CHAPTER FOUR

Dramatic Dialogue in Old Times

*Old Times* (1971), two-Act play, was first presented at Aldwych Theatre, London on June 1, 1971, directed by Peter Hall. This first full-length play after *The Homecoming* was preceded by *Landscape* and *Silence*. Both these plays are concerned with human isolation and the crucial problem of communication through our attempts to recall the past. *Old Times* has a rather similar static quality. In the play we hear a new voice of the playwright under the spell of the element of time, and the related concept of memory and the distant past. *Old Times* revolves on the hinges of memory, and the attempts of the three characters, "all in their early forties" (IV, p.2), to recapitulate the past. All the stylistic and thematic components that had defined Pinter's work up to this point continue to be equally vital elements in it.

*Old Times* is no less distinguished by pauses and silences that invest the Pinterian dialogue with strange ambiguous meaning. The play, underlining the subtle struggle for psychological power, is steeped in an atmosphere which blends everyday reality with dream-images. The play also introduces an intruder, as do the earlier plays, who threatens the prevailing peaceful mode of life, and registers similar battle for territory - for possession of an individual. Besides, the play is having a strong under-
current of sexual overtone. In *Old Times* Pinter's dialogue creates the appropriate dramatic tone which is new and poetically compelling. The shifting perspectives on the past, the inadequate grip characters have on truth and reality give rise to a threatening world in which the desire for verification, the need for full knowledge and genuine communication is necessarily frustrated. Through the dialogue *Old Times* makes slow but sure move to divulge the malignant element usually hidden in human life - a common Pinter Theme.

In *Old Times* Pinter shows us that a play in its broadest definition is a personal, a direct impression of life. Its value is greater or less in accordance with the intensity of the impressions of the individuals. The playwright knows that physical performance expresses inner conflicts and resolutions. He uses a theatre language capable of carrying forward these sense impressions. In *Old Times* there is the colloquially based verbal game people play in their social interchanges. The dialogue of all the three characters raises the question whether the characters tell lies to one another. Can they make the audience aware that they are lying? The answers may emanate out of the accentuation and intonation - giving a clue either of assertion or of neutrality. The significant aspect of dramatic dialogue happens to be its latent heat
or the various degrees of suggestiveness. From this standpoint it may be said that Pinter's play is a dramatic text which defines its own context through its dialogue.

The playwright communicates with actors in a direct way, being equipped with the inner theatrical logic. He as a dramatist does not involve the audience so much as he imposes a theatrical spectacle on it, and this he does primarily through the dialogue, upholding J.L. Styan's familiar observation, made in his *Elements of Drama*, that a play is its dialogue. The pattern of the dramatic dialogue pertains to the modern, knowing society shot through with psycho-sexual sophistication. The playwright has deftly exploited all visual clues, such as the devices of close-up, mixing images, flash-back, fading and quick scene-shift in order to intensify the absence of direct verbal route-map.

In *Old Times*, Pinter subtly retreats the ingredients of the traditional comedy of manners through a theatrically viable lingual idiom. This focuses on the love intrigues of sophisticated young high-ups who rely heavily on their verbal wit expressed in the comic style of popular entertainment. Pinter's play differs in the sense that as an Absurdist play it uses comedy to express ironic techniques and philosophical ideas representing Existentialism. In the Absurdist plays like Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1954) comic convention is employed in order to
convey a profoundly serious view of human existence. As Old Times unfolds itself it gradually becomes clear that what is stirred in the three characters is more than a simple remembrance of things past, for the past is forgotten and only retrieved in snatches to become an acute awareness of isolation in between the counterpointed trio of memory. As individuals they are alienated from one another in an inexpressible way. Communication fails in attaining any logical end, as Anna's dialogue underlines:

There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place. (IV, pp.27-28)

These words bear an echo from The Dwarfs (1960):

Len: You're the sum of so many reflections. How many reflections? Whose reflections? Is that what you consist of? What scum does the tide leave? What happens to the scum? When does it happen? I've seen what happens. But I can't speak when I see it. I can only point a finger. I can't even do that. The scum is broken and sucked back. I don't see where it goes. I don't see when.... What have I seen, the scum or the essence? What about it? (II, p.112)

This is perhaps the most crucial question of the Existentialist human predicament. Anna's dialogue closely resembles the dialogue of Ellen in Silence:

Yes, I remember. But I'm never sure that what I remember is of today or of yesterday or of a long time ago.

(Pause)

And then often it is only half things I remember, half things, beginnings of things. (III, p.214)
The dialogue points to the unverifiability of the past which remains in frozen isolation in a somewhat no man's land, difficult of access. Dialogue given to Deeley again drives the point home:

Deeley (to Kate): .... Yes, we met in the Wayfarers Tavern.... She (Anna) took a fancy to me.... She was pretending to be you at the time.... wearing your underwear.... We went to a party.... on the way to the party I took her into a Cafe.... She thought she was you.... May be she was you. May be it was you, having coffee with me...."

(IV, p.65)

What Deeley suggests is not only that Anna put on Kate's underwear, and pretended to be Kate, he gets finally confused as to if she was Kate herself, not Anna. Thus unverifiability reigns supreme. Old Times through its placid dramatic language gives us a deep sense that life escapes — a sense that Virginia Woolf wanted to convey: "Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this'.... life is a ... semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end."1 Old Times is made as a picturesque tableau chiefly through its dialogue having multidimensional connotations.

Dialogue works through specially chosen words culled out, with an acute observation, from the mannerisms, repetitions and cliches of the English vernacular as spoken in real life. Between the three characters of Old Times words are exchanged as potent weapons of dominance and
subservience. Pauses and silences are awfully meaningful in the literary sense. What resembles tape-recorded vocabulary is, nevertheless, highly stylized. In *Old Times* Pinter shows his total capability in approximating human reality with that artistic attempt to capture the given moment and set it above the uncertainties which time brings all the way through its passage:

Anna: Why don't you dry her yourself? 
Deeley: Would you recommend that? 
Anna: You'd do it properly. 
Deeley: In her bath towel? 
Anna: How out? 
Deeley: How out? 
Anna: How could you dry her out? Out of her bath towel? 
Deeley: I don't know. 
Anna: Well, dry her yourself, in her bath towel. 

(Pause) (IV, pp. 50-51)

*Old Times* has a very satisfying shape, structure and an overall dramatic unity, all of which are of a very different kind from those of the conventional plays. The play is basically a series of conversation between three characters — Anna, Kate, Deeley — who form a clear love triangle. Their dialogue, woven mostly around the episode of the past, attempts to define the nature of the relationship which existed and gradually came to stay in between them. Their conversation in bits and pieces leads to an awareness of the distance by which they have been alienated.
Bryden, the reviewer of the first night of *Old Times*, comments pertinently on the dialogue by referring to "the value of each word and silence which exposes every layer of the text like the perspex of a three-dimensional chessboard."^2

An audience with an ear for Pinter's dialogue recognises the territory upon which *Old Times* stands. The complex rhythm of the dialogue strikes the note of a conflict for dominance and possession. The combat ground indeed is Kate; the two contenders to possess her are Anna, her one-time room-mate and only friend, and Deeley, her husband. The ammunition used in the skirmish is indeed dramatic dialogue. Language of innuendo and ambiguous menace abounds in the play. As in *The Homecoming*, the winner here will be the one who would ultimately impose his or her language upon the other in getting the upper hand.

In *The Homecoming* Ruth and Lenny exchange blows; in *Old Times* it is between Anna and Deeley that blow follows blow and parry follows parry in terms of the skilled game of lingual gambits and manoeuvres. Whereas Deeley, Kate's husband, wields crude power with Kate under his physical control, Anna has a patient finesse, the authority of money and culture, a cool determination. Kate's vague, smiling passivity appears to be on Anna's side. The dialogue of the play "participates in the new Pinter world of maximum compression and austere poetry
first heard in Landscape and Silence."³ For within the same triangular frame of remembrance of things past as of Silence, Old Times blends the sexual ambiguities of The Collection with the territorial wars of dominance which underlines The Homecoming. All this is achieved by dint of the verbal designing and technique used with stunning mastery of economy of expression.

The dramatic action of Old Times takes place in a converted country farmhouse of Deeley and his wife Kate, who are awaiting the arrival from Sicily in Italy of Kate's old friend Anna whom Kate has not seen for the last twenty years (IV, p.63). Her arrival subtly menaces the marriage of Kate as she tries calculatedly to recreate her very close friendship with Kate which Deeley has got into as an intruder by marrying Kate. Anna enters the secluded household of Deeley and Kate to struggle for a position of dominance, as does Ruth, coming from America, in The Homecoming. In the earlier One-Acter Landscape this theme of struggle for dominance appears only tangentially, but in Old Times it recurs with an insidious force superbly manifested through the masterly fashioned dialogue with verbal variations cut out for the individual characters:

Deeley: Yes, I remember you quite clearly from The Wayfarers.

Anna : The what?

Deeley: The Wayfarers Tavern, just off the Brompton road.

Anna : When was that?
Deeley: Years ago.
Anna: I don't think so.
Deeley: Oh yes, it was you, no question.
I never forget a face. (IV, pp. 44-45)

The combat for territory between Deeley and Anna for the possession of Kate with all her individuality emerges gradually from their glib conversation and soon explodes into the uncomfortable, rather surreal, memories of the past. Old Times upholds the usual male-female scuffle found in Pinter's world and endemic to human race as well. Deeley, a successful, widely travelled film maker, uses masculine prowess and blunt coraseness to encounter Anna's indirect and sly attack. The dramatic dialogue in Old Times weaves the pattern of attack and defence in which all the three characters are locked.

Old Times deals with the element of time, space and the related concept of memory of the dim distant past. The play attempts to recapture the past, to co-relate eternal time with spatial time and to recreate the effect of the past on the present through memory lane. Its dialogue relates to the past of all the three characters, and is broken up by extended stories which in their turn relate again to the past with reference to space in time. It is aptly said that "the characters in Old Times enter a sort of time-machine." Kate confronts her girl friend Anna from the hazy past, and thereupon hidden and shelved memories start spilling out once again though it is
difficult to ascertain the truth behind.

A close examination of the dramatic dialogue reveals that there is a strong undercurrent of suggestion that Kate and Anna could well have been involved in a lesbian relationship. It is also suggested that there could have been a close touch between Anna and Deeley in the past. Gradually, as the play unfolds its net, Deeley the single man of the triangle is left with a sense of separation from both women. Their conversation shows that Pinter, being quite intent on mystification, withholds essential information. In this context, Nightingale's observation is quite relevant: "Most playwright's reputations depend on what they reveal about their characters; one has felt that his (Pinter's) depends on what he (Pinter) does not reveal." 5

In Old Times as in The Birthday Party and The Homecoming, Pinter does not come up with any information to set up the necessary background of the characters. What he points out is that the mind has chasms, and that human subconscious is more or less impervious. The dialogue magnifies the mysteries, and multiplies speculation. Though the dialogue between Anna, Deeley and Kate, the playwright's message that unfolds is that impressions and events come to us filtered through the unreliable senses of unreliable people, and consequently what is true for one is often untrue for another. When through a play such as Old Times
our idea of certainty about the common events of the exterior reality gets tarnished and removed, the play tries to draw our attention on the greater truths of the inner reality. Pinter's journey is into the interior of a man, and until this point is not considered, he appears to be imperviously absurdistic in his plays.

*Old Times* begins imaginatively with a strong visual metaphor that evokes the central theme of the play. The strange, paradoxical, almost invisible backstage presence of Anna — who is actually being awaited by the couple as an expected guest — behind the two onstage characters Deeley and Kate, and the triangle of the characters thus formed gives out an instant symbolic meaning. It is that the past exists in the present through memory, and as such past is capable of exercising palpable and potential impact on the present. This visual metaphor having introduced us to the Pinter territory of *Old Times*, dramatic dialogue steadily pursues the theme that has been explored all through the action of the play. So the past is already gathered into the present through the shadowy figure of Anna silhouetted against the window. At the given moment Anna comes forward from the dimly lit backstage area into the middle of the conversation going on between Deeley and Kate. Anna's sudden surfacing is an excellent example of Pinter's effective theatre.
Though Anna was physically present on the stage, the dramatist alerts the audience to her presence only at the cross-section when the present meets the past, and Anna steps into the limelight to make both Kate and Deeley aware of herself.

At the same time this stage manoeuvre expresses an idea or a subtle feeling which is vitally important to the play, viz., that of the distant past and the present existing side by side and even coalescing from time to time, affecting each other. Both the past and the present as presented by Pinter in Old Times seek from the audience-perception a reinterpretation. The play gives us a Bergsonian idea of time in the sense that the conventional clock-time is different from the variable human experience of duration. However, Old Times does not attempt at providing any ordered or chronological narrative sequence of time. On the contrary, what the playwright does in the play is that time is focused on the three characters through various camera apertures, set by dialogue, in exploring their past, seeking to define their present.

In Old Times, as in The Birthday Party and No Man's Land, Pinter avoids traditional expository devices except to set the scene on the stage and to allow the characters to provide, through specially treated dialogue, information about themselves which may or may not be true.
Old Times abounds in echoes from No Man's Land:

Spooner: .... Experience is a paltry thing. Everything has it and will tell his tale of it. I leave experience to psychological interpreters, the wetdream world. I myself can do any graph of experience you wish, to suit your taste or mine. Child's play. The present will not be distorted (IV, p. 82).

Here Spooner seriously doubts experience which always registers itself with the past. The very terms by which Hirst is invited by Spooner to open up with his past, suggests rather mockingly that the whole effort in recreating or recapitulating past experiences may very well be called in question.

Old Times reflects Pinter's concern with poetic, cosmic truths. It is concerned with the basic human condition rather than with mere factual details about people. Such details, being highly relative in nature, can never be really trusted. As Pinter observes, "I suggest there can be no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false." This is what we may term as Pinter's poetic quest for the essence as against superficial factual particularities of mundane events. He has used poetic techniques along with cognate phrases and has put maximum pressure on every word. He tends to be poetic in the deeper sense. No specific and vivid literal meaning can be abstracted from his plays, such as Old Times. How the
full effect of Pinter's dramatic dialogue is absorbed in the theatre is clearly stated by the first night reviewer. He refers to the important moments which become dramatically relevant and meaningful on the stage:

"Do you drink brandy?" asks Deeley. Vivien Merchant's pause before replying that she would love some is just sufficient to remind you that on Pinter territory, every question is an attempt to control and every answer a swift evasion.8

Pinter mistrusts what is often naively taken for granted as a true confession of past actions, events or motives. In Old Times Anna's words to Deeley confirm this mistrust: "There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened" (IV, pp.27-28). What Anna says to Deeley finds a close parallel in Pinter's Monologue: "You often act as if the Balls Pond Road and the lovely ebony lady never existed, as if the rain in the light on the pavements in the twilight never existed, as if our sporting and intellectual life never was" (IV, p.273).

Whatever the playwrights of the conventional realistic plays wish to convey, is conveyed through words which do not normally have any sub-textual undercurrent. In Pinter, however, the sub-text is of utmost importance, for he believes that: "language... is a highly ambiguous business. So often, below the words spoken, is the thing known and unspoken."9 The dialogue of the Old Times shows that the playwright exploits fully the ambiguities and deceits inherent in spoken language, and thereby achieves
his own kind of realistic effect. Between Pinter's "lack of biographical data (about his characters, Deeley, Kate and Anna)... and the ambiguity of what they say lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration but which is compulsory to explore."¹⁰

Pinter uses words "meticulously and with constant awareness of the other language that can be locked underneath the spoken words."¹¹ This is a remarkable exercise in Old Times in the light of this "awareness of the other language" kept crucially confined beneath the words Deeley, Anna or Kate use. It is, therefore, interesting to see how Pinter's dramatic dialogue in Old Times serves the purpose of explaining the submerged ground behind Pinter's characters for whom truth is a variable, intangible thing. The vital issue for Pinter is the unverifiability of the past.

Old Times has all the stylistic and thematic components of the plays already discussed here. Like the preceding plays, it is distinguished by pauses and silences that invest Pinterian dialogue with strange, sardonic and ironical meanings. The pattern of dialogue woven around Old Times creates that special surreal atmosphere which makes a perfect blending of the known everyday reality with mysterious, nebulous dreamy events. The play also inheres most of the previous prominent Pinter themes such as the arrival of an intruder who threatens the prevailing
stability and quietness of the scenario, the battle for
dominance and possession between two persons over the
third one, and even that sexual ambiguity noticeable in
The Homecoming. The dialogue of the three characters in
Old Times shows that the themes of menace and sexual
undertone perfectly match the lyrical quality of the text
dealing with the flux of time and sequence of memory.
Consequently there arises a dramatic tone which is new
and compelling. In the short-piece Monologue (wr. 1972,
television 1973) Pinter speaks through the only character,
Man: "the thing I like... quite immeasurably, is this kind
of conversation, this kind of exchange, this class of mutual
reminiscence" (IV, p. 272). The verbal level of Old Times
attains perfect economy. Its form runs in concurrence with
its content.

Old Times opens with a fine Pinterian device which
is theatrically effective. The stage direction by itself
becomes a language of its own:

Light dim. Three figures discerned.
Deeley slumped in armchair, still.
Kate curled on a sofa, still.
Anna standing at the window, looking out.
Silence
Lights up on Deeley and Kate....
Anna's figure remains still in dim light at the window.

Deeley and Kate get bright light when the scene opens; Anna's
silhouetted backstage figure still remains quite mysteriously
obscure in the shadows. Three characters are thus placed at
separate meaningful positions so that their figures form a triangle:

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   A
 /\  \\
/   \\
 K   D
/     \\
(on sofa) (on armchair)
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The couple awaits Anna and talks about her. Though Anna is standing mysteriously behind them all along on the dimly lighted backstage, she has supposedly not yet arrived. Through the dialogue between husband and wife — Pinter's characteristic minimalist dialogue — it transpires that in the past Kate and Anna lived together in London. The more Kate strives to remember her old friend whom she has not seen for the past twenty years the more becomes the haziness of the past as far as Kate is concerned: "I hardly remember her. I've almost totally forgotten her" (IV, p.8).

Significantly enough the very first word in the play, uttered by Kate, is "dark" (IV, p.3). Apparently it has been spoken in answer to Deeley's question about Anna's complexion. The subtextual meaning of the monosyllabic word "dark" at the connotative level refers to the gloomy nature of the past with its fog and mist especially as gathered over these long years. Yet again it may mean that Kate intends actually to repress unwholesome memories of an awesome past she has shared with Anna. The dialogue insinuates that it might refer to their ignoble semi-
profession of call-girls in London pubs. She might also want to avoid calling to mind her obliquely hinted lesbian relationship with her only friend. As Anna says, "She was my only friend.... My one and only" (IV, p.5). This friend is now visiting her after the passage of twenty long years, when the spatial time has changed considerably. In correlating Anna's dimly lit figure at the backstage with the opening dialogue of Kate and Deeley, it is possible for an alert audience to deduce that Anna represents the past that has been imprisoned in Kate's mind through memory, and which at the same time is quite capable of affecting her present.

As Anna is discussed by the husband and wife there is an instant transition in time as Anna suddenly and dramatically materializes out of Kate's shadowy past. Her presence, thus brought about, registers itself physically in the room where Deeley is talking to Kate. This theatrical device may be construed as the literal embodiment of the bygone old times spent by these two girl friends in London. Deeley asks Kate probing and pointed questions regarding the old times she has spent living together with Anna. Kate's brief responses are rather unwilling:

Deeley : Was she your best friend?
Kate : Oh, what does that mean?
Deeley : What?
Kate : The word friend... when you look back... all that time.
Deeley: Can't you remember what you feel?
Kate: It is a very long time (IV, p.4).

It is evident that Kate either does not want to recollect or actually recalls nothing about the past. As she indicates by the isolated first word of the play "dark", she visualises only a blurred image of her past days as she lived in London about more than two decades ago. Kate's memories, hidden in the dark spaces of the secret chamber of her mind, may be said to be embodied in Anna's figure, which is similarly obscure in the shadowy corner of the backstage. For Kate these rather uncomfortable and unsettling memories loom over the old times as a palpable menace to the present. At the same time Anna's portentous physical presence lurks behind her as an agent of uneasiness and threat. That these buried memories are drawn once again into the light of consciousness is shown by Anna's manoeuvred Pinterian movement into the lighted area of the centrestage where Deeley and Kate have been sitting. This is Anna's first arrival as a dramatic character of the play, and this subtle transition takes place without the gimmick of any explicit entry on the stage. Past simply slips into the present, incarnated through mysterious Anna, who at once starts pouring out her reminiscences, instigating Kate to dig up images from her own past.

In a Pinter play there has always been a fundamental concern for the visualisation of characters on the stage.
Their gestures and movements greatly add to the significance of the dramatic dialogue between them. As Pinter observes, "What is so different about the stage is that you're just there, stuck — there are your characters stuck on the stage, you've got to live with them and deal with them.... I find myself stuck with these characters who are either sitting or standing...." The dialogue at Anna's first appearance well serves its purpose: 

Queing all night, the rain, do you remember?... the Albert Hall, Covent Garden, what did we eat? to look back, half the night, to do things we loved... to work in the morning, and to a concert, or the opera, or the ballet, that night, you haven't forgotten? and then riding on top of the bus... and the bus conductors, and then dashing for the matches for the gasfire and then I suppose scrambled eggs, or did we? who cooked? both giggling and chattering, both huddling to the heat, then bed and sleeping, and all the hustle and bustle in the morning, rushing for the bus again for work... innocent girls, innocent secretaries, and then the night to come, and goodness knows what excitement in store, I mean the sheer expectation of it all, the looking-forwardness of it all, and so poor, but to be poor and young, and a girl, in London then... (Pinter's three-dots) and the cafés we found, almost private ones, weren't they?... and does it still exist I wonder? do you know? can you tell me? (IV, pp. 13-14).

In examining this passage carefully, we find that Anna is reconstructing the past by reminiscing about the past episodes of her living together with Kate in London as working girls decades ago. By doing so she provokes Kate to remember things, to dig up the memories of Kate's past from oblivion. In this passage there are nine notes of interrogation, and the entire dialogue does not have a
single period. This special characteristic of the dialogue signifies the impetuosity of Anna's verbally-manipulated provocation. The tension of the passage is well discerned. This tension implies that the menace of the past is to run its course through the action of the play, and that by stirring the skeletons in the cupboard Anna shall exercise considerable influence over the present. The patterning of the dialogue, as Almans and Henderson rightly point out, "has the effect of immediately conveying a sense of synchronic — rather than diachronic — time, since, from the outset, past and present are both manifest on the stage simultaneously, though with a different status (light versus dark; centre of the room versus window; foreground versus background)."  

Anna's dialogue at once establishes by its perceptibly whining overtone that it is dealing subtly with the synchronic. It seeks to describe the existing events, as against the diachronic, or historical, aspect of time. To elaborate this in proper perspective it may be said that for Kate Anna represents a U-turn to past with emotional strings attached. Anna's dialogue is reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's lines from *Four Quartets*: *Burnt Norton*:

> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage....
> My words echo
> Thus, in your mind.

Anna refers to some very particular moments in the time-pocket as they did exist. Footfalls of those moments echo
still in the memory. Kate's husband Deeley represents the immediate spatial present with all its here-and-now appeal. As such *Old Times* does not expand the idea of the historical flux of time. In this play Pinter has put the space of the past as against the space of the present.

As the action of the play unfolds itself systematically through the dialogue which the three characters exchange between them, we find that Anna, Kate and Deeley too start delving, not mere nostalgically, but with some cautious moves, into the past by way of recollecting choicest episodes. As it gradually transpires, the audience discover that Deeley also knew both Anna and Kate as and when they lived and moved and shared an apartment house together in London of that time. Deeley says to Anna, "I wish I had known you both then" (IV, p. 16). This is cunningly ambiguous and false. In view of this, Thompson rightly says that Pinter "exploits to the full the ambiguities and deceits inherent in spoken language and achieves his own kind of realistic effect." After a while the following dialogue between Deeley and Anna is noteworthy:

Deeley: Yes, I remember you quite clearly from *The Wayfarers*.
Anna: The what?
Deeley: *The Wayfarers* Tavern, just off the Brompton Road.
Anna: When was that?
Deeley: Years ago.
Anna : I don't think so.
Deeley: Oh yes, it was you, no question. I never forget a face... (IV, pp.44-45).

These remembrances and references to past events by Anna and Deeley register their battle for gaining ground, or in other words a struggle for territory, and the territory is no other than Kate's body and mind. Pinter's dialogue engages the words in combat to set the dramatic pattern of intensification which underlies the Pinterian theatre. Ionesco advocated this intensification, having repudiated the descriptive well-made play:

A play does not consist in the description of the development of... a story.... A play is a structure that consists of a series of states of consciousness, or situations which become intensified, grow more and more dense, then get entangled....

The dialogue between Deeley and Anna is serving this dramatic purpose as each measured utterance of both Deeley and Anna tends to intensify the action and to find means of expression beyond language. This may be said to be a battle between time past represented by Anna and time present represented by Deeley.

It has been contended that "in Pinter, unlike in T.S. Eliot, there is no time future contained in time past," and also that "the characters... are cut off from their future by their unchristian despair." It is difficult to agree with these critics. In Old Times, we find that for Kate time past did contain time future in the sense that
she will have a backward movement to turn to merge her future with her past in the surrealistic way, synthesizing the workings of her subconscious mind with the conscious one. On the other hand, the characters can hardly be said to be cut off from their future by their unchristian, non-religious, despair. The dialogue with all its sub-textual pull establishes no such ennui or despair of life on the part of the trio, since they are not expressing or exchanging ideas in terms of any realistic logicality. As regards Kate and Anna, no plausible despair may be traced. For Deeley it is defeat in retrieving and retaining Kate in the present with him. His is the abstention from movement. Gale\textsuperscript{17} observes that in \textit{Old Times} Pinter has given us the "dramatisation" of the famous opening lines of T.S. Eliot's \textit{Four Quartets}: \textit{Burnt Norton}:

\begin{quote}
Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future.
And time future contained in time past.
\end{quote}

It may, however, be pointed out that \textit{Old Times} is not just the dramatisation of these opening lines, but rather of the whole of \textit{Burnt Norton} in which Eliot deals with the psyche of the "unredeemable" time, arriving at the realisation that "Only through time time is conquered." In \textit{Old Times} Pinter also deals with the same psyche of time as all the three characters appear to be "Caught in the form of limitation/Between un-being and being," to quote from \textit{Burnt Norton}. This makes Hayman comment that
"perhaps Pinter owes more to T.S. Eliot than has been recognised." Accordingly, much of the theatrical impact of *Old Times* is due to the suspense in trying to get at what really happened in the past and what sort of relationship existed between Anna, Kate and Deeley. Pinter expresses his view thus:

> We don't carry labels on our chests, and even though they are continually fixed to us by others, they convince nobody. The desire for verification on the part of all of us, with regard to our own experience and the experience of others, is understandable but cannot always be satisfied.

*Old Times* demonstrates through its dialogue that the search for the final truth about a character is likely to be an unfinished quest. Dialogue in the play fulfils a two-fold function: communicating the truth of the past, and the dramatic tension produced by the conflicting involvement of the three characters.

When the characters in *Old Times* start delving into the past, their individual accounts vary from description of parties or visits to cinema, to the recounting of events and happenings of a more private nature with sexual overtones. The audience, in the course of hearing the dialogue, recognise the discrepancies and contradictions in between these individual accounts, though it becomes quite clear from the obvious parallels that Anna, Deeley and Kate are remembering the same incidents. The dialogue reveals that each character is
describing these supposedly identical incidents from its own angle of vision, distorting the past deliberately in order to push through its own requirement. In *Old Times*, an Absurdist play, it is hardly important whether these accounts or stories are true or false, whether they can be depended upon with any degree of certainty. This is where there is the chasm between a well-made conventional play and an absurdist play. In the former the truth of an account or story revealed through dramatic dialogue, is of crucial importance as regards its theme and conclusion. In the latter these remembered accounts are no longer dependable as carriers of any vital information.

The entire dramatic dialogue of *Old Times* suggests that one can never be absolutely sure about the existence of the past in terms as one recapitulates it. The play is dominated by the past, being reminiscent of L.P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between* (1953) for which Pinter wrote the screen-play in January 1969. Its first line reads: "The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there." It is significant that Pinter also wrote another screen-play in 1972 — *Remembrance of Things Past* — for Proust's epic novel *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. These two novels deal with the atmosphere of the past almost in the same manner as *Old Times*. Along with Proust and Hartley Pinter concerns himself with mutability and the big question as to what past means to ourselves. Pinter's concern has been distinctly manifested through the verbal idioms he has used in the play.
The past is no longer within reach, it has vanished into eternity for ever; only the memories remain. Memories are seldom any accurate recordings of the past, nor can they ever be regarded as an authentic photocopy or a negative print of any past happening. Memories, more often than not, redefine the past — man having acutely undergone various stages of transformation along with the inexorable passage of time. As such, over and above the phenomenal situation that forgetfulness is a condition of mind, one either distorts the past to hide or avoid what is uncomfortable or threatening; or, one re-creates an altogether imaginary or unsubstantial past in order to satisfy one's temporal psycho-moral needs.

It has been rightly said that "in Pinter words are... barbs to protect the wired enclosure of the self." Pinter himself strongly adheres to the idea that "the speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smokescreen.... that what takes place is a continual evasion, desperate reargued attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves." In Old Times what Anna says is in tune with this statement of Pinter:

There are some things one remembers even though they may never have happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place (IV, pp.27-28).

As the characters themselves are not sure of what has exactly happened in their past, the audience or readers to
whom important information is being communicated through dialogue between these characters, are left in a state of uncertainty. However, the response of the audience to the play also centres round the synthesis of the bits and pieces of information it has been provided with by the dialogue exchanged by the dramatis personae so as to establish certain realities about that past.

Dramatic dialogue in *Old Times* spells out the imprecise, unexplainable, unknown and unremembered or less remembered past in a context that does not prompt audience or readers to ask what really happened but rather to understand and feel that certain matters do remain imprecise, inexplicable, unknown and unremembered in the life of a person in this world. Kate and Anna make guesses about their past; either they remember or try to remember it. However, the accuracy of the remembrance does not dramatically matter. What matters is what happens. Kate, Anna and Deeley are required to try to ascertain the truth which in a Pinter play remains ambiguous, undetermined, distorted and untrue. In this context, it has been pertinently observed that "the only thing we know about Pinter's characters is that they find communication not only difficult but terrifying.... they continually try to evade the pitfalls of human intercourse, frequently resorting to a sort of bobbing and weaving in the face of all direct contact." So the characters do not like to come out of the maze of the past, as it happens in *Old Times*. 
The tales remembered by the characters, one by Deeley and another by Anna, are of prime importance in creating the menace of the past palpably. These two reminiscences project the sharp angle of menace that has caused Kate to subdue her memories of her old and only friend, Anna. The information accruing from these memories suggests overtly that Anna and Kate have had a lesbian relation between them in the past. The dialogue involving Anna at many points in the play hints at this lesbian relationship between Kate and herself. But there is no explicit acknowledgement of such a sexual bond between them. Pinter's dramatic dialogue has mysteriously referred to this possibility in more than one way. A few such overt references may be cited:

Anna : But she was always a charming companion.
Deeley : Fun to live with?
Anna : Delightful... we used to play them... all the time, late at night, lying on the floor... sometimes I'd look at her face... (IV, p.22).

or

Anna(Quietly): Don't let's go out tonight, don't let's go anywhere tonight, let's stay in.... (IV, p.39).

or

Anna : .... I would tell her in the dark. She preferred to be told in the dark... knowing her preference, I would choose a position in the room from which I could see her face...
Deeley : Sounds a perfect marriage.
Anna : We were great friends (IV, p.62).

or
Deeley: You say she was Bronte in secrecy but not in passion. What was she in passion?

Anna: I feel that is your province.

Deeley: You feel it's my province? ... (IV, p.62).

At one stage Deeley recounts his story, disclosing how he met Kate for the first time. On an excruciatingly hot "summer afternoon" (IV, p.25) he went to a movie house to see the Robert Newton film, "Odd Man Out". Before the show started he found that there were only two people present there. They were a couple of lesbian "usherettes standing in the foyer and one of them was stroking her breasts" to seduce "the other one" who "was saying 'dirty bitch' and the one stroking her breasts was saying 'mmmmm' with a very sensual relish and smiling at her fellow usherette" (IV, p.25). And again: "There was only one other person... in the whole of the whole cinema... there she was, very dim, very still... at the dead centre of the auditorium."(IV, pp.25-26). This was no other than Kate. While leaving "when the film was over" (IV, p.26) he noticed "that the first usherette appeared to be utterly exhausted" (IV, p.26), apparently, as the dialogue suggests, having had sex with the second whom Deeley did not notice. "Then this girl", the only other spectator "came out and... looked about her" (IV, p.26). Deeley approached her, even propositioned, and she acquiesced. Whereupon Deeley "thought Jesus this is it, I've made a catch, this is a true blue pick up" (IV, p.26). Deeley then took his catch to the cafe, and that was that. In the dialogue there
are two obvious insinuations. One is that Anna and Kate had lesbian relationship, the other is that Kate too was in the call-girl racket.

Anna does not seem to pay much heed to Deeley's account. Soon she comes out with her own almost identical tale. It was on "one sunday" that she had made off with Kate to "some totally obscure, some totally unfamiliar district and, almost alone, had seen a wonderful film called "Odd Man Out" (IV, p.34). The dialogue here parallels the earlier one. The film was the same as Deeley had seen, the particular show was almost empty, Anna and Kate were together. For Anna the locality was "totally unfamiliar", whereas for Deeley "there was something familiar about the neighbourhood" (IV, p.25). It is not difficult for Pinter's audience to gather from the dramatic dialogue that Deeley and Anna are talking about the same incident. As such, all the characters of Old Times were there in that cinema on that day at the same time. However, one big dilemma remains: whereas Deeley claims that Kate was the only other person in the audience, Anna indicates that she too was there. The most obvious explanation for this contradiction is that though Anna was present there, she was mistaken by Deeley for an usherette. Besides, Kate could have been the other woman whom Deeley identified as an usherette. This may clarify as to why, when the show was over, Deeley did
not notice the other usherette, and he never assumed that Kate was the missing one. "I remember", says Anna, "one Sunday she said to me... come quick, quick, come with me quickly" (IV, p.34).

The sharp edge of the dialogue here points to Anna's playing upon the sexual undertone of the monosyllabic word "come" which is written as "cum" when used in sexual terminology in referring to the point of orgasm. Anna's use of the word may perhaps be a matching hand-out of Deeley's overt use of the same word, in relation to "a man in the dark across my wife's lap" (IV, p.29) a little earlier: "Of course he'd been. He went twice and came once" (IV, p.29). Such use of the word "come" may as well imply that Kate and Anna went on a holiday to see the movie in some totally obscure district for an intimate sexual association, and from this particular standpoint they could as well fit into the roles of the lesbian usherettes whom Deeley saw there at the cinema.

Here the dramatic dialogue as used by Pinter may have a number of potential suggestions thrown out by a change of vocal inflexion — suggestion about the character who is delivering the dialogue, and the character about whom the words are being spoken, underlining the situation existing between the two. In Anna's words "... Come quick, quick, come with me quickly" (IV, p.34), the stress is alternately on the words "come" and "quick".
The dialogue is meant to be spoken in the rapid and increasing pace of excitement. It might as well be reduced in strength and gusto to a mere whisper proportionate to the excitement, or it may rise to a higher pitch according to the lesbian sexual pleasure anticipated. The expression "come with me quickly" is quite capable of raising ripples of sly suggestiveness. This is how Pinter creates his well-orchestrated dialogue-oriented ambiguity. Anna's speech containing these words is immediately followed by a pregnant "silence" before Deeley speaks. This works out an intense perceptive process.

The dialogue has an obvious edge which thrills and creates mysteriousness. Here is struck Pinter's original unusual tone in bringing in a tense dramatic atmosphere of expectation. Dialogue makes it clear that a Pinter play does not give a damn for any extra-theatrical meaning. As this dialogue proves, Old Times presents a text which dramatically propounds the concerned context, for the action, as is found here, invariably unfolds in an autonomous state of uncertainty. The dialogue acts on the audience by spreading out the mystification, while the playwright seems to enjoy it and to explore it for its own sake, without resolving it. Through his dramatic dialogue Pinter drops hints deliberately as they could turn out to be clues in the mystery. Nevertheless, the trail of evidence ends in smoke without ever leading
to any solution. Pinter knows how to bring his dialogue under control, making it mean exactly what he alone wishes it to mean or imply or insinuate. This is when Pinter's drama reaches the point where the horizontal axis of content intersects the axis of form. As Styan has significantly pointed out, "the playwright knows that in the theatre he has our ears, and much of his appeal rests upon the feeling he wants us to hear in the voices of his actors, as distinct from the meaning of their words." 23

Indeed, Pinter who is a consummate theatre personality as an actor, screen-play writer, director, knows that in the voice of the actors he has a most flexible instrument perfectly capable of communicating the sense. Peter Hall has informed us in detail about rehearsing the action of Pinter's plays in terms of the "tunes" of the words, expecting an actor to convey the vibrations of meanings to the audience in the delivery of a given piece of dialogue. Alan Bold aptly observes that "the rich verbal texture of Pinter's theatrical routine is inspired... by the experience of spending long hours in rehearsal where every utterance is under scrutiny and has to be delivered with dramatic impact." 24 Character-actors accept the text as a theatrical challenge which they undertake to translate into vocal terms. When we read or listen to the dialogue of Old Times, we feel that it is not the words alone which make the play, but the vivid dramatic impressions which the words are capable of creating. Peter Hall pertinently remarks that "there
is a communication in the theatre which is beyond words, and which is actually concerned with direct feeling.\textsuperscript{25} In \textit{Old Times} the entire dialogue is feeling-oriented revolving round Deeley, Kate and the intruder, Anna.

Deeley is quite sensitive to Anna's innuendoes and gets disturbed over her conscious attempt to shirk an avowal or a denial that she and Kate had been lovers. Consequently, as shown by the dramatic dialogue, he makes constant effort to extract some conclusive tell-tale information from her. As an example we may cite the following dialogue between Deeley and Anna:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Anna:} No one who lived here would want to go far. I would not want to go far, I would be afraid of going far, lest when I returned the house would be gone.
\textbf{Deeley:} Lest-?
\textbf{Anna:} What?
\textbf{Deeley:} The word lest. Haven't heard it for a long time.
\end{quote}

(Pause) (IV, p.15).

The word "lest" used by Anna appears to have an indirect implication of a lesbian attachment, and the almost anagrammatized sound of which at once hits Deeley where it hurts. Then again in the following dialogue the same thing happens again:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Anna:} ... we used to play them... late at night, lying on the floor... Sometimes I would look at her face, but she was quite unaware of my gaze.
\textbf{Deeley:} Gaze?
\textbf{Anna:} What?
\textbf{Deeley:} The word gaze. Don't hear it very often.
\end{quote}

(IV, p.22).
Again, in this dialogue, the word "gaze" seems to have a homophonical association with the word "gay" which stands for homosexuality. On both these occasions, Deeley wants Anna to explain why she has chosen these particular words, which are for him rather awkwardly meaningful.

What strikes an attentive audience or reader is that Anna always makes use of her fig-leaf statements so much so that Deeley's suspense never ends, nor that of the audience. We don't learn unambiguously whether there had been any sexual tie between these two mysterious female characters. What the playwright himself has said in this context is noteworthy:

My characters tell me so much and no more, with reference to their experience, their aspirations, their motives, their history. Between my lack of biographical data about them and the ambiguity of what they say lies a territory... which it is compulsory to explore.\textsuperscript{26}

Before Pinter and other writers of the absurdist plays, what a character said on the stage was true for our purpose, unless we were given specific reasons for distrusting his words. Pinter, an absurdist playwright, rejects this convention of the well-made play. His characters are shot through with a very palpable indefiniteness. The impossibility of verifying reality becomes not only a source of dramatic suspense created and maintained through dramatic dialogue, but it also becomes one of the major ingredients of his plays. Pinter
deliberately withholds information for which the audience craves, following his own theory: "The desire for verification is understandable, but cannot always be satisfied..."\textsuperscript{27}

This view may seem related to a metaphysical vision of the unity of opposites. But when Pinter elaborates that there are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, he is only saying that events reach us through our unreliable sense impressions. We may here cite a Pinterian dialogue from \textit{The Hothouse} (1958):

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

This basic unverifiability, in effect, removes the surface layer of facts and events that cover our external life. The sharp undertone of Pinter's dialogue unares the crucial inner being, while the superficial experiences of ordinary surface life make things too easily verifiable.

In spite of all the hints that emanate from this dialogue, pointing to such an implied relationship, it never gives anything concrete with the result that the audience feels the presence of more than one meaning. This gives rise to the Pinterian situation when "the audience holds the paper. The play fills in the blanks."\textsuperscript{28} The dramatic dialogue requires the audience to fill in the blanks as much as it can with the help of the hints that the dialogue drops in the course of the action. Though
many facts in a Pinter-play are thus not straightway given to us, yet the most significant things we need to know are never left out from the dialogue. These are brought into sharp focus by the very blurring of detail. Situations are recreated through the power of a specially framed dramatic language.

The dialogue in Pinter's plays gives rise to uncertainties, doubts and contradictions. It shows that the ordinary and the realistic are inextricably intertwined with the irrational and the absurd. Esslin has underlined this subtlety with which a Pinter play works by pointing out that a Pinter audience gets confronted by the "images of the real world which are raised to metaphors of the human condition by the mysteriousness inherent in reality and the difficulties of drawing a line between the real, the imagined and the dream." It becomes clear through the dialogue in *Old Times* that Anna does have amorous feelings towards Kate, even if Kate does not show any expressly reciprocal ones:

Anna: And poor Katey when you're away? What does she do? 
...... (To Deeley)

Anna: (to Kate) I think I must *come* and keep you company when he is away (IV, p.35).
......

Anna: (Quietly) Don't let's go out tonight, don't let's go anywhere tonight, let's stay in. I'll cook something, you can wash your hair, you can relax, we'll put on some records.

Kate: Oh, I don't know. We could go out (IV, p.39).
......
Kate: What shall I wear tomorrow? I can't make up my mind.

Anna: Wear your green.

Kate: I haven't got the right top.

Anna: You have. You have your turquoise blouse.

Kate: Do they go?

Anna: Yes, they do go. Of course they go (IV, p.41).

Besides, if the dialogue is construed in the light of Anna's strange behaviour upon her arrival at the abode of Deeley and Kate, it becomes clear that Anna is still strongly attracted to Kate.

Gradually it also becomes clear that Anna's purpose in visiting Kate is to re-possess her one-time only companion and room-mate. In achieving this end Anna intends to revive memories of the past, reaffirming her past intimacies with Kate. What is important is that Anna at length becomes successful in weaning Kate away from Deeley having elicited from her "Katey" (IV, pp.32-33) the residual homosexual feelings which she might still have possessed for Anna. This gradual winning over of Kate by Anna has been brilliantly developed by Pinter through the almost poetically sounding dialogue such as the following one:

Anna: ... I knew that Katey would always wait not just for the first emergence of ripple but for the ripples to pervade and pervade the surface, for of course as you know ripples on the surface indicate a shimmering in depth down through every particle of water down to the river bed (IV, pp.32-3).
By examining this dialogue closely we find that here Anna is slyly insinuating that she intends to probe beneath the surface of the present to look for those lustful passions of the past which Anna believes are still embedded in Kate's heart. Anna hopes that when those dormant passions of the past are once roused in Kate, they could bring about the necessary motivation in her so as to forsake Deeley and surrender to Anna. There is an unmistakable irony in what Deeley says: "You'll always find a few odd unexpected unwanted cheeky globules dripping about (IV, p.50)." Anna hopes that Kate has not been able to completely rub out all her memories of the past passionate moments with Anna. Deeley too refers to these "unexpected" as well as "unwanted" "cheeky globules" of past remembrances of Kate in relation to Anna. Consequently, Anna will replace Deeley as Kate's sex partner as "the odd man out". Anna's words to Deeley have a razor-sharp irony tinged with paradox: "I would like you to understand that I came here not to disrupt but to celebrate (IV, p.64).

This makes us recall the following dialogue in The Homecoming:

Ruth: I'm not making any noise.
Teddy: I know you are not (III, p.39).

Ruth in that play makes enough noise over the stationary waterfront of Teddy's London home to disrupt the entire set-up. Anna too has been successful enough in systematically
disrupting the home circle of Kate and Deeley. She came there in order to explicitly disrupt, and ultimately she could have the occasion, by achieving her end, to "celebrate" her victory over Kate.

Now we realise how ironical were Deeley's earlier words when he had thought that Anna's arrival and presence would be wholesome for Kate: "We must see you more often. You're a healthy influence" (IV, p.21). This shows how powerfully there runs an undercurrent of strange suggestiveness beneath a Pinterian dialogue. Anna's influence over Kate as far as Deeley is concerned is, in fact, far from wholesome.

The dialogue of Old Times continually shows that all the three characters are involved in a love triangle in which at a single time two of them are pitted against each other in a somewhat sexual bond, while the third is the odd one out. There is a straight battle between Deeley and Anna for the love and attraction of Kate. Whenever one of them seems to get the upper hand, the other becomes too weak for the moment to have a hold on Kate's love and attention. When Old Times opens, Deeley and Kate are well united by the bond of marriage and Anna is the stark outsider. Pinter has also been quite careful, with his long stage experience as an actor himself, to place Anna and Deeley meaningfully on the stage. Deeley and Kate sit in the lighted area at the front stage.
Anna is in the shadows, almost invisible behind the other two characters at the 'back stage, for some given length of time, out of bound from the home circle. It is suggested that Kate's marriage with Deeley has blurred, almost obliterated, her past bond with Anna.

Anna moves forward in due course, and starts asserting her control over Kate. Here begins, rather imperceptibly, through a very sensitive dialogue, the familiar Pinterian struggle for territory between Anna and Deeley who gets cautious against her gradual advances. This battle for territory means the battle for possession of the female. Deeley retains his usual wit but desperately struggles to defend his position in relation to Kate's love against Anna's offensives. Their respective strategies, hitting and parrying, moves and counter-moves are essentially carried out through tactical verbal means. In fact, Anna and Deeley enter the arena for verbal games.

Conflict for dominance and possession of territory (Kate) gains ground and the battle is fought with the verbal weapons of cunning innuendo and ambiguous threat:

Deeley: How's the yacht?
Anna : Oh, very well.
Deeley: Captain steer a straight course?
Anna : As straight as we wish, when we wish it.
Deeley: Don't you find England damp, returning?
Anna : Rather beguilingly so? (To himself) what the hell does she mean by that? (IV, p.37).
Here it may be noticed that the ideas are compressed into a few words. Also, the connotations are ambiguous with an undertone of sexual struggle. Deeley adopts masculine straightforwardness and a marked coarseness to confront Anna's implicit, subtle and indirect attack. The dialogue shows the characters as very effectively locked in a pattern of attack and defence. Bryden aptly comments: "On Pinter Territory, every question is an attempt to control and every answer a swift evasion."30

Deeley at the outset makes it clear that his possession of Kate is quite firm and that Anna's efforts to win Kate won't yield result. Deeley does this by describing his intimate meeting with Kate at the movie-house where "Odd Man Out" was being shown. Deeley cautions Anna: "So it was Robert Newton who brought us together and it is only Robert Newton who can tear us apart" (IV, p.26). These words suggest that it is not possible for Anna to disrupt Deeley's hold over Kate which was forged by Robert Newton who happens to be an agent beyond Anna's grasp.

Deeley has mentioned Anna as only an usherette; he took Kate as the other spectator like himself, missing Anna from amongst them at the show which he claims to have seen jointly with Kate (IV, pp.25-6). However, Anna's words neutralize Deeley's, for according to her it was she who brought Kate to the show where Deeley met her. So even if Deeley's logic is to be accepted, it is Anna who is
capable of tearing the two apart, since it was she who brought them together. Anna too claims to have seen the same film, "Odd Man Out" along with Kate and Deeley in the same show-house. She refers to another character of the cast in "Odd Man Out" to clinch the issue:

Anna: F.J. McCormick was good too....
Deeley: You've seen the film then?
Anna: Yes. (IV, p.26)

This dialogue shows that Anna intensifies her battle with Deeley for territory on Deeley's own terms. Her assertive "Yes" has sinister implications for Deeley. Even in the earlier song sequence (IV, pp.23-25), the dramatic language reinforces the fight for dominance between Anna and Deeley. The undersurface tension in the minds of the two contenders is quite objectively expressed by the way the lines of the popular pop-songs with erotic overtones have been chosen by Pinter. The song sequence shows both Deeley and Anna trying in different ways to attract Kate's loving attention.

Anna attempts to pull Kate towards her through passionate expressions. Deeley reacts by emphasizing that Kate and he are solidly unified by their marriage bond:

Deeley: (Singing) Blue moon, I see you standing alone...
Anna: (Singing) The way you comb your hair...
(IV, p.23).

Deeley's "blue moon" (Kate) stands alone out of reach of Anna, as he wants to affirm. Anna's single line at once
reveals her passion for Kate who is sexually attracted to Anna with her physical charm. In this context, Anna's earlier statement that Kate "was always a charming companion" (IV, p.22), brings to mind Pinter's oft-quoted statement about dramatic language: "a language... where under what is said, another thing is being said." Deeley's contention is that Kate cannot be taken away or stolen from him: "Oh no they can't take that away from me..." (IV, p.23).

Anna is still referring to her passionate feelings for the physically charming Kate:

Deeley: (Singing) I've got a woman crazy for me. She's funny that way.
(Slight pause) (IV, p.23).

Deeley who, like Spooner in No Man's Land, tries to use language with varying degrees of success as a means of obtaining a more secure foothold in his relationship with Kate. He demands that Kate is crazy for him. In other words, Deeley wants to convey that she is maddeningly in love with him and that she is quite appreciable in that mode of their married life. The slight pause following the dialogue makes the word "funny" susceptible to more than one suggestion. The most striking one is that she is rather unprecedented that way. Though apparently Deeley never means "unpredictable" at all which would go against his demand. But the word "funny" creates its own ripples of ambiguity as regards the stability of Kate's hetero-sexual
status. Then again Anna's words are not weorthy:

Anna (Singing): You are the promised kiss of springtime... (IV, p.23).

Anna indeed refers to their old association when Kate was the source of several promising rosy kisses for Anna. Her lust for Kate, however, remains unsatiated.

Deeley expresses his belief that eventually he will be the winner of the competition for the possession of Kate in bodily terms. When Deeley says that "Some day I'll know that moment divine,/When all the things you are, are mine" (IV, p.23), he refers to the final hour of recognition when Kate with all her being will surrender to Deeley's overall possessiveness.

Anna's words help us to understand the subtle meaning that this absurdist play tries to convey:

Anna (Singing): I get no kick from champagne, Mere alcohol doesn't thrill me at all, So tell me why should it be true (IV, p.24).

This comes close to Anna's confession of having a lesbian relationship with Kate, and shows the real nature of Pinter's dramatic dialogue. Pinter observes that "a character on the stage who can present no convincing argument or information as to her past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his motives is as legitimate and as worthy of attention as one who, alarmingly, can do all these things."32 Anna's words quoted
above hint that Kate with all her sexual appeal was for Anna the real passionate stimulant to excite her sexual appetite in terms of lesbianism.

This is in conformity with Pinter's theory that "below the words spoken, is the thing known and unspoken." Deeley immediately cuts in to say, "I get a kick out of you" (IV, p.24). To Anna's "why should it be true?" Deeley replies that he gets a kick out of her, thus completing for Anna her unfinished sentence. This is a sly reference to the fact that he has been all the time suggesting such an awkward lesbian relationship between Anna and Kate. This use of "I" refers actually to Anna, as he pretends here to complete her sentence on behalf of her. On the other hand, Deeley affirms that it is he who gets a kick right now out of Kate, indicating that he alone would ever have a hetero-sexual thrill out of his marital status. The word "you" may mean Kate as well.

Anna tells Kate that she is the only one who has been her (Anna's) true love:

Anna(Singing): They asked me how I knew My true love was true, I of course replied, Something here inside Cannot be denied (IV, p.24).

Anna's passionate feelings for her one-time room-mate refuse to be kept confined within her bosom. Deeley sings: "When a lovely flame dies..." (IV, p.24), implying that whatever flame of feelings in Kate might in the past have
been enkindled for Anna, the same had already been extinguished with Kate marrying Deeley. Anna presently cuts in paying Deeley in his own coin, singing: "smoke gets in your eyes" (IV, p.24), thereby arguing that Deeley's vision of the whole issue is obscure. Singing "the sigh of midnight trains in empty stations" (IV, p.24) Deeley conveys to Anna that she must sigh in vain for Kate, as does the midnight train without finding even a single passenger on empty platforms. Anna conjures up her memory of the past when she and Kate, as lesbian partners, might have visited the secluded parks. Anna sings: "The park at evening when the bell has sounded" (IV, p.24). She refers to public parks after sunset where she might have possessed Kate on several occasions.

Deeley sings: "The smile of Garbo and the scent of roses..." (IV, p.25) and talks of his fragrant evenings with Kate in some expensive movie-house to see the flamboyant heroine Greta Garbo hits, hinting that their marriage is well cemented, and that they enjoy this conjugal life just as well as the normal happily married couples do. Anna sings: "The waiters whistling as the last bar closes" (IV, p.25). She refers clearly to her old London days with Kate when they used to frequent pubs and bars till late hours. At a later stage Anna reinforces her words used here: "I found her.... I took her to cafes... and we sat hardly breathing with our coffee, listening to the life around us" (IV, p.65). The song sequence illustrates
Pinter's remarkable use of stage dialogue when the two characters exchange significant words to counter each other's prominence and thus the scene accelerates the momentum required by the play.

Dramatic dialogue in *Old Times* has also another pattern to unfold. Anna intends Kate, in Act II, to re-discover her old amorous feelings for her. She induces Kate to drive her mind backward, journeying through space in time. The metaphor for time in *Old Times* has been expressed through space which denotes a particular time-pocket along the passage of time, similar to an eddy along the passage of a river. In *Old Times* the dialogue deals mainly with this spatial time wherein past and present interact alternately. All the three characters are involved in the time-frames of both past and present. In the very first scene just as Anna's silhouetted figure occupies the back stage behind Deeley and Kate, so does the period Anna represents. It is the dark past of these two women, excruciatingly locked up in Kate's sub-conscious, behind the present in which she moves and breathes.

Kate's resting in the temporal present has also a bearing on spatial time. Kate has confined herself not only to the present, but also stayed essentially static at the same location — the remote farmhouse outside London. Here Deeley's words are quite significant: "My work takes me away quite often, of course. But Kate stays here" (IV, p.15). Thus, just as Kate has given up delving into
the past, she has similarly abstained from having a sojourn in the outside world. Had she tried to permeate that region, she might run the risk of crossing the safe border-line of the present to risk tarnishing her special relationship with Deeley as her husband. Some common visuals could have moved her; some fleeting images and vibrating muffled noises could have disturbed her in relation to her past.

The dialogue involving Anna makes it evident that she too is quite aware that movement through space represents a movement through time simultaneously. Anna is quite conscious that travelling into the past may prove perilous for Kate's happy married life. She perceives why Kate has taken the wise precaution of not getting strayed far off from her cool sea-side home where she is secure. Anna says: "No one who lived here would want to go far... I would be afraid of going far, lest when I returned the house would be gone" (IV, p.15). She knows that in "going far" from her house, which is synonymous here with Kate's home as she has set up after marrying Deeley, may be shattered to pieces. Anna recognises the fact that by confining herself to a tight corner of space, Kate has remained in the present metaphorically, keeping her past "dark", the first word uttered by Kate. Anna shows awareness of the danger to which Kate's present is exposed due to any revelation of her culpable past. As she says, "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" (IV, p.15). Once again the word "silence" points to the silent past of Kate looking in the background.

However, because Anna's specific purpose is to shatter Kate's home and resuscitate her old intimacy with Kate, she intends to persuade Kate to shift to another space by delving into the past. In doing so, Anna believes, Kate is likely to rediscover her old passion and dormant emotional attachment to Anna. Consequently, in her urge to reunite with her old crony, she may decide to sever her ties with Deeley. Anna's design appears to be successful as _Old Times_ proceeds. Gradually, as Kate begins to refer to the world outside, she also starts pairing with Anna while Deeley gets alienated from her. By the close of Act I, Anna able to Kindle to Kate an interest in Sicily, the far-away island where Anna now lives.

In _Old Times_ the dialogue is encased in a firm and stable monologic framework. It is established through verbal interactions between all the three characters that the reality of the past fades, and memory transforms real events into shadowy remnants of insubstantial experience. Pinter's dialogue quite deftly shows how contradictory are the lies which we tend to accept. Also by using a folded-in convoluted language pattern Pinter wants to make the
meaning theatrically more luminous by provoking the audience to work out the implications so that it can recreate the meaning by carefully following the verbal exchanges. The characters in this play say nothing explicitly. Pinter finds people enigmatic, and his presentation of them, as an absurdist, remains an enigma. All the meanings of the play must be guessed only with the help of the clues which the dialogue provides. The dialogue requires the audience to read between the lines and grasp the meaning intuitively at the connotational level. Through the verbal exchanges between Anna, Kate and Deeley, Pinter has endeavoured to expose the lies which the audience believe to be the truth.
Notes and References

All the references to Old Times are to Pinter Plays: Four (London: Methuen, 1984). Page numbers have been cited parenthetically in the text.


6. Henri Bergson (1859-1941) was a French philosopher and an international leader of serious thought, who observed that philosophers in describing change have taken time into account only in the sense of a conventional measure, spatial in character, and have ignored real duration, what each of us is conscious of, the indivisible continuity of change, and that this must be recognised as a reality. Bergson holds that memories are not stored in the brain. Pure memory, standing apart from habit memory, is a
psychical, not a physiological function. The past has not ceased to exist, and past psychical states have the same sort of independent survival as the material world. In relation to pure memory, as Bergson interprets, the function of the brain is to shut out from consciousness the greater part of our past, only letting through that small segment of it which is relevant to the practical activity of the moment.

Bergson's first book, translated as *Time and Free Will* (1910), challenged the commonly accepted views of the nature of Time, and put forward arguments distinguishing between conventional clock-time and variable human experience of duration.


10. Ibid., p.13.


16. Ibid., p.86.


27. Ibid., p.11.

28. Ibid., p.12.


30a. This Irish film (1947) was adapted by R.C. Sheriff, from a novel by E.L. Green. It was directed by Carol Reed, who created a moving impression of the last hours of an I.R.A. gunman on the run. The screenplay was written jointly by Sheriff and Green. James Mason played the lead role. Notable performances came from actors Robert Newton and F.J. McCormick to whom several references are made in Old Times. These and other details are found in Leslie Halliwell, The Filmgoer's Companion (New York: Avon Books, 1971), p.732.


32. Ibid., p.11.

33. Ibid., p.13.