PINTER'S TWO LOVES OF COMFORT AND DESPAIR

TWO LOVES OF COMFORT AND DESPAIR:
THE LOVE TRIANGLE
IN
HAROLD PINTER

By

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ABSTRACT

Using the poem "Afternoon", an early sketch, Dialogue for Three and a late play, Monologue, as a basis for discussion, this thesis attempts to locate the essential core relationship that lies at the heart, not only of the above three works, but the whole range of Pinter's work. The core relationship or pattern upon which Pinter's drama is arranged is revealed as a love triangle. Once we have isolated the triangle it is possible to identify the various corners of the triangle using both the symbolic vocabulary Pinter provides in the dichotomy between light and dark, between blindness and potence and the psychoanalytic terms, ego and id, which correspond exactly to the corners of light and dark, respectively.

The Pinter protagonist is typically confronted with two psychosexual alternatives, one in the guise of a guardian and the other in the guise of a thief. The terms "guardian" and "thief" are taken from the poem "Afternoon" and they serve admirably as nominatives for the extremes of polarization in the bifurcated world of the plays. The plays are accounts of the various means by which those who confront these two disturbing and equally withering alternatives struggle to consolidate their identities.

"Afternoon", Dialogue for Three and Monologue will provide the platform for a study that will make repeated reference to all but a few minor plays in the Pinter canon. The thesis of the love triangle which emerges from these three little-discussed works is equally relevant to all of Pinter's work and accounts for the most important motifs of his plays.

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INTRODUCTION

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Joseph Frank, in "Spatial Form in Modern Literature",[1] traces a line of influence from Flaubert through Proust to Joyce of a kind of literature which has, in the course of its development, subverted the clear-cut narrative in favour of a far more profound and internal (organic) basis of unity. The result, according to Frank, is something he terms "spatial form". Using Pound's definition of image -- "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" -- Frank demonstrates that spatial form transforms the structure of a poem or a novel into "an instrument of his [the artist's] aesthetic intention" and that the modern reader, confronted with spatial form, must be prepared to "continually fit fragments together and keep allusions in mind until, by reflexive reference, he can link them to their complements."[2] Proust's A la Recherche du Temps Perdu, an example of the type, is an attempt to create a form that represents the simultaneity of past and present: those moments of "celestial nourishment" for Proust in which he apprehended "a fragment of time in its pure state." Proust's form condenses past and present, memory and sensation in "a form which usually remains invisible, the form of time." (The influence of Proust on Beckett and Pinter cannot be underestimated; Pinter's recent The Proust Screenplay is a benchmark on a track of

influence which connects Proust, Beckett--Pinter's most certain influence--and Pinter).

To the group of novelists and poets who have explored the possibilities of spatial form may be added the name of the dramatist, Harold Pinter. The structure of Pinter's plays depends absolutely on this "reflexive reference"; the ambiguities which pervade his theatre have their origin in the shadowy theatre of the mind in which past and present confront each other. In Pinter, the past, immanent and strangely inimical, remains a shadow that resists explanation but from which you cannot escape.

This thesis will primarily examine the coincidence of past and present in a relatively early work of Pinter's, Dialogue for Three (hereafter referred to simply as "Dialogue"). "Dialogue" is important for a number of reasons but mainly because it epitomizes all that is uniquely Pinter. "All" may seem a somewhat radical assessment of the play's worth considering its brief length, but, using a detailed exegesis of the sketch as the basis for a general examination of Pinter's work, I intend to demonstrate that the thematic core of Pinter lies intact and complete in "Dialogue". Half poem and half play, "Dialogue" represents in its form, not only a point of intersection between the poetic apprentice and the dramatic journeyman, it epitomizes the spatial coincidence of past and present that accounts for the form of the best of Pinter's work. Using "Afternoon", a late poem, "Dialogue", an early sketch, and Monologue, a recent play, I intend to demonstrate that the sympathies among these works are not merely a matter of coincidence of deliberate thematic options, but that they are a function of psychodynamic factors which change but little in the twenty-five years of playwriting

these works span. The love triangle is a function of these concerns, the dramatic structure in which these factors inevitably find expression. Once the nature of these psychodynamic factors has been established, the nature of the triangle can and will be examined in the final chapter. Having isolated the psychodynamics of the triangle, a coda that will give some insight into the general pattern of the plays of one of the world's leading playwrights will be provided.

Because Pinter has subverted traditional forms of narrative, it might be said that his plays are plays of atmosphere. When little else is making sense, when it seems as though the thread of narrative is finally, irrevocably lost, there is always the compressed, compelling atmosphere of the play that assures us of an organizing, albeit hidden, coherence. If the subject of any speaker's speech sounds abstruse beyond hope, there is always something--even something as subtle as the choice of words--that makes sufficient sense. Often the plays are about darkness or blindness, about the eroding ability to distinguish the forms which intrude with a concomitant influx of suppressed pain and anguish. In this sense, Pinter's form is very much his subject. Intellectual stratagems are of little use when confronted with the disturbing ambiguities of the play. Without the arbitrary form of conventional narrative the audience is placed in much the same position as an Edward in A Slight Ache or a Rose in The Room, confronting emerging forces we do not comprehend but find strangely irresistible.

Gore Vidal once observed that an individual author cannot help but create every fiction around a fixed core of speaking parts, a sort of standard repertory of the mind. This is most appropriate when

applied to Pinter. All of the plays, from the fifteen speaking parts in A Night Out to the single voice of the man in Monologue, are concerned with a love triangle. The play may make use of two interlocking triangles, as in The Collector, triangles involving three males, as in The Dwarfs and The Caretaker, triangles whose third corner is a product of a shared reminiscence as in Landscape or A Slight Ache or the most common triangle of all involving simply two members of the same sex and a third of the opposite gender. But even within this last type, Pinter has explored a number of possibilities. The competition between two males for the interest of the female, as in The Basement, can be played as a competition between a man and a woman for the attention of a second woman, as in Old Times. The only variation, in fact, that Pinter has yet to explore is a triangle made up of three women.

The film scripts that Pinter has written, it should be mentioned tangentially, even though adapted from other authors' work, are like the stage plays in that they involve the playing out of love triangles. The Servant, adapted from Robin Maugham's 1948 novel of the same name for Joseph Losey's 1963 film, bears a remarkable resemblance to Pinter's play, The Basement, written in 1966. The origin of the considerable sympathies between the original novel, the play and the film are not as important to our argument as the interest Pinter demonstrates in the triangular pattern, which remains fundamentally unchanged in both the earlier film script and the later play.

The Accident and The Go-Between especially are absolutely consistent with the developing pattern of concern for the triangle explored in the stage plays. Trimingham and Ted of The Go-Between,

Leo's alter egos, with the most minor of modifications, could occupy a basement with Jane of The Basement.

I should qualify the term 'love triangle' inasmuch as love triangle is an expression with a specific definition. The triangular pattern in Pinter is something of a love triangle, complete with divided loyalties, recriminations, etcetera, but its origins are far more subtle than those which usually inspire the standard love triangles of romance. A more appropriate label might be, 'purgatorial love triangle': purgatorial suggests a state of limbo, a condition of non-being between one state and another. Pinter's triangles are purgatorial because they are functions of a mind fixated on two opposing and irreconcilable alternatives between which it cannot bring itself to choose. Arthur Ganz refers to "the two significant impulses of inner life"[3] which inevitably confront the Pinter protagonist. The first he identifies as an impulse "towards a life of power, energy and sexual gratification" and the other, expressed by the desire to retreat to the "womb-tomb-room" (as Gabbard puts it),[4] is "a retreat from those impulses that are both dangerous and alluring." Davies' rejection of the introverted Aston in The Caretaker in favour of Mick's crude vitality typifies the sort of choice confronting Pinter's protagonists. Ruth makes a similar choice in The Homecoming in rejecting Teddy's insipid intellectuality in favour of his family's bestial vigour. An arrangement consisting of a protagonist, and the personified alternatives of a vulgar but active life in the world and the passive but sterile life of the shelter seems to account to a great degree for Pinter's reliance on the psychological pas de trois.

The Go-Between opens with the words, "The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there."[5] These words could serve as an inscription for all of Pinter's work. The film, like the plays, takes as its theme the power that the past exerts over the present. In The Go-Between, the elderly Leo Colston finds himself some fifty or sixty years after the event still running messages for Marian: time has done little to affect his escape from the past. His past implicates him in the death of Ted, the more vital and potent of the love alternatives Marian found herself unable to choose between. The little boy, staring into a darkened outhouse overgrown with deadly nightshade at the two discovered lovers, is still, held in the thrall of that terrible tableau. The scatalogical locus of the outhouse, the deadly feminine flower imagery, the doomed and blinded lover (Ted's head is "buried in her shoulder")[6] are familiar landmarks on the common inscape upon which Pinter's dramas are played. Leo will never, we suspect, recover from the tableau in the decayed outhouse. The message of the past is unequivocal: the death of Ted is the death of sexual love and Leo, one of the conspirators, implicated by forces he does not yet comprehend, assumes his share of the burden of guilt.

No one can fail to appreciate the remarkable status the past is accorded in Pinter. The plays break down very quickly into studies of the effects a hitherto repressed past has on the supressors. The matchseller in A Slight Ache, Riley in The Room, Goldberg and McCann in The Birthday Party are personifications of repressed memory who return to confront the Edwards and the Roses and the Stanleys.

The past is a "foreign place" because memory subtly adjusts the past it holds. In the crucible of memory, memory and desire join

to create symbolic patterns; the merely photographic is transmogrified by the complex impulses and appetites that screen memory. Details are either dropped from the picture or, if they are included, are exaggerated into new proportions (in psychoanalysis, childhood memories are called 'screen memories' "which may seem trivial but can be treated as dreams, interpretation of their manifest content revealing a significant latent content").[7]

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Chronology is rarely a crucial concern in the criticism that Pinter's work has generated in the last twenty years or so. Perhaps because of the sometimes irritating ambiguities which pervade his plays critics have felt free to use the whole body of his work as a developing source of associations for the play in question: the plays serve admirably as rubrics for one another. Chronology will not be a concern here, for while it is arguable that Pinter's focus has shifted or evolved in the last twenty years, I am convinced that the key to Pinter's art throughout lies with a nexus of themes that arises out of his preoccupation with triangular relationships. One need only look at the poetry Pinter wrote before The Room for proof of the above.

In 1949, at the age of nineteen, Pinter wrote a poem entitled, "Kullus".[8] The earliest poem published in Alan Clodd's collection of Pinter's poetry, the poem describes the arrival of a man named Kullus into the confines of a room occupied by a lone man. "I am not alone", warns Kullus, the narrator, and he invites a shawled girl into the room. In the room there is a lamp and a fire in the grate. The curtains of

the room are drawn during the day and opened at night. Reading like a script for a play or film, much of the poem's effectiveness lies in the emerging ambiguity over the identity of who is speaking any given line. This confusion is complicated by confusion over just who lives in the room all three share: is Kullus or the narrator the original occupant? In the opening, the narrator invites Kullus in to warm himself by the fire and then retires to his stool. Without question we are intended to assume that the room is the narrator's. However, in part II, the girl that Kullus brought with him asks the narrator to move into the room:

> --Why don't you move in here?
> she asked.
> --Is it possible?
> --Can you move in here?
> said the girl.
> --But how could I?

In this early poem by the nineteen-year-old Harold Pinter, the germ of his drama is contained and already active. No Man's Land, written twenty-five years later, takes as its setting a room fitted with windows lidded by heavy curtains to shut out the light of day. But the similarities between the very early and most recent work are far more profound than matters of staging. The intruder this time is named Spooner and he arrives as the most recent of a long line of intruders who have attempted to insinuate themselves into an equally long series of rooms. Twenty-odd plays, seven film scripts and a number of revue sketches later, the struggle against the usurper continues. Seventeen years after the writing of the adolescent poem, the poet used the themes of "Kullus" as the explicit source of a fully developed television (and later, stage) play, The Basement.

In Pinter, perhaps more than in any playwright of commensurate stature, the circle of dramatic focus is surprisingly narrow. William Faulkner's observation that an author writes the same book for all of his creative life is peculiarly apt when applied to the work of Harold Pinter. This is not, however, an indictment of Pinter, or evidence of his limitations as a poet. We must take care not to confuse concentration with limitation; the above, rather, is a tribute to Pinter who continues to discover new vantages from which to approach the old themes, the phantoms that persistently dwell at the heart of his creative universe. Most often these phantoms are discovered in groups of three.

Pinter's drama is fraught with a special tension and menace. Behind the illuminated facades of the proscenium stage there are forces determining the patterns of movement, language and silence which remain stubbornly offstage, in the darkness beyond the wings. All of the characters from all of the plays hail from this same ill-defined, portentous gloom; they tend to speak the same language, share the same appetites, the same ailments, the same histories. Pinter's audience is constrained to look to that gloom for the matter that lends his characters substance. It is a commonplace of criticism that literary characters depend to a degree upon psychological truth: I contend that in Pinter, characters depend to an almost absolute degree on an immanent psychological framework that the plays, in the attitudes and arrangements of characters, represent. In other words, the plays depict a state of mind, a consistent psychological attitude or complex of attitudes that is held together, not by ulterior intellectual assessments,

but by internal psychological imperatives an audience is more likely to intuit than consciously accept. The dynamics of those psychological imperatives will provide a focus for much of this paper's criticism.

Another way of formulating Arthur Ganz's "memory and desire" would depend on our recognition of the operation of psychoanalytic imperatives in the reciprocity of memory and desire. If desire is the agent which determines (or screens) memory, then the substance of memory is virtually the exclusive result of factors which describe desire. This, of course, applies to what Beckett terms the "highest sense . . . of rememoration":

> In extreme cases memory is so closely related to habit that its word takes flesh, and is not merely available in cases of urgency, but habitually enforced. Thus absence of mind is fortunately compatible with the active presence of our organs of articulation. I repeat that rememoration, in its highest sense, cannot be applied to these extracts of our anxiety. Strictly speaking, we can only remember what has been registered by our extreme inattention and stored in that ultimate and inaccessible dungeon of our being to which Habit does not possess the key, . . . because it contains none of the hideous and useful paraphernalia of war.[9]

It is into this 'ultimate dungeon' of our being that Pinter leads us; it is at this level of memory that desire resides. Desire is active during Beckett's "extreme inattention;" this is another way of saying, perhaps, that the conscious mechanisms of the mind are not engaged. Desire is, in fact, a somewhat nebulous term referring to the whole of a conscious and subconscious complex of expressed appetites. The term, as it will be applied in this context, connotes the latter, beyond the influence of habit. What Pinter has done in his drama, to again use Beckett's terms, is to deny the "organs of articulation" their usual

'inarticulation' and to provide the means for the denizens of that "inaccessible dungeon" to "take flesh." Pinter uses the shell of memory and banality but infuses it with the deepest of significances.

I should apologize for the method of this paper which presumes considerable familiarity with every one of Pinter's plays. Some may find the tendency to shift the focus suddenly and without warning from one play across a bridge of years and titles to another play irritating but, I stress again, it is one of the precepts of this paper that Pinter's plays are all elaborations on a basic theme.

CHAPTER I

HIS GUARDIAN THE THIEF OF HIS BLOOD

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Addressing themselves to the subject of literature and psychology, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in their important Theory of Literature, for all of their determination to enlarge the scope of criticism, register the prejudice of literary critics in general by asserting that psychology is a reductive rather than a suggestive system of analysis: "In the sense of a conscious and systematic theory of the mind and its workings, psychology is unnecessary to art and not in itself of artistic value."[1] This is a remarkable conclusion given the overwhelming body of evidence which confirms beyond doubt the existence of a relationship between the degree of neurosis in the artist and his need to create (W. H. Auden advised poets to remain as neurotic as they could endure). Messrs. Wellek and Warren admit the existence of a certain reciprocity between the gifted imagination and the disturbed psychology but, rather than welcome a system of standards which would account for the relationship between madness and art, they reject the influence of psychology outright. In fairness to Warren and Wellek, I should add that they conclude their monumental study with a caveat to those who would build walls around any particular critical enclave: "After all, we are only beginning to learn how to analyze a work of art in its integrity: we are still very clumsy in methods, and their basis in theory is constantly shifting."[2]

Walter Kerr is one among many who cite "oedipal" and "Freudian" strains in Pinter's work but remain content to merely bandy psychoanalytic nomenclature while grinding more pressing critical axes. In Pinter's case especially, psychoanalytic criticism cannot be so cavalierly put aside. In his article, "The Playwright as Existentialist", Kerr draws a rather curious distinction between Samuel Beckett (probably Pinter's most certain influence) and Pinter. Beginning with a definition of existentialism (existentialism posits that every man lives in a void, that man creates himself with every action), Kerr determines that Pinter, unlike Beckett, thrusts his characters forward into an existential void, a void without aetiological struts of any kind: " . . . the universe in which it [the Pinter play] exists is unstructured."[3] "The past and future" of objects in a Pinter play are "suppressed" with the result that they are not "absorbed . . . into a pattern that explains them away as mere tools of a narrative or as looming symbols of conceptual value."[4] Perhaps taking his cue from Pinter whose hostility to critics and the various critical readings that break down the symbolic matrix of any given play is well known, Mr. Kerr applauds Pinter's ability to create objects which absolutely resist attempts to read them as symbols: for Kerr, a teacup in Pinter is a teacup is a cup of tea. Mr. Kerr concludes that Pinter's "objects" steadfastly resist symbolic qualification. In the same breath the article cites the following exchange between James and Bill in The Collection (which takes place at the denouement of their skirmish with the fruit knives) as comic relief. Bill wants to conclude the contest and announces that he intends to put down his knife:

JAMES: Well, I'll pick it up.

(James does so and faces him with two knives.)

BILL: Now you've got two.
JAMES: I've got another in my hip pocket.

(Pause)

BILL: What do you do, swallow them?[5]

The obvious phallic associations Pinter is playing upon in the exchange are not commented upon by Kerr; to admit that Pinter, acutely sensitive to the associative value of words, dressed his comic relief with a symbolic layer wherein the homosexual tensions between the two men was being expressed, would no doubt critically undermine the existentialist thesis of the article. Kerr's article fails to convince because it declines to do more than scratch the surface of Pinter's world. The fact is that the void is held together by causal strings; the plays affect us not because they approximate and reflect the nameless dread of angst but because they reflect the very peculiar and cohesive order of a single complex of guilt and obsession. Mr. Kerr sees Pinter's art as moving towards the general when actually the reverse is true. I would agree with Kerr that Pinter works without conceptual "underpinnings". It does not necessarily follow that Pinter's art is incapable of revealing a pattern that has far more organic unity than conceptual pattern.

Pinter, responding to a critic's assessment of The Homecoming as essentially a question of homosexuality said, "It's about love and lack of love. The people are cruel to be sure. Still they aren't acting arbitrarily, but for very deep-seated reasons."[6] Walter Kerr's

article demonstrates the liabilities inherent in a critical approach that ignores psychoanalytic cause and effect in Pinter's plays, precisely what Pinter means by "very deep-seated reasons". Stripping the past and future from Pinter's world--what Pinter alludes to in "very deep-seated reasons"--would reduce Pinter to the relatively unsubtle world of Ionesco's The Bald Soprano.

How then are we to approach Pinter psychoanalytically? Andrew Brink in Loss and Symbolic Repair suggests that, "Poetry is seen to act as a retrieval system that calls back deepest feelings to order and to make sense of them, but poetic skills rest on more than psychodynamic factors."[7] Martin Price speaks of the simultaneous power of the art form both to exhibit a fear of a feeling and to provide a release vehicle for that feeling or complex of feelings. The key to this power, according to Price, is the process of shaping: "With the creation of a pattern, psychic complexities, which might overwhelm or engulf the artist, are harnessed and explored."[8]

However, it should be emphasized at the outset that the psychoanalytic method cannot account for more than a portion of Pinter's art. Freud himself argued against the reducing of art to psychological motive. The psychoanalytic method is only one of a series of keys capable of illuminating "the void". And while this paper will make serious use of psychoanalytic input, I intend to widen my approach to include more traditional means of analysis.

The aim of this thesis is to isolate the primary unconscious motivations that account for Pinter's more typical characters. In pursuing that aim, I hope to leave the ambiguity of the plays intact

and to refrain from formulating limiting, procrustean criteria. As Gabbard says of her psychologically-based study, "it does not rule out other interpretations, it merely adds to them."[9] And Kenneth Burke in "Psychology of Form" justly observes that, "psychoanalytic criticism in particular is too prone to define the essence of art in terms of the artist's weaknesses. It is rather the audience which dreams, while the artist oversees the conditions which determine this dream . . . This . . . is the real meaning of artistic felicity--an exaltation of the procedure . . . ."[10] Further, it should be clear that a psychoanalytic analysis of a work or works of art is not necessarily intended to reflect upon the psychology of the author. Psychoanalysis as an approach to literature is a controversial enough subject without further complicating the issue by inferring a psychoanalysis of the author. Gabbard says as much in the introduction to her "dream approach" to Pinter.

> It must be clearly understood, however that in approaching these plays as dreams, there is no attempt to psychoanalize Harold Pinter. Freud insists that the dreamer's cooperation is necessary to any accurate interpretation of the private symbolism of a dream.[11]

My method is governed, I hope, by the kind of caution Dr. Brink adopts in his book Loss and Symbolic Repair. Dr. Brink's book convinces partly as a result of its determination to apply cautiously psychodynamic theory, drawing together aspects of the poet's biography with recurrent themes manifest in the poetry. Loss and Symbolic Repair is a model of restrained scholarship which eschews the sensational or the disturbing reductionism that can so easily damage studies of this kind. He concludes rightly and inevitably that, "it is implausible to go on talking

about poetry as though it were strictly made from other antecedent poetry in the type and kinds supplied by the long tradition of English and Classical verse."[12]

Curiously, Pinter has demonstrated a singular antipathy towards psychology. Asked by Lawrence Bensky whether he was interested in psychology, Pinter delivered a succinct and unqualified, "No".[13] Given Pinter's appetite for philosophy and the delineation of abnormal states of mind in his plays, this reluctance to admit psychology into his sphere of interests is remarkable. Pinter's lack of sympathy for psychology is manifest literally in the plays themselves: Spooner in No Man's Land one suspects speaks for Pinter when he says of psychology, "Experience is a paltry thing. Everyone has it and will tell his tale of it. I leave experience to psychological interpreters, the wetdream world." Spooner, the latest of a long line of Pinter outsiders fixated on a broken, suggestive past, will, in the same breath that dismissed the denizens of the wetdream world, ironically insist that, "I am interested in where I am eternally present and active." While Spooner may insist upon a life in the present, the construct upon which the bulk of that present is played is held together by Spooner's and Hirst's determined and determining pasts. They pick at it like a scab or, to use an image Esslin borrowed from Pinter, a wound that is "open", "contained" and "peopled".

ii

The title of this chapter, "His guardian the thief of his blood", is taken from the poem "Afternoon", written by Pinter in 1957, the same year he wrote The Room and The Birthday Party. The poem touches upon a

number of the thematic and symbolic strains which will later inform the plays but because it is so seriously flawed as a poem, final considerations as to the theme of "Afternoon" would have to be teased with some violence out of the uneven fabric of the material. Rather than force meaning from the poem, we shall be content to provide a suggestive and not a conclusive resource of theme and symbol from which we might later, in considering more mature and controlled work, draw upon as a source of precedent. I have telescoped the analysis of the poem somewhat, reserving a detailed exegesis of related material for the central focus of this thesis, Dialogue for Three.

The figures that move through the disturbing fog of this poem prefigure the characters that will emerge in the later plays; the processes of artistic maturation will eventually discard the Grand guignol properties and abandon the conventionally grotesque arena of "Afternoon" in favour of the far more profound horror latent in the prosaic world of everyday rooms and everyday speech.

T. S. Eliot personified an atmosphere of psychic numbness as "a patient etherized upon a table." In "Afternoon", the doctors have arrived and performed the expected operation:

> Summer twisted from their grasp
> After the first fever.
> Daily from the stews
> They brought the men.
> And place a wooden peg
> Into the wound they had made,
> And left the surgery of skin
> To barbers and students.
>
> Some burrowed for their loss
> In the ironmonger's bin,
> Impatient to reclaim,
> Before the journey's start,
> Their articles of faith.

Some nosed about in the dirt,
Deaf to the smell of heat
And the men at the rubber pit,
Who scattered the parts of a goat
For their excitement and doubt.

One blind man they gave
A demented dog to sniff,
A bitch that had eaten the loot.
The dog, bared to his thought,
Became his mastiff at night,
His guardian and thief of his blood.[14]

A critic, commenting on Faulkner's involuted prose, referred to it as "a cordite bolus of suppressed reference".[15] The phrase could appropriately be applied to "Afternoon" with one slight modification: instead of "cordite" I would substitute "anthracite". In fact, the poem is so compressed that discernible veins of suppressed reference are extremely difficult to separate. Perhaps the chief fault of the poem lies with the apparently indiscriminate use of the pronoun "they" which renders the poem ambiguous almost to the point of unintelligibility. Who are the "they" of "Afternoon"? The question is critical to our understanding, not only of the poem, but as I intend to demonstrate, to the nature of the triangular pattern generally.

How important, too, is the sex of the dog who at the close of the poem serves as both a companion and a thief to its blind master? If the bitch is a symbol of the female, Pinter is providing us with a fairly explicit statement concerning his fears of castration and the inimical nature of sex in his imaginative universe. If on the other hand the bitch is either male or sexually undifferentiated--and the use of the word "bitch" in The Homecoming would tend to support the latter--then what is Pinter saying about the feminine role which usually describes at least one corner of his triangles?

Before undertaking a detailed examination of the poem, let me identify what I take to be the two central concerns of the poem. The first is the relationship between the persecutor and the victim. This concern with power colours all of Pinter's work; The Birthday Party's Goldberg versus Stanley, The Caretaker's Mick versus Davies, and No Man's Land's Foster and Briggs versus Spooner are typical dramatic exercises which explore the effects of power. As in The Homecoming, in the tension between Max and Lenny, the contest for authority is typically waged between an older father figure and younger man. Leaving aside the oedipal implications of these arrangements, the relationships cited above inevitably feature a dominant, tyrant figure mindlessly responding to an absent if immanent authority figure who through various means of psychological pressuring maintains power over a weaker, often effeminized figure. The weaker figure often questions the authority of the dominant figure--the nature of his world--and so ultimately undermines the latter with debilitating doubts. This is precisely what happens with Ben and Gus in The Dumb Waiter.

For Pinter, the struggle to dominate and to resist being dominated is at the epicentre of all relations between men, or between men and women. When men confront women on these terms, sexual aggression and doubt only complicate this basic concern with power and ascendancy. What we learn to watch for in Pinter, regardless of sex, is the corruption of the authority figure in the very exercise of his power.

The second feature the poem shares with mainstream Pinter is the sexual trauma which provides the frame of reference for the exercise of power discussed above. The predicament this poem describes is

certainly sexual and perforce is a comment on the nature of women and the role they can be expected to play in Pinter's world. With these two basic observations in mind, let us examine the poem in detail.

In the fourth line of the first stanza we are introduced to a "they" who bring the men from the "stews", or whorehouses, to suffer castration. The "summer", the time when the promises of spring--"the first fever"--reach fruition and maturity is denied them. The generalized, faceless persecutors rob the equally faceless victims of the sexual promise sounded in the "fever" of spring or adolescence. Pinter is using a commonplace of Western literature--that spring is the time of fecundity, of Venus' reign--ironically, as did Eliot with "April is the cruellest month". That the men are brought to punishment from whorehouses touches upon another preoccupation of the Western imagination: women as source of betrayal, inconstancy and disease. The whore is merely an amplified version of woman and in Pinter's world most women function as whores. But, it should be emphasized, Pinter is constrained to point out that whorishness is an attitude of survival more than it is of inclination (Ruth of The Homecoming is the archetype here). The original source of sin is usually male: women are whores because men refuse to see them as anything else. At any rate, the whorehouse, with its associations of arbitrary or 'mongered' sexual expression, is the gate through which the victims in "Afternoon" pass.

Notice the use of the words "twisted" and "grasp": both of these words have secondary meanings associated with mental or psychological equilibrium. Like the word "bent" which Pinter will feature in Silence,

"twisted" suggests a perverted perspective. Grasp, in the sense of an intellectual or intuitive grasp of a subject, supports the impression of a violated psychological perspective.

The words "summer", "fever" and "stews" all suggest heat. Images of heat and flame enjoy a remarkable frequency in Pinter's work and, as in line 2 of the third stanza, "Deaf to the smell of heat", usually connote sexual heat.

The last four lines of the first stanza describe the castration of the victims and the implementation of prosthetic phalluses, "wooden pegs". The lines, "And left the surgery of skin/ To barbers and students" suggest that the operation is more psychic than physical for "barbers and students" echoes the identification made in the first line of the poem, with the words "twisted" and "grasp", of a psychological source of trauma: barbers and students are concerned with matters relating to the head, both literally and figuratively.

The second stanza introduces the animal imagery the rest of the poem will feature. "The men" identified in the first stanza "burrow" for their lost sexuality. Curiously, the removal of sexual apparatus in the world of the poem turns men into animals. The norm in literature from Homer to Joyce is that unrestrained sexual expression is conventionally symbolized by animal imagery. In "Afternoon", the opposite seems true--castration, removal of the offending organ, transforms men into animals.

To burrow is also to dig a hole or shelter and to crawl into it which is precisely what the typical Pinter protagonist is inclined to do. Rose's flat in The Room, for instance, is the first of a series of such

shelters. But these men burrow in "the ironmonger's bin"; the shelter they seek lies, presumably, in the firmer, more reliably tumescent iron replacement for their wooden pegs. Pinter calls these lost phalluses, "their articles of faith" which suggests how profoundly the loss of potency is felt in Pinter's world.

From the second stanza to the poem's end, the blind lead the blind across a wasteland bereft of comfort or solace. The third stanza repeats the animal burrowing image with the opening, "Some nosed about in the dirt." The next line, "Deaf to the smell of heat", is an awkward synaesthetic crush meant to suggest the absolute failure of the senses to recover lost sexuality. The absence of smell picks up on the previous "nosed" and anticipates the function of the dog in the fourth stanza. The word "heat", in light of the dog soon to be introduced, is likely a reference to the period of aggravated sexual appetite in animals. The neutered men, their noses pressed into the dirt in mock copulation are at once reduced to the status of animals but incapable of responding on any kind of level to the presence of sex. In the next image, one of the more effective images in the poem, men at a rubber pit dismember a goat.

At this point it may seem that the light and dark duality which accounts for so much of Pinter's imagery is somewhat contradictory: if darkness is the forum of the animal where the instincts are the prevailing influence and light is the light of reason or of the soul, then why do characters like Edward in A Slight Ache or Hirst in No Man's Land--men who are committed to the light of the intellect and determined to suppress their darker instincts--seek out the comfort of curtained rooms

or the shade of scullieries? One would expect them to gravitate towards the lighted space and to abjure the shadows wherein their instincts might stir.

Monologue is probably the most lucid poetic statement Pinter has made on the duality of light and shade and we will comment upon the significances of the duality again in Chapter VI, in our discussion of Monologue, but to spare the reader unnecessary confusion in the interim, let me briefly suggest a reason for the blindness-shadow motif.

The reason that Edward and Hirst and the voice of "Daylight" are drawn towards shadow and inclined to blindness is the same reason that any tragic hero, Oedipus, for instance, is compelled ultimately to face the truth: repressed factors are never destroyed and they cannot be forever ignored. Rather, they tend to find alternate avenues of expression, usually unconscious. In Pinter's world, woman and sex are forbidding to the male and are challenged or repressed by the influence of light or reason. The avenues these repressed factors tend to express themselves in fall within a paradigm of shadows ranging from curtained rooms to blindness. The repressed aspect of their being--the shadow that provides the chiaroscuro, to use one of Landscape's metaphors--is manifested by displacement. The plays are demonstrations, however, that the displaced shadows are a contingency insufficient to the task of maintaining psychic balance or power. A true instinctual expression of lust or violence (usually in tandem), amplified by repression, always erupts to supercede the surrogate, displaced instinct of the artificially darkened sensibility.

In "Afternoon", it is only during the day that the dog remains a bitch to serve the man as something of a companion. The image of a blind man surrounded by daylight is an image of balance in Pinter's world. At night, however, when blindness is no longer a factor, no longer a viable defence, the dog is transformed into a terrifying mastiff. The word puns on the massive phallic potence the bitch assumes supported by the night and predisposed to destroy the impotent male. Night, the time of passion, is the time of terror for the wretches of "Afternoon".

It is appropriate that the eyes, the organs most closely associated with reason, should be the sense most likely to fail the Pinter protagonist. The world of shadow they suppressed will return to take its revenge. As in the case of Disson in Tea Party, whose repressed sexual longings are leaking through the porcelain veneer of his life, the eyes, the lights of the mind, are the first to register defeat:

> DISSON: Listen . . . I never said I couldn't see. You don't understand. Most of the time . . . my eyesight is excellent. It always has been. But . . . it's become . . . erratic. Sometimes, quite suddenly, very occasionally, something happens . . . something . . . goes wrong . . . with my eyes. (p. 120)

The syntax of the sentence in the third stanza concerning the men and the scattered goat leaves it unclear whether it is the castrated victim or the dominant authority figures who dismember the goat. The effect is to blur any distinctions the reader may have presumed existed between victim and victimizer. As indicated above, Pinter repeatedly describes the debasement of the persecutor. The "excitement and doubt" seems to include everyone in the world of the poem, regardless of attitude.

And what can Pinter be suggesting about the need for sex and the search for sexual expression when that search features an act of arbitrary and remarkable cruelty? Violence is made a handmaiden to consummation; a violent act destroyed their sexuality and a violent act is forwarded as a potential means of restoring it. The violent act is never a restorative act in Pinter. Just as it fails in "Afternoon" to restore sexuality or potency, it will fail in the plays. But nevertheless, the violent and usually sexual act is a feature of the search for selfhood the Pinter protagonist undertakes. The best example from the plays to illustrate the importance of this act, in consideration of the fragmentation or dismemberment motif "Afternoon" employs, is a speech Gus makes in The Dumb Waiter. The following is virtually the only explicit reference to women made in the play:

> GUS: I was just thinking about that girl,
> that's all.
> (Gus sits on his bed.)
> She wasn't much to look at, I know,
> but still. It was a mess though, wasn't
> it? What a mess. Honest, I can't
> remember a mess like that one. They
> don't seem to hold together like men,
> women. A looser texture, like. Didn't
> she spread, eh? She didn't half spread. (pp. 52-53)

Lenny's sexual anecdotes to Ruth in The Homecoming and Bert's murder of Riley in The Room following the verbal/sexual express of the van ride are two more examples. It is a dynamic we will observe again in our discussion of "Dialogue".

The image of the dismembered goat is also suggestive of the kind of sacrifice in which the entrails of the sacrificed animal are searched for signs of divine intention. Once again the religious aspect

of the quest in "Afternoon", implicit in the phrase "articles of faith", is sounded. We are told that the priests who oversee this rite have only their "doubt" confirmed.

This religious aspect of the search for selfhood is less of a concern in each succeeding Pinter script and is gradually refined altogether from the theatre of his concerns. But at this stage, religion has yet to be eliminated as a viable option, either in the *identification* with the source of the problem or as a source of some absolution. As Pinter's work matures, the quasi-rabbinic Goldberg and defrocked McCann of The Birthday Party for instance, will reappear as they do in the persons of Foster and Briggs of No Man's Land without the baggage of religious association. No doubt religion is featured in the tangle of frustration and despair "Afternoon" describes, but I believe we can safely assume that an enquiry into the religious aspects of the malaise the poem depicts will yield us very little.

The phrase "excitement and doubt" will be useful in our discussion of the impotence which is epidemic among Pinter males. Excitement and doubt perfectly describes the order of experience for the impotent male: impotent males are capable of sexual arousal or excitement but are ultimately prevented, by crippling doubts, from satisfying that excitement. Following this invocation of "excitement and doubt" we are introduced, in the fourth stanza, to the blind man; blindness, for Pinter, is the physical expression of the psychic disorder of impotence. Rarely in Pinter is impotence registered without the concomitant failure of the eyes. Indeed, this identification between the physical and the psychical disorder is so complete in Pinter that metaphors of seeing--

in either the figurative or literal sense--become extremely complex statements whose metaphysical veneer tends to thicken the more profoundly the speaker feels his impotence. Teddy, the philosopher of The Homecoming, is an expression of this axiom: the more impotent the male, the more he tends to intellectualize. This type of male tends to avoid the light of day, as does Edward in A Slight Ache. The dark forces of his being, his animal instincts, have been subverted to such an extent that the artificial "darkness" of curtained rooms and burrows of any kind are sought for their value as approximations of that darkness they cannot allow themselves to express. Blindness is the ultimate expression of this tendency so often featured in Pinter towards impotence and withdrawal.

At this point, I would like to introduce a brief companion poem entitled "Daylight" into the discussion. The poem precedes "Afternoon" in the anthology and will serve as an effective rubric on a number of symbols already discussed.

Daylight

I have thrown handfulls of petals on your breasts.
Scarred by this daylight you lie petalstruck.
So your skin imitates the flush, your head
Turning all ways, bearing a havoc of flowers over you.

Now I bring you from dark into daytime,
Laying petal on petal.[16]

Like "Afternoon", the poem addresses itself to the problem of dealing with a sexual object (in this case, at least, certainly a woman) who betrays. The woman in the poem has a head that turns "all ways", denoting deceit, and has skin that refuses to register a sexual flush. The inviolability and remoteness of the woman confronted by the studied

seduction of the narrator is so complete that the only sexual response the man is able to produce in her only "imitates" the real thing; it is, in fact, a sexual flush composed of flower petals--a blush of his own manufacture. The poem presents women as dark creatures who must be "scarred", "struck" and brought to "havoc" in the act of knowing them. The word "petalstruck" has precisely the same tone of violence and aggression as the word "dumbstruck" which occurs in "Dialogue". Like the woman in The Dumb Waiter and the goat of "Afternoon" the flowers are dismembered, fragmented by the sexual interest of the male.

I will not dwell too long on this fascinating poem but notice that the act of love tacitly described in the poem has as much the air of a funeral bier as a love bower about it; the body is as much attacked or smothered or buried as caressed. Once again we are confronted with the conflation of violence and sexuality, eros and thanatos. The bitch that is given the blind man in "Afternoon" is very much a part of this especially feminine complex of betrayal, darkness and violence that follows the initiation of the sexual in Pinter.

The dog is given to the blind man "to sniff" meaning either the dog is expected to sniff for the blind man the way a seeing-eye dog sees, or that the blind man is expected to sniff the dog, the usual manner in which animals approach one another sexually. This is one instance where the ambiguities of "Afternoon" succeed, for either or both alternatives are relevant. Further, the dog is "demented", which completes the associations of insanity in the poem, and a "bitch". Bitch is an explicit identification of the dog as female. The "they" of the poem who initiated the hellish quest complete the blind man's sexual

humiliation by providing him with a corrupt version of the real thing, a female dog. This is the same creature who "had eaten the loot", who thereby actively participated in the ritual of castration and who now, quite literally, possesses the phallus. Thus we have the impotent male and the avenging phallic woman; we need only look as far as A Slight Ache for a formal dramatic rendering of the miniature of psychological attitudes arranged in "Afternoon". Like "Daylight", "Afternoon" is saying that the female wrapped in the protective, buffering sheath of petals (symbols, intellectual distillations, "notwoman") is likely to rob you of your manhood is she is allowed to emerge, naked. Otherwise, why the necessity of the insulating crust of "petal on petal"? The dog in "Afternoon" is essentially akin to the woman in "Daylight", rampant but trivialized. The bitch, like the woman, is inconstant: by night she steals the blood she guards during the day. This vampire aspect focuses the vague fears of "Daylight" in which the man uses daylight to overcome the woman (vampires are destroyed by daylight).

Obviously "Afternoon" is an attempt to come to symbolic terms with deep sexual fears. The surface of the poem, like the petals on the woman in "Daylight", serves the simultaneous function of both describing and concealing the form beneath, the latent content of the poem. Unfortunately, "Afternoon" conceals rather more than a successful poem should.

In the poem men and women are both discredited by instincts the poet identifies as animalistic. Animal imagery in general and the dog image in particular are very much a part of Pinter's symbolic cosmology, always representing the presence or expression of sexual appetite. But

it is the tendency to view women as the animals or as the catalysts that will release the animal in man thus rendering him liable to disaster that most interests us here. "She'll turn us into animals", warns Max of Ruth in The Homecoming. Max's prophecy proves correct and the animal latent in the men is released by Ruth, but though they may feel their lives are impoverished with the woman rampant in their home, we suspect that their lives are nonetheless enriched by the experience.

There is one ambiguous phrase in "Afternoon" which expresses the ambivalence men feel for women--"bared to his thought". Like much of Pinter's symbolism, the line can be interpreted in any number of ways. It might mean that the dog has bared its teeth, demonstrated its primitive hostility to the man's power (or preoccupation) with ratiocination. "Bared" could also mean revealed, that the man's mind has penetrated the dog-woman's concealments and percieved its dual nature. Or finally and most appropriately, bared could syntactically connote that the dog is the exclusive product of the man's imagination. The deliberate ambiguity of the phrase is itself indicative of an unresolved conflict. Yet all three meanings are consistent with the essential meaning of the poem: the dog is hostile to the man's mind and in the man's mind.

The poem is characteristic of Pinter not only because it manifests the preoccupations that provide the themes for later work but because it relies so heavily on considerable displacement, condensation and splitting to carry a concealed charge of meaning. These terms will provide an important part of the critical vocabulary of this thesis and should be defined at the outset.

Displacement in dream analysis refers to the defence mechanism by which cathexis (energy) is transferred from one mental image to another: "Displacement is . . . responsible for the fact that in dreams . . . one image can symbolize another."[17] The "demented dog" in "Afternoon", because it is a bitch, is very likely a displacement of a woman or women in general. The dog in "Afternoon" is at once a guardian and a thief; a pathetic demented dog who serves as a guide by day is transformed at night into a mastiff, a menacing and even deadly succubus. In the poet's imagination, the woman is displaced and the resulting dog image is then subject in that same imagination to splitting. Splitting is another psychoanalytic term referring to a defence mechanism "by which an object is divided into two typically antithetical parts, one object being experienced as good and the other as bad."[18] In the poem, through the mechanism of splitting, the poet can at once identify with the companionable dog and damn it for its part in his predicament. Condensation is another important term defined here for later reference: "The process by which two or more images combine to form a composite image which is invested with meaning and energy from both."[19]

The poem is compromised as a work of art because too much of the meaning behind the symbols remains obscure. Can we finally say what Pinter meant by "the rubber pit", for instance? One can adduce a connection between the burrowing noses in the dirt, the ironmonger's bin and the rubber pit--they are all images of penetration, descriptions of orifices and holes--but the rubber pit and the ironmonger's bin remain, as poetic images, too idiosynacratic. The poem fails to provide an adequate frame of reference; details have been disgorged whole from an

inverted symbolic constellation and have not been transmuted by the peculiar processes that make art into true symbols. This tendency of Pinter's--to mine images from the most personal and idiosyncratic depths--is more or less evident in all of his plays. The Dwarfs, a good example, remains a favourite of Pinter's in spite of its critical failure (W. A. Darlington expressed typical frustration with the play calling it, "pintation at its most pinticular").

CHAPTER II

THE AGENT FOR ANOTHER POWER

In the sketch Dialogue for Three, written early in 1959, two men and one woman speak. The 2nd MAN has only one line (evidently lifted intact from the unpublished play, The Hothouse[1]), "The snow has turned to slush." The 1st MAN and the WOMAN, except for an exchange concerning the relative nature of the woman's femininity, tell apparently unrelated anecdotes. The 1st MAN tells two anecdotes, again, on the surface apparently unrelated to each other or to the woman's anecdote. In the course of these brief, imploded offerings, the reader familiar with the whole of Pinter's work will recognize, in each image, fragments of imagery and shards of detail which appear in virtually every play. The sketch provides convincing evidence that the constellation of imagery and symbol--arranged and fixed by discernible psychodynamic processes--remains the same from The Room through to No Man's Land. This is not to say that Pinter has not grown as an artist; this is only to demonstrate that Pinter's drama, as evidenced by the repeated patterns of imagery, emanates from a common source. The nature of this common source can be established by a careful exegesis of "Dialogue". James Hollis is one of those who despairs of ever accounting for the complexities of Pinter's art. According to Hollis, his plays, "resist all allegory. Pinter has left too many loopholes for the one-to-one identification allegory demands."[2] Martin Esslin, however, has more

confidence in Pinter: "As in all poetic imagery, there is a deep and organic connection between the multiple planes on which the layers of ambiguity operate."[3] If Esslin is correct in his confidence that a deep and organic connection is active in Pinter's drama, we must be careful not to accept the 'dream' at face value, but delve beneath the layers of ambiguity for the key.

"Dialogue" contains no indications as to staging. As the title suggests, Pinter's specifications are limited to precisely that: a dialogue for three voices. Radio would prove the most likely medium except for the lone script direction which calls for the 1st MAN to address the final speech of the play to the 2nd MAN, which would be difficult to represent on radio. Were the play staged, the bare, expressionistic set of Silence, another dialogue for three, would prove the most appropriate physical setting.

The play opens with the following speech:

> 1st MAN: Did I ever tell you about the woman in the blue dress? I met her in Casablanca. She was a spy. A spy in a blue dress. That woman was an agent for another power. She was tattooed on her belly with a pelican. Her belly was covered with a pelican. She could make that pelican waddle across the room to you. On all fours, sideways, feet first, arseupwards, any way you like. Her control was superhuman. Only a woman could possess it. Under her blue dress she wore a shimmy. And under her shimmy she wore a pelican.

Certainly with the mention of Casablanca, the listener cannot help but make an association with the movie of the same name. Casablanca is a city that has a place in the common imagination as a centre of intrigue and romance. The unnamed woman the man met in Casablanca was a spy;

the movie involved a female spy, played by Ingrid Bergman. Pinter uses the device of a film in Old Times, and, as in this case, the film serves as an integral metaphor for the play. In Old Times, Deeley makes it clear that he identifies with Robert Newton in the film, "Odd Man Out". Is the man in "Dialogue" imagining himself as Humphrey Bogart, the super-masculine figure who loves easily and loves well? Pinter perforce most often satisfies our need to know and his own need to tell[4] on a subconscious level through symbols which are determined by the latent forces of the play. Esslin says that Pinter's language is predicated on the premise that "people interact not so much logically as emotionally through language."[5]

Of language, Pinter himself has said that, "the speech we hear is an indication of what we don't hear. It's a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly and anguished or mocking smokescreen which keeps the other in its true place."[6] In The Homecoming, Ruth possesses the power to penetrate the "smokescreen" Lenny manufactures to cover his vulnerability. Spooner, in No Man's Land (perhaps more than any of Pinter's plays an amalgam of what has gone before) makes explicit what has always been implicit in Pinter's characters' relationships:

> Yes, I was about to say, you see, that there are some people who appear to be strong, whose idea of what strength consists of is persuasive, but who inhabit the idea and not the fact. What they possess is not strength but expertise. They have nurtured and maintained what is in fact a calculated posture. Half the time it works. It takes a man of intelligence, of perception to stick a needle through that posture and discern the essential flabbiness of the stance. (p. 16)

With the mention of the tattooed belly, the illusory images of Bogart and Bergman are broken but not dispelled. Describing the tattoo, the man verbally peels off the layers of clothing, past the blue dress, past the shimmy, to reveal an absurd, waddling pelican. Instead of genitalia or breasts or flesh of any kind, the secret disclosed under the woman's clothes is the image of an obscenely accomodating animal. Yet the bird, like the neglected sexual apparatus of the female, is not incapable of fascinating: "She could make that pelican waddle . . . on all fours, sideways, feet first, arseupwards, any way you like." And then, securing the association with female sexual apparatus, he concludes, "Only a woman could possess it." There is a displacement of the woman into the pelican in his characterization of the two-legged pelican assuming a position on all fours, the position a woman might assume during intercourse or a prostitute or stripper might assume so as to display her genitalia.

Arthur Ganz says of Pinter's language that, "Pinter focuses almost our entire attention on what is not said, what cannot be said, though it is apparent in the situation."[7] Pinter's characteristic reliance on tautology or repetition to define what is not being said is typical of his use of symbols in general (and after all, words are a lower order of symbols).

Martin Esslin describes the product of Pinter's semantic and syntactic gambits as "a type of associative structure, in which several basic thought . . . intermingle in ever-recurring variations."[8] "Dialogue" as a whole forms an especially concentrated "associative

structure". The pelican tattoo, for instance, is a resonating, reflexive symbol whose symbolic value is determined by the expanding frame of reference the play provides.

The audience will not, of course, be able to digest the unusual amount of information being transmitted by the language in Pinter's plays during the first sitting. But at whatever level the information is absorbed and to whatever degree, the certain effect on the audience has to be one of suspense. Pinter, like a good detective novelist, is careful to provide his audience with the information they will need to solve the mystery evolving before them. But not on the conscious level, unless that audience was acutely sensitive and uniquely susceptible.[9]

The two 'symbols', the pelican and the tattoo, conjoin to create an extremely dense and complex symbol which functions simultaneously at a number of levels in the play. For example, the colour of the bird, grey-white, is represented several times in the play: the snow; the white trunks. Each has to be accounted for before the symbolic valence of the individual representations of the colour white can be commented upon with any degree of assurance. Take the word, tattoo: on one level we are reminded that a tattoo is an artificial configuration applied to the flesh of the woman--it does not belong there. This is its immediate meaning and one that can be grasped independent of the context in which it appears. But the 'meaning' of the word has yet to be determined. We associate tattoos with sailors who emblazon their chests, forearms and biceps with them as tokens of their masculinity or, with circus performers who exhibit their tattoos beside the freaks in a sideshow.

The tattoo as emblem of masculinity becomes important when we listen to the exchange between the 1st MAN and the WOMAN over the relative value of the woman's femininity: the WOMAN has concealed a masculine emblem under her dress. The tattoo we associate with circus freaks assumes importance as we listen to the description of the performing pelican's unique capacity to please at the expense of its dignity. The tattoo is located on the woman's belly and not on the usual forearm, bicep or chest and the circus association is further established.

Perhaps it is only when the sketch concludes that the original significance of the tattoo--an artificially assumed device--takes on an added significance in light of the 1st MAN's evident fear of the WOMAN and his need to project that fear onto the screen of her belly.

The pelican functions at even more levels than the tattoo. Before he completely displaces the WOMAN for the pelican, he describes the pelican tattoo in a peculiar way: "Her belly was covered by a pelican". The tattoo-woman-pelican condensation is thus further condensed with another associated image--Leda and the swan. Leda is always depicted with the swan (another white water bird) covering her belly in the copulatory act. The swan in the myth is the disguised sybaritic Zeus who habitually took the form of an animal during his seductions. The swan is therefore a phallic symbol, the beak of the bird serving as a displaced phallus. The 1st MAN, however, displaces the phallic potential of the pelican-swan onto the WOMAN--"Only a woman could possess it." Like the "bitch that swallowed the loot" in "Afternoon", the creature has assumed the phallic power of the male.

She is at once Leda and the swan--"an agent for another power". Like the dog in "Afternoon", the pelican has two contrary and exclusive aspects: the pelican is also significant for its enormous throat. The dream, therefore, grotesquely characterizes the woman as both phallic and, with a vast throat capable of swallowing the phallic fish, as vaginal. Closed, the ambivalent beak is phallic, open it threatens engulfment. This is precisely what men so often fear about women in Pinter: the woman in the full blossom of her sexuality (see Flora, Ruth, etc.) is liable to use that rampant sexuality to dominate and control men. Lenny's confrontation with Ruth in The Homecoming demonstrates the tremendous power the sexually aggressive or phallic woman has over the male. Lenny attempts to disguise his fear of Ruth by inventing a couple of anecdotes in which he demonstrates his power over women. Ruth, whom we suspect is a veteran in coping with such pyrotechnical flourishes of potency, easily punctures Lenny's offensive posture and puts him on the defensive. Ruth's counter-offensive hinges on the word "take", which is given a sexual connotation:

> LENNY: Just give me the glass.
> RUTH: No.
>
> (Pause)
>
> LENNY: I'll take it, then.
> RUTH: If you take the glass . . . I'll take you.
>
> (Pause)
>
> LENNY: How about me taking the glass without you taking me?
> RUTH: Why don't I just take you? (p. 34)

As the man says of the pelican woman in "Dialogue", "Her control was superhuman."

At this point in the play, the information transmitted by the 1st MAN is virtually inert--its relevance is limited. As in Silence and Rumsey's opening speech concerning the grey girl, the WOMAN sharing the stage has been tacitly involved in woman-spy intrigue by implication but she has yet to respond; the bizarre images of the opening speech hang suspended in the air, waiting to be tied to a reality shared by the three on stage. The 2nd MAN, when he speaks, says little to indicate how we, as the audience, are expected to react to the unusual content of the speech. At first blush, his brief response--"The snow has turned to slush."--might indicate that he either has not been listening or that he has elected to ignore the caprice of his companion and to restore the conversation to a more conventional level.

He comments, as so many of us comment when at a loss for something better to say, on the weather. He remarks on the effect that heat has had on a colder element, snow; the snow pure and cold and silent, has become confused, dirty, watery slush. That is the most we can immediately infer from this single line. However, at this point in the play two men have spoken: two image hordes have become involved in a reflexive relationship. The speech of one cannot help but colour or affect the speech of the other. If we compare the two 'speeches' carefully, some curious coincidences begin to emerge.

The 1st MAN spoke of a pelican, a grey-white water bird indigenous to warm regions of the world. Casablanca (which incidentally featured white suits and white interiors) is located in a tropical locale. The 1st MAN's speech allusively described a woman whose unusual sexual abilities were represented by an elastic tattoo concealed under her

costume. The tattoo connotes a debased woman and the speech makes it clear she is degraded by the heat of sexuality. The 2nd MAN's speech similarly describes the debilitating effect of heat on an element, which, like woman, lends itself to idealization; the snow breaks down into common slush just as the image of the woman breaks down into a 'dirty' joke.

The 1st MAN, alert to the threat the 2nd MAN presents, replies with a non sequitur, "The temperature must have dropped." Obviously for the snow to have turned to slush the temperature would have to rise and not drop. On the most immediate level, it is apparent that the 1st MAN and the 2nd MAN are having difficulty communicating. Responding to the challenge the 2nd MAN adduced, the 1st MAN moves into his frame of reference--the weather--and all but contradicts him. Further, the reference to the drop in temperature, bereft of the associations ice and cold have in Pinter, provides us with a clue as to the tension that now exists between these two men. The 'chill' is broken by the WOMAN who completes the standard triangle.

At least part of the function of the 2nd MAN in the sketch is to provide the WOMAN and the audience a basis for comparison in judging the character of the 1st MAN. We listen as the 2nd MAN cryptically and economically translates the significance of the 1st MAN's speech into his own symbolic terms. Keying in on the destructive effect of warmth, the 2nd MAN prepares us for the disturbing exchange between the 1st MAN and the WOMAN who have, evidently, shared a kind of warmth at one time. Their relationship emerges as an object lesson on the potentially unpleasant effects of that warmth.

The 2nd MAN then lapses into the silence which in Pinter is an attitude of strength. In Monologue, the narrator who, like one of Beckett's characters, cannot help speaking and rephrasing his past, observes that, "It's a fact of life. The ones that keep silent are the best off." The 2nd MAN, in his taciturn reserve, represents an alternative to 1st MAN in his tendency to verbalize, to regress in fantasy. The comment on the weather is restrained, impersonal and relevant to the present.

Yet, if the two men do represent alternative male responses to experience, neither is accorded any real sympathy in the sketch: the 1st MAN's shortcomings are only too apparent and the 2nd MAN is no more than an outline of frozen albeit formidable restraint.

The dialogue between the 1st MAN and the WOMAN which follows centres around the question of her femininity:

WOMAN: Sometimes I think I'm not feminine enough for you.
1st MAN: You are.
WOMAN: Or do you think I should be more feminine?
1st MAN: No.
WOMAN: Perhaps I should be more masculine.
1st MAN: Certainly not.
WOMAN: You think I'm too feminine?
1st MAN: No.

Once again we see the familiar Pinter tautology, this time on the word "feminine". Femininity is a relative term, a function more of attitude than biology. Her insistence on the word suggests that, in Spooner's phrase, she is interested in the status of "a calculated posture". Her concern over the impression she is making as a representative of her sex reminds us of the 1st MAN's opening speech in which he insinuated an affiliation with an ideal of masculinity, Humphrey Bogart. The

1st MAN's abridged responses to her redundant appeal for validation implicates him in her confusion: he is unable to answer in such a way that she would feel sexually validated. Her distress, whatever its source, isn't resolved by the exchange. Further, she is placed in an attitude of subservience and supplication which foreshadows the phantasy of domination she will describe in her dream. This dream is the most difficult in the sketch for reasons which will soon be made clear.

CHAPTER III

THE SPIDER, THE BEACON AND THE WEB

The WOMAN offers a dream-anecdote of her own in which a number of familiar Pinter motifs are introduced. Like the 1st MAN, the WOMAN will rely upon the power of her imagination to affect the connection with the man her earlier questions failed to achieve. She asks the man to "remember", to return with her and under her auspices to a tableau fixed in a past supposedly shared by both. Like Deeley and Anna in Old Times, the WOMAN understands that memories have a power which transcends truth: "These are the things I remember", Anna warns Deeley, "which may never have happened but I recall them so they take place." (pp. 31-32) As in Landscape, Silence and Night--and indeed, all of Pinter's plays--action hinges around just such a return to a pivotal, psychic locus which, in Arthur Ganz's words, mixes "memory and desire".

The woman's dream is far more difficult to analyze than the man's dream of the pelican which is, by comparison, relatively straightforward. Its degree of complication arises out of a fundamental observation which might easily be overlooked: Pinter, a lone male sensibility, is ultimately responsible for the typology of both the 1st MAN's and the WOMAN's dream. The fabric of the woman's dreams is axiomatically the result of a male projection intended to approximate a female perspective. The complexities which result are as manifold as those produced when a mirror is placed in front of another mirror: the dream simply cannot be analyzed as an independent phantasy.

This masculine frame of reference is manifest in the structure of "Dialogue": the 1st MAN's speeches enclose the action of the play; at the very centre of the play the WOMAN speaks and her meaning depends absolutely upon the context--the symbolic framework--the 1st MAN provides. Very simply stated, the woman's attitudes are finally a male's assumptions of what her attitudes might be: her attitudes are absolutely conditioned by his attitudes.

At its most pellucid, the WOMAN's dream is a fantasy of male domination. The woman looks into the eye of man and finds herself wanting. The man ascends into the light and magnitude of the moon while the woman is petrified, blackened and diminished to the size and substance of a spider. The agent that affects this radical distinction in attitude is amplified sexual desire. But this primary attempt at interpretation fails to satisfy. Pinter is too much the poet to allow a single image or word to interrupt the silence unless charged with a peculiar relevance. This is especially true in the case of "Dialogue". A valid interpretation of the latent content of this dream must therefore account for the whole crust of imagery and symbolism that make up the manifest content of this distilled rendering of the psychological factors involved in the relationship between the Pinter male and female.

The WOMAN's dream allows us the opportunity to view the psychic imbroglio from the vantage of the bitch in "Afternoon", the woman beneath the petals in "Daylight" and the tattooed spy of the first dream. According to the female pattern of appetite and inclination circumscribed by the masculine perspective in the above instances, we anticipate an expression from the woman of the kind of negative cathexis that obliged

the men in the examples cited above to behave in the manner they do. In all three instances the female is imbued with an inimical power of tremendous proportions; in each case the male attempts to defend himself by symbolizing the female as an animal. According to 'classical' psychoanalytic theory, "only what is repressed is symbolized; only what is repressed needs to be symbolized".[1] What this means in Pinter's use of the female animal symbol is that the repressed animalistic tendencies of the male are displaced onto the female. Unfortunately divested of what he identifies as the animal portion of his being, he is rendered essentially impotent, finally incapable of defending himself against the brute inclinations projected onto the female. Anguished "Vigilance", as Monologue posits, becomes the "watchword".

One of the a priori factors informing this breakdown of the WOMAN's dream is that the WOMAN's independence as a character is limited in a peculiar way. Pinter makes it clear (in some plays moreso than in others) that the characters that orbit the central figure are merely satellites or fragments of that central intelligence. The uniquely cohesive triangles of his plays are separated from external realities by a prophylactic membrane.

Len in The Dwarfs and the narrator in Monologue both refer to curtains and partitions behind which the triangles are concealed. Len accuses Mark and Pete of "standing behind the curtains together . . . you're both still standing behind my curtains, moving the curtains in my room." (p. 112) The narrator of Monologue imagines the black couple that were his friends in a sexual embrace, "behind the partition". The partitions and curtains are demarcations not unlike the male sphere

of reference in "Dialogue"--they do not represent hindrances to keep Len or the narrator in Monologue separated from the other two corners of the triangle so much as they serve to prevent the other two corners from escaping. Commentators have often described Hamm's room in Beckett's Endgame as the inside of a skull; the same is true of the rooms in Pinter in which the triangles gather--they are sealed compartments of the mind.

It is arguable that the two males and female of "Dialogue" correspond to psychological components of a split ego and the id, respectively. The burst of light can then be seen as the defensive hypertrophy of the ego. The terms id and ego are useful in our discussion because they describe an antithesis which parallels exactly Pinter's use of white and black symbols: "The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id which contains the passions."[2] If we apply this terminology to the issues of light and dark already discussed we could say that what the men in "Daylight", "Afternoon" and "Dialogue" confront in women is the shadow of their own displaced id. According to Freud, who coined the term (translated from his "das En") the id is "the dark, inaccessible part of our personality . . . chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations."[3] In the first dream, as in "Daylight" or "Afternoon", we have listened to the fear and trembling of an ego threatened by the chaos of the id. In "Daylight", the narrative voice is more successful than the blind man in "Afternoon" because he has more light at his disposal: "Afternoon", on the other hand, augurs the intrusion of night and influence of the devouring id.

In the woman's dream in "Dialogue" we are given an opportunity to hear the id's side of the argument. Yet if we examine the dream in detail it becomes evident the light-masculine-ego imperative that

brackets the speech is demonstrably incapable of allowing the dark-feminine-id aspect a fair hearing. The woman only manages to arrange a symbolic constellation very nearly identical to that observed in "Daylight", "Afternoon" and "Dialogue" wherein the woman assumes the role of offending, offensive party. And yet permeating the dream are the beginnings of the sensibility that will eventually create a Ruth, the fully realized and wholly sympathetic descendant of the woman in "Dialogue". Because two contradictory impulses are registered in her dream, to minimize confusion in the exegesis of the most confusing of the dreams, the impulses will be analyzed independently. What we are attempting to do is to isolate the process by which the bitch is transformed into the mastiff, the guardian into the thief. We will begin by considering the WOMAN in her role as thief.

ii

As in Night, the recollection concerns "the first time" the two lovers met. And as in so many of Pinter's plays the scene is set near a body of water.

> If I didn't love you so much it wouldn't matter. Do you remember the first time we met? All those people? And the bonfire? And the waves? And the spray? And the mist? And the moon? Everyone dancing and somersaulting and laughing? And you--standing silent, staring at a sandcastle in your sheer white trunks. The moon was behind you, in front of you, all over you, suffusing you, consuming you, you were transparent, translucent, a beacon. I was struck dumb, dumbstruck. Water rose up my legs. I could not move. I was rigid. Immovable. Our eyes met. Love at first sight. I held your gaze. And in your eyes, bold and unashamed, was desire. Brutal, demanding desire. Bestial, ruthless, remorseless. I stood there magnetized, hypnotised. Transfixed. Motionless and still. A spider caught in a web.

Water is an extremely important element in the symbolic paradigm to which Pinter consistently refers. According to Freud, dreams involving bodies of water are most often birth dreams. In The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud analyzes a brief water dream which describes a scene not unlike that portrayed by the woman:

> At her summer holiday resort, by the Lake of ------, she dived into the dark water just where the pale moon was mirrored in it.[4]

Freud arrives at an interpretation of this dream by reversing the event reported in the manifest dream, "thus, instead of 'diving' into the water, we have coming out of the water"[5], i.e. being born. The dream is revealed as an evident birth-phantasy.

In "Dialogue", all three dreams make reference to water: Casablanca, mentioned in the first dream, is a seaport in French Morocco; the third and final dream locates itself by the banks of the Euphrates. The three dreams can be seen as linked variations of a regressive phantasy in which water functions as a symbol of birth.

The setting the woman in "Dialogue" recalls is a shoreline, the transitional area between the elements, land and sea. The man stands on the shore and the woman stands in the water, the feminine element. In many ways her dream is a miniature of Landscape in which Beth is drawn into the uterine waters of the sea while Duff, although similarly drawn to water, finds himself beside a miniature, impoverished version of the same, a pond in a park. It is for Beth, like the woman in "Dialogue", to make physical contact with the uterine water.

It is night in the dream, the realm of the id. Two sources of light--the moon and a bonfire--are established. The sea is active;

waves are throwing "spray" and "mist" into the air. Evidently some kind of celebration or party is taking place; around the man and woman, "all the people", a chorus of celebrants, are "laughing", "dancing" and somersaulting".

The first half of the dream is given over to a description of the physical background, an animated human celebration against the sympathetic backdrop of an equally animated seascape. With the entrance of the man in the white trunks, the atmosphere suddenly changes. Except for the moon, which condenses with the white trunks, the background dissolves utterly, leaving the man and the woman locked together in a silent and deadly ocular embrace.

We have spoken of the dream mechanism, condensation, wherein two or more images combine to form a composite image. In the woman's memory, we observe the phenomenon taking place, not in the latent content, but on the surface in the manifest content which reaffirms our determination to interpret the memory as a dream. The man and moon suffuse into a beacon of light; the man on the beach quite literally becomes the man-in-the-moon to the woman. As a beacon, the image denotes an illumination that serves to guide or orient. By following the light or impulses a beacon emits, one arrives at a hoped-for destination and escapes the dangers of the reef. We will see that the characterization of the man as a source of hope or rescue is ironic and that the light given off by the man is more malignant than salubrious.

The immediate effect of the beacon upon the woman is similar to the effect apocalyptically ascribed to Paul on the road to Damascus when the Holy Ghost appeared to him: she is "struck dumb". But she is

not merely struck dumb. Pinter repeats the words, reversing the order: "I was struck dumb, dumbstruck." The characteristic repetition of words is Pinter's way of drawing our attention to a hidden significance. The repetition of the word "struck" especially catches our ear. To be struck by something is to be either suddenly enlightened or just as suddenly to receive a physical blow. In the latter case, struck dumb might translate as 'beaten senseless' (dumb signifying the loss of the power of speech). What is there about the apparition before her that so profoundly affects her?

A clue to the significance of the transformation lies in the description of the white trunks as "sheer". It is through these trunks that the moon and its disturbing light find access. The sheerness of the trunks ("transparency" is a synonym later used to describe the beacon) apparently affords the woman a view of the man's genitals. Important to note, however, is that at this point in the action the man is silent--the Pinterian attitude of strength--and is "staring at a sandcastle". Moments later his gaze will shift to the woman and his entire aspect will undergo a radical transformation, but at this juncture his attitude is actually that of a pre-adolescent.

The sandcastle is the key: it is a symbol of childhood. The only other specific association for sandcastles in Pinter's plays occurs in The Basement. Jane, who builds the sandcastle, has essentially one outstanding characteristic--her youth. The child association of the man staring at the sandcastle is reinforced by the whiteness of his coverings which, like the white robes Beth of Landscape and Kate of Old Times assume, connotes a virginal attitude (Hirst in No Man's Land, speaks of "the white flower of a blameless life."). (p. 29)

The sandcastle is one of a series of related symbols in Pinter that represent childhood. In The Birthday Party, the symbolic valence of the sandcastle is served by the toy drum Stanley destroys. The Birthday Party is an instructive delineation of the potentially devastating effects of awakened sexuality; it demonstrates the converse of the attitude the man in the woman's dream will assume.

Like Stanley, the man in the dream has been drawn to the shore, beside the uterine waters of the sea, for his rite of passage into adulthood. The celebrants who surround the man have gathered for the ritual of the party which, as Martin Esslin observes in The Peopled Wound, is "a metaphor for the process of growing up . . . of expulsion from the warm cosy world of childhood."[6] As "Afternoon" suggested, the transition from childhood to adulthood is critical in Pinter's dramatic world.

In The Birthday Party, Stanley violently resists the party. In the course of his initiation and subsequent plunge into darkness and catatonia, he attempts to strangle Meg and to rape Lulu. In psychoanalytical terms, he rejects the suffocating attention of the mother figure all too willing to shelter him but is unable to shift cathexes to the vital, if vulgar Lulu, the alternative love object who proves all too willing to be seduced by him. Unable to go either backward or forward, he ends up doing neither, blind and paralyzed. The woman's dream, on the other hand, is a prescriptive phantasy of the psychic means by which the disaster of puberty might be circumvented.

Because the sandcastle is a symbol of pre-adolescence the trunks must be seen as those of a child. The "sheer" trunks, which become one

with the light identified as the light of the ego, are the original source of the bestial sexual power of the man. But the sheerness of the trunks at this "sandcastle" stage of development can only afford the woman a view of pre-adolescent genitals, useless to her in her role as the awakening, debilitating id. She awakens the man, but not as we might expect; for the man, poised in a nascent state of Edenic innocence and balance, is about to by-pass the usual trials of puberty altogether. Fairbairn describes the ego of a child as a "unitary dynamic ego".[7] The man in the dream manages to preserve this pristine unitary ego in a mock puberty in which the radical physical changes of actual puberty are subverted: the ego swells into fantastic proportions of the beacon and the more physical id atrophies to the size of a spider.

In the woman's dream, she becomes the spider, the object of loathing and self-reproach. Further, she is caught in a web of her own making. We recall that Stanley, similarly caught in a web of psycho-sexual intrigue, is named Webber. Like Stanley, the woman ends up immobilized by powerful sexual longings. The "bold and unashamed desire", however, originates not in her eyes, but in the eyes of the dominating male. The "translucent, transparent" man who turns her into a spider is the negative image of Oedipus who was left blind, body still intact, whereas this man, his flesh consumed by the moon (another symbol of virginity) is virtually all eyes. The type of male that Stanley represents is replaced in "Dialogue" by a male in possession of exaggerated visual power and concomitant power over women. The eyes that were closed on Riley-Rose, Stanley, Edward and Disson are opened up completely to reveal sexual desire that is described with seven adjectives, five of

which are negative in tone: ruthless, brutal, demanding, remorseless, and bestial. These are precisely the qualities of appetite which the characters above refused to express.

Consistent with the inversion of the usual course of events, the woman and not the man is rendered immobile. Like the desire in the eyes of the man, the immobilization of the woman is accorded a plethora of adjectives: rigid, immovable, magnetized, hypnotized, transfixed, motionless and still. R. D. Laing, in The Divided Self applies the term 'petrification' to describe a condition which corresponds in every aspect to the condition the woman in "Dialogue" imagines herself as experiencing. Laing's contribution to psychopathology is especially relevant in our discussion of Pinter for, under the three headings of engulfment, implosion and petrification, he has provided terms of reference that describe with remarkable accuracy the forms of anxiety Pinter's characters experience. The state which underlies all three manifestations of anxiety Laing defines as ontological insecurity; the ontologically insecure person "may feel more unreal than real; in a literal sense, more dead than alive."[8]

In describing the peculiar dynamics of petrification, Laing uses terms identical to those Pinter has often used:

> The risk consists of this: if one experiences the other as a free agent, one is open to the possibility of experiencing oneself as an object of his experience and thereby of feeling one's own subjectivity drained away. One is threatened with becoming no more than a thing in the world of the other, without any life for oneself, without any being for oneself.[9]

Petrification can be either the fear of turning into an object, i.e. stone, or the tendency to turn others into stone by negating the other person's autonomy. In the latter case, one treats the person not as a person but as Laing puts it, "as an it".[10] This is precisely how Bates in Silence, refers to the little girl:

> Once I had a little girl. I took it for walks.
> I held it by its hand. It looked up at me . . . . (p.208)

In the thrall of petrification anxiety, dreams in which the self is either immobilized or immobilizes someone else are common. Dreams of suffocation are less radical variations on the fear of petrification, according to Laing: the woman, water rising up her legs, has not only been 'turned to stone', she is in imminent danger of being drowned (Bates, another of the type, is referred to as a "suffocating old man" at "his last gasp" (p. 211) when he hears the lovers in Silence).

The power that the man assumes in the dream results from an absolute identification with the white light of the moon. In psychoanalytic terms this virtual apotheosis of the ego would be recognizing an obsessional defence, or more specifically, a reaction-formation: a reaction-formation is a "defensive process . . . by which an unacceptable impulse is mastered by exaggeration (hypertrophy) of the opposing tendency. Solicitude may be a reaction-formation against cruelty . . . etc.".[11] This man-in-the-moon phantasy is a function of the core metaphor in Pinter--the relationship between black and white, between darkness and light. Because it has a concealed dark side the moon makes an appropriate symbol for this unique triumph of light in its antipathy for darkness and shadow.

In "Dialogue", the man not only is suffused with light, he consolidates his power by rising into the heavens, an appropriate perch for a being so determined to see. Silence uses the same patterns of light and superior perspective. Ellen, who plays a role not unlike that of the spider in "Dialogue" is "crushed by the light" Rumsey exudes.

Rumsey very early identifies his thoughts as "clouds racing" above the earth upon which he and Ellen meet as lovers. The white clouds, like the white moon, suggests both the advantage of an aerial perspective and the disadvantages of isolation and sterility inherent in such an attitude. Sterility, the impotence of isolation (impotence is another form of denial of the other), is the price of the superior perspective; this syllogism is reaffirmed in every play. Rumsey, from the celestial vantage of his cloud thoughts, sees Ellen below him:

> ELLEN: When I run . . . when I run . . . when I run . . . over the grass.
> RUMSEY: She floats . . . under me. Floating . . . under me.
> ELLEN: I turn. I turn. I wheel. I glide. I wheel. In stunning light. The horizon moves from the sun. I am crushed by the light. (p. 208)

Although the above passage is suggestive of an orgasm, of orgasmic flight, the light nonetheless remains an inimical source of energy. Like the "struck dumb, dumbstruck: woman in "Dialogue", Ellen is stunned and "crushed by the light". In "Dialogue", the woman was condensed with a bird and although a bird could be said to be capable of an aerial perspective, the man in the sketch 'dwarfs' her achievement in his incarnation as the moon. An identical relationship occurs in Silence: Ellen's "I turn. I turn." speech is a description of a bird trying to elude a manifestly superior celestial body that is trying to do her harm. Further,

she "floats" beneath him, which links her escape to the water dynamic explored above.

The same pattern operates in A Slight Ache. Edward early in the play announces that his priorities have long since shifted from Africa and the Belgian Congo (the heart of darkness), symbol of nature at its most fecund and primitive, to airy, metaphysical speculation on "the dimensionality and continuity of space . . . and time." (p. 17) Edward's rejection of earthly and earthy priorities in favour of the superior perspectives of philosophy are symbolically registered in the image of the cliff. For at least a time in his life, the perspective from the cliff was experienced as an advantage:

> I could stand on the hill and look through
> my telescope at the sea . . . feeling fit,
> well aware of my sinews, their suppleness,
> my arms lifted holding the telescope, steady,
> easily, no trembling, my aim was perfect . . .
> my grasp firm, my command established. (p. 35)

But something happened to disrupt the vital connection between Edward and his body and his "object". The view afforded by the cliff has lost its appeal. Edward characterizes the source of change as, "A germ. In my eyes . . . In my eyes. My eyes." (p. 38) Rumsey, from his clouds, suggested that there were "so many ways to lose sight of them [people]" (p. 208). Edward, from his cliff, describes the phenomenon in his own way:

> . . . it was not so much any deficiency in
> my sight as the airs between me and my objects
> . . .--the change of air, the currents obtain-
> ing in the space between me and my object, the
> shades they make, the shapes they take, the
> quivering, the eternal quivering. (p. 38)

In contrast, Flora, Ellen and the woman in "Dialogue" remain earthbound. They do not seem to be motivated by the same psychological urgencies that compel the men to seek the qualified advantage of morbid and obsessive intellectual or metaphysical perspectives.

The status of the man in the dream is the opposite of Stanley's in The Birthday Party or Edward's in A Slight Ache. The blindness and impotence are circumvented by the absolute denial of the flesh, of the darker aspects of self. In this respect, the association of Paul alluded to above is not as unlikely as it might seem: Paul and not Christ is credited by modern Biblical scholarship as the real source of the flesh and spirit dichotomy so deeply ingrained in the Western imagination. On one level, therefore, the man in the dream expresses the Judeo-Christian phantasy of redemption through denial. On another level, he validates his fear of woman and sexual responsibility by displacing his own repressed appetite onto the woman and then preventing her from exercising even that faculty. In her inability to move, her petrification, she serves as the sacrificial "goat" in the way that Stanley served Goldberg.

The woman in the dream is struck and stunned senseless by sexual desire. Her powerlessness before the exaggerated potence of the male satisfies the masculine phantasy of domination which is, as has been suggested above, a function of the masculine sensibility arranging the integers of both the 1st MAN's and the WOMAN'S dreams. But the phantasy of domination the WOMAN parrots is a remarkably accurate representation of the inherent weakness of the male; she is brutalized not by a man in the exercise of actual physical sexual power but by the vicarious phallic

power discharged by the eyes. Eyes, as we have discovered, blind or otherwise, remain symbols of the ego, avenues of reason and common sense. The fact is that the power the man turns upon the woman is nothing more than an amplified version of the power men relied upon in "Daylight" and "Afternoon"---the power of light: he becomes the virgin moon--a beacon. Where is the true phallic power latent in the darkness of the id? The man in the dream is rinsed clean of any shadow, any reference to the power of the id; the "bestial" power of his eyes is of no more consequence than Lenny's professed penchant for beating up women: it is a fiction. The difference between the woman who imagines herself as a spider and Ruth who confronts the same fictive overtures of potence is that this woman accepts the artificial potence of the eyes. Ruth, who makes a point of demonstrating to the men closing in around her that she can still move her legs, that she is still mobile, is willing to play the spider but too experienced to be caught in the web.

In The Birthday Party, Stanley's ego confronted his id and disaster resulted. In the WOMAN's dream, she suggests the only real alternative: the id (woman) entraps the id and the ego (man) consumes the ego. What men in Pinter fear is being caught in the web of sexual intrigue where the female spider, like the black widow, consumes her mate. By projecting his fears onto the woman, the male is able to deny that he is the actual source of the need to petrify. Notice that in the dream the woman is the spider but the man the actual source of the immobilizing web.

In the dream of the ego's absolute triumph over the id, the woman's role as victim is far more realized than her role as thief. The innocence of the female is far more a factor in "Dialogue" than in "Afternoon" or "Daylight". The woman remains in her corner of the triangle serving the role of thief, but implicit in the dream is the recognition that her role as thief or spider is more a function of the male's fear than of her appetite. It is the man who turns her into the spider, who lashes out at a creature whose only crime seems to be that she loves him "so much". She is destroyed in the way that the innocent Riley is destroyed, as part of a virtuoso display of terrifying, displaced sexuality.

CHAPTER IV

NO WOMAN'S LAND

After the WOMAN concludes, the 1st MAN turns from her, ignoring her appeal, and addresses the 2nd MAN directly for the first time:

> You know who you remind me of? You remind me of Whipper Wallace, back in the good old days. He used to knock about with a chap called House Peters. Boghouse Peters we used to call him. I remember one day Whipper and Boghouse --he had a scar on his left cheek, Boghouse, caught in some boghouse brawl, I suppose-- well, anyway, there they were, the Whipper and Boghouse, rolling down the banks of the Euphrates this night, when up came a policeman . . . . . up came this policeman . . . . . up came a policeman . . . . . this policeman . . . . . approached . . . . . Boghouse . . . . . and the Whipper . . . . . were questioned . . . . . this night . . . . . the Euphrates . . . . . a policeman . . . . . .

Consistent with the emerging pattern of regression, this anecdote takes its frame of reference from the past, "the good old days". Just as the WOMAN explicitly condensed two images together in her dream, the 1st MAN demonstrates the peculiar tendencies of both dream and memory by conflating the 2nd MAN with an old acquaintance, Whipper Wallace. No less colourful than his first speech, this last offering concerns the experience of two friends who are discovered by a policeman one night "rolling down" the banks of the Euphrates River. Just as the brawl is interrupted ("rolling down", however, is sufficiently ambiguous not to preclude the possibility that they are locked together in a homosexual embrace), so is the speech and the 1st MAN trails off into silence.

As in the case of the two previous speeches the speech is best approached as a dream. In the analysis of this final speech, the entire image horde which precedes it has to be taken into consideration. The image of two people brawling confirms the intimations of repressed hostility expressed throughout "Dialogue" up to this point. The images of the third dream are familiar: we recognize the night, the presence of water, the contest between two persons. Indeed, the dream is something of a symbolic restatement of the previous two dreams. But there are two critical differences: women are not referred to and a third party appears on the dreamscape.

The Euphrates is another exotic locus with a place in the common imagination, but unlike Casablanca and the world of spies and cinematic intrigue, the Euphrates is a biblical-historical reference point. It is also a river associated with early Babylonian culture which, given the sterile possibilities inherent in the quasi-homosexual embrace of the dream, is likely an ironic reference to the fertile source of Western civilization.

The mention of the Euphrates in the modern context of the speech is calculated to prick the imagination of the audience. For even the most unsophisticated ear, the name Euphrates is likely to conjure images of the distant past. "The good old days" are indeed the good old days for the river is first mentioned in scripture as one of the four rivers of Eden (Genesis II, 14): "Its celebrity is there sufficiently indicated by the absence of any explanatory phrase, such as accompanies the names of the other streams."[1] Eden is the symbol of

paradise, the paradise lost with the birth of knowledge and shame. We have seen another "edenic" condition already depicted in "Dialogue": in the WOMAN's dream the boy's pre-sexual, unblemished trunks are suggestive of a prelapsarian innocence. Pinter will use the symbol again in Landscape: Duff, like the 1st MAN, is fixated on the "downfall" (Duff uses the word on three different occasions).

In the remote past, in this seminal, mythic locus, the 1st MAN imagines two caricatures of masculinity tangled in each other's arms. The fact that they are construed thus denotes the difficulty the 1st MAN has disentangling these two aspects in his imagination. Like the halves of a split ego, the two men are at once intimately related yet struggling with each other.

The names Whipper and Boghouse--the sort of names wrestlers or schoolboys assume--are, like the tattoo from the first dream, tokens of identification with a stereotypic image of masculinity. This burlesque association of masculinity parallels the references in the first dream to Humphrey Bogart and, in the psychological etymology of the names, the scatology and misogyny inherent in the image of the pelican-woman.

The third dream is a reference to the infantile state in which the ego experienced itself as whole and pristine. It is the doomed world of memory where sex is not yet a factor. The entrance of the policeman--the agent of external laws of reality--threatens the innocence of the vision and prevents the regressive tumble into the Euphrates. This alternative, exclusively male bonding is discussed more fully in the concluding chapter.

With the concluding dream the cycle "Dialogue" describes has come full circle. The 1st MAN began with an appeal to the 2nd MAN which expressed his fear of the pelican-woman whom he felt possessed "supernatural" power. The attempt to affect an alternative connection with the 2nd MAN fails and the 1st MAN is drawn into direct, if inconclusive, contact with the source of his trepidation. His defence takes the form of an unrealistic and ultimately unsatisfactory phantasy in which the WOMAN is eliminated. The limited proscriptive value of the phantasy is demonstrated in the final dream in which the imagined exclusively masculine relationship is interrupted by the agent of external reality and the 1st MAN is left in essentially the attitude in which he began the play.

We leave the play with the WOMAN unanswered, the 2nd MAN unable or unwilling to respond and the two figments of the 1st MAN's imagination, like the figures of Keats' Grecian Urn, "overwrought" in suspended flight, forever prevented from resolving their dispute.

CHAPTER V

TWO LOVES OF COMFORT AND DESPAIR

i

I suggested earlier that one of Pinter's plays will make explicit what has been implicit in another play. Monologue, written in 1974, is just such a resource for the concerns of this thesis. In Monologue, all but the most essential of Pinter's symbolic flora and fauna has been trimmed from the dialogue; the pelicans, Edenic rivers and the various moons have all been given a place in Monologue, but they have been integrated completely into the elemental pattern of black and white imagery that holds the play together. Monologue is a far more candid portrait of obsession and deception than earlier plays; the "petal on petal" imagery that obscured the form beneath is now controlled by a poet more determined to confront the truth of certain patterns of obsession than inclined to disguise those patterns beneath a bewildering patina of images.

Monologue is the work of the mature poet. In many ways, it is "Dialogue" more than fifteen years after the fact--the same inescapable, uncomfortable triangle. But only the 1st MAN speaks this time; the voices of the WOMAN and the 2nd MAN have been completely integrated into the single, organizing, limited consciousness of the narrator.

The chapter that follows will explore those aspects of the triangle Monologue uniquely defines. Using plays like The Lover, A Slight

Ache and The Dwarfs, which represent a varied spectrum of the works which fall between the writing of "Dialogue" and Monologue, I hope to demonstrate, as indicated in the Introduction, that the essential seeds of Pinter's drama were active in "Dialogue" and that the love triangle provides for the essential structural core of all of Pinter's work.

Monologue considers the love triangle in a unique way. The speaker in Monologue addresses himself to another male character (not on stage but represented by an empty chair) who participated with him in a common past--specifically, the woman they once shared. Prior to Monologue, Pinter had been content to suggest obliquely that third parties like the matchseller in A Slight Ache or Anna in Old Times or even Sykes of Landscape had no independent existence of their own but were projections of Flora and Edward, Kate and Deeley and Beth and Duff, respectively. There is no doubt that Anna and Sykes especially are or were actual persons, but the impression was nonetheless created that whatever identity they once possessed, that identity had long since been subverted and modified by the action of memory and desire. These third corners of the love triangles emerge as the product of composite projections from the other two corners.

The motif of the imagined lover is constantly used in Pinter and is, in fact, the means through which most love triangles are established. Probably the best example we could use to illustrate the nature of this tendency is the Richard-Max split in The Lover. "Dialogue," Monologue and indeed most of Pinter's work rely absolutely on just the sort of schizophrenic split of identification The Lover explores. Both

Richard and Sarah have invented a third party, a lover of their own, to enliven their insipid marriage. The plot twist, of course, is that Sarah's lover, Max, turns out to be none other than her husband Richard (and vice versa). The motivation behind this schizophrenic nostrum is, in Richard's case at least, an inability to confront both the whore and the wife in the woman Sarah:

> Why? I wasn't looking for your double,
> was I? I wasn't looking for a woman I
> could respect as you, whom I could admire
> and love, as I do you. Was I? All I
> wanted was . . . how shall I put it . . .
> someone who could express and engender lust
> with all lust's cunning. Nothing more. (p. 169)

By splitting the two aspects of woman and isolating what he feels to be the whore aspect, Richard is able to deal with the positive aspect of his wife. We see the same sort of splitting in A Night Out: the prostitute is the focus of the displaced agression for his mother Albert cannot express.

Dissociation is a psychoanalytic term referring to "the state of affairs in which two or more mental processes co-exist without becoming connected or integrated."[1] Dissociation is closely related to another technical term, splitting ("no hard and fast distinction can be made"[2]) which is described as "a defence mechanism by which the ego splits . . . typically only one part of the resulting part-ego is experienced as self and the other constituting a (usually) unconscious 'split-off part of the ego'. After splitting of an object, the emotional attitude towards the two part structures is typically antithetical, one object being experienced as good . . . and the other as bad."[3] It is startling how

closely The Lover approximates this psychoanalytic phenomenon. Richard and Max are the good and bad aspects of the same ego; Richard enjoys the "dignity" and "sensibility" of his marriage, while Max risks the contamination with the dehumanized whore who "is simply a whore, a functionary who either pleases or displeases." We little wonder that Sarah finds Richard's attitutde towards women "rather alarming".

From the tone the narrator takes in Monologue, more so than from the words themselves, it becomes apparent that the "you" to whom his monologue is addressed is, in fact, himself. Pinter ironically includes a caveat within the text in case the audience misses the point (and in so doing, obliquely identifies himself with the speaker):

> Even if you're too dim to catch the irony in
> the words themselves, the words I have chosen
> myself, quite scrupulously, and with intent,
> you can't miss the irony in the tone of voice!

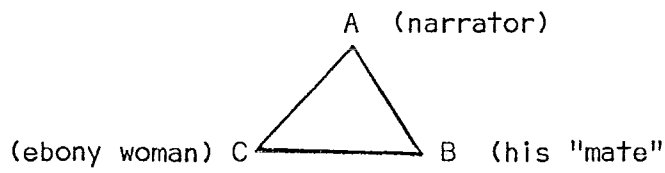
The two ego alternatives in the play break down in the usual way: the speaker is supposed to love the soul of the ebony lady and the one spoken to is supposed to love only her body. Using the primogenitive metaphor of black versus white, the man suggests (to 'himself') that "his face was too white", "blatantly vulnerable, veering towards pitiful." If, on the other hand, he had had a black face, then he might have stood "a chance of getting somewhere, really making a go of it." Like the man-in-the-moon, suffused with white light but concealing a dark side, one part of him is a creature of light whose "watchword is vigilance" (hence, the enlarged eyes in "Dialogue"). Keeping the androgynous WOMAN's dream in mind, the following speech serves as a coda for much of its latent content:

> It was your detachment was dangerous. I knew it of course like the back of my hand. That was the web my darling black darling hovered in, wavered in, my black moth. She stuttered in that light, your slightly sullen noncommital, deadly dangerous light.

The "detached" man-in-the-moon in the white trunks gave off a similar "deadly, dangerous light". The word "stuttered" here connotes interrupted flight and impeded speech: Ellen's flight, we recall, was 'interrupted' by a crushing, stunning light: the WOMAN in "Dialogue" had her voice similarly affected--she was struck completely dumb. The only real problem with correlating the parallel imagery is with the "black moth" which Pinter italicized to emphasize its capacity as victim and not author of the web. In the WOMAN's dream, the woman was not only caught in the web, she was responsible for its creation. However, as I indicated, the WOMAN's dream is an amalgam of masculine and feminine imperatives. The image of the spider caught in its own web in "Dialogue" condenses (in Monologue's terms) the male's web and the entrapped female moth.

Monologue, in fact, creates--in its own terms, it must be emphasized--a feminine-masculine amalgam not unlike that of "Dialogue". Because Pinter was the exclusive source of both their dreams, the man and the woman in "Dialogue" were essentially masculine. "Dialogue's" implicit androgyny is made explicit in Monologue.

Diagramatically, the Monologue love triangle could be represented as below:



Referring to the "mate" (B) and the woman (C), the narrator reduces the three points of the triangle to two:

> I often had the impression . . . often . . .
> that you two were actually brother and sister,
> some kind of link-up, some kind of identical
> shimmer, deep down in your characters, an
> inkling, no more, that at one time you shared
> the same pot.

(A) tends to see (B) and (C) as a single unit, (BC). (A), later identifying himself with (C), further condenses the two remaining points of the original love triangle into a single point:

> Sometimes I think you've forgotten the black
> girl, the ebony one. Sometimes I think you've
> forgotten me.

(A) imagines that (B) sees (A) and (C) as (AC). The view from (C) is imagined to be similar to the view from (A) and (B): "My spasms could be your spasms. Who's to tell or care."; (A) imagines that (C) sees (A) and (B) as interchangeable. It does not matter from which point on the triangle you look. The three points of the love triangle in Monologue are finally only a single point, (A).

This business of shifting corners of reality should strike a chord; Edward gave us a clue in A Slight Ache:

> FLORA: You must have seen me in the garden.
> You can see through this window.
> EDWARD: Only part of the garden.
> FLORA: Yes.
> EDWARD: Only a corner of the garden. A very
> small corner. (p. 17)

Edward has taken shelter in the scullery (skull-ery) to protect himself from the spectacle of the whole garden; he prefers to see only a corner of the reality before him. Len in The Dwarfs picks up the theme in earnest:

> I've got my treasure too. It's in my corner. Everything's in my corner. Everything is from the corner's point of view . . . I do the corner's will. (p. 107)

The corner is, of course, Len's ego. But Len is unable to keep his corner separate or inviolable; he can't keep Pete and Mark out of his corner. Pete and Mark, a "music hall act", are images that run together in Len's mind. They seem to have no identity except what Len, the (A) of this triangle, bestows upon them. Len tells Mark to look in the mirror: "Look. It's a farce. Where are your features? You haven't got any features. You couldn't call those features." Mark is not unique; when Len looks into the mirror, he is unable to see his own face: "I can't see the mirror I have to look through. I see the other side." (p. 103) Pete has a dream in which people's faces melt or rot away. Len imagines Pete as bird (Pete is the rationalist and has the distinction of the 'loftiest' perspective) tearing a rat's head off. The Dwarfs is about the failure to separate and maintain a unique identity within the morass of impressions the world presents. Len, like the narrator in Monologue and the 1st MAN in "Dialogue", is the psychological centre of the play who suffers from the fear of implosion. Implosion is "the fear of being annihilated by reality which is experienced by people who lack primary ontological security. Such people feel like vacuums, long to be filled, but fear whatever could fill them would destroy their identity."[4] Implosion is Laing's term but in classic psychoanalysis, the same phenomenon would be characterized as a failure or breach of ego boundary. Len refers to just such a breach: "Both of you bastards, you made a hole in my side, I can't plug it! I've lost a kingdom" (p. 107). (Bettleheim points out in Uses of Enchantment that

kingdoms in fairy tales are symbolizations of the ego)[5]. Edward, in A Slight Ache, speaks of a lost kingdom, of his eroded ability to defend that kingdom "against all kinds of usurpers" (p. 35). Edward is no longer able to maintain the sanctity of his corner or kingdom and, like Len, is incapable of establishing that critical distance between "me and my object" (p. 38). As Laing says, "A firm sense of one's own autonomous identity is required in order that one may be related as one human being to another. Otherwise, each and every relationship threatens the individual with loss of identity."[6] This is the crux of Len's problem; he complains to Mark of the debilitating impingements on his reality--his corner: " . . . you're in it, Pete's in it, you're all in my corner. There must be somewhere else!" (p. 107).

There is a speech in The Dwarfs which delineates the problem of identity that confronts so many of Pinter's males. Len, one corner of the triangle, addresses the other two corners, Pete and Mark. Using the metaphor of chess, with its black and white pieces, Len bemoans the fact that first, he can't distinguish or choose between the alternatives each of the other two corners of the triangle represent and secondly, that he can't finally distinguish himself from the remaining corners.

> The point is, who are you? Not why or how, not even what. I can see what, perhaps, clearly enough. But who are you? It's no use saying you know who you are just because you tell me you can fit your particular key into a particular slot, which will only receive your particular key because that's not foolproof and certainly not conclusive . . . Occasionally I believe I perceive a little of what you are but that's pure accident. Pure accident on both our parts, the perceiver and the perceived. It's nothing like an accident,

> it's deliberate, it's a joint pretense . . . What you are, or appear to be to me, or appear to be to you changes so quickly, so horrifyingly, I certainly can't keep up with it and I'm damn sure you can't either. But who you are I can't even begin to recognize and sometimes I recognize it so wholly . . . I can't look . . . You're the sum of so many reflections. How many reflections? Whose reflections? Is that what you consist of? . . . you're both still in the same boat, you're eating away all my biscuits . . . you're still both in the same boat, you're still standing behind the curtains together . . . you're both still standing behind my curtains, moving the curtains in my room. He may be your Black Knight, you may be his Black Knight, but I'm cursed with the two of you, with two Black Knights . . . . (pp. 112 - 113)

The two "Black Knights" should remind us of the'black' man and ebony woman of Monologue. The narrator of the later play is in the thrall of precisely the same debilitating inability ever to finally consummate satisfying and responsible contact with either of the two types that confront him or to dismiss them utterly and somehow endure, reconciled to solitude. Len cannot choose between the lambent sensuality of Mark and the cerebral detachment of Pete. In Monologue and "Dialogue" the choice is a progressive sexual relationship with a woman or a regressive obliquely homosexual relationship with another male. This explains the third dream of "Dialogue" in which Boghouse Peters and Whipper Wallace are represented in each other's arms in a "brawl" that is part fight, part game, part embrace. Like the two "Black Knights" Len refers to, the two friends-combatants are similarly undifferentiated, similarly "the sum of so many reflections," and just as determined to resist separation.

If we were briefly to outline the order of experience represented by "Dialogue", it would read as follows: the 1st MAN rejects the appeal

of a woman who asks to be recognized sexually and attempts to attach himself to the 2nd MAN. The nature of the appeal to the 2nd MAN changes from an invocation of a fanciful heterosexual relationship in the first dream to a homosexual bonding in the third: the spy of the first dream is replaced by Boghouse Peters. The latter dream is the more regressive (as indicated by the age of the river, Euphrates) and recalls an age or level of experience in which women do not figure. The adolescent roughhousing of Watson and Peters is a reference to the sort of relationship the two mates shared in Monologue before the entrance of the ebony lady. The narrator of Monologue, judging from his reminiscences, has faced exactly the sort of challenge the 1st MAN is facing in the action of "Dialogue". In "Dialogue," the 1st MAN rejects the sexual overtures of the WOMAN and appeals to the 2nd MAN to remember--to affirm--a relationship that precluded the need for women.

The homosexual aspect of this kind of relationship must be qualified. The homosexual alternative in Pinter, in plays like The Dwarfs, The Collection, The Caretaker, The Homecoming or No Man's Land, features males bonding not as lovers but as fellow refugees might bond, for the comfort that comes of mutual distress and for strength against the enemy without, women. The word 'homosexual', unfortunately, has sensational connotations that are misleading and if we use the word to describe an aspect of the triangle, we must use the word with care. Monologue's narrator has been and, arguably, still is involved in the sort of homosexual attachment to another male to which Pinter makes repeated reference. This is no indication that the relationship was ever consummated or even developed beyond the sort of unexpressed, oblique homosexuality

adolescent schoolboys express. Indeed, were homosexuality a viable option for Pinter's males, they would not find themselves in the far more unwholesome predicament of isolation. The attraction of the male lies in the fact that he doesn't have to be confronted sexually in the way that a woman has to be confronted.

These men are the men we were introduced to in "Afternoon"; they are sexual casualties whose initiation into the sexual and into manhood was bungled. They are men with uncertain futures. But uncertain futures do not preclude the succour afforded by certain pasts, before the fevers of that first, awful spring. And in that past is located the male alternative in the dichotomy the narrator in Monologue sets before himself.

Monologue opens with the narrator's evocation of the uncomplicated, prelapsarian world the two "mates" shared before the entrance of the woman. The woman completes the third corner of the triangle and signals an end to the idyll the two men shared before the inception of "burdensome commitments." This world was the safe kindergarten world of play. Games are a central feature of that world and a metaphor in Pinter from the beginning of the relationship that precludes the sexual (One of the most effective images in the film of The Servant is the sequence in which Tony and Barrett, having manoeuvred the women out of the house, improvise a game on the stairs. Having withdrawn from the world of women and other responsibilities they are drawn to the kind of competition and camaraderie they must have enjoyed as children). The jack-in-a-box in Monologue is a symbol of that lost innocence. At one point in the relationship between these "best" and "truest" mates, a woman enters and the mate, in "a rare

burst", offers her tea. This signals a crisis in the male relationship and Pinter uses the weather (as he used it in "Dialogue," Silence and Landscape) to inflect hidden significances:

> She'd put on a woollen dress because the morning was chilly, but the day had changed totally, totally changed. She cried. You jumped up like a . . . those things, forget the name, monkey on a box, jack in a box, held her hand, made her tea, a rare burst. Perhaps the change in the weather had gone to your head.

In "Dialogue", the male idyll was played beside the ancient Euphrates. In Monologue, the weather indeed changes: the cold the woman feels awakens in the mate a sympathy and affection that is "rare". The change in the weather leaves the narrator unmoved--it does not go to his head. The toy that suddenly springs to life is a symbol of the awakened sexuality of the mate; the box is slang for the female sexual organs and the springing jack, a likely reference to an erection. Notice that the narrator, who has rejected the animal in himself, mistakes the jack for a monkey. This is consistent with the tendency of most males in Pinter to displace their own repressed animal instincts onto others.

The mate grows up and leaves the prophylactic world of games to the now isolate narrator. What does the narrator then seize upon as compensation for the loss of their "sporting and intellectual life"? Consistent with the types already considered, he opts for the life of the mind, the white world of light. "I'm still sparking" is a brilliant pun; the suggestion that the man who eschews women is an effectively tuned machine touches upon the primitive superstition sounded in "Afternoon" that women are a source of rot and decay.

At twenty-two years of age, the probable height of this man's sexual energy, the narrator slept twenty-four hours a day. As the years wane and libidinous resources fail, the man sleeps less and less until he reaches the state in which he now finds himself, sparking at 2,000 revolutions per second, as a mechanism whose primary function apparently involves vigilance against the dark imperatives of the flesh.

Because of his isolation, the speaker in Monologue is unable to love. Addressing an empty chair (which, incidentally, is a favourite technique of Gestalt therapy) he ironically accuses himself when he accuses the chair of "acting as if you're dead, as if the Balls Pond Road and the lovely ebony lady never existed, as if the rain in the light on the pavements never existed, as if our sporting and intellectual life never was." It reads like an appeal from the mind ("up here") to the body to reawaken. It is an appeal from the "sullen dangerous light" of the ego (the "crushing", "stunning" light that Rumsey turns upon Ellen in Silence; the light Beth in Landscape attempts to come to terms with in her principles of drawing) to the lost or destroyed darkness of the id. In one of the most harrowing lines of the play, concealed as usual in humour, the speaker puns, "I keep busy *in the mind*, and that's why I'm still sparking, get it?" And then, the final irony: "What you are in fact witnessing is freedom. I no longer participate in holy ceremony. The crap is cut."

ii

In the opening chapter of this thesis I cited Martin Price's comment that, "With the creation of a pattern, psychic complexities,

which might overwhelm or engulf the artist, are harnessed and exploited."[7] For Pinter, the pattern is clearly the triangle.

We have seen how pervasive the dynamic of the love triangle is in Pinter and how consistent the nature of cathexis that created and cohered those triangles. Pinter has yet to write a play that does not depend absolutely on the organizing structural and symbolic means of the love triangle. Once we have accepted the love triangle as the core relationship in Pinter it is possible to apply it to his earliest and latest work and to isolate essential relationships and factors that remain essentially unchanged in twenty years of writing. More fascinating than the discovery of immutable patterns is the apprehension of the development of aspects nascent in the early triangles. In the comparison of early and late triangles, for instance, we can trace the growth of one corner of the triangle, the bitch in "Afternoon", into one of the modern theatre's most compelling portraits of woman, Ruth of The Homecoming.

Obviously, this thesis has addressed itself to only a fraction of the whole range of themes that comprise a Pinter play. But it has isolated the essential dynamic that accounts for the origins of many of the important motifs in Pinter. The fear of the outside world and the axiomatic need to shelter in darkened rooms is clearly a reaction against the sexual challenge that inevitably threatens from the third corner of the love triangle. The role of the various mother figures and the tendency of Pinter's males to search for surrogate mothers who will accept or encourage a latent need to regress to childhood has, as we have discovered, its source in the need to circumvent the influence of the thief, the various ebony women of the plays.

Tangential to the cathexis of the triangle is the predisposition of the Pinter protagonist to degrade women in the service of the self-fulfilling prophecy that shapes the world so that it corresponds to the topography of their deepest fears. Without an insight into the nature of this most fundamental structure at the heart of Pinter's drama--the Euphrates, as it were, from which the personnae of his plays all trace their origins--only the most superficial reading of his work is possible.

Pinter himself confesses that most of the time he doesn't know what's happening in his plays. He speaks of "following"[8] his characters, as if they had an independent life of their own and he was merely their chronicler. "I wouldn't know a symbol if I saw one," [9] he protests, perhaps only half ironically. Written on this intuitive level, the plays seem to spring virtually whole, not from the brow of the creator, but from a far deeper source. Their unique organic density is the result of a method that rejects conscious pattern making in favour of an appeal to unconscious sources whose patterns are far less mutable, the result of a long process of ingestion, digestion and assimilation. Unlike Athena, Pinter's characters emerge naked from a wound of undisclosed origin, from the deepest forges of his identity.

> I was always surprised that anyone initially came in to see my plays at all, because writing them was a very personal thing. I did it--and still do it--for my own benefit; and it's pure accident if anyone else happens to participate. Firstly and finally, and all along the line, you write because there's something you want to write, have to write. For yourself.[10]

Afternoon

Summer twisted from their grasp
After the first fever.
Daily from the stews
They brought the men.
And placed a wooden peg
Into the wound they had made,
And left the surgery of skin
To barbers and students.

Some burrowed for their loss
In the ironmonger's bin,
Impatient to reclaim,
Before the journey's start,
Their articles of faith.

Some nosed about in the dirt,
Deaf to the smell of heat
And the men at the rubber pit,
Who scattered the parts of a goat
For their excitement and doubt.

One blind man they gave
A demented dog to sniff,
A bitch that had eaten the loot.
The dog, bared to his thought,
Became his mastiff at night,
His guardian and thief of his blood.

Dialogue for Three

1st MAN: Did I ever tell you about the woman in the blue dress? I met her in Casablanca. She was a spy. A spy in a blue dress. That woman was an agent for another power. She was tattooed on her belly with a pelican. Her belly was covered with a pelican. She could make that pelican waddle across the room to you. On all fours, sideways, feet first, arseupwards, any way you like. Her control was superhuman. Only a woman could possess it. Under her blue dress she wore a shimmy. And under her shimmy she wore a pelican.

2nd MAN: The snow has turned to slush.

1st MAN: The temperature must have dropped.

WOMAN: Sometimes I think I'm not feminine enough for you.

1st MAN: You are.

WOMAN: Or do you think I should be more feminine?

1st MAN: No.

WOMAN: Perhaps I should be more masculine.

1st MAN: Certainly not.

WOMAN: You think I'm too feminine?

1st MAN: No.

WOMAN: If I didn't love you so much it wouldn't matter. Do you remember the first time we met? On the beach? In the night? All those people? And the bonfire? And the waves? And the spray? And the mist? And the moon? Everyone dancing, somersaulting, laughing? And you--standing silent, staring at a sandcastle in your sheer white trunks. The moon was behind you, in front of you, all over you, suffusing you, consuming you, you were transparent, translucent, a beacon. I was stuck dumb, dumbstruck. Water rose up my legs. I could not move. I was rigid. Immovable. Our eyes met. Love at first sight. I held your gaze. And in your eyes, bold and unashamed, was desire. Brutal, demanding desire. Bestial, ruthless, remorseless. I stood there magnetised, hypnotised. Transfixed. Motionless and still. A spider caught in a web.

1st MAN (*to* 2nd MAN): You know who you remind me of? You remind me of Whipper Wallace, back in the good old days. He used to knock about with a chap called House Peters. Boghouse Peters we used to call him. I remember one day Whipper and Boghouse --he had a scar on his left cheek, Boghouse, caught in some boghouse brawl, I suppose--well, anyway, there they were, the Whipper and Boghouse, rolling down by the banks of the Euphrates this night, when up came a policeman . . . up came this policeman . . . up came a policeman . . . this policeman . . . approached . . . Boghouse . . . and the Whipper . . . were questioned . . . this night . . . the Euphrates . . .

Monologue

Man alone in a chair.
He refers to another chair, which is empty.

I think I'll nip down to the games room. Stretch my legs. Have a game of ping pong. What about you? Fancy a game? How would you like a categorical thrashing? I'm willing to accept any challenge, any stakes, any gauntlet you'd care to fling down. What have you done with your gauntlets, by the way? In fact, *while we're at it*, what happened to your motorbike?

Pause.

You looked bold in black. The only thing I didn't like was your face, too white, the face, stuck between your black helmet and your black hair and your black motoring jacket, kind of aghast, blatantly vulnerable, veering towards pitiful. Of course, you weren't cut out to be a motorbikist, it went against your nature, I never understood what you were getting at. What is certain is that it didn't work, it never convinced me, it never got you onto any top shelf with me. You should have been black, you should have had a black face, then you'd be getting somewhere, really making a go of it.

Pause.

I often had the impression . . . often . . . that you two were actually brother and sister, some kind of link-up, some kind of identical shimmer, deep down in your characters, an inkling, no more, that at one time you had shared the same pot. But of course she was black. Black as the Ace of Spades. And a life-lover, to boot.

Pause.

All the same, you and I, even then, never mind the weather, weren't we? We were always available for net practice, at the drop of a hat, or a game of fives, or a walk and talk through the park, or a couple of rounds of putting before lunch, given fair to moderate conditions, and no burdensome commitments.

Pause.

The thing I like, I mean quite immeasurably, is this kind of conversation, this kind of exchange, this class of mutual reminiscence.

Pause.

Sometimes I think you've forgotten the black girl, the ebony one. Sometimes I think you've forgotten me.

Pause.

You haven't forgotten *me*. Who was your best mate, who was your truest mate? You introduced me to Webster and Tourneur, admitted, but who got you going on Tristan Tzara, Breton, Giacommetti and all that lot? Not to mention Louis-Ferdinand Celine, now out of favour. And John Dos. Who brought you both all those custard tins cut price? I say both. I was the best friend either of you ever had and I'm still prepared to prove it, I'm still prepared to wrap my braces round anyone's neck, in your defence.

Pause.

Now you're going to say you loved her soul and I loved her body. You're going to trot that old one out. I know you were much more beautiful than me, much more *aquiline*, I know *that*, that I'll give you, more *ethereal*, more thoughtful, *slyer*, while I had both feet firmly planted on the deck. But I'll tell you one thing you don't know. She loved my soul. It was my soul she loved.

Pause.

You never say what you're ready for now. You're not even ready for a game of ping pong. You're incapable of saying what it is you're capable, where your relish lies, where you're sharp, excited, why you never are capable . . . never are . . . capable of exercising a crisp and fullbodied appraisal of the buzzing possibilities of your buzzing brain cells. You often, I'll be frank, act as if you're dead, 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.

Pause.

She was tired. She sat down. She was tired. The journey. The rush hour. The weather, so unpredictable. She'd put on a woolen dress because the morning was chilly, but the day had changed, totally, totally changed. She cried. You jumped up like a . . . those things, forget the name, monkey on a box, *jack in a box*, held her hand, made her tea, a rare burst. Perhaps the change in the weather had gone to your head.

Pause.

I loved her body. Not that, between ourselves, it's one way or another a thing of any importance. My spasms could be your spasms. Who's to tell or care?

Pause.

Well . . . she did . . . can . . . could . . . .

Pause.

We all walked, arm in arm, through the long grass, over the bridge, sat outside the pub in the sun by the river, the pub was shut.

Pause.

Did anyone notice us? Did you see anyone looking at us?

Pause.

Touch my body, she said to you. You did. Of course you did. You'd be a bloody fool if you didn't. You'd have been a bloody fool if you hadn't. It was perfectly *normal*.

Pause.

That was behind the partition.

Pause.

I brought her to see you, after you'd pissed off to live in Notting Hill Gate. Naturally. They all end up there. I'll never end up there, I'll never end up on that side of the Park.

Pause.

Sitting there with your record player, growing bald. Beethoven, cocoa, cats. That really dates it. The cocoa dates it. It was your detachment was dangerous. I knew it of course like the back of my hand. That was the web my darling black darling hovered in, wavered in, my black *moth*. She stuttered in that light, your slightly sullen, noncommital, deadly dangerous light. But it's a fact of life. The ones that keep silent are the best off.

Pause.

As for me, I've always liked simple love scenes, the classic set-ups, the sweet . . . the sweet . . . the sweet farewell at Paddington Station. My collar turned up. Her soft cheeks. Standing close to me, legs under her raincoat, the platform, her cheeks, her hands, hoot, hoot, nothing like the sound of steam to keep love warm, to keep it moist, to bring it to the throat, my ebony love, she smiles at me, I touched her.

Pause.

I feel for you. Even if you feel nothing . . . for me. I feel for you, old chap.

Pause.

I keep busy in the *mind*, and that's why I'm still sparking, get it? I've got a hundred per cent more energy in me now than when I was twenty-two. When I was twenty-two I slept twenty-four hours a day. And twenty-two hours a day at twenty-four. Work it out for yourself. But now I'm sparking, at my peak, *up here*, two thousand revolutions a second, every living hour of the day and night. I'm a front runner. My watchword is vigilance. I'm way past mythologies, left them all behind, cocoa, sleep, Beethoven, cats, rain, black girls, bosom pals, literature, custard. You'll say I've been talking about nothing else all night, but can't you see, you bloody fool, that I can *afford* to do it, can't you appreciate the irony? Even if you're too dim to catch the irony in the words themselves, the words I have chosen myself, quite scrupulously, and with intent, you can't miss the irony in the tone of *voice*!

Pause.

What you are in fact witnessing is freedom. I no longer participate in holy ceremony. The crap is cut.

Silence.

You should have had a black face, that was your mistake. You could have made a going concern out of it, you could have chalked it up in the book, you could have had two black kids.

Pause.

I'd have died for them.

Pause.

I'd have been their uncle.

Pause.

I am their uncle.

Pause.

I'm your children's uncle.

Pause.

I'll take them out, tell them jokes.

Pause.

I love your children.

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1]Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature", in A Grammar of Literary Criticism (New York, 1967).

[2]Ibid.

[3]Arthur Ganz (ed.), Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972), p. 11.

[4]Lucina Paquet Gabbard, The Dream Structures of Pinter's Plays (New Jersey, 1976), p. 76.

[5]Harold Pinter, Five Screenplays (London, 1971), p. 112.

[6]Ibid., p. 136

[7]Charles Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis (Middlesex, 1968), p. 148.

[8]Harold Pinter, "Kullus", in Poems (London, 1968), pp. 41 - 43.

[9]Samuel Beckett, Proust (New York), p. 18.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1]William Baker and Stephen Ely Tabachnick, Harold Pinter (Edinburgh, 1973), p. 92.

[2]Ibid., p. 268.

[3]Walter Kerr, God on The Gymnasium Floor (New York, 1970), p. 135.

[4]Ibid., p. 134.

[5]All quotes from Harold Pinter's plays are taken from the Eyre Methuen editions (edition dates listed below) except for the following plays which were taken (excepting Monologue) from the Eyre Methuen Master Playwright Series: Pinter Plays:Three and Pinter Plays: Two: from Pinter Plays: Two are taken The Collection and The Lover; from Pinter Plays: Three are taken Tea Party, Landscape, Silence and Dialogue for Three.

Old Times	-	1971
A Slight Ache and Other Plays	-	1973
The Birthday Party	-	1975
No Man's Land	-	1975
The Room and The Dumb Waiter	-	1976
The Homecoming	-	1976

Monologue is from Covent Garden Press, published 1973.

[6]Henry Hewes, Harold Pinter "Interview", Saturday Review (April 8, 1967), p. 56.

[7]Andrew Brink, Loss and Symbolic Repair (Hamilton, 1977), p. 3.

[8]Martin Price,

[9]Lucina Paquet Gabbard, The Dream Structures of Pinter's Plays (New Jersey, 1976), p. 275.

[10]Kenneth Burke, "Psychology of Form" in A Grammar of Literary Criticism (New York, 1965).

[11]Gabbard, p. 17.

[12]Brink, p. 238

[13]Lawrence Bensky, "Interview", Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays, Arthur Ganz, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972).

[14]Harold Pinter, Poems (London, 1968), p. 33.

[15]Conrad Aiken, "William Faulkner: The Novel as Form", in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, Robert Penn Warren, ed./ Prentice-Hall, Inc. (New Jersey, 1966), p. 47.

[16]Harold Pinter, "Daylight" in Poems (London, 1968), p. 32.

[17]Charles Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis (Middlesex, 1968), p. 35.

[18]Ibid., p. 156.

[19]Ibid., p. 22.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1]Martin Esslin, The Peopled Wound (London, 1974), p. 185.

[2]James R. Hollis, Harold Pinter: The Poetics of Silence (Carbondale & Edwardsville, 1970), p. 41.

[3]Esslin in The Peopled Wound, p. 86.

[4]Harold Pinter, "Writing for Myself", Pinter Plays: Three (London, 1977), p. 11.

[5]Esslin in The Peopled Wound, p. 38.

[6]Lois G. Gordon, Stratagems to Uncover Nakedness (Columbia, 1970), p. 4.

[7]Arthur Ganz, "Introduction" in Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972), p. 11.

[8]Esslin in The Peopled Wound, p. 43.

[9]One has only to read John Lahr's A Casebook on Harold Pinter's "The Homecoming", and learn of the difficulties actors working with Pinter himself had in coming to terms with their roles, to appreciate the complexities involved in Pinter's work.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1]Rycroft, p. 162.

[2]Ibid., p. 38.

[3]Ibid., p. 66.

[4]Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams (New York, 1950), p. 525.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Esslin in The Peopled Wound, p. 141.

[7]R. D. Laing, The Divided Self (Middlesex, 1971), p. 42.

[8]Ibid., p. 50.

[9]Ibid., p. 51.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Rycroft, pp. 136 - 137.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1]William Smith, Smith's Bible Dictionary, Pillar Books (New York, 1976), p.243.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

[1]Rycroft, p. 35.

[2]Ibid., p. 35.

[3]Ibid., p. 156.

[4]Laing, p. 44.

[5]Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment (New York, 1977),

[6]Laing, p. 43.

[7]Price,

[8]Pinter quoted in Walter Kerr's God on The Gymnasium Floor (see Chapter I, Footnote number 3), p. 132.

[9]Harold Pinter, "Writing for Myself", in Pinter Plays: Two (London, 1977), p. 10.

[10]Ibid., p. 11.

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