CHAPTER II

THE MYTH OF THE FURIES
The influence of the existentialist thought on Harold Pinter is not a matter of speculation. He has confirmed his indebtedness to several writers who had made use of that philosophy in their writings. Pinter said "I read Hemingway, Dostoevski, Joyce, and Henry Miller at a very early age, and Kafka. I'd read Beckett's novels too, but I'd never heard of Ionesco until I'd written the first few plays." Even without Pinter acknowledging the influence of the writers he had mentioned, one can without much difficulty trace his thought to them. Because like the existentialism of Martin Heidegger his works present man's confrontation with himself and the nature of his own being, that fundamental anxiety which is nothing less than a living being's basic awareness of the threat of non-being, of annihilation. There is hardly any text or any work which does not make use of the existential fear. Pinter also acknowledges his indebtedness to Kafka and Beckett: "when I read them it rang a bell, that's all, within me. I thought: something is going on here which is going on in me too." There are Kafkaesque elements in Pinter if by the word Kafkaesque we mean "weird," "mysterious," "nightmarish," "horrible" etcetera. The questions that confront the reader of Kafka are the questions that confront the reader of Pinter. The vice and warts which are never answered in Kafka are the vice and warts we find in Pinter. As far as Pinter's
indebtedness to Beckett is concerned it is at the level of form because Beckett's play is in every respect a trend setter. It has been pointed out how Pinter abandons Kafka and Beckett's techniques of fantasy and dream to settle down in realistic events. His dialogue and his characters are real but the plays are poetic because there is ambiguity in them.

The existentialist philosophy centres on the existing man facing a crisis when he confronts non-existing, being facing non-being. If man is faced with a crisis he is utterly lost because he cannot understand the meaning of existence and does not find purpose for his living. This suggests that man cannot be motivated and if he has no motivation he cannot be represented as a character in the traditional way. This explains why Pinter disregards identity, motivation, verification. The writer has understood the basic problems confronting humanity and the problems. It is this philosophical understanding that makes him what he is and his plays what they are. Justifying his creation of characters without an identity, motivation and verification he says that the twentieth century drama has taken to cheating:
The playwright assumes that we have a great deal of information about all his characters, who explain themselves to the audience. In fact, what they are doing most of the time is conforming to the author's own ideology. They don't create themselves as they go along, they are being fixed on the stage for one purpose, to speak for the author who has a point of view to put over. When the curtain goes up on one of my plays, you are faced with a situation, a particular situation, two people sitting in a room, which hasn't happened before, and is just happening at this moment, and we know no more about them than I know about you, sitting at this table. The world is full of surprises. A door can open at any moment and someone will come in. We'd love to know who it is, we'd love to know exactly what he has on his mind and why he comes in, but how often do we know what someone has on his mind or who this somebody is, and what goes to make him and make him what he is, and what his relationship is to others?
Pinter in the above statement questions the claim of the playwrights to omniscience and therefore with his radical and uncompromising attitude disapproves of intolerable arrogance on the part of the writers concerned. Consequently the audiences have to decide on the basis of what is presented as to the origin, background and motivations caricature.

Hinchliffe, Arnold P. in his book on Pinter says that:

Harold Pinter is quintessentially the English ... representative of Absurd Theatre. He has incorporated the genre so successfully that it is almost parochial in flavour and looks decidedly home-grown. This ability to fuse European Absurdity with the English way of life, the foreign with the native, the timeless and universal with the immediate and local, gives Pinter's plays a lasting quality. He will remain one of Britain's most important twentieth-century dramatists ... the most important.4

Referring to Esslin's work Hinchliffe says that it shows connection between contemporary drama to contemporary trends in philosophy. Although the connections with Sartre and
Existentialism as suggested by Esslin are not inappropriate; they tend to be confusing because Existentialism itself seems to be an odd collection of writers and philosophers. Hinchliffe, for instance, draws attention to Walter Kaufmann who can link them only in terms of refusal: "The refusal to belong to any school of thought; the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems; and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and remote from life - that is the heart of Existentialism." Although it is confusing by a preoccupation with failure, threat, and death, writers as diverse as Kierkegaard, Dostoevski, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, Rilke and Kafka have been brought together and shown as united in the perception of the absurdity of man’s condition. These writers battled with both thought and language to express the absurdity of man’s condition.

In the existential attitude which asserted precariousness of human life voiced by philosophers and artists, in the existential god who offered the reward of eternity of compensation for the suffering and anguish of temporal life. The long process of secularisation terminated in the mid-nineteenth century with the pronouncement of the death of the god. Since then philosophy, religion and the arts reflected the existential crisis of unaccommodated man.
What was an occasional experience is now an experience of generation. Existentialism is a philosophy of existence which attempts to give man in his relationship to the universe in all its concrete plenitude and its problematic complexity. It is not a philosophy of existence. Both atheistic and theistic existentialists address themselves to two broad alternatives facing man in a world in which god is dead: the institutionalised and collectivized life on the analogy of the machinery of technology toward which man is drifting and the agonizingly difficult authentic existence of the individual who insists upon maintaining his unique consciousness in the face of the overwhelming pressures to conform. The existentialists have not only attacked the essentialist philosophers but also the scientific rationalism of the nineteenth century utilitarian philosophers and the logical positivists of the twentieth century because they locate reality in the objective realm of measurable matter and value in the production of utilization objects. Consequently they subordinate man to a tool, consciousness to efficiency, and the individual to the social and collective organizations. Inevitably and logically the individual came to be dehumanized and is reduced to the status of an object like other objects in nature. Stripped of his subjectivity he is alienated from his authentic self and becomes an easy victim of a vast and efficient collective modelled after mass
production processes. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers have expressed their horror at democracies and totalitarian societies for their unconscious drift towards the achievements of massive materialistic utopias. Nicholas Berdyaev in *The End of Our Time* says:

Utopias appear to be far more possible than it was formerly thought. And we find ourselves confronting ... a dreadful question: How to avoid their ultimate realisation? ... Utopias are possible. Life marches toward utopias. And perhaps a new century begins, a century in which the intellectuals and the cultivated class will imagine ways of avoiding utopias and of returning to a non-utopian society, less "perfect" and more free.  

The existentialist rejects the rationalist analyses of man and their dehumanising systems which use man as another object and submits him to the same natural laws that govern stones. He therefore irrationally affirms life against death. In this revolt against a cosmos he becomes the absurd man. Sisyphus, who despite being condemned to ceaselessly to roll a rock to the top of the mountain only to find it at the mountain bottom not only endures but also
finds joy in that task, is Albert Camus's symbol for the absurd man. For Kierkegaard the Biblical Abraham who though cannot perceive god rationally nevertheless obeys. Sartre's "Existence precedes essence" means that man "becomes rather than merely is." Man cannot be abstracted and quantified, and placed in a system that can accurately predict his behaviour. The essentialist philosophies which state that essence precedes existence and reduce a unique and vital being to the level of an inert thing. Humanistic existentialism refers to man and ultimately means that he is free, he alone is capable of choosing his own future and determining his own essence. This is put in a formula by Sartre's existence. The concept of freedom, the root principle of existential thought, are centred in man's state in the universe and his agonizing responsibility for choosing between complex alternatives concerning his existence:

Stripped of the ethical guides deduced from theological or rational systems, the individual is left naked and alone to face in fear and trembling the great void and, to adapt King Lear's words, to decide whether to make something out of nothing. Thus the existentialists refuse to allow man to take freedom for granted as he usually does. They
reject the vague notion that it is a privilege that somehow renders life easier and happier. Rather, they assert its difficulty. As Sartre says, man "is condemned to freedom." Comfort and freedom are incompatible. The easy life, in fact, is the privilege of slaves, for whom all the painful decisions are made by others. The life of a truly free man is measured by the degree of his suffering. In short, freedom, as the existentialists understand it, is, in the words of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, "a terrible gift."8

Existentialism as a philosophy or as an attitude has become part of imaginative literature which can be seen in all in its bounds. The creative artist discovered existential predicament in myths and in scriptures. Nathan Scott in his book Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier shows that several writers of twentieth century made use of myths which had existential predicament. The Myth of the Isolato in Kafka's novels The Trial and The Castle as the theme of isolation and estrangement, the Myth of Hell embodying the theme of Nothingness and the disintegration of meaning in The Sound and the Fury and The Waste Land, the Myth of Voyage containing the theme of painful journey through the irrational self or world as in Joyce's Ulysses.
and the Myth of Sanctity in *The Family Reunion* deals with the theme of reconciliation with salvation.

These categories constitute a brilliant insight into the ways in which myth has been appropriated by the contemporary existential writer, but Scott’s hint that the four myths, taken as a unit, resemble Dante’s journey in *The Divine Comedy* through the Inferno and the Purgatorio to the Paradiso, coupled with Heidegger’s analysis of death and Nothingness, suggests a more inclusive symbolic pattern to stand as the archetypal myth of the existential imagination: the flight from a dark, threatening agent who pursues the fugitive protagonist into an isolated corner (often, the underground), where he must confront his relentless pursuer, whereupon, in a blinding moment of illumination he discovers the paradoxically benevolent aspect of his persecutor. This symbolic pattern, of course, is the Greek myth of the Furies, in which the protagonist’s (Orestes') face-to-face encounter with the pursuing Erinyes (the Angry
Ones) activates their transfiguration into the Eumenides (the Kindly Ones).\textsuperscript{9}

The existentialist by making a clever use of the myths patterned their works with a symbolic meaning. Of the four kinds of myths the Myth of the Furies caught the imagination of writers like Albert Camus, Archibald MacLeish, Harold Pinter and their predecessors Dostoevski, Graham Greene and Charles Williams. This myth of the Furies constitutes something of an archetype in the literature of contemporary existentialism by its preoccupation of human condition. In the face of death and the futile effort to evade it the creative writer has tried to meet the crisis with the help of the myth.

Sartre's \textit{Nausea} and Pinter's \textit{The Dwarfs} and \textit{The Homecoming} contain the most detailed treatment of absurdity of human condition. Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter unlike Sartre, Genet remove their characters from immediate social context because they are politically committed. Pinter says:

\begin{quote}
I find most political thinking and terminology suspect, deficient. It seems to me a dramatist is entitled to portray the political confusion in a play if his characters
\end{quote}
naturally act in a political context, that is, if the political influences operating on them are more significant than any other considerations. But I object to the stage being used as a substitute for the soap box, where the author desires to make a direct statement at all costs, and forces his characters into fixed and artificial postures in order to achieve this. This is hardly fair on the characters. I don't care for the didactic or moralistic theatre. In England I find this theatre, on the whole, sentimental and unconvincing.\textsuperscript{10}

Myths often provide the form to a writer to illustrate an idea and sometimes to clarify a contemporary experience or reality. Going to an earlier form might be due to failure to conceive a form suitable to convey human experience or it could be a mimetic urge, a deep desire to copy a model which was hailed by many. We may go further and add that this is one of the ways by which the present is related to the past and shown that the tradition is a continuous stream. Myths also reveal the archetypal condition of man which has not changed essentially. All definitions of myths suggest that they are the collective property of people and are part of their consciousness. It
is this awareness of the potential of the myth that makes a creative writer fall back on it and make a creative use of it. Christopher Fry, T.S. Eliot, to cite a few examples, have employed myths as a framework for some of their plays. To Eliot and many others the Greek myths, especially myths dramatised by Aeschylus, have provided framework to dramatise their apprehension of human situation. The story of a man guilty of matricide whom the Chorus of Furies pursue, try and ultimately absolve him of the sin, is one such. Orestes in Aeschylus play kills his mother Clytemnestra to avenge his father's death. Apollo is bent upon punishing Orestes but Athena constitutes a court and pleads with it to end the curse on Atreus's family by granting pardon. The Chorus of Furies give up their pursuit. This myth of a man being pursued till he is transformed is the theme of "Hound of Heaven" by Francis Thompson and the Biblical story of Job. In some of the plays like The Birthday Party, The Room, The Dumb Waiter and A Slight Ache of Harold Pinter we find the Furies appearing in different from. In The Birthday Party Stanley Webber is pursued and brought back to the place from where he had run away by the armed militants. In The Room Rose is being shifted from district to district by her husband Bert to save her from a black Negro who never gives up the idea of chasing the woman. In The Dumb Waiter the hired killers chase an unknown citizen to kill him according
to the orders given by the speaking tube. The matchseller chases Flora in *A Slight Ache* and takes her away with him in front of Edward. In these four plays the insiders are worried that they will face danger from the intruders. The insiders are being chased by the outsiders who are unkind and never bother about the dependents of their victims.

As in the plays mentioned above the theme of hounding is to be found in *The Birthday Party*, in this case much more explicitly. The act of chasing has been achieved without having created any kind of violence. Stanley Webber, the victim in the play has been accommodated in the lurking place at the seaside boarding house of Petey and Meg. In fact Stanley had run away from a mysterious organisation. Since then, the mysterious organisation started searching for their missing member through its emissaries. The moment Stanley hears about the arrival of the two visitors through Meg, he is nervous and tells Meg that they have come looking for someone in a van with a wheelbarrow in it. It means he knows who they are and also knows that they are chasing him. The two emissaries Goldberg, a Jew and McCann, the brutal Irish terrorist come together on an assignment to fetch Stanley away from Meg. Goldberg, carrying a briefcase and McCann, two suitcases, enter the house from the back door. They understand that they have come exactly on the day which
is also the Stanley's birthday. They tell her that they would celebrate his birthday by joining and giving her lodger a party. The couple of brutal terrorists have planned properly, come to the right place to capture Stanley, occupied the boarding house and at any time may attack him. Stanley is being chased, is caught now and he cannot escape this time from their hands.

Stanley is moody and unpredictable when he encounters first McCann and then Goldberg. Even though he is indifferent to McCann, he tells him that he was born and brought up at Maidenhead and reminds him of Fuller's teashop, Boots Library and the High Street. He adds that he was in Basingstoke for many years where he never stepped outside the door. Currently he came down to the boarding house on little private business which kept him longer than he expected. The two terrorists convey their greetings on his birthday. But he does not like them to stay with him. At first Stanley threatens them to leave the place. He is merciless "... this house isn't your cup of tea. There's nothing here for you, from any angle, any angle. So why don't you just go, without any more fuss?" (p.45). To save himself he behaves menacingly with the brutal militants who accuse him of driving Meg off her conk, forcing Petey out to play chess and treating Lulu like a leper. But all these are baseless. They engage him simply to put him into their trap and capture
him without creating violence. They want to finish their assignment given to them by their mysterious organisation. If necessary, they are ready to become wilder and they have come with all weapons. They ask him several questions which are irritable and embarrassing. They question him for having left their organisation, betrayed them and hurt their feelings. McCann snatches Stanley's glasses. The following conversation shows how they threaten him menacingly to hold him under their grip:

GOLDBERG: Where was your wife?
STANLEY: In—
GOLDBERG: Answer.
STANLEY(turning, crouched): What wife?
GOLDBERG: What have you done with your wife?
MCCANN: He's killed his wife!
GOLDBERG: Why did you kill your wife?
STANLEY(sitting, his back to the audience).
What wife?
MCCANN: How did he kill her?
GOLDBERG: How did you kill her?
MCCANN: You throttled her.
GOLDBERG: With arsenic.
MCCANN: There's your man!
GOLDBERG: Where's your old mum?
STANLEY: In the sanatorium.
MCCANN: Yes!
GOLDBERG: Why did you never get married?
MCCANN: She was waiting at the porch.
GOLDBERG: You skedaddled from the wedding.
MCCANN: He left her in the lurch.
GOLDBERG: You left her in the pudding club.
MCCANN: She was waiting at the church.
GOLDBERG: Webber! Why did you change your name?
STANLEY: I forget the other one.
GOLDBERG: What's your name now?
STANLEY: Joe Soap. (pp.49-50)

The two cryptic militants have started interrogating Stanley with their stream of questions which really offend him. Stanley is really threatened and is unable to answer properly to their questions. Consequently McCann gets angry and asks his fellow militant to stick a needle in Stanley's eye. So, it is evident how cruel McCann and Goldberg are. Stanley surrenders himself completely under threats and now he cannot escape or protect himself. He is helpless and crouched in his chair. He is addressed as "a Plague" and "an overthrow" (p.52). Goldberg feels that Stanley is sterile. The two men come to the conclusion that he is like dead man, unfit for existence. The following exchange of dialogue
between the brutal militants indicates that they want to take him back to the mysterious organisation either alive or dead.

MCCANN: You betrayed our land.
GOLDBERG: You betray our breed.
MCCANN: Who are you, Webber?
GOLDBERG: What makes you think you exist?
MCCANN: You're dead.
GOLDBERG: You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You are a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour!(p.52)

Goldberg as a diversion proposes to play blind man's buff. While they are playing it McCann breaks Stanley's glasses to faint him. Once again he is frightened. Even though the militants drink, play and appear sociable, they are menacing and plan doing harm to Stanley from time to time, which is part of their assignment.

The next morning, when Meg has been up with Stanley's cup of tea McCann opens the door. So, McCann has been talking with Stanley in his room in the early morning. Meg is surprised to see McCann in Stanley's room. Meg
suspects their behaviour with Stanley. "I don't know what they were talking about. I was surprised. Because Stanley's usually fast asleep when I wake him. But he wasn't this morning. I heard him talking. (Pause.) Do you think they know each other? I think they're old friends. Stanley had a lot of friends. I know he did. (Pause.) I didn't give him his tea" (p. 68). McCann has a secret discussion with Stanley which he does not let Meg know about it. He talks to Stanley about their purpose and he is able to convince him. Meanwhile Goldberg who has been out brings his black car and a wheelbarrow in it to take Stanley who might fall ill or his dead body with them in their car. The car was not seen the previous day but is brought there in the morning for carrying their victim. Petey and Meg quietly notice the dubious movements of Goldberg and McCann but they never clear their doubts. When Meg goes out for shopping, McCann comes down with his two suitcases. When Petey asks Goldberg about the doctor he says that "it's all taken care of. We'll give him a bit of time to settle down, and then I'll take him to Monty" (p. 74). Before they carry Stanley down from upstairs Goldberg becomes harsh with McCann who becomes uncertain and he also hesitates to go to Stanley's room and there is also a little bit of confusion between the two brutal militants, which is clear in the following exchange of dialogue between them:
MCCANN: Do we wait or do we go and get him?
GOLDBERG(slowly): You want to go and get him?
MCCANN: I want to get it over.
GOLDBERG: That’s understandable.
MCCANN: So do we wait or do we go and get him?
GOLDBERG(interrupting): I don’t know why, but I feel knocked out. I feel a bit... It’s uncommon for me.
MCCANN: Is that so?
GOLDBERG: It’s unusual.
MCCANN(rising swiftly and going behind Goldberg’s chair. Hissing). Let’s finish and go. Let’s get it over and go. Get the thing done. Let’s finish the bloody thing. Let’s get the thing done and go!
Pause.
Will I go up?
Pause.
Nat!
Goldberg sits humped MCCANN slips to his side.
Simey!
GOLDBERG (opening his eyes, regarding MCCANN).

What — did — you — call — me?

MCCANN: Who?

GOLDBERG (murderously): Don't call me that!

(He seizes MCCANN by the throat.)

NEVER CALL ME THAT!

MCCANN (writhing): Nat, Nat, Nat, NAT!

I called you Nat. I was asking you, Nat.

Honest to God. Just a question, that's all, just a question, do you see,

do you follow me?(p. 76)

Meanwhile Stanley himself comes down in his dark well cut suit and white collar holding the broken glasses in his hand. Goldberg and McCann induce him by promising several comforts, things, proper care, treatment, twenty four hour service and whatever he requires to prosper. They wish him all success and prospects. They hope that he will be re-oriented and become rich. Though they frighten Stanley in the beginning, they become his well-wishers at the end because he is convinced and also willing to follow them to the place from where he had run away. They are hopeful of his prospects and grand success in future again in the same brutal organisation:
MCCANN: You'll be our pride and joy.
GOLDBERG: You'll be a mensch.
MCCANN: You'll be a success.
GOLDBERG: You'll be integrated.
MCCANN: You'll give orders.
GOLDBERG: You'll make decisions.
MCCANN: You'll be a magnate.
GOLDBERG: A statesman.
MCCANN: You'll own yachts. (pp. 83-84)

Since he agrees to go back along with the militants, he is forgiven. He is saved because they are kind and generous to him. He is given grace in spite of his sinful activities in the past. He was accused of killing his wife, isolating his mother at the sanatorium and abandoning another woman in an awkward situation. But when he realises that they want to forgive him he relents for fear of being murdered and taken in their car. Stanley might have realized but never confesses because he becomes speechless. He wants to speak but he cannot, when he is asked for his opinion. He is seen trembling involuntarily with fear and excitement, thinking of the problems ahead of him with his former employer, neighbours and kith and kin. He is almost all disabled, motionless and crouches in his chair. The two militants help Stanley out of the chair and take him to the car. When Petey
tries to protest, they tell him that they will take him to Monty to give him a special treatment. Thus the chase ends as in the myth.

The play *The Room* in contrast to *The Birthday Party* has a simple location and few characters. In spite of a trivial theme of a couple staying in a room and another couple making enquiries about another vacant room, it contains a spectrum of meanings. This is evidenced in the critical attention bestowed on it since its appearance. Quigley finds that "the play is built around a series of polarities between light and dark, warmth and cold, cosiness and inhospitality, man and woman, husband and wife, domination and subordination, Rose's fears and Rose's desires, and finally Bert and Riley."¹² There is no dispute about the contrastive structure and the symbolism inherent in the opposites. It is the symbolic element that elevates the play into a poetic one and investing it with multiple meanings. Situated as it is in the middle portion of the building *The Room* is like Dante's "Purgatorio," neither "Inferno" nor "Paradise." For Elizabeth Sakellaridou the play represents the absurdity of human condition. She draws attention to the two couples in the play and the series of failures resulting in depression and disappointments. They are constantly engaged in an unmeaning dominance and
both Rose and Mrs Sands become increasingly unpleasant and undesirable through their oppressive behaviour while their husbands' resistance becomes all the more justifiable. This archetypal scheme is one-sided because the two women cannot offer any corresponding feminine myths to counter-balance the ones fabricated by their males."13 There are critics who find psychological overtones in the play. For example Bert finds a wife's substitute in the van. The word menace which has come to be associated with a Pinterian play is striking in the very first play of Pinter. Mr.Kidd's visit and the sudden appearance of Riley are nothing short of a menace. Riley holds out the threat that he might kidnap or abduct. As Misra remarks: "Riley may stand for the spirit of a dead man or a messenger of death or the ghost of Rose's own dead father."14 Esslin commenting on the atmosphere of menace says or justifies the long speech of Bert in the later part of the Play:

There is nothing intrinsically improbable or unreal in an old man who is so dotty that he talks nonsense. And, yet, very characteristically already, by an accumulation on such basically realistic detail, Pinter succeeds in building up an atmosphere of
menace, of Kafka-esque uncertainty. The silent giant van-driver, the anxious woman clinging to the warmth of her room, and the room being situated in a house of uncertain size, so that it seems suspended between an unexplored basement and a top that loses itself in a dim, unending flight of stairs, each of these details may in itself be explained away - in accumulation they create tension and foreboding."

Esslin has also found in Bert's silence the theme of failure of communication but Pinter himself says: "I believe the contrary. I think that we communicate only too well ... and that what takes place is continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else's life is too frightening. To disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility." Whether the play deals with the absurdity, or the failure of communication, or not, it has the atmosphere of menace and conforms to the structure of chase and confrontation.

Rose Hudd lives in a shabby room in a large house with her husband Bert. The district in which she is hidden is totally alien to them as well as to their kith and kin.
To keep away from their own people they have come to the new place. Even though Rose is not happy with her husband she does not want to go back to her father or lover or any such intimate friend or neighbour. The room number seven in which they live is quite comfortable like a protective mother's womb. Rose has accommodated the feeling of serenity and the sanctuary in her sanctum. Now she is almost all like a home-bird which means she does not know about her neighbours and the rest of the floors. She has not even seen the basement. The basement is full of dampness and darkness in which the landlord Mr Kidd lives. Rose has her own feelings about the world outside and expresses her ill-feelings of fear, cold, hostility and danger. She prevents her husband from going outside leaving her alone in the room thinking that during his absence she might be chased or kidnapped or even killed by her enemies or intruders. It could be her fear to stay alone in her flat leaving her husband. In spite of her best efforts she cannot prevent him. He takes his van and drives himself away from the room.

During Bert's absence the Sands visit Rose and make enquiries with her whether the room number seven is vacant. Further, they add that they have been to the basement where they have been told the particular room is vacant by the voice of the two mysterious personalities.
They are not sure who is the actual landlord between the two unidentified men. The Sands have heard their voice from the darkness but not seen them. They are in the basement and it is occupied by the terrible darkness. The Sands confuse Rose who has not seen them earlier. They are probably fleeing from somebody else and that's why they came searching for room. They themselves are mysterious. As far as Rose is concerned their landlord is Mr Kidd who lives alone in the basement. Now she hears about another person in the basement who is also mysterious. The Sands fail to differentiate between the two unknown men. Rose feels tense on hearing the voice of the second person. She is confused and threatened. But what she has heard is exactly correct. Mr Kidd has accommodated another mysterious person who has been waiting to see Rose in the absence of her husband, which she does not know. Mr Kidd had already visited her but could not tell her because Bert was there. Now Rose is alone after the Sands have left. In fact Rose is also waiting for Mr Kidd just to find out the details of the upstairs, downstairs, the basement and also the security of the room. According to her upstairs rains in, downstairs dark, the basement wet and the room in which she lives with her husband may also not be absolutely safe and comfortable.
As soon as the Sands leave the place Mr Kidd calls on Rose with a piece of information. He has come to her to discuss the black Negro stranger who has been waiting in the basement for a week to see Rose when she is alone. Rose is almost all forced by Kidd to receive the father-like black Negro. The mysterious stranger wants to talk to Rose personally when she is alone. At first she declines Kidd’s proposal and also pretends that she knows nothing about the black Negro. She is frightened with the threat of Mr Kidd who in fact has accommodated the Negro in his basement. Further he wants Rose to receive the Negro. He almost threatens and blackmails her for the sake of Negro and for his secret meeting with her.

Mr KIDD: I know what he’ll do. I know what he’ll do. If you don’t see him now, there’ll be nothing else for it, he’ll come up on his own bat, when your husband’s here, that’s what he’ll do. He’ll come up when Mr Hudd’s here, when your husband’s here.

ROSE: He’d never do that.

Mr KIDD: He would do that....

... 

ROSE: He wouldn’t do that.\textsuperscript{17} (pp.27-28)
Here one can understand Rose's feelings of fear, tension and anxiety. On one hand her husband is expected by now and on the other hand she is forced to hold meeting with stranger which her husband does not tolerate. She wants to finish off the meeting with him before Bert arrives. The nerve-racking woman is caught by the visit of her father-like figure. It is understood that she must have had contacts with that old man, Riley in the past. Unless she had relation with him, Riley would never chase her at this age at an alien place. Nobody knows her lurking place in this district. But the blind Negro who is adamant has been hunting the woman leaving no choice to her:

If she invites the man in, she runs the risk of having Bert return and discover them. If she refuses to invite him, she runs the risk of having him call when Bert is present. That both situations seem threatening to her is a function of her inner betrayal of Bert and the possibility that this betrayal might become evident in the presence of the visitor.18

When Rose is caught in a dilemma Mr Kidd prepares himself to go down and send the Negro up. She might be forced or convinced or pleased or even interested to see him. Anyway
she asks Kidd to "fetch him. Quick. Quick!" (p. 28). She might have a soft corner for him in her heart. Otherwise she would have denied the case. But here she considers and entertains him.

Rose has given us an impression that she is leading a chaste life with her husband without having any ugly scars in her domestic life all these days. But amidst all these are pretensions she tries to hide herself from her heinous past thinking that nobody knows about her at a foreign place. Anyway the blind Negro is called in when he comes and introduces himself that he is Riley which she never believes. She scolds him for disturbing her and for destroying the peace in the room. She addresses him as blind, deaf and dumb. She spends few minutes with him. She is terribly upset with the interruption. She says: "as for you saying you know me, what liberty is that? Telling my landlord too. Upsetting my landlord. What do you think you're up to? We're settled down here, cosy, quiet, and our landlord thinks the world of us, we're his favourite tenants, and you come in and drive him up the wall, and drag my name into it! What did you mean by dragging my name into it, and my husband's name? How did you know what our name was?" (p. 29). The blackmailer might be her father. She tells him that she is not "a little girl," may be to give the
impression that it is not easy to carry her out or to drag her out with him. But she is "a grown-up woman in this room" (p. 28). Which means it is impossible for him not only to carry her away or blackmail or kill or even convince. Riley tells her that he has come to see her because he has brought a message for her from her father: "Your father wants you to come home" (p. 30). He addresses Rose as "Sal" which she does not like. Riley might have planned to establish his relation with her once again so that he can take her back to his place. The exchange of dialogue follows between the suspected or possible father and daughter:

RILEY: come home, Sal.
ROSE: Don't call me that.
RILEY: Come, now.
ROSE: Don't call me that.
RILEY: So now you're here.
ROSE: Not Sal.
RILEY: Now I touch you.
ROSE: Don't touch me.
RILEY: Sal.
ROSE: I can't.
RILEY: I want you to come home.
ROSE: No.
RILLY: With me.
ROSE: I can't.
RILEY: I waited to see you.
ROSE: Yes.
RILEY: Now I see you.
ROSE: Yes.
RILEY: Sal.
ROSE: Not that.
RILEY: So, now.

Pause.

So, now.

ROSE: I've been here.
RILEY: Yes.
ROSE: Long.
RILEY: Yes.
ROSE: The day is a hump. I never go out.
RILEY: No.
ROSE: I've been here.
RILEY: Come home now, Sal.

*She touches his eyes, the back of his head and his temples with her hands.*

(pp.30-31)

Rose appears to have been persuaded to believe in the authenticity of the appeal which is reflected in a momentary softening. This is in contrast to her earlier rejection when she did not allow him to touch her when he proposed. Now
there is a change in her attitude and her peculiar behaviour is against the wishes of her husband. She is committed. It is at this moment that her husband arrives: "He regards the Negro for some moments" and then he pushes him from his chair. The Negro tries to say something about Rose. "Mr Hudd, your wife - "(p.32). He is not allowed to complete the sentence, but he is struck, knocked down and his head kicked against the gas stove several times. His reaction is unexpected and accidental. All of a sudden he becomes violent. He puts an end to the scene and the couple are seen safe. The Negro is severely beaten but not killed. If her husband came a little bit late there might be a catastrophe or even Bert would have lost her. Riley's chase ends in a disaster and in this respect the play comes as a contrast to others.

The hired killers, working-class cockneys, Ben and Gus in The Dumb Waiter are working for a mysterious organization. They have chosen an uninhabited, dark and dreaded basement room in a multi-storied building in Birmingham. They wait for the orders and the information to kill the victim. After finishing their assignment they have to go somewhere else to take up another execution. The senior partner Ben like a puppet acts according to the directions given to him by his employer whereas Gus questions
Ben at every stage. He has number of doubts for which Ben has to answer. When Ben reads out the two extracts from the newspaper about a man of eighty seven being crushed under the wheels of a lorry and a eleven year old boy killing a cat and blames it on his eight year little sister, Gus does not believe his words. Gus does not know that he is being chased and at last he is going to be killed by Ben. Of course Ben is also ignorant and together they think that the victim must be a third person. Like the Negro in *The Room*, Gus also does not like to live in this basement and asks Ben "...you come into a place when it's still dark, you come into a room you've never seen before, you sleep all day, you do your job, and then you go away in the night again" (p.40).

Ben is deficient in imaginative power and acts without thinking whereas Gus is frank, keenly inquisitive and he needs explanation for his doubts. But Ben never lets him know the things. Before they came to the basement room Ben on the way stopped the car to spend sometime thinking that they "were too early" (p.42). It might be meant to Gus that someone had to get out before they got to occupy the room on Friday. The armed gunmen find a sealed envelope cover which is slided under the door which contains a twelve matches inside. They have not seen a soul all the time in the entire building and when Gus opens the door nobody is seen. When Ben
threatens him to put on the kettle the following exchange of dialogue between them brings another suspicious event:

GUS: I bet my mother used to say it.
BEN: Your mother? When did you last see your mother?
GUS: I don't know, about -
BEN: Well, what are you talking about your mother for? (p. 48)

There is a possibility to think that Gus's mother also would have been murdered by one of the professional killers or even Ben which Gus does not know. The innocent Gus asks "who it'll be tonight" (p. 49) going to be killed. He does not know that it could be himself. They discuss the girl and Wilson who also belong to one of the departments in their mysterious organization.

Gus says that the entire building is his property, which he has not seen. One of the upstairs is occupied by someone. It could be the ghost or a mysterious person or an unknown representative from the organization or even Wilson and the girl. Probably Ben might have known it. The person who lives upstairs sends orders from time to time through the lift and demands varieties of food. "A dumb waiter goes up and down carrying orders from an unknown master upstairs, and serves as a link between the 'ghosts' and the 'killers.'"
Ben responds every time and whatever is left in the room he asks Gus to arrange to send. So whatever the food the dumb waiter or the mysterious lodger is fond of, is getting through the lift which often comes down with demand and goes up with food items. This time he asks for "Beansprouts" which they do not have. Meanwhile they discover the speaking tube and Ben talks to the lodger upstairs that they "haven't got anything left. We sent up all we had. There's no more food down here."(p.61). They have sent whatever they have but he is not satisfied and moreover he wants a cup of tea which they cannot offer him. Again the lodger upstairs sends a chit asking for "Scampi"(p.68). Gus gets angry and this time he himself gives him reply: WE'VE GOT NOTHING LEFT! NOTHING! DO YOU UNDERSTAND!(p.68).

Now Ben is anxious because time is getting on and he wants to get ready to shoot a person whenever the call comes from the dumb waiter upstairs. He alerts Gus also to be ready for execution. After Gus has gone out of the door on the left to have a glass of water Ben receives the orders through the speaking tube. It says that the victim "has arrived and will be coming in straight away. The normal method to be employed. Understood"(p.70). Ben calls Gus and takes his revolver who is ready for shooting and opens the door right sharply by aiming his revolver at the victim. To
our utter astonishment Gus stumbles in who is stripped off his jacket, waistcoat, tie, holster and revolver. Gus is supposed to be killed now but Ben hesitates. They are completely dumbfounded with the unforeseen situation at the end of the play.

It is obvious from the above summary that *The Dumb Waiter* is an extension of *The Room*. The elements are same - two people, mysterious and menacing, wait to carry out an action, a violent action. Ben and Gus have been employed to kill someone as may be understood from the revolvers they are carrying. A phone call from the mysterious organisation is enough for them to execute the assigned job. The two pale assassins are a peculiar pair. Although they have come there together they do not seem to know each other. They do not even seem to know whom they are going to kill. The only piece of information that we gather is that Ben is senior to Gus and the senior gives orders to the junior. Even in terms of mettle there is a difference. Pinter shows his ingenuity of giving a distinct character to each by focussing on manners and speech. As Sakellaridou comments:

Ben, the tougher of the two, chooses a different method to disguise his deficiencies. He is absolute in his manners, arbitrary and commanding in his behaviour, axiomatic in his
speech, in the usual manner of all impotent Pinter males. The television production of *The Dumb Waiter* conveyed very well the vulnerability of both killers. When the long-awaited order for action arrives, Ben's face appears sweaty on the screen and his movements are nervous, revealing a final breaking and a loss of self-control. One can even discern pain on his face when he identifies Gus, his accomplice, as his next victim.21

The atmosphere of menace is repeated in this play as he has done it in *The Room* and in *The Birthday Party*. The characters are not quiet but are restive. Gus is pacing up and down the room restlessly and his frequenting the defective toilet. Yet another instance of the tense state is to be seen in meaningless repetitive actions. The following account illustrates the point:

Gus ties his laces, rises, yawns and begins to walk slowly to the door, left. He stops, looks down, and shakes his foot.

Ben lowers his paper and watches him. Gus kneels and unties his shoe-lace and slowly
takes off the shoe. He looks inside it and brings out a flattened matchbox. He shakes it and examines it. Their eyes meet. Ben rattles his paper and reads. Gus puts the matchbox in his pocket and bends down to put on his shoe. He ties his lace, with difficulty. Ben lowers his paper and watches him. Gus walks to the door, left, stops, and shakes the other foot. He kneels, unties his shoe-lace, and slowly takes off the shoe. He looks inside it and brings out a flattened cigarette packet. He shakes it and examines it. Their eyes meet. Ben rattles his paper and reads. Gus puts the packet in his pocket, bends down, puts on his shoe and ties the lace.

He wanders off, left.

Ben slams the paper down on the bed and glares after him. He picks up the paper and lies on his back, reading.

Silence.

A lavatory chain is pulled twice off, left, but the lavatory does not flush.
Silence.

Gus re-enters, left, and halts at the door, scratching his head. Ben slams down the paper. (p. 35)

The theme of violence is carefully designed in the texture of the play. It does not come as surprise. The obsession with crime is suggested in Ben's reading about violent deaths from a newspaper. It is an indication of what would follow.

Written about the same time The Birthday Party does make use of many elements that are found in The Dumb Waiter. Here again there are two hired men who are assigned the job of abducting Stanley. The difference between The Dumb Waiter and The Birthday Party seems to be that in the former there is a difference in terms of seniority between Goldberg and McCann as it is between Ben and Gus. Another difference between the two plays consists in the fact that the assassins do not know who the victim is whereas in The Birthday Party they know their victim. The change from the unpredictable to the predictable, from violence leading to death to a violent abduction are the changes effected from the earlier play to the later play. The preoccupation with violence and death have been accounted for Pinter's private
experiences. His rejection of National Service as a youth has to do with his hatred of horror and terror or even terror of war. No one has a conscientious objection. Pinter has always opposed any organisation which encourages its members to indulge in violence.

Critics have suggested Pinter owed it to Beckett or his play although he concealed Pinter while acknowledging it claims to have added his own:

... there is no question that Beckett is a writer who I admire very much and have admired for a number of years. If Beckett's influence shows in my work that's all right with me. You don't write in a vacuum; you're bound to absorb and digest other writing and I admire Beckett's work so much that something of its texture might appear in my own.  

As for repetition of certain elements which bear Pinter's insignia there is no need to stress. Esslin says:

The Dumb Waiter, also in one act, uses the same basic situation as The Room. Again we are in a room enclosed by a dark, mysterious world outside. Again the people in the room...
are watching, in dreadful suspense, a door which is certain to open. Moreover, in this case we are, from quite an early point in the play, made aware of the fact that whoever it will be who enters by the door will have to die. For the two people in the room are professional assassins, Ben and Gus by name, working-class Cockneys. They are working for a mysterious organisation which sends them, from time to time, across country on missions of this kind; at first they are told no more than the bare name of the town to which they have to go and the address at which they will have to call; then they just have to stay there and await further instructions. When these arrive they must liquidate their victim; then they have to get back as quickly as they can; they don't even know who it is that disposes of the bodies: who cleans up the room where the execution has taken place. As soon as they are back at base, they have to stay at home waiting for the next phone call with the next address for the next execution.
If examined from the structural pattern of chase, the play aligns itself with *The Birthday Party* and *The Room*. Interestingly and ironically in *The Dumb Waiter* the killer and the killed are together without knowing that the victim is one of them. Pinter appears to be driving home the point that killers execute the work so mechanically and irrationally that they cease to be human beings. Men are no better than robots without motive, without mind and without soul.

As in *The Room* and *The Birthday Party* in *A Slight Ache* the pursuit pattern continues but marital discord and domestic disharmony of Flora and Edward adds a further dimension. The women in *The Room* and *The Birthday Party* force their husbands to hang on to them, Flora in *A Slight Ache* decides to seek freedom outside marriage. Pinter might be suggesting that lovelessness ruined Rose and Bert, whereas Flora wanted to realise her passion for the lover. Instead of regretting the rape committed on her she appears to cherish it and live in a world of fantasy and memories. Unlike Hardy's heroine Tess who had been raped by Alec whom she hates all her life, Flora has sympathy and attachment for the spirit who comes as a matchseller after several years. The play also reminds us of Soyinka's play *The Lion and the Jewell* in which a buxom youth Sidi rejects an effeminate
lover after she has slept with the chief of the community, an old man. Flora comes nearest to Lawrence's heroines who realise themselves even if it meant breaking marriage ties. Lady Chatterly, for example, chooses a gamekeeper for her lover and discards the bourgeoisie invalid, her husband.

Edward in *A Slight Ache*, impotent, weak, impatient cannot remain silent in the face of his wife's faithlessness. Once he is certain that his wife still loves the matchseller he has no option but to accept him as his wife's lover. But unlike Bert who strangles his rival, Edward pretends to be magnanimous only to test his wife's character. But Flora is too clever for Edward and she pays him back by punishing his hypocrisy. The impotence of Edward is revealed in many instances but his rage against his wife's infidelity is symbolically suggested in his torturing the wasp. It appears he married Flora for his own improvement which is to say the least being selfish and immoral. Like George in Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* who marries Martha for his own progress Pinter's Edward also marries for his own success or benefit. That this character is anything but noble is suggested in the disease, a slight ache in his eyes. His diseased eye may be the green eye, meaning jealousy. It is characteristic of Pinter that he makes the disease symbolic of a moral lapse in a character. As Misra remarks:
The blindness of Rose in *The Room*, a slight ache in the eyes of Edward in *A Slight Ache*, the defective eye sight of Disson in *Tea Party* are presented in such a manner that they invest even trite utterances with significance and power, functioning along realistic and symbolic axes at the same time. The illogical and irrational experience are merged in the behavioural content of the play beyond the point of distinction.24

The irony in Edward's character lies in the gap between intellectual pretensions and their practice in life. We understand that he writes on aspects of theology, philosophy, primitive cultures, Space and Time but in his dealings he is neither theological nor philosophical. The symbolism of the play is not confined to actions but to persons as well. This again is a Pinterian characteristic. The matchseller in the play is not a mere matchseller but more. Simon Trussler examines a symbolic nature of characters in the following comment: "Riley in *The Room* may have been Death, but he was also a blind Negro: whether the Matchseller is Something Nasty in the Woodshed, an Anti-Life Force, a Slight Ache, or Death in a more middle-class image, he is never just a Matchseller."25 Further, he quotes Esslin:
"She [Rose] too is visited by a symbolic figure who had been waiting for her outside. She too is stricken with blindness and presumably loses her warm home to be expelled into the cold of the basement: death. But if the Matchseller is demonstrably a "Symbolic figure", the blind Negro is also and always a blind Negro. Besides, being stricken with blindness is different from being struck dead—though whether significantly different, in the dramatic context of A Slight Ache, is admittedly arguable.\textsuperscript{26}

For Ronald Hayman the matchseller is not "obviously he isn't a fantasy because Edward and Flora both see him and speak to him and Flora feels him: but far from having a clear physical appearance, he seems to Edward to change shape and size. Sometimes he looks strong, sometimes weak, and to Flora he is sometimes repulsive, sometimes attractive."\textsuperscript{27} For Martin Esslin "... the encounter with the old matchseller provokes Flora into the sexual fantasies of her youth about possible first, unchaperoned 'canters' and being set upon by wild men. And in spite of the old man's 'vile smell' she gradually works herself up into sexual excitement about him."\textsuperscript{28} About Flora's linking a matchseller with Barnabas. Hinchliffe says
that "Barnabas becomes for her the desirable and submissive combination of child, husband, and lover that the apparently dominant Edward never could be." Bernard F. Dukore endorses Hinchliffe's analysis in his criticism, "she associates him with sexuality, for Barnabas was an early Christian father who disagreed strongly with St Paul, the apostle of chastity." 

Like the blind Negro in *The Room*, the matchseller in *A Slight Ache* blind, deaf and dumb, has been waiting for Edward's wife, Flora, standing day in, day out at their back gate. He has been chasing them for two months in the disguise of a matchseller. He wants to see Flora when she is alone. But Edward is unlike Bert, who never goes out leaving his wife alone. If he does not dismiss the impostor from the place, he knows the consequences for him in future. Before taking the decision the couple kill the wasp by scalding in the bottle. Moreover he squashes it on a plate and really he enjoys the game. He could kill only the wasp but he cannot touch the matchseller. Instead of matchseller the wasp is killed. For which he gets a slight ache in his eyes. Flora, who is being chased by the old man, has affection for him. Even though Edward is aware of the old man's pretensions he invites the matchseller for lunch through his wife.
Flora reminds the guest that she was raped by him, who was a poacher once. "It was a ghastly rape." She is lustful and seductive, tempts him to speak to her about love and sex. In fact she was in love with him and adored him deeply. She says: "It's me you were waiting for, wasn't it? You've been standing waiting for me. You've seen me in the woods, picking daisies, in my apron, my pretty daisy apron, and you came and stood, poor creature, at my gate, till death us do part. Poor Barnabas. I'm going to put you to bed. I'm going to put you to bed and watch over you. But first you must have a good whacking great bath. And I'll buy you pretty little things that will suit you. And little toys to plays with. On your deathbed. Why shouldn't you die happy? (pp. 32-33) Flora finds him ill. When she hears the footsteps of her husband she asks him not to come down.

FLORA: Don't come in.
EDWARD: Well?
FLORA: He's dying.
EDWARD: Dying? He's not dying.
FLORA: I tell you, he's very ill.
EDWARD: He's not dying! Nowhere near.
He'll see you cremated. (p. 33)
Edward understands that the matchseller has come all the way searching for his wife and he is sure that the impostor will certainly take Flora and occupy the house. Moreover Flora is keenly interested to stay with him. Edward is bound to the circumstances and he himself indirectly suggests him to take his wife away with him. "Get a good woman to stick by you. Never mind what the world says. Keep at it. Keep your shoulder to the wheel. It'll pay dividends"(p.24). The old man is really sympathetic with Edward and drops tears for his pathetic condition. Edward says: "You're crying. (Pause.) You're weeping. You're shaking with grief. For me. I can't believe it. For my plight. I've been wrong"(p.37).

Flora is ready and arranges everything for her lover. She wants to show him her garden which will become his later and also her japonica, convolvulus, honeysuckle and clematis. She has put up the canopy for him in the garden where he takes his lunch by the pool. She has polished the entire house for her lover. She calls her lover Barnabas and asks him to take her hand.

Take my hand.

Pause. The MATCHSELLER goes over to her.

Yes. Oh, wait a moment.

(Pause.)
Edward. Here is your tray.

She crosses to EDWARD with the tray of matches, and puts it in his hinds. Then she and the MATCHSELLER start to go out as the curtain falls slowly. (p.40)

We have come across the violence in *The Room* where as in *A Slight Ache* it ends peacefully. The old man, who is her ex-lover, has chased her and finally succeeds in his attempt. He wins Flora and also occupies the house along with the garden. He occupies the place of Edward by making him isolated. When he is given the match tray he accepts it. It is nothing but exchanging their positions. Edward’s silence and the acceptance of the tray are adequately evident that he is leaving his wife for the old man.

The play *A Slight Ache* is remarkable for its exposure. Unlike his other plays where husbands are reconciled to faithlessness of their wives and wives reconciled to the impotent and hypocritical husbands, this play has a bold and dramatic resolution. In the words of Elizabeth Sakellaridou:

The end of the play is extremely eloquent. It closes with Flora's stern command to Edward to take up the Matchseller's tray and,
thereafter, disappear from her life. The television version of the play closed with the strong scenic image of Edward lying on the floor and the matchseller stepping over him—a visual clue that leaves no doubt as to the inexorability of his fate.32

Here is a woman who finally decides to remove the veil and not to hide the truth. She is a contrast to others.

The character of the matchseller is a unique innovation. Although he never utters a word in the entire play his silence itself becomes a threat to the peace. Guido Almansi remarks:

Although the Pinterian hero is often as inarticulate as a pig, stumbling pathetically on every word, covering a pitifully narrow area of meaning with his utterances, blathering through his life, he does not, like any honest animal, seem to whine or grunt or giggle or grumble to give an outlet to his instincts, desires, passions or fears. He grunts in order to hide something else. Even when he grunts ...., his grunt is a lie. Pinter's characters are often abject, stupid, vile, aggressive; but they are always
intelligent enough in their capacity as conscientious and persistent liars, whether lying to others or to themselves, to hide the truth if they know truth's truthful abode. They are too cunning in their cowardice to be compared to noble animals. They are perverted in their actions and speech; hence human.33

From the foregoing discussion it becomes evident that *The Birthday Party*, *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter* and *A Slight Ache* are united by a common structure - the fugitive being chased and apprehended. The process may involve threat of violence, fondling and a celebration as in a birth so that a new life comes into being. *The Birthday Party* shows the fugitive's refusal to give up old life but his ultimate birth into a new world. In *The Room* there is the backward chase, to force a person to return to an inglorious past, the resistance and on reluctance and the punishment of the victimiser. The blind Negro Riley persists in renewing his old relationship with Rose but is punished mortally. The irony of the chaser becoming the chased, the victimiser becoming victim, the Lord of Death never realizing the Democles' sword hanging over his head, the absurdity of life being no more than waiting dumbly are represented in the characters of Gus and Ben in *The Dumb Waiter*. The long wait
and unceasing effort to get hold of a thing lost, the Matchseller's retrieving his love, Flora and the helpless husband, dumb-founded, at his wife's returning to her lover are romantic stuff in modern setting.
NOTES


17. Pinter, Harold, *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter*, London: Eyre Methuen Ltd, 1959, pp.27-28. All references to the text are from this edition.


32. Sakellaridou, Elizebeth, *Pinter's Female Portraits*, p.81.