectly patterned of Pinter's structures. Yet the cutting of units 14 and 31 from the Methuen paperback edition of 1970 is interesting in at least two ways. The cutting of 14's monologue entailed the removal of a line repeated from it at 31, thus proving that Pinter was totally aware of the very rigid symmetry of the play and the way he had avoided any new material after unit 17. Had he cut 14 without removing 31 the symmetry would have been ruined totally because 31 would then have appeared to be
an intrusion of new material. The embodiment of memory would have been confused by fresh thought. The second interesting thing about the cut is that Pinter has detected a flaw in the structure we have described. The cut passage reads as follows:

ELLEN

A long way a long way a long way over the hills I can see lights far far away. Far far into the distance over the hills which are black the sky just less black and lights far far away a long long way away over the hills which are black.

From where I am I can see lights far away in the distance.

As my eyes close I see last of lights far over black across black under my eyes far away lights over hills closing.

Silence

The passage in itself is inferior to the writing of the other monologues, straining as it does for an effect of poetic prose by means of easy repetitions without at the same time adding to our knowledge of Ellen's character or her relationship with either of the men. It is merely a perception and description adding nothing to the dramatic situation; by cutting it away Pinter not only tightens the structure further, but at the same time discovers another telling and ironic cross-cut giving a climax through dramatic contrast where previously he had merely a loose lyricism. For by removing 14 Pinter now ends part one of the play with 13, Bates' powerful resentment and harsh cynicism:

From the young people's room — silence. Sleep? Tender love?

It's of no importance. (p. 45)
Cross-cut to Rumsey, and his gentle, romantic reverie:

I walk with my girl who wears — (p.46)

This bit of surgery has neatly provided more emotional tension at the central turning point, the crux of the play. The structure as it now stands is an impeccable and beautiful example of meticulous craftsmanship.

What of the thew, sinew and flesh of this sturdy skeleton? The play's two-part plan gives rise to parallels and attendant ironies and contrasts. In the first part of the play the three portions of dialogue at 3, 7 and 11 entail movement by Bates and Ellen but not Rumsey. This underlines the fact that Bates desires Ellen though she will reject him. Ellen's two "visits" to Rumsey's stage area similarly show that she desires him, but that he will reject her. In 11 he tells her to find a younger man. In the second part of the play, the repetition of a few lines from these units is not accompanied by movement. As the proportion of silence to words increases, so the characters become immobile. If their voices also become less animated in performance, a strange poignancy can be achieved.

The shape of the play and the restriction of movement it demands were emphasised in the London production by means of the technicalities of set and lighting, Jeremy Kingston's *Punch* review of Peter Hall's London production preserves the details that

...three characters are seated on black chairs arranged in a diagonal across a stage of tilted glass...strongly lit from above...shadows against back of stage...they look like people trapped in a block of ice. A note by the director, Peter Hall, informs us that they are 'sometimes old, sometimes young'...
Pinter's directions at the beginning of the play, and this elaboration of them, are almost abstract, indicating a kind of limbo inhabited by a performance time which may coincide with a time present of the characters in which they may be seen as fairly young (twenties, middle thirties and forty); but this time present does not progress sequentially, existing only as a collage made up of memories of earlier time when Ellen was a little girl and projections into a future old age of the characters in which they remember less and less of the vivid and urgent moments of the youth we glimpse. Thus in I Ellen is loved by both men in time present. As Martin Esslin notes in The Peopled Wound, the best book on Pinter so far, and the best discussion of Silence I have seen in print, after the first silence we are in another time sequence in which Rumsey is alone with his animals, Bates is an irate old man complaining about noisy music and love-making from young neighbours, and Ellen is getting older ('I'm old, I tell her, my youth was somewhere else...But I'm still quite pretty really...'). This is typical of the fluidity of time as it is handled by Pinter in this play. The enacted dialogues seem to take place in a time contemporaneous to that of the period of the Ellen/Bates/Rumsey sexual activities. But in the first visit by Ellen to Rumsey the conversation seems to enact the beginning of the love affair between the grown-up Ellen and the forty year old Rumsey. Subtly, Pinter plants a memory of Ellen's childhood within the conversation when Rumsey reminds her of the last time she visited his house — as a little girl. The last section of
this dialogue is teasingly ambiguous. It is the bit about whether it gets darker the higher one is. This could be heard as a flashback to the childhood visit, time having softly sifted back into the past. On the other hand it could be that the awkwardness of their first meeting as adult lovers is conveyed in Rumsey's non sequitur to Ellen's remark:

ELLEN

It's very dark outside.

RUMSEY

It's high up.

ELLEN

Does it get darker the higher you get?

(p.42)

Her question could then be seen as gently teasing him. She is drawing attention to his illogicality. And perhaps she is subtly inviting him to take her higher up, to take her upstairs to bed.

The next enacted dialogue between Ellen and Rumsey contrasts starkly with the happy, playful and charming mood evoked here. Rumsey curtly tells her to get a younger man. The history of their affair is telescoped into these two crucial enactments. The three dialogue passages in fact act out for us minimally the dramatic situation at the core of the play; the monologues weave a fabric of thought and rumination, and, like the glass stage itself, suggest the pallid repetitions or reflections of memory. These are not merely disconnected memories, but as we have shown, they are deliberately patterned
to make a drama of contrasts and receding memory, with the silences not only marking off each scenic unit, but also denoting subtle time shifts, and conveying the gaps between people. In performance, of course, the actors can use the contrasts between words and silences to build emotional tensions within the silences, and by gauging the tension in the audience and timing the next utterance to come just at the right moment, very powerful effects can be obtained. Silences have different densities. Pinter, as an actor himself, knows this as well as anyone. But if the actors do not time the play properly and control the silences, the attention of the audience could wander. Landscape and Silence both demand a fair amount of concentration from their audience. The attention is upon the words. Pinter has moved away from a more traditional theatricality towards increased stress on the text at a time when the fashionable impetus in the theatre is towards the cult of total theatre, plays like Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun and Weiss's Marat-Sade, theories like those of Artaud, groups like The Living Theatre of Julian Beck and his company, and experimental directors like Brook in England and Grotowski in Poland. But if Pinter's technique is less spectacular in all senses of the word, the perfect little structure of Silence marks a breakthrough for him in the exploration of a very fluid and pregnant narrative method untrammeled by the demands of sequential time. He can move from present to past to future looking back on its past which is a kind of present.
Walter Kerr took Pinter to task for imitating Beckett without being able to make his prosaic statement sing with the voice of true poetry. But the very title of his review, "A Break With Anything Pinter Has Done Before," points to the importance of Landscape and Silence within the Pinter canon. He had achieved a very compressed way of contrasting images, moods, themes, men, types of sexuality; darkness, light, country, town, childhood, adulthood, prime, old age, speech, silence, noise, music, acceptance, rejection, gentleness, coarseness, fulfilment, frustration, love, and isolation. The work is small but not merely imitative of Beckett. It is a limited type of drama, yet it has not become as narrow and as nearly non-existent as Beckett's dramaticules and sketches such as Come and Go and Breath. After Silence, the reviewers wondered where Pinter could go next. Pinter's admirers might well have feared that he could easily follow his own characters, Beckett-like, into the silence. But study of his tendency to pare away before building again would have indicated a more optimistic view. And this would have been amply justified, for what followed was a subtle two-act play incorporating some of the lessons of Landscape and Silence. It was Old Times.

The idea of the love triangle associated with memory is further complicated and developed in Old Times. Pinter has made a triangle involving Deeley, his wife Kate, and her former (perhaps bisexual) friend, Anna, which in turn contains the
added factor that Deeley and Anna have perhaps also had an affair. Moreover, the exploration of memory is used as in Landscape and Silence to reveal an incomplete picture of the past youth of the characters, all in their early forties, but it now complicates Pinter's more usual concern with active relationships between people. We are back to dialogue and anchor speeches rather than separate monologues. But the dialogue is cool, restrained, seemingly desultory. We are back in his world of conversation as a kind of battle. But memory, whether actual or invented, is a new and potent weapon in that battle, which in the case of Old Times turns out to be the struggle of Deeley and Anna for possession of Kate.

The structure is a two-act one reminiscent of The Homecoming in that an intruder, Anna, arrives in the family unit of the married couple. A struggle ensues between male and female principles. Kate, it seems, is the prize. The weapons are memories, false memories and counter-memories. The duel occurs in a converted farmhouse (the country setting again, as was used in Landscape) one Autumn night. Time is not specified. But at one point Deeley talks with the slang of the hippy seventies when he describes his meeting with Anna in the Wayfarers Tavern:

We had a scene together. She freaked out. She didn't have any bread, so I bought her a drink. She looked at me with big eyes, shy, all that bit. (p.69)

Yet this event is supposed to have occurred twenty years before. The characters are specified as in their early forties. But
this would set the incident in about 1951. Yet the person in
his twenties in 1951 would not be cherishing "Smoke Gets in
Your Eyes" and the other nostalgic songs Deeley and Anna sing
over Kate at another point in the play, and which they associate
with their first knowing her. Moreover Odd Man Out, a film
both Deeley and Anna claim to have seen (perhaps on different
occasions) with Kate was made in 1946. All this may point to
the fact that the characters are in their early forties not in
the time present of the performance (1971) but a few years
earlier, the setting being the late sixties. Why should this
effect have been created? There are two probable needs being
satisfied. The play shifts in time in a curious way. Its action
transpires between the time before the "arrival" of Anna in
Act I when Deeley and Kate discuss her, and the conversation
which ensues from the time Deeley appears with the late-night
drinks that same day. But there are forays into the past of
twenty years before, and there is also the suggestion that
memory can shape the future, for Anna warns Deeley:

There are things I remember which may never
have happened but as I recall them so they
take place.

DEELEY

What? (p.32)

Deeley is obviously and justifiably disconcerted.

The time shift thus fits in with the general preoccupa-
tion with the problem of memory in these latest stage plays.
The second need Pinter has is a constant need of the artist —
the need to distance the material of his art; Pinter is now in his early forties, facing what Conrad called "the shadow line" of life, a crisis point in middle-age where one's regrets and failures are particularly telling as one faces the fact that youthful aspirations are fading. We face, after that melancholy event, the fortieth birthday, the journey towards death, lost opportunities and lost hopes. Pinter's characters face the stern Autumnal of their lives, as does the playwright himself; but he has probably placed their forties in the late 1960's rather than the early 1970's. This need to distance may well be the more pressing because Old Times contains certain autobiographical details about Pinter and his friends, Colin Blakely (like Deeley an Irishman) Dorothy Tutin, Vivien Merchant (his wife) and Peter Hall. An interviewer for Plays and Players reported:

Blakely admits that Pinter writes 'from a very private sphere,' and it is fascinating to notice that the careers of the quintet which shaped Old Times for the stage run if not on parallel, then on remarkably comparable lines. '...There are some very subliminal things which Harold has written into the play. For instance, Deeley was supposed to have met his wife at a flea pit which was showing the old Carol Reed film Odd Man Out. They say that Robert Newton, who played an artist in the movie, brought them together. Now the character Newton played was based on a real author in Belfast — and I knew him ten years ago! In the second act of Old Times Deeley invents a character at a party where he is supposed to have met his wife's friend, Anna, in the past and looked up her skirt. That man at the party is called Luke ("a big chap with a ginger beard"). In Odd Man Out Robert Newton played the part of Lukey! Harold has a home movie of the film. 'There are certain lines in the play which I can actually envisage Harold saying — but that's because I know him well. Lines I've had trouble with — if I
give a parody of Harold saying they would be absolutely right. I brought this up with Peter Hall the other day — a certain line which had been bothering me. Harold would get away with this line. Peter's answer was that whereas I knew Harold an audience didn't. On stage the character is not Harold Pinter at all — but the part he's written. So I had to find the right delivery through the part. That's the right solution.12

Pinter's own memory obviously, in the detail of Odd Man Out alone, has become part of the weave of memories in his play. Time and memory are, then, crucial to the structure of Old Times.

This structure has great symmetry and economy. As with The Homecoming it leads us to an ending in a tableau of male frustration and need for affection before an impassive female; as with Silence it leads to three characters implicated in a past which has become a silence. But the style and effects of the play are different from those of its predecessors. I would divide the play into nineteen scenic units, eleven in Act I and eight in Act II. The first unit of the play is the dimly lit tableau of Act I:

Light dim. Three figures discerned.

DEELEY slumped in armchair, still.
KATE curled on a sofa, still
ANNA standing at the window, looking out.

Silence. (p.7)

The atmosphere established is of calm, of relaxation, but with a hint of dejection in the slumped figure we discover is Deeley. The silence allows this picture to take effect. Anna, the figure at the window, is removed from the others, outside their aura, yet unmistakably there. The lights come up in this subdued
opening on a well-off, middle-class sitting room, a fashionably converted farmhouse room. This is neither the slums of London or Birmingham, nor the servants' kitchen, nor the frigid limbo of Silence. As unit 2 progresses we find that surprises occur, but they are subdued effects, ineluctably accumulating. Pinter starts in medias res:

KATE

(Reflectively) Dark.

Pause. (p.7)

It could be a remark about the way the evening has crept upon them as they sit in their room. It could fix the time as night, as the directions specify. But then Deeley's question "Fat or thin?" alters it all, and we realise that they are talking about a person Kate knows and Deeley has not seen. He has, we may assume, been questioning Kate about this person. As the unit progresses we overhear a conversation in which Kate refuses to accord her only friend from past years the status of best friend. What, we wonder, has she got against this friend? We learn that Kate's friend stole her underwear, and that Kate will not remind her of this (Deeley apparently thinks that it would be fun to do so). Nor is Kate looking forward to her friend's visit; in fact she has "almost totally forgotten her" (p.12). Kate is revealed as cold, unexcited at the prospect of renewing an old relationship; Deeley is warmly curious, and displays a certain subtlety of mind in his idea of watching Kate's reactions to see "if she's the same person" (p.12). This means that Deeley will see if the friend has been
changed over the years by watching Kate's reaction to her. But what of Kate? Has she not changed too over the years? Or has Deeley an inkling that he might know the woman? Why is he so curious about her? Deeley wants to know whether she is married. He is abrupt when he learns that the two friends had lived together. What does he suspect? Some kind of liaison? The fairly laconic converse has raised our expectations about a visitor soon to arrive in the good old tradition of many a well-made play. Our interest in Deeley's rather obsessive curiosity makes his dismissal of the topic ring a little false:

Anyway, none of this matters. (p.17)

The present dismisses the past, but ironically the past is all the time standing there in the person of Anna. She suddenly moves to sit on the second sofa and unit 3 begins with her conjuring of the two as young girls living excitedly in London, going to opera, concerts, ballet. Anna is the visitor they have been talking about. She has simply moved in to talk on cue. Clearly she is not introduced in a realistic way. Immediately further questions are raised. Is she more than a friend on a visit? Is she dead? Is she the spirit of the past itself? Time mocks us, and Anna's genteel, spinsterish, rather coy manner is at the same time subtly mocking by being rather too complimentary:

How wise you were to choose this part of the world, and how sensible and courageous of you both to stay permanently in such a silence.

(p.19)

Her words are at odds with the picture she has given of culture vultures, dashing about in the excitement of the city. She
seems to be hinting that Kate belongs more to London than to the country, that the past was rich, but this present life by the sea is dull. Anna's move forward has not only altered the situation but jumped us forward until after dinner that same evening without Pinter's usual blackout device. The structure is by no means as conventional as its hint-wait pattern had suggested.

Unit 4 begins with Anna moving back to the window. She has made a little sortie into the present life of Kate, and has found Deeley's influence, taking Kate from London and thoughts of Yeats to the cultural isolation of the country and thoughts of domesticity. The landscape and seascape Anna contemplates from the window is as calm and unruffled and cold as Kate's personality. Deeley's conversation with her now reveals Anna inhabits "a volcanic island" — is her temperament similarly volatile? The dormant volcano image fixes the manner of this play. Feelings and jealousies smoulder beneath the surface of the dialogue. Anna and Deeley begin to talk of Kate as if she weren't there — and much of the play proceeds in this mode. For Deeley, Kate is curiously absent, almost like a ghost whose face he holds in his hands,

Then I kind of let it go, take my hands away, leave it floating. (p.24)

Ironically, he seems closer to Anna, finding her more interesting than the woman he has married; he shows off by insulting Kate in front of Anna,

We're forcing her to think. We must see you more often. You're a healthy influence.

(p.25)
Deeley, at the height of his confidence, is cruel; he does not foresee that he will be reduced to tears. Deeley and Anna lavish praise upon praise on Kate, the mutual love-object (Anna in a Freudian slip has already reduced Kate to a casserole, a tasty dish) reaching a brilliant comic climax in unit 5 as they both sing lines from nostalgic love songs over Kate. The lovers' cooing of a fragmented dewy duet over Kate is an effusion of nostalgia, but also a short way with the sphinx-like female. The extravagant praise and adulation of the smiling lovers is loaded with irony; both feel the loss of the Kate they loved. Deeley provides the climax to the episode:

Oh, how the ghost of you clings... (p.29)

The episode breaks the calm surface of the play. It is irresistibly funny and at the same time the moment catches up the theme of memory. Moreover, the complicity of Deeley and Anna, seemingly ganging up in fun at Kate's expense, is a turning point — fun, mockery and nostalgia are broken by the rumbling of Deeley's big gun: duet turns into duel as out of the silence comes Deeley's memory of how he picked up Kate in a fleapit of a cinema. The genial and jocular use of memory has given way before something more dangerous. Deeley's anchor speech which begins unit 6 is a challenge and an assertion of superiority as well as a sly dig at the Lesbianism he seems to suspect in Anna. What otherwise is the point of his story of the two lesbian usherettes? The speech has something of the suppressed violence we have come to recognise in such outpourings, but it
is much more innocuous on the surface than say the viciousness of Lenny in *The Homecoming*. It contains perhaps an oblique reference to Deeley's position as dependent partner rather than self-sufficient personality since the moment he met Kate:

I was off centre and have remained so. (p. 30)

The speech reaches a comic peak on its last line as Deeley throws down the gauntlet to Anna, asserting his solidarity with Kate and the solidity of their marriage:

So it was Robert Newton who brought us together and it is only Robert Newton who can tear us apart. (p. 30)

But Anna is a match for him. Her laugh-line sweeps his assertion away with further laughter. Deeley may well find that time has taken Kate away from him already. Unit 7 proceeds with Anna parrying as Deeley remembers his first making love to Kate, and rubs in the painful (to Anna) memory with further jokes, using the accommodating Robert Newton as an entertaining leitmotif:

And then at a slightly later stage our naked bodies met, hers cool, warm, highly agreeable, and I wondered what Robert Newton would think of this. What would he think of this I wondered as I touched her profoundly all over.

(To ANNA.) What do you think he'd think?

(p. 31)

Deeley is having his fun not only at the expense of Anna, but also, of course, at the expense of his wife. And yet again, there is irony against him, for in what sense we wonder has Deeley ever touched Kate profoundly, cool and detached as she is? How can she be "warm?" Deeley's offensive covers weakness.
Anna responds to the jealousy by throwing doubt on Deeley's memories as things which may never have happened. She also issues her enigmatic warning which fascinatingly claims she can fabricate memories which will happen in the future. She gives us an example which we find later to be an exact account of the unhappy dumbshow which ends the play.

This man crying in our room. (pp. 32-33)

Yet Anna adds a detail too which does not occur at the end of the play. This is an irony against her; she will not in the event manage to drive him out. She has the man go out, leaving her alone with her Katey. Her gentleness is chilling as she muses:

- It was as if he had never been. (p.33)

Deeley is ready for her, though, and demonstrates his confidence and controlled front by making light of it all with a risqué jest:

- Of course he'd been. He went twice and came once. (p.33)

Unit 8 begins with Kate asserting her silent self again by getting up to take a cigarette. The duel has developed rapidly since she last got up to serve the coffee in unit 3 after Anna's introductory monologue. Her moves enclose the first part of the struggle. Her feelings come out in one clipped, telling sentence, a rebuke to both her vassals:

- You talk of me as if I were dead. (p.34)

Kate insists she lives in the present; it is, after all, the others who have been living in the past with their memories.
Anna comes into the present and makes her boldest move so far, openly wooing Kate in front of her husband, who again pushes the scene to a climax by angrily interrupting Anna. In unit 9 Deeley belittles his seriousness in his own wooing and proposal. He counters Anna and punishes Kate, "a slip of a girl not long out of her swaddling clothes whose only claim to virtue was silence" (p.35). Perhaps Kate is "dead" for him now, after twenty years of marriage: 

A classic female figure, I said to myself, or is it a classic female posture, one way or the other long out-worn. (p.36)

The female principle itself seems to reside in Kate, the cat-like, self-contained, indifferent sphinx and the more sinuous, serpentine Anna. The image of marriage Anna presents is an elaboration of "taking the plunge" into a sort of suicidal jump into a river. The image ripples in the play itself, sending a wave as far as Kate's final speech describing Anna as a corpse, muddied as if by drowning. The metaphor is used to suggest the danger of falling in love. Kate's love is a sort of suicide to Anna, it seems, for her compliments to Deeley about his reciprocating the love and being artistic come across as slyly, biting irony. Under his influence Kate seems to have regressed to an intellectual vegetable:

I was interested once in the arts, but I can't remember now which ones they were.

(p.37)

Kate's remark has a double edge. It confirms Anna's dig at Deeley, but it is also a rap over the knuckles for Anna, who cleverly seizes the opportunity to remind her of the visits
to the Tate, but also of a visit to Odd Man Out perhaps before Deeley knew them or perhaps on the occasion Deeley picked up Kate — the speech is ironically set against his in unit 6 by the scathing omission of all direct mention of his presence, and oblique acknowledgement of his unimportance in the masterful little phrase which asserts that they saw the film "almost alone."

Unit 10 begins as an innocuous effort to make conversation, Deeley telling of his job, that of an itinerant filmmaker apparently, but it rises to a crisis of rudeness as Deeley shows his suspicions of Anna's sexuality and his fear of the possibility of Kate's complicity when he suggests that Kate would entertain, in more ways than one, Anna's husband. Deeley's remarks show that he probably suspects this husband is a fiction, and he starts poking fun at Anna by suggesting he might be an Italian with Christian names reminiscent of those of the film directors Ponti and Pasolini. Deeley hints further that he thinks Anna's life in Sicily is a fiction by coming out with the preposterous boast that he is really Orson Welles. Kate tries to make normal conversation to save the situation but Deeley insults Anna through the cultivated and artistic, sophisticated and wealthy world she would have them believe she inhabits — to Deeley, such people are "mainly prostitutes of all kinds." Kate tries to talk to Anna, but her friend can only stare. Unit 11 ends the act with the punishment of Deeley by both women. The past is not recalled now; it is relived, re-enacted. We see them as if they were twenty years
younger, living in their shared flat. Anna even recites the names of men they could ask over to spend the evening with them, and perhaps the night! The situation is a neat reversal of the beginning of the play. Then Kate and Deeley were in the present time of the play, Anna standing silent, a figure in a timeless limbo, apart, not yet involved, not yet arrived, and representing the past about to impinge in the near future. Now it is Deeley who stands apart. Kate and Anna in the time present of the play enact time past, a past in which Deeley had not yet impinged upon them. He was an unknown future, destined to change Kate's life. Deeley tries to bring them back into the time present of the play by interrupting about the casserole. But it is no use, Anna has won. But finally, it is Kate who holds the power; she decides to run her own bath, enacting the past physically in the routine of the present. She goes out, and we are in the present again, the two combatants standing and watching each other.

Act II opens with time having jumped forward enough for Kate to be having her bath and for Deeley to have made coffee. But our first view of the set suggests that time could have jumped backward. Deeley is not on stage. The set is now the bedroom, the symmetry of the structure suggested by Pinter's direction:

The divans and armchair are disposed in precisely the same relation to each other as the furniture in the first act, but in reversed positions. (p.47)

The lights are dim again, but it is Anna who possesses the room,
alone, save for the dim light from the bathroom door which signifies the presence of Kate. In Peter Hall's London production, the furniture was in a triangle arrangement stressing the character relationships. But with Deeley not yet on the stage we get an image of that typical evening of the past when Anna and Kate lived together. The tableau is left to register in the silence which precedes the entry of Deeley and the beginning of unit 2 of this act. Deeley starts with a quiet little ploy about the way the beds can be arranged in various permutations, and then fires at point blank range: he tells Anna he remembers her from the past. The hints in I, unit 2, and his curiosity about Anna are developed. Deeley tells us how Anna had not been so prim, but a bohemian wearing the post-war (existentialist) rig-out "a black scarf, and a black sweater, and a skirt...And black stockings" on jaunts to The Wayfarers Tavern where she was "darling of the saloon bar" (p.49) among the arty-crafty denizens of that hostelry who included among their number the ginger-bearded Luke. Deeley could be attacking with a false memory. Anna defends herself by denying all recollection of this portion of her past. He becomes directly and coarsely sexual, implying Anna was a whore, and knocks her lesbian tendencies by stressing the grossness of the men at the party and his own lustful and blatant gazing up her skirt. Anna's reply to this rigmarole is a masterly and exquisite piece of characterization. She assumes a lofty, patronizing pity for Deeley, quietly earnest in the mode of genteel hauteur and girlish romanticism she has established.
I've rarely heard a sadder story (p. 52)
But then she admits that it was she Deeley remembered. Perhaps Anna now wants Deeley to woo her. But after a silence in which we have time to realize that she was indeed at The Wayfarers or that she is going along with Deeley for her own devious purposes, unit 3 moves on with Deeley's next ploy — to allow Anna's interest in his wife but to establish sexual rank over her in the speculations on how to dry Kate after her bath. If Anna is indeed a lesbian, Deeley's proposal that they make an alliance for the drying of Kate must be distasteful as well as normally embarrassing. Deeley seems to be trying to ruffle her feathers, but he does not succeed. He even insults Anna about her age and her changed looks.

Just as Anna was talked about before her move to enter the action in Act I, so Anna and Deeley now in Act II have built up suspense about Kate, before she enters wearing a bathrobe and begins unit 4 by smiling at Deeley and Anna. It is she who now takes up the position looking out of the window, but Deeley now repeats the song ploy of Act I. His and Anna's complicity in this suggests that they both resent Kate's power over them. They now sing only one song, the lines summing up the theme of the struggle of each lover to retain a particular memory image of Kate.

As in Act I, the song sequence is funny and yet now it is tenser, less genial, "The way you hold your knife —," and is followed in unit 5, after Kate's speech in time present about the softer water preferable to the London water, by Anna and
Kate playing another round of the "get Deeley" game. Pinter has hinted that there might be a curiously sensual drying of Kate scene, and Deeley now strengthens that hint by bringing up the subject to break the spell of the re-enactment of the past. Kate's smile gives Deeley and Anna further opportunity for admiring her almost gloatingly. This ploy is nettling her at last; she abruptly complains the coffee is cold. Anna's offer to make more leads again into the enactment of a cosy evening of their past and the discussion of boy-friends. Kate prefers Christy, an Irish name suggesting it might be Deeley's (this subtlety could explain why Pinter has given his man a surname and his women Christian names). This gives more point to Deeley's managing to break into the Kate/Anna dialogue:

KATE
He's so gentle, isn't he? And his humour. Hasn't he got a lovely sense of humour? And I think he's...so sensitive. Why don't you ask him round?

DEELEY
He can't make it. He's out of town.

(p.63)

If Christy is Deeley, he is true to form here, revealing his characteristic humour.

Unit 6 provides another climax of anger in this act, for Anna's account of life with Kate and borrowing underwear leads to Deeley's description of the relationship as a marriage, and then his outburst as an outraged husband, whereupon Anna tries to avert crisis by immediately backing down to assert the surface, normal situation of the play.
But what can you possibly find distasteful? I've flown from Rome to see my oldest friend, after twenty years, and to meet her husband. What is it that worries you? (p.6?)

Deeley's seemingly irrelevant outburst about Anna's husband is really a recognition that he and Deeley are counterparts; but the Italian man Anna is neglecting for a while and being unfaithful to in her pursuit of Kate has compensations in the "slim-bellied Cote d'Azur thing" whereas Deeley finds himself neglected or rejected by Kate, mocked by Anna

DEELEY

...deprivations and insults, why should I waste valuable space listening to two —

KATE

(Swiftly.) If you don't like it go.

DEELEY

Go? Where can I go? (p.67)

This is the crisis and turning point of the Act and of the structure as a whole, for Kate's attitude to her marriage is exposed. Her marriage is dead. Deeley tries to shrug it off with a joke, but they all fall silent.

Unit 7 begins with Anna's statement that she comes not to disrupt but to celebrate. Her words are mannered, noble, and styled to recall the description of London girlhood in Act I. Deeley cuts straight through this mood with his anchor speech confessing he knew Anna years ago, but by the end of the speech, Anna has perhaps merged into Kate. Perhaps Anna is the Kate he knew as a young man, the Kate he married and who has now become the cool, shy self of the country housewife.
This is why Kate can explain just why Anna fell in love with Deeley. On the realistic level, Deeley is merely hurting Kate and Anna by deliberately using his confusion of them in his memory as an offensive. But Kate is not put down. She comes to the attack with the implication that she knew of the affair with Anna, knew that Anna had loved Deeley. This is another surprise, and a reversal, for Kate has now entered the fray and we suddenly realize, as perhaps she has done, that Anna could have come not to win Kate but to sever her marriage, of which she is jealous, and take Deeley, who has indeed found Anna sexually stimulating; no wonder she was reluctant to remember much about Anna at the beginning. The visit has stirred up old times muddier and more dangerous than had been supposed. Deeley, like Christy, is seen as different from the other, crass men in a very funny little exchange in which Kate and Deeley are together again. Significantly now Anna delivers her last line of the play, and Pinter specifies that she says it coldly. She reverses her earlier denial that she knew Deeley when he looked up her skirt. Kate has sat smiling and keeping calmly aloof; as soon as she has seen the situation she has brought the issue to a head by challenging Deeley and now she dismisses Anna. After the climax and reversal we have just discussed, the play does not wind down. Pinter pushes to a further climax by giving Kate a long speech with which she dominates the end of the play.

Where Act I ended with Anna defeating Deeley and then Kate taking control, Act II ends with Deeley defeating Anna,
the reverse of the expectancy aroused by Act I and the change of set in Act II, but then Kate not only takes control but also subjugates the unhappy Deeley. Kate's command is established in her anchor speech, the monologue which leads to the final dumbshow and tableau. She starts by dismissing Anna to the limbo of dead friendships (picking up the imagery of Deeley's previous anchor speech to which she had listened so carefully) such as those of the Edgware Road gang who were considered dead because they had not been seen or contacted for so long. Kate also uses Anna's memory of watching Kate unseen against her now:

I remember you lying dead. You didn't know I was watching you. I leaned over you. Your face was dirty. You lay dead, your face scrawled with dirt, all kinds of earnest inscriptions, but unblotted, so that they had run, all over your face, down to your throat. (pp. 71-2)

The speech is startling in its imagery — the cultural pretensions and prescriptions, and the expressions of love and affection are like a mask of dirt over Anna's face, streaked and wet; it suggests a made-up face ruined by tears and grief at the break-up of a love-affair, perhaps Anna's affair with Deeley and with Kate when she realized that Deeley would marry Kate. Thus Anna is now as one of the dead. Kate's cool self-possession is alarming and even horrible. Where Anna's grief is imaged as a death, bones "breaking through your face,"

Kate does not even feel discomposed:

But all was serene. There was no suffering. It had all happened elsewhere. Last rites I did not feel necessary. Or any celebration. (p. 72)
The last is the nastiest cut of all. We know with full force now why Kate could coldly deny in Act I that Anna had been her best friend. Kate had all those years ago taken Deeley away from her, realizing that she loved him. Twenty years later she has once again fought her friend to the death. Twenty years ago she had gone and taken a bath, just as now she has emerged from a bath. Twenty years ago Anna had, of course, gone away from their room and Deeley had moved in, just as now Anna is once more dismissed to the silent limbo from which she emerged.

The speech is startling in its cruelty, too, for it is all delivered at Anna its victim like a deadly fusillade.

We had a choice of two beds. Your bed or my bed. To lie in, or on. To grind noses together, in or on. He liked your bed.

(p.72)

Yet it is able too to hit at Deeley and wound with the revelation to Anna that he has been a victim of Kate's sexual frigidity:

He though I was going to be sexually forthcoming, that I was about to take a long promised initiative. (p.73)

Kate tells how she plastered his face with dirt. She was trying to make him resemble Anna, evidently. But what is this imagery of dirty faces? Here, once more, the understanding of the structure depends on our memory. The image of the dead Anna recalls a drowned corpse, dirt streaked by water over the face. But in Act I Anna had likened falling in love to jumping into a river. She has jumped for Kate and for Deeley, and she has
drowned. But Kate "never did things loosely or carelessly, recklessly," instead she waited for ripples. Anna remembered that Kate had jumped for love of Deeley. But Kate's element is not Anna's. The desecration of love Anna accepts. Deeley does not, preferring a frigid marriage and a change of place. Kate bathes not in the waters of love but in the domestic bathroom. She has become horribly invulnerable to love. Her speech ends with a cruel denial that Anna had ever existed; it is also a clever way of tormenting Deeley with jealous speculation:

He asked me once, at about that time, who had slept in that bed before him. I told him no one. No one at all.

Long silence. (p.73)

That silence allows the full weight of her words to sink in. We have had revealed to us the ruthless power of the strongest character in the play. She is frigid, cold, implacable, unwavered by sentiment. The duelling of Deeley and Anna has been a sort of genteel game of fisticuffs into which at the climax of the play Kate has sprung like a lynx. Pinter has used a subdued, symmetrical structure to reveal the anguish of loving, the pain of rejection, and the cool power of a woman horribly impervious to other people. No wonder she has no friends. The final tableau sums it up and fixes the situation which has turned through a full circle to reach the grouping with which Act I had opened. Moreover, its dumbshow makes Anna's memory of the man "crying in our room" come to pass.

Action on the stage can usually be assumed to be representation of what is happening at a specified time unless it is meant
to be a particular dream or vision. In *Old Times*, however, we have the very subtle device whereby the mime at the end may have happened in the past (as Anna's true memory of twenty years previously), may be going to happen in the future, may be happening now, may never be going to happen or may never have happened (for how can Anna have a memory before the event?) — in the theatre however, such subtlety is in a sense wasted. Deeley sobs. If the actors have acted with conviction, if the final monologue has worked and revealed the depths of its callousness, then we will be moved by Deeley's dependence upon Kate, and by his sobbing. And we shall have compassion for the shadowy Anna. And if at the same time we are aware of the dangerousness of all three in this trio, this is as much complexity as we need. The play will have worked. Before, Pinter had achieved this amount of subtlety only in the juxtaposition of words. Now he has managed to find a context powerful enough to suggest a complexity of time and relationships in which the dumbshow could achieve bewildering complexity from a few simple actions. If the verification of the past has been called in doubt, so now is the verification of the moment, elapsing as it does before our eyes, in the sudden harsh light of the Peter Hall production.

Pinter has reached a limit here, though, for if the ambiguities of the ending are too many, then our interest itself is threatened. Moreover, the subdued, desultory tone is also a danger. If the whole is played too nonchalantly on the surface we shall miss the recognition by Kate of what is
happening between Deeley and Anna, and this would impair the reversal and climax. Old Times is a new, complex and subtle exploration of the resources of memory and time-shifts to produce an exquisitely modulated and fascinating triangle relationship; it needs exquisite and subtle performance. The role of Kate is brilliantly contrived for its sudden revelation, but it demands an actress able to sustain her power throughout the whole play with hardly any lines at all. And the triangle relationship itself exists within a circular movement. Each character seems in turn powerfully placed at the apex of the triangle, but it revolves to the point at which the tableau at the end of the play seems a mirror image of the tableau we had at the beginning. The characters are the same. The lighting chillingly comes up on the white serenity of the merciless Kate. A critic of the New York production (Peter Hall directing a different cast from his London one) praised John Bury's lighting of the play:

Mr. Bury is a clever man; he made my flesh creep by brightening the lights instead of dimming them.  

What had begun as dimly apprehended memory had become, in the course of the evening, terrifyingly clear. The final enclosed dumbshow, the re-enactment of the core situation and memory of the play is frozen into the white light and tableau. It is an emotional trap. One thinks of Sartre's play about a man with two lady companions, one a lesbian, trapped in the narrow circle of the hell of human being. I mean, of course, Huis Clos. But Pinter's characters are both inside and outside the circle.
They are bound by memory together, but in a sense, though Deeley is the only man in the play and is made to feel "odd man out" in the Anna and Kate memory sessions, Anna herself is an odd one out; she is not married to Deeley and her sexuality is ambiguous. Kate herself is an odd one out in that she cannot relate warmly to any other human being.

The pattern of Old Times, then, is in a way classically of the Pinter world — there is a struggle for possession and the intrusion by an interloper. But the stress of memory as weapon is a new subtlety derived from the lessons learned in Landscape, Silence and The Homecoming. The new spareness of language, the new subdued tone of the "slow, stilted ceremony of nostalgia" are there. The concern for identity and verification of being and memory strike us as not only typical of Pinter and his liking for Beckett, but as emerging through enlarged dramaturgical possibilities — the presence of Anna in the shadows, the acting out of the past in the present — which recall the stagecraft and concerns of Pirandello. Furthermore, Pinter has shown that his world is frighteningly universal. These saddened, wistful, defiant, dangerous people are not denizens of some particular working-class room we may not happen to inhabit. They are universal. They are, perhaps inside us. Pinter has not managed to achieve the spiritual immensity of Beckett's brief signals:

CLOV: Do you believe in the life to come?
HAMM: Mine was always that.16

But the shadowy dimensions of Old Times and the resonance of
its structure achieve a reverberating series of dramatic situations out of the stark possibilities of the human spirit which do not achieve a poetry of words which Beckett commands, but certainly give us a distinctive poetry of the theatre dependent on strictly and precisely apportioned words and silences.
CONCLUSION

We have seen how Pinter, through a careful and craftsmanlike shaping of his structures, paring down, tightening and vitally expanding them, arrived at the complexity and power of The Homecoming. This play explored most of the features of his early work: security and threat, talk as an often vicious weapon, the closed circle of the room, the mystery of personality and identity, the tension between the surface and the depths when people converse, the difficulty and uncertainty of verification of event and memory, the fight to possess living space, the fight to possess a person, the ambiguous and even dangerous aspect of woman, the brutal and gentle aspects of man, the threat to the individual of the group, and the power of silence. And all this was held within an ironic study of kinship. It is the most disturbing of Pinter's plays and the most powerful and thorough-going exploration of the urban lower-class milieu as a paradigm of man's estate in the whole of his work to date. And all that savagery was held together with a sense of family, astonishing though that seems, within a fairly orthodox sequential structure rich in ironic juxtapositions.

What could he do next? At a point of apogée there seems but one way to go, and that downward. Pinter took the plunge with astonishing boldness. He plummeted into the zero zone so painfully inhabited by Beckett. It was a surprising change which Pinter wrought. Binding and confining his theatricality,
and gagging it even at the end of *Silence*, Pinter seemed to be rushing on a Beckettian journey to the end of a night in which characters were frozen and speech would cease. Yet Pinter did not reach the exasperating nullity which Beckett's dramaturgy has reached. He was exploring a new area of uncertainties — those of memory; he was finding new structures, abandoning horizontal for vertical movement and exploring cyclic not sequential time, exploiting monologue and not dialogue. Nor was he out of breath, for in his latest play, *Old Times* Pinter has shown that the enterprise of cutting narrative content, purging his prose somewhat, changing his style and tone with the shift in subject matter, and perfecting miniature structures could be the old strategy, *reculer pour mieux sauter*. *Old Times* is not only different from Pinter's other work, it is also very different from that of Beckett. And at the same time, it is irresistibly, to use a word Pinter dislikes, Pinteresque. And now that *Old Times* is there, *Landscape* and *Silence* appear more like the logical fore-runners of it than like mere imitation Beckett. For despite the variable factors (mood, the use of memory, the lessening of menace, the finding of an elegiac tone and a new tenderness towards words, new kinds of relationships or lack of relationship, new subtleties, different uncertainties, and the shift from movement, violence and stage business to more stress on the interplay of word and mood in a manner reminiscent of Chekhov's change from plays of direct to indirect action) despite all this evidence of change and growth, Pinter's plays remain
stubbornly and unmistakably his own. Underlying all is his sense of the weapons people use, their stratagems of attack and defence, the failing struggle for security and identity and possession, the uncertainty of all experience, the conflicts of the interloper with the group. And always, beneath the meticulous particularity of the texts there is that non-Euclidean geometry of the human condition we all can respond to (Pinter is much translated): the psychological triangle of sexuality, of power-struggle, of family and of possession.

Pinter rose to fame with a bright generation of new British playwrights astonishing in the energy and totally unforeseen quality of its talent, with Osborne, Arden, Wesker, Kops, Alun Owen — yet he does not reek of the kitchen-sink or the soap-box; he is in some ways a proletarian social realist, yet he is not just that, nor is he politically committed or Brechtian; despite The Dumb Waiter he is not absurdist in the sense of the fantastic Ionesco, nor déraciné like Beckett; his realism is never merely prosaic, but always gapes to reveal that darker dimension of the Kafka world, not shaking with Kafka's laughter, though, but with the perky guffaws of the cockney world Dickens knew about; in the heady atmosphere of Artaud's theories, of poor theatre, cruel theatre, total theatre, living theatre, and the rather sweaty fetish of audience participation, Pinter stares us coolly in the face, shows us the vulnerability of people, and in the silences, tensions and tableaux we participate with the compassion and the disgust he wrings from us. We do not forget the stricken Rose in her shabby
room, the dumb-founded killers, Ben and Gus, and the harsh irony of the tortured Stanley and his beatifically smiling Meg. A rejected tramp, a raging old man grovelling for love; they sear us, and seem likely to endure. Our participation is absorbing and emotionally demanding. It is not a result of fashionable gimmickry or of short-lived politics which could be out of date tomorrow. It is crafted carefully from structured human actions, silences and language which communicates. Pinter speaks to us with gestures, and with those subtlest of human instruments, words themselves, which are stark, colloquial, simple, yet so moving, so funny and so complex in their nuances. Pinter's structures do not lie merely on the page. They envelop us and shape our emotions and our thoughts in the human darkness of the auditorium.
NOTES

CHAPTER I


2. The quotations from these plays throughout the thesis are all taken from the Methuen paperback editions save those from Old Times which come from the Methuen hardback edition. Full publishing data may be found in the bibliography. Hereafter pagination from each play as quoted will be given parenthetically in the body of the text. I have consulted also the Grove Press editions of the plays and the Methuen hardback editions. Any differences noted, and they are minimal, will be mentioned during the course of my discussion.


CHAPTER II


3. For this quotation and the suggestion of its relevance to Pinter's pauses I am indebted to Frank Beardow and Andrew Parkin. I quote from their unpublished translation of G. Kozintsev "Prostranstvo Tragedii" ["The Landscape of Tragedy"] Iskusstvo Kino, 7 (July 1971), 103.

5. Ibid., p. 94.


CHAPTER III


2. Arlene Sykes, p. 81.


5. Ibid., p. 340.


8. Ibid., p. 20.

9. Ibid., p. 23.

10. Ibid., p. 24.


CHAPTER IV

1. Pinter as quoted on the dust cover of "Landscape" and "Silence" (London: Methuen, 1969).


6. Written for the stage, its radio premiere, 25 April 1968, was necessitated by the Lord Chamberlain's objection to an obscenity which Pinter refused to cut. Radio was not subject to the Lord Chamberlain's censorship.

7. Pinter as reported by P.H.S., "The Times Diary", The Times, 11 April 1969, p. 10.


A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

No one has yet published a full study of the dramatic structures of Pinter's plays, and Pinter criticism has so far been concerned with elucidation, theme, imagery and language. The critical work available has, therefore, been of help in a general way, but has had only minimal influence on my account of the structures of the stage plays. This bibliography lists all published books on Pinter in English, and but a few of the articles and reviews.

A. PINTER'S WRITINGS:

PLAYS


OTHER WRITINGS BY PINTER


"Writing for Myself." Twentieth Century, 169, 1008 (February, 1961), 172-75. Includes also a poem by Pinter.


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B. INTERVIEWS WITH HAROLD PINTER:
(in chronological order)


C. BIBLIOGRAPHIES:


D. BOOKS AND BOOK REFERENCES ON PINTER:


E. BACKGROUND BOOKS:


F. ARTICLES:

Amend, Victor E. "Harold Pinter - Some Credits and Debits." Modern Drama, 10(September 1967), 165-174.

Bernhard, F.J. "Beyond Realism: The Plays of Harold Pinter." Modern Drama, 8(September, 1965), 185-91.


G. SELECTED PRODUCTION REVIEWS:

The Birthday Party


The Dumb Waiter with The Room


The Caretaker


The Homecoming


Hughes, Catherine. "Pinter is as Pinter Does." Catholic World, 210(December 1969), 124-126.


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June 1, 1971: Aldwych Theatre, London.

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