Harold Pinter (b.1930) is regarded as a distinguished dramatist writing today. In a career spanning four decades, he has written about forty plays which include plays for Radio and Television. Starting his career as an actor he evolved into a playwright, producer and director. Pinter criticism, too voluminous to handle, has used labels such as "Kitchen-sink drama", "neo-realist", drama of non-communication", "absurd drama", "comedy of menace", "dark comedy", "drama of cruelty" to describe his plays. The variety of labels suggests the range of themes and subject matter that he plays contained.

Since Harold Pinter is our contemporary whose works are so near in time any evaluation is likely to be tentative. The author's own pronouncements, few though they are, have contributed to the fluidity of opinion. Pinter is an enigmatic writer and his works defy pigeonholing. Consequently it is difficult to define Pinteresque drama. However the plays can be defined by describing what they are not: they are not patterned after classical tragedies, romantic comedies, wit comedies, sentimental comedies, poetic dramas, angry dramas. Though Pinter's plays are not any of the above, they are, nevertheless, traditional. The
realistic mode relates them to the English dramatic tradition but there is no rhetorical mode in the plays. Pinter's experiment with language is his greatest novelty. Beckett might have been a model but it is not similar to Beckett's.

It is this complexity which refuses relationship with any known form that is discussed in Chapter one. There is a critical analysis of Pinter's evolution as a dramatist. The various thinkers and writers who revolutionized modern thought and art and their influence on Pinter are analysed. It has been shown how Pinter was fascinated by the writings of Kafka, Sartre, Camus, and others who were described as existentialist writers. Further, it has been pointed out that technically Pinter owes something to Beckett but has improved upon what he has inherited. Pinter's achievement consists in fusing successfully European absurdity with the English way of life, the foreign with the native, the timeless and universal with the immediate and local.

In Chapter Two the plays The Birthday Party, The Room, The Dumb Waiter and A Slight Ache are discussed. It is shown how these four plays have the myth of Furies. Whether or not Pinter consciously used myth to structure these plays they do conform to the myth. There is in these plays as in
the myth a person guilty of a social or moral crime for which he is pursued. This myth of a man being pursued till he is transformed is dramatised in these plays.

The predatory nature of man manifests in violent attempts to acquire a piece of territory or a room or a person. Sometimes this may lead to a forcible possession of a woman belonging to someone else. Human aggrandisement and greed lead to betrayals and breaking of families. The means adopted for achieving the goal are anything but moral. In plays like *The Caretaker*, *The Basement* and *No Man's Land* Pinter represents such of those human beings who by disregarding established relationships succeed in their attempts. In Chapter Three there is a discussion of this theme with reference to the plays mentioned.

The findings of psychologists have been an influential component of modernism in this century - James Joyce and Lawrence in fiction, O'Neill, Miller, Tennessee Williams in drama, to cite but a few. Pinter's plays *A Night Out*, *The Birthday Party* and *Night School* have Oedipus Complex as the major theme. Childless mothers and dependent sons are represented in the plays mentioned. In Chapter Four there is a discussion of some of the theories of psychology and Pinter's use of them.
One of the disturbing features of modern life is its disregard of the institution of marriage. Marital harmony and domestic happiness are no longer represented in literature. Men and women have begun to seek happiness outside marriage and outside home. They are given to despicable sexual practices including incest. Pinter is not blind to these realities. In *Tea Party* and *The Homecoming* he dramatises sexual obsessions. This is the theme of Chapter Five.

If sexual abnormalities attracted Pinter's attention, adulterous relationships annoyed him. He makes a distinction between real adultery and adultery which is pure fantasy. In *The Collection* adultery is fantasy whereas in *Old Times* and *Betrayal* it is real. In these plays adultery is not carried on secretly but openly. In Chapter Six is discussed adulterous relationships.

In Chapter Seven called the Language of Pinter it has been shown how Pinter's devices are anything but traditional. He has used pauses, double entendre, quibbles to new effects. His low mimetic mode enables him to use vernacular structures and linguistic solecisms of ordinary people. His language communicates the failure of communications.
In the Chapter called Conclusion an attempt has been made to summarise Pinter's achievements as a thinker and dramatist. Like all great artists Pinter has represented the best thought of his times and represented very truthfully the human condition. His is an art which conceals art. His plays begin to work on the human mind after they are kept back in the shelves.

Ever since I contemplated on the idea of working on Pinter's plays and began to write this dissertation I have been repeatedly asked whether I was not wrong in discussing plays which are primarily meant for the theatre. Though I initially tended to agree with suggestions that discussions of plays should be based on their performances in the theatre, I ultimately convinced myself that plays can be understood and analysed even without seeing them performed. To me Pinter's plays are literature meant to be read and enjoyed. In the theatre the meaning of the play is dependent on director, actor, stage and mood of the audience. Such being the case each producer or actor may interpret the play by his voice, gesture and acting experience. The reviews of Pinter's plays have taken notice of multiple interpretations of the same plays. In the case of a printed text the performance is imagined by the reader and his understanding is not foreclosed by the performance.
Visualising people in the mind's eye, hearing their voices and seeing their gestures I have tried to understand the plays and that has given me an unusual satisfaction. The proof of it is that I have enjoyed them. It must be admitted that I have not included all the plays written by Pinter but have chosen only those which would fall into the thematic pattern on which plays have been grouped and discussed. This dissertation does not attempt critical assessment of individual plays because since Martin Esslin's *The Peopled Wound* many have done it. If nothing this dissertation is a very modest attempt to evaluate Pinter's plays from different perspectives. Though I am aware of the need to send a questionnaire I have up the idea considering the fact that Pinter is reluctant to discuss his plays.

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