

**T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**



**EXISTENTIAL ANXIETIES CREATED BY MENACE IN HAROLD
PINTER'S PLAYS: THE ROOM, THE BIRTHDAY PARTY AND THE
DUMB WAITER**

M.A. Thesis

BANU MUTLU YILMAZ

İstanbul, 2014

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. HAROLD PINTER'S LIFE AND WORKS

Harold Pinter is regarded as one of the most influential, admired and prolific playwrights in the English-speaking theatre since 1957 when he began his career with *The Room* and he is one of the primary representatives of the Theatre of the Absurd. After three decades of playwriting, Pinter is acknowledged as one of the major playwrights of the world.

Pinter was born in 1930 in London into a poor Jewish family that fled from persecution in Poland and Odessa. They were poor trying to live with very limited resources, like other low-class families in Hackney. He grew up in the working class area, full of bad smelling factories, and railroads. When he was nine years old (on the outbreak of WW II), he was evacuated to Cornwall and taken from his parents. This influenced his writing style and his works extremely. What he experienced before and during Blitz left Pinter with profound memories of loneliness, bewilderment, separation and loss: themes that are in all his works. At the age of 14, he returned to London. This situation combined with growing up in a time of anti-Jewish sentiment, gave him a feeling of being out of place, which is seen in many of his works.

Pinter began writing poetry and prose after he attended Hackney Downs Grammar School between 1944 and 1947. He took an interest in theatre and he took roles as Macbeth and Romeo in school productions. He got a scholarship to study at Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and he continued his education in 1948. However, he found the academy frustrating and he stayed there for two terms only. He was a conscientious objector to war and he wanted to get this as a legal status but he was denied.

He wrote some of his poems under the name "Harold Pinta" and they were published outside of the school magazine. According to Bilington, in these poems it is possible to see his obsessive mind full of territorial displacement which is caused by the threat of the Fascists in Hackney after the war (1996:27). He also attended Central School of Speech and Drama

and continued his academic training. On one of his tours he met the actress Vivien Merchant and he worked with her. Later, in 1956, he married her. Billington writes Pinter had an income from acting but it wasn't enough. Since they had difficulty to make a living, Pinter had to take different jobs like postman, a dishwasher, a salesman. In this period of his life, he took some roles in his works and in some others' works for radio, TV, and film and he went on to do this through his professional life (1996:38).

Pinter wrote his first plays in 1957. These plays were dealing with interior life of individuals and their experience. His first play was *The Room*. This is a one-act play. With this play he attracted many critics' notice and also this play showed Pinter's dramatic technique and talent. In that same year, he wrote *The Dumb Waiter* and *The Birthday Party*. *The Birthday Party* was produced in 1958 but the performance didn't go well. The play was attacked and the critics rejected it considering it as a failure.

In spite of his failure, Pinter didn't lose his courage and continued to write more for the stage. He wrote his plays *A Slight Ache* and *The Hothouse*. In 1960, he achieved his first important stage success with *The Caretaker*. With *The Birthday Party* and *The Homecoming* (1965), *The Caretaker* Pinter became one of the important playwrights in Britain, even the most important dramatist since George Bernard Shaw (Billington, 1996:39).

In 1967, after going to Broadway, he became famous. He had various productions such as theatre and radio plays and cinema and television scripts. Billington says in the years 1968 and 1982, he wrote a different kind of plays that Billington defined as "memory play" (1996:388) which gave an insight to the ambiguities and the unknown side of man's memory. In the memory plays, dealt with dangerousness, unreliability and contradictions of man's memory.

Starting with the year 1983 and continuing until 2000, Pinter's theatre was like a means of political activism against oppression, torture, and other human rights' violations. During this period, he involved his theatre with more explicitly political matters.

Pinter wrote his last play, *The Remembrance of Things Past* in 2000. Writing film scripts and poems continued until his death in 2008. In 2005, his contributions to theatre brought him Nobel Prize for literature. Almost all 20th century drama critics agree with the idea that Harold Pinter is one of the most influential playwrights in the English theatre since the early 1960s. Although there are some critics like Esslin and Tinker who criticized Pinter's directing his focus and creative energy to other directions, in particular political activism, because they thought it reduced his stage power after 1980s, Billington claims that that being diverse contributed to the fertility of his ingenious world and this makes him one of the greatest dramatists (1996:393).

Despite some critics who have considered Pinter's early works apolitical, Pinter's political association has always existed in unusual ways. Considering all his drama, he puts a great effort to show that the totalitarian government activities and global politics affect the smallest unit of society, the individual. Pinter told private worlds invaded by power relations in his early plays. In *The Room*, Rose, the obedient and talkative wife is mastered by her violent and silent husband. There are some clues of racism in the language of the play. In *The Dumb Waiter*, it is clear that the higher authority upstairs manipulates and eliminates Gus. Pinter wants to explain how low-class men are used by the organization to perform dirty tasks. In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley is an individual and creative artist once but he is taken under control, frightened and turned to be nothing by McCann and Goldberg, who are parts of a secret organization. All these characters, Rose, Gus and Stanley, are the victims who are oppressed and finally given in to the authority. These plays show Pinter's political ideas that the personal and the public lives are political and controlled by powers. These plays reveal the oppression and torture that the authority (husband, secret organization, etc.) uses to control its objects. Actually, what Pinter created is a miniature version the world war, genocide and the threat of nuclear bomb from which he was affected deeply. Pinter contents that in his plays characters Bert, Wilson, and McCann and Goldberg symbolizes the forces in society that wants to destroy

any individual opposing the system in order to silence them and oppress them like the Nazis.

Apart from their political disobedience, Pinter's plays are not like traditional works. They are called in different ways such as black comedies, comedies of menace, tragic farces, plays of cruelty, memory plays, tragicomedies, etc. (Esslin, 1970:28). The literary critic Irving Wardle called Pinter's early plays, *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Birthday Party*, *The Hot House* and *The Caretaker* as "comedies of menace" (1958:28-33) since the beginning of all these plays are innocent situations but threatening for the rest of them. The plays do not relieve the viewers but they make them question themselves and feel guilty. When these plays were first staged, they received harsh reviews.

Some critics claimed that Pinter was influenced from Samuel Beckett and suffered from this impact. However, according to Bernard Dukore, who is one of the important literary critics, although there is a similarity between Pinter and Beckett in terms of their theatres, Harold Pinter's is rather different (1962:43). Plays written by Pinter are often comic and frightening; their meanings are generally unclear, they are realistic at the same time. Characters are believable even if they seem mysterious. One can recognize them from English life. There isn't much information given about their objectives and backgrounds. Yet we recognize that there is motivation even if we are not sure of its essence (1962:44). They are like real people from real life with the given details of their daily lives and their anxieties, fears and conversations. However, the world of the play where they exist and which symbolizes the frightening and menacing world of Pinter's theatre is unusual. It is a familiar world which holds mirror to the distorted English life (1962:47). Pinter is not obviously symbolic while Beckett and Ionesco are. What he refers to is always obscure. It is clear that Pinter's theatre reflects crisis in language, politics and morality. In other words, Pinter's characters are realistic but there is always a mystery about them because Pinter doesn't provide much information about them except for their visible fears but still it is not known why they have these fears. What's more, the works Pinter created

touch the issues of real life but while doing this, he is not clear about what he wants to criticize. The audience is expected to understand it.

Pinter is also known with the adjectives Pinteresque and Pinterish which appeared with the use of his name to refer to his own use of language. It suggests the irrationality of everyday conversations, its bad syntax, repetitions, non-sequiturs and self-contradictions. For Pinter, real-life conversations do not proceed efficiently and logically from point to point. Regarding language, Pinter is an innovator. According to him, everyday language alienates the speakers from one another and speech is suggestive and it disturbs the right reflection of colloquial language. For example, Pinter puts the brutal and the ordinary together in the plays *The Room* and *The Birthday Party* and he created a piece of art from spare language and silence. In "Introduction" to Complete Works 1, he states:

"We have heard many times that tired, grimy phrase: 'Failure of communication'...and this phrase has been fixed to my work quite consistently. I believe the contrary. I think that we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else's life is too frightening. To disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility" (1977:15).

In relation to content of his works, Harold Pinter, like many of his contemporaries, is a playwright who deals with the existential problems of man in a hostile universe. Through his works and his idiosyncratic style, he contributed a lot in revelation of the existential problems of mankind. Alienation, sense of disintegration, evasiveness, domination, violation of identity and sense of self are major themes depicted in his plays. His plays have been studied very often. Many critics have tried to classify them depending on their intended themes as plays of menace, identity, memory, and political plays which are carrying an aim to highlight and reveal specific ideas of the human existence. In order to do this, he utilized the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd which "strive to express its sense

of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of the rational devices and discursive thought" (Esslin, 2004:24). Considering this, he does not only satisfy with a restatement of many familiar existential themes but he also introduces the play with a count of its every aspect so it will function according to existential principles and rules. Thus, he achieves to get something much deeper than what is said on the stage despite the visible naturalism of his plays.

These existential problems of man are well reflected in Pinter's plays which are often classified as 'Comedy of Menace.' This is a term first used by David Campton for subtitled his four short plays *The Lunatic View* (1957). What it essentially means is a kind of play in which one or more characters feel that some force that comes over the play threatens them. For Pinter, this force could be some unclear force, power, or even a character, which becomes a source of black comedy.

The phrase 'comedy of menace' evokes both negative and positive feelings. It may be thought as contradictory because comedy is something that makes people laugh while menace is something threatening. In its literal meaning, the phrase has laughing at a menacing situation. The writer uses comedy during a dangerous situation as he wants his audience to come to a conclusion about a specific character or communication. Therefore, it would be wrong to name Pinter's plays only as comedy since he creates humour in a very dramatic and anxious situation which leaves his audience with a feeling of confusion at the end.

In comedies of menace, Pinter uses very simple settings that are generally just one room. There is an unknown power threatening characters. What the audiences do is to concentrate on the communications between the characters and understand the gist of the play from the conversations.

In his plays, Pinter adds an element of comedy, provided mostly through the brilliant small-talk behind which characters hide their growing anxiety. Many of Pinter's plays involve processes of physical and mental torture. He creates figures that live in isolation in a menacing world. They do

not “revolt against a hostile abstract world. Instead, they look for shelter, be it physically defined, as a room, for example, or in the negotiation for psychologically safe place. They are in pursuit of the fulfilment of their emotional needs” (Olivera,1999:54). In order to fulfill these needs, they develop power relationship with each other. If the balance of this relationship is violated, changed or used in the wrong way, this relationship ends up with creation of different types of menace.

2. THE CONCEPT OF MENACE IN PINTER'S PLAYS: *THE ROOM*, *THE BIRTHDAY PARTY* AND *THE DUMB WAITER*

"I've never been able to write a happy play, but I've been able to enjoy a happy life."

Harold Pinter

Certain human feelings like fear, insecurity and hopelessness are typical Pinter subjects used in his plays. These human feelings are attached to the concept of menace. Menace is a sinister and intriguing feeling. Characters experience this feeling as their identities are threatened with this inevitable feeling. Characters who are the victims of menace feel that everything around them has an undefined intention to capture their existence and that they are surrounded by a sense of fear. Therefore, there is no certainty in their lives.

Menace may present itself in different ways like physical, psychological, and mental ways. Physical menace may show up in the shape of another entity such as an individual or organization, as it can also show itself in their behaviors and attitudes. Menace also has a psychological aspect since the characters interact with others who have objectives and these objectives can be thought as the source of menace. As for the mental aspect of menace, it occurs in the minds of characters and there the sense of self is defined. If one fails to do that, cannot define self, then this threatening feeling, menace, appears. The menacing entity is frightening because it cannot be definable. The source of menace appears in a hidden way which can be a violent sound behind closed doors, or a person who has an identity which is not easy to realize, so it is difficult to identify it.

The theme of menace is highly visible in Pinter's plays. According to Pinter, menace is unspecified. It dominates individuals and makes them helpless. However, the initial thing to know is that where this element of menace stem from in Pinter's plays. As it has already been mentioned in the

previous chapter of the study, Harold Pinter is a playwright who experienced World War II and some important events of world history such as genocide and atom bombing, so it is impossible not to regard the influence of these events in Pinter's works. Especially, he was affected from WW II which brought a different, harsh and brutal atmosphere to people's life.

Even though it started in 1939 and ended in 1945, the destruction of WW II is dramatically high even after the war. It was probably the most painful experience for people. It is a destruction caused by WW II and its aftermath in every sense, indeed. However, the social aspect of it is far more considerable. The atmosphere of social life couldn't be the same as it was before. The life after the war was rough as it caused depression, tension, disillusionment, suspicion and disturbed state of minds and life was full of ambiguities, anguishes, fears and threats. Apart from the post war psychology of people, the reason why people had these feelings was that those 'isms' like fascism, racism, capitalism, McCarthyism were all around standing as a source of menace threatening people's very existence; their identities, individualities, self-esteems and confidence. Most importantly, this source of menace could be everywhere and one could not identify it easily. For instance, some unknown powers with the idea of McCarthyism emerged to interrogate individuals because of their ideas. McCarthyism was a practice of making accusations of disloyalty, rebellion or treason without any concrete evidence. Those who were accused of these crimes became the subject of aggressive interrogations and questioning before government or committees or agencies. Government employees, who were in the entertainment industry, educators and union activists were the main target of those suspicions. Their leftist associations or beliefs and the threat posed by them were generally exaggerated. There were many people who suffered loss of employment and destruction of their careers – even some of them suffered imprisonment. This side of the society is mirrored very well in Pinter's *The Birthday Party* in which audience can see an intense interrogation of Stanley carried out by the two characters Goldberg and McCann. Stanley was a pianist in past but those unknown powers destroyed the place where he

played and they destroyed his musical career. In the play he is accused of many crimes with an exaggeration and without any clear evidence and given no chance to defend himself. At the end of the play, one can witness his catastrophic end as a musician and as an individual.

In a society like this, the only thing people cared about was their own existence in a world which was not safe enough for them to live comparing their past. Everything was meaningless for them apart from their own existence which was threatened by menace. Except for themselves, people started to see everything as menace because the trust they had for each other did not exist anymore. This menace could be anything or anybody from their life but it maintained its existence invisibly and the individual was afraid of this new society; that's why, he had to defend himself against this new social order.

Briefly, it can be said that this worldly event brought a rampant, complex and fragmented social life and there menace came out threatening individuals' very existence and creating anxieties of losing their existence. Harold Pinter, who was a child during the war, felt disillusioned once the war is over. He lived in that society and witnessed many things which influenced him and gave him inspiration to create his works later on. Pinter himself, as a Jewish person, experienced menace which aroused angst in him as a denial of his existence and he reflected this in his works. In relation to this, Billington states,

“the ‘sense of disruption’ that Pinter experienced growing up in the world war II London allowed him to see how perilous and unknowable each moment is; it is a theme that powerfully resonates in all of his works, the ‘life-and-death intensity of daily experience’” (1996:8).

Moreover, in *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction*, Simon During says this of ‘modern everyday life’:

“It emerges in the emptiness of a rootless social order ... Nonetheless ... it remains space where people have a residual capacity to act freely, and where political dominant powers out. Hence everyday life is ambiguous: it is

less meaningful than it ought to be, but it is where autonomy and resistance to the system still have some kind of chance” (2005:28-29).

During suggests that typical everyday life can provide a defense against the external forces of “the system” (2005:28-29). For Pinter, whose everyday lives were so problematic, the “system” of which During speaks may have seemed to be present all aspects of his life. The works of Pinter support the notion that everyday life does not provide a space to “act freely.” In his works, characters are confronted in their private, everyday lives, by the external forces that threaten to ruin their stability as individuals. Thus, the tension and instability of post war society, as an external force, affected Pinter’s creative writing and he is successful to evoke the feelings of isolation, alienation, despair, uncertainty and uneasiness which are all the products of existential anxieties created by menace.

In the plays, *The Room*, *The Birthday Party* and *The Dumb Waiter*, it is possible to observe the concept of menace and existential anxieties it brings. Therefore, this chapter of the study is divided into two as Outside Menace Threatening Individual and Menace Deriving from Individual Self which include the analysis of the selected plays.

2.1. OUTSIDE MENACE THREATENING INDIVIDUAL

WW II and its aftermath society are mentioned already. This society has its own system standing as an outside menace coming from outside forces. People live in this world of system and this system is generally presented as if it was for individuals’ advantage by its creators. Most try to exist in that world by playing according to its rules but at the same time there are many who fails to keep up with the system. Those are the ones who are not really aware of their existence and identities. They are just stuck in their small world. They are not strong enough to struggle with the menace of the system which can show its face in different ways. It can be bureaucratic

forces, any character or person from their life like a landlord, a tenant, a guest or a colleague working with you or it can even be a cold weather threatening your cosy room.

Pinter's characters have these fears caused by outside world which is thought to be ready to destroy their existence. These characters are depicted within the borders of walls which they think hinder them from contact with outside world. They try to escape from menace by hiding themselves into a room or a building which is actually a threat itself. They isolate themselves as they think they will be hurt by the outside system. However, they are defeated by menace which is the unique weapon of the evil system.

Pinter uses the image of a room which can be assumed in different forms like a cell, a prison room, a refuge, or a trap. These places have something in common in terms of their ability to bring the feeling of menace. In some plays, the room may function as a refuge that is to be broken into by an outsider who is the source of the undefined menace while in others, it is the room itself where the menace originates which is once overtaken by more powerful agents. That's to say, in Pinter, the image of the room is closely related to the idea of menace. Esslin states that for Pinter the outside world is frightening, and, therefore, threatening for the individual:

"Pinter's people are in a room, and they are frightened, scared. What are they scared of? 'Obviously, they are scared of what is outside the room. Outside the room is a world bearing upon them, which frightening ... [and] which is inexplicable and frightening, curious and alarming' (1970:35)."

In Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*, the sense of menace is projected through "the room-door-suspense syndrome" (Esslin, 1970:70). Ben and Gus are two assassins. They occupy a basement room and wait their orders. The room is without windows and this image of the room reflects their sense of fear since they don't have certainty considering their condition within and outside the room. The room is enclosed by a dark, mysterious world outside. These two men feel imprisoned because their acts and chances of living are restricted into a room by the organization which they get their orders from.

In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley Webber spends most of his time inside a boarding house as outside is full of mysteries and terror. He feels free and secure from outside menace in this house. It is like his shelter. Unfortunately, his security is destroyed with the arrival of two unknown men. Stanley's fear is symbolized by "the room, the safe heaven, menaced by an intrusion from the cold outside world" (Esslin, 1970:75).

In *The Room*, characters are also trapped in a room which is a form of menace. The room which seems safe becomes unsafe. The main character of the play, Rose, is in an illusion that "This room's alright for [her] ... and nobody bothers [them]" (Pinter, 1983:8-9) but, after a couple who keeps telling that her is for rent visits her, she is frustrated and at the end of the play, she is shocked by the visit of a stranger who ruins her security completely.

In a nut shell, the theme of imprisonment is common in Pinter's plays and it reflects the idea of how menace appears in characters lives. Pinter uses an enclosed room in order to present fear and terror.

What's more, according to Pinter, in such a society, menace of the system shows itself through unknown organizations. This kind of menace is not specified and it maintains its existence invisibly. It is not possible to identify its form as an individual we know or group of individuals. The reason for this feeling is a threatening system and considering its function and structure, it is also indefinite and it is anonymous throughout Pinter's works. They contain much ambiguity and mystery. For Esslin, in Pinter's plays, there is a reality of characters and their dialogues; however, the general impression of them is mysterious, uncertain and ambiguous (1970:37). Pinter's world shows his own sense of the universal reality because he "sees world as mysterious, multi-faceted and unfathomable" (Esslin, 1970:52), which represents his idea of menace. Coppa states that "the threat is somehow beyond articulation – literally unspeakable" (2001:52). That's to say, menace has an abstract nature and it is visible in the existence of a nameless authority with hidden motives in Pinter's plays. His characters are unable to

understand the potential terror in the world and it decreases their capacity to survive in that world.

For Esslin, what the writer's works have in common is the factor of uncertainty about the aims of the characters, their background, and their individuality (1970:37). With an individual's past it is possible to depict his identity and real character. However, in *The Birthday Party*, Stanley doesn't have a past. Moreover, the two men entering his life provide little information about themselves; it can be understood that they have known Stanley, and Stanley has known them even though their acquaintance is not stated clearly. Pinter presents his situation in a single room, and considers this condition very typical of everyday life, where people are only able to know each other as far as this confrontation affords. Pinter accepts this in an interview: "The world is full of surprises. A door can open at any moment and someone will come in. We'd love to know who it is, we'd love to know exactly what he has on his mind and why he comes in, but how often do we know what someone has on his mind or who this somebody is?" (Esslin, 1970:38).

When Meg tells Stanley about the arrival of the two men, he gets into a panic since his attempts to identify the identity and the aims of the men are useless:

STANLEY: Who are they?

MEG: I don't know.

STANLEY: Did he [Petey] tell you their names?

MEG: No.

STANLEY: (*pacing the room*). Here? They wanted to come here?

MEG: Yes, they did. (*She takes the curls out of her hair.*)

STANLEY: Why?

MEG: This house is on the list.

STANLEY: But who are they? (Pinter, 1996:14)

Here "the two emissaries of a mysterious and brutal organization" are the source of menace for Stanley entirely because they remain unknown to their victim (Esslin, 1993:76). Their motives and the organization they work for is not known. Stanley's capacity to solve the mystery about these is limited.

Prentice states that “much critical response promotes the view that Stanley is an unwitting victim of a mysterious organization, which Goldberg and McCann represent” (1991:26).

A threatening atmosphere is presented by Pinter so as to create anxiety element in *The Birthday Party*. The inexplicit details and information supports this threatening feeling in the play. Information given by Stanley about the two men, who are possibly his pursuers, is rather confusing: “They’re coming in a van. ... Do you know what they have got in that van? ... They’ve got a wheelbarrow in that van. ... They’re looking for someone. A certain person” (Pinter,1996:18). This information given by Stanley about two agents causes a sense of tension and fear. “Ambiguity generates fear and terror” (Prentice, 1991:40). Furthermore, Meg speaks with a voice through the letter box about something not named and this increases the feeling of anxiety. Later, this thing turns out to be a birthday present for Stanley from Meg. These details may seem ordinary but they add to the mysterious atmosphere of the play.

The uncertainty about Goldberg’s and McCann’s motives and their occupation exists throughout the play. Though it can clearly be understood that they are representatives of some higher powers who we will never know, the task given to them by the uncertain organization is not easy to identify:

MCCANN: This job ..., is it going to be like anything we’ve ever done before?

...

GOLDBERG: The main issue is a singular issue and quite distinct from your previous work. Certain elements, however, might well approximate in points of procedure to some of your other activities. All is dependent on the attitude of our subject. At all events, McCann, I can assure you that the assignment will be carried out and the mission accomplished with no excessive aggravation to you or myself. (Pinter, 1996:23-4)

Why do the two characters show up in the lodging house where Stanley lives? What makes Stanley’s situation unique? What do the “job”, and “mission” exactly refer to? These questions are not answered. They

treated Stanley in a weird and mysterious manner. He is oppressed by them. Moreover, his oppressors target to fulfill the secret mission perfectly. Stanley attempts to resist but it is useless because it is clear that failure is his destiny. Goldberg's celebrations of victory shows Stanley's end. Though Stanley's crime is not given, he is accused of number of crimes:

MCCANN: Why did you leave the organization?

[...]

MCCANN: You betrayed the organization.

[...]

MCCANN: He killed his wife!

[...]

MCCANN: You throttled her.

GOLDBERG: With arsenic.

[...]

MCCANN: Where's your old mum?

STANLEY: In the sanatorium.

[...]

GOLDBERG: Why did you never get married?

MCCANN: She was waiting at the porch.

GOLDBERG: You skeddadled from the wedding.

[...]

GOLDBERG: You stink of sin. (Pinter, 1996:42-3)

Nevertheless, these accusations are not proven or necessary to be punished. A feeling of guilt occurs in Stanley. Although Stanley is related to the indefinite large mechanism, this relation is not showed. He complains about an unspecified "they" because they have ruined his professional comfort and career as a pianist:

They carved me up. Carved me up. It was all arranged, it was all worked out. My next concert. Somewhere else it was. In winter. I went down there to play. Then, when I got there, the hall was closed, the place was shuttered up, not even a caretaker. They'd locked it up. ...I'd like to know who

was responsible for that. ... They wanted me to crawl down on my bended knees. (Pinter, 1996:17)

He is a pianist and it is not explained that what he did to a power or people he doesn't know and what is the reason for them to want him crawl on his knees.

Moreover, those mysterious men, agents probably, McCann and Goldberg use different names throughout the play, so they make it impossible for Stanley, the victim, to identify their identities. His friends call Goldberg as Nat and his family, apart from his father who calls him as Benny, calls him Simey. McCann is called Dermot by Goldberg and later, Petey also calls him by the same name. Therefore, it is not possible to know their real names.

In this play names indicates invisible off-stage characters as well as unknown individuals. Monty represents the evil, dark and unknown system and he remains a hidden source of menace. It is understood that Stanley is being taken to him to be treated completely. It is obvious that Monty is not a doctor but an important figure of authority. However, his real identity and what he is going to do with Stanley are still questions which are not answered.

In the play, *The Dumb Waiter*, it is also possible to see a mysterious organization or order. There are two assassins, Ben and Gus, and the play gives a picture of the bad situation these men involve in. They work for a big mechanism and they have no idea about what kind of organization they work for. "The ultimate Who, What, and Why remain [...] mysterious, unknown, and possibly unknowable" (Prentice, 1991:16). These two men act only according to the instructions given by the authority. They mustn't question the situation or the task given to them. They are like robots in the hands of the authority. They don't have a mutual communication with their employer and they cannot have a contact with the organization on their own. These two gunmen are just two unimportant men who are there to do the job of a powerful mechanism. Only authority can reach them and get in touch with them when it is necessary. When the organization gets in touch with them is not given.

However, those officials of the unspecified organization can put an end to the lives of individuals who are not powerful enough anytime. Thus, in Pinter's works, uncertainty is the most threatening source of menace:

The real menace which lies behind the struggles for expression and communication, behind the closed doors which might swing open to reveal a frightening intruder, behind the sinister gunmen and terrorists, behind the violence, the menace behind all these menacing images is the opaqueness, the uncertainty and precariousness of the human condition itself. (Esslin, 1970:51-2)

Pinter's characters are in a room where they can look for a hiding place from threatening and frightening outside world. And Pinter creates the sense of menace with an intrusion of others into his characters' so-called small but comfortable worlds. This intrusion may be expected but when it comes, it is always surprising and unwelcome. In *The Dumb Waiter*, the unwelcome coming of an envelope including about a dozen of matches increases the tension because it is not certain where it comes from. Pinter uses a door to give the feeling of threat. The matches are pushed to the room under the door and there is no one outside. Here, there is also mystery which contributes to this feeling of threat.

It is obvious that mysterious events are intense in *The Dumb Waiter*. In Pinter, "the dreamlike, nightmarish quality of the plays as a whole" and "their very realism is part of their menace" (Esslin, 1970:53). When the dumb waiter appears, it is something unexpected in the gloomy and empty house. Ben and Gus cannot understand who operates the dumb waiter although it is apparent that the place was used as a café before. The opening where the dumb waiter goes down is in effect "another opening, out in the dark, menacing outside world" (Esslin, 1970:70).

There is an invisible off-stage character in this play, too, who is Wilson. The name has a threatening effect and the invisible Wilson represents authority in the play. However, Wilson sends some messages on pieces of paper for food orders. Wilson doesn't often appear and he is unavailable. But he has a mysterious power and is a perfect authority figure

thanks to his unavailability. When he talks, he does this through a speaking tube. His talking is heard neither by Gus nor the audience. Ben is the only one who can hear him because he is the senior member in the organization. It is visible that Gus puts into an inferior state. He lacks means of reaching the central mechanism. He also admits that he “finds Wilson hard to talk to”. Gus thinks like this because Wilson is not reachable, even if he can be reached and he doesn’t have a responsive manner. “There are a number of things I want to ask him. But I can never get round to it, when I see him” (Pinter, 1996:29-30). It can also be inferred that it is not possible to meet with that kind of unreachable authority member. This unspecified menace surrounds Pinter’s characters. There is no possibility for them to know the person, who manipulates the things, in the unknown organization.

Moreover, existence of these unknown powers brings inequality as there has always been a battle between the powerful and the powerless and in this battle information which belongs to the parties’ identity is a means of defense. If an individual’s identity is easy to find out, this person is easy to attack and becomes the victim since he/she doesn’t have any information about the enemy. The enemy, which is an unknown system, has the power to get information. It brings some uncertainties to the victimized person’s life; that’s why; it never lets anyone to enlighten the uncertainties. How the lack of information and menace are related is stated by Francesca Coppa: “Menace depends on ignorance; the terror of it stems from the vagueness of the threat” (2001:52). Thus, it is something highly expected to observe power inequality between the individual and the powerful mechanism since, unlike the individual who already gives in because of his/her ignorance and blindness, the powerful organization overpowers by using and keeping information and obtaining awareness.

This kind of struggle is available in Pinter’s plays. Characters are already condemned to fail in this battle to be dominant because the desire they have to obtain knowledge is not fulfilled. Finding truth is the reason why his characters struggle; however, this “quest for truth [...] is quickly deflected to self-preservation, which they rarely achieve” (Prentice, 1991:27).

It is highly visible to see the struggle for power in *The Birthday Party* caused by the lack of information. In the play, “the power-subservience theme has more a sense of [...] bureaucratic emphasis” and “some sort of corporate threat” (Knowles, 1995:29). Stanley doesn’t have the information which will cast light on the two men who are there to take him. Holding the information means power for both the attacker and the victim. Hence, there is a mutual questioning between Stanley and McCann trying to have power. It is clear that Stanley and McCann are successful to hide the truth from each other. The first attempt McCann has to make on Stanley is to stop Stanley to leave. “The first really explicit act of terror contained in the play, this action serves to substantialize the hint of menace” (Gale,1977:49). Stanley prepares a counterattack. First, he tries to understand their aim and he looks for it in McCann’s papers, yet McCann gets the paper back which means the power changes hands again. Stanley tries to prove that there is familiarity with McCann but his effort to do this fails.

Instead of meeting one another’s need for information, Stanley and McCann pose questions to each other as an attack. Their replies are not satisfactory, so this causes their conversation to lose its function and they repeat their questions such as Stanley’s repeated question: “Why are you down here?” (Pinter, 1996:35). McCann answers this question shortly with an unimportant phrase, so his answer gives no explanation, too. “A short holiday” (Pinter, 1996:35). McCann remains unclear during their conversation and this causes the sense of threat raise more in Stanley. The state of ignorance is Stanley’s fate; therefore, what he can do to protect himself is to try to distort the truth about himself. Although Stanley tries not to reveal much about himself, they are likely to know almost everything about him. McCann notices and expresses that Stanley is the one who is on his birthday but he looks depressed but Stanley tells lies. He says it isn’t his birthday. His birthday is next month (Pinter, 1996:35). Although he doesn’t want, they organize a birthday party for him with Meg, the landlady. Now, Stanley is under their control desperately.

Stanley Webber is questioned by Goldberg with many accusations that he cannot understand and he isn't given any chance to defend himself.

GOLDBERG: Webber, what were you doing yesterday?

STANLEY: Yesterday?

GOLDBERG: And the day before. What did you do the day before that?

STANLEY: What do you mean?

GOLDBERG: Why are you wasting everybody's time, Webber? Why are you getting everybody's way?

STANLEY: Me? What are you –

GOLDBERG: I'm telling you, Webber. You're a washout. Why are you getting on everybody's wick? Why are you driving that old lady off her conk? (Pinter, 1996:41)

It can be understood that Stanley's end is close with these questions which are used as weapons by the two men. Their questions are irrelevant and they are changing accusations in order to take Stanley, the victim, out from his covers which protect him and also to understand his life fully. Their interrogation becomes threatening for Stanley. "This progression of Stanley's inquisition is a study in psychological warfare in which the subject is assaulted from all sides at once, with varying periods of aggression and restraint" (Gale, 1977:48). McCann and Goldberg are the inquisitors:

GOLDBERG: When did you last wash up a cup?

STANLEY: The Christmas before last.

GOLDBERG: Where?

STANLEY: Lyons Corner House.

GOLDBERG: Which one?

STANLEY: Marble Arch.

GOLDBERG: Where was your wife?

STANLEY: In –

GOLDBERG: Answer.

STANLEY: (*turning, crouching*). What wife?

GOLDBERG: What have you done with your wife?

MCCANN: He's killed his wife.

GOLDBERG: Why did you kill your wife?

STANLEY: (*sitting, his back to the audience*). What wife?

MCCANN: How did he kill her?

GOLDBERG: How did you kill her? (Pinter, 1996:43)

The inquisitors dominating the individual, who becomes the victim, force the individual to accept their reality. The victim's understanding of reality is not important. Therefore, again, the victim finds himself in a position in which he is ignored. Even his own past cannot be confirmed by him, and he is made to adopt a reality which created for him by the dominating powers. He responds to this through silence. Stanley becomes tongue-tied because of all these questions and accusations. In the end, his replies become incoherent and unreasonable. Stanley is beaten by the dominant who denies his reality and prevents him from reaching the information that can give him power.

In *The Birthday Party*, the theme of blindness is related to understanding. Stanley who gives in to the men of the system is put into an irreparable situation; that is, blindness. In its real meaning, he loses his sight. He doesn't have an ability to fight with them. The two men, who are his oppressors, punish him by taking his glasses which can be interpreted as a way of keeping him under control physically. Without his glasses Stanley is hardly a healthy person and is almost disabled. He cannot walk and is lack of ability to fight with his oppressors. They give his glasses back but they keep him blindfold since "the frames are bust" (Pinter, 1996:68). Hence, he cannot be assumed as happy to have them back. Petey suggests mending the frames with Sellotape, but Goldberg convinces him not to do like that: "Sellotape? No, no, that's all right, Mr Boles. It'll keep him quiet for the time being, keep his mind off other things" (Pinter, 1996:68). Without his glasses Stanley must struggle to see and this is what Goldberg wants. Therefore, he doesn't allow Petey to repair the glasses because he doesn't want Stanley gain his sight again.

Playing the game Blind man's bluff with Stanley is Goldberg and McCann's plan. They play it by turning off the lights and shining a torch on

Stanley. Stanley becomes the blind man and they cover his eyes. Except for Stanley's face, they leave everywhere dark. Under this light, Stanley's sight is blurred. He is literally and figuratively blinded. Everybody in the game can see everything but Stanley's view is not clear. While they are playing, McCann touches Stanley's glasses symbolically. He takes them off in order to cover his eyes with a scarf. Stanley stands blindfold. McCann goes back slowly across the stage to the left. He breaks Stanley's glasses. During the game, his cracked glasses are broken completely, so it is not possible to repair them. Playing game is not as innocent as it may be thought but it is a form of victimization. For Prentice, "Stanley has been reduced to a broken, possibly blind, gibbering shell of his former self" (1991:24). Although he has a potential to see, he lacks the potential to understand his irreparable situation, and also he lacks the potential to protect his individuality.

Pinter's characters are certainly in a power struggle to protect their identities and chances of living. Again Prentice indicates "in Pinter's work asserting dominance over another remains the primary means characters not only establish identity but survive in a world where to allow oneself to assume a subservient position, for even a moment, can result in annihilation – physical, psychological, or both" (1991:28). Although his characters struggle for their identities and life, they are unable to protect it as it generally results in characters' disaster. They have to accept their fate in the end as they are not strong enough to fight and as they don't have the power of knowledge.

2.2. MENACE DERIVING FROM INDIVIDUAL SELF

In Pinter's plays, characters do not only fight with outside menace but also with menace deriving from their inner individual selves in that hostile society. Pinter depicts disillusionment of people and their disturbed state of minds very well. Apart from physical aspect of menace, a weaker character's need for love which has nothing in return because the character is deprived of understanding and friendship means psychological menace. The characters' sense of identity is also under threat if they fail in their relationships. Detaching oneself from society and being lonely causes to lose sense of self and a failure of existence.

In Pinter's works, individuals do not have a proper interpersonal communication and they are unsuccessful in a mutual understanding. For all these reasons, individuals have to face menace in them. There is a relation between menace and the conditions of isolation, deprivation and insensibility. The victims, in Pinter's works, suffer a lot because they are dissatisfied with their need for love and respect and they can't achieve a decent interaction with others. This unfulfilled love becomes a source of menace. Without love and respect, the individual is nobody, and he has a sense of being isolated and alienated by the world. In *The Room*, for instance, Rose needs to be loved and respected by her husband or the people around her. However, she cannot build up a good relation with the others, such as her husband Bert and their landlord Mr. Kidd, because she thinks if she interacts with others and knows about them this means they will know about her, too. She doesn't want anybody to cross her border and she sees them as menace which will ruin her so-called stable life. Thus, she isolates herself from the life and life leaves her alone with her fears and nonfulfillment. In this play, even the characters have a conversation with others, they talk differently. Each talks about a different thing and no one listens to another, so it cannot be called an interaction, but it is possible to say that they trap themselves in their own world and don't want to go out.

Another point necessary to highlight in Pinter's works is the menace in the problems of identity. Menace of identity is, in fact, a result of other forms of menace mentioned before. When individuals encounter with a powerful system, their sense of individuality and self-esteem start to shatter. While giving individual's self-definition, it can be seen better and this self-definition is now controlled by the dominant powers. The individual starts to see himself/herself from the eyes of others; that's why, he/she loses his/her sense of self and self-confidence. Also he/she is drawn into an exercise of self-torture and self-accusation.

Pinter's characters "often struggle to preserve identity and, by extension, to survive, engage in a conflict that becomes a life-and-death battle" (Prentice, 1991:23). In Pinter, it is possible to see exertion of one's existence. In relation to this, Pinter, like the existentialists, disengages himself from the rational devices of characterization, and is concerned with an existential suffering and the idea that "existence precedes essence". Walter Kerr who talks about Pinter's existential technique, suggests that Pinter involves us in a world of anxiety for existence (Burkman, 1971:7). And this anxiety leads characters to do everything for their existence. They put a great effort to protect their existence.

In the first three plays of Pinter, a character who appears to be comfortably settled in a secure little world of his own is attacked and destroyed by an evil force from outside. There is a common issue that is illusion of security, which is defined in each play as a function of the protagonist's sense of identity, his knowing who he is. "Pinter demonstrates in these plays that such security is almost '*hubristic*', calling the menacing force down upon itself, the universe that Pinter describes will not permit a confident 'I am who I am'" (Berkowitz, 1978:83). All of his plays have an assumption that no one can have a secure sense of who he is and have shown how uncertainty which stays in the centre of life controls our lives. Therefore, that any attempts to reach a secure sense of self is destroyed.

Rose Hudd, in the beginning of the play *The Room*, presents a strong identity. She is controlled by hatred to darkness and to cold – "I don't know

why you have to go out ... It'll be dark in a minute as well, soon. It gets dark now. It's very cold out, I can tell you. It's murder" (Pinter, 1983:5). She has a one-room flat and she keeps it bright and warm; that is actually, "a protection of herself in a world defined by an almost conscious and deliberate opposition to her" (Berkowitz, 1978:84). She complains about the cold outside and reminds her husband to tell anyone who asks her that she is happy with the place she lives. Rose has a unique place for herself and she feels secure inside although she has an unavoidable fascination for the possible dangers waiting in the cold and dark, especially when she thinks of having to live in the basement of the building:

Did you ever see the walls? They were running. ... Those walls would have finished you off. I don't know who lives down there now. Whoever it is, they're taking a big chance. (Pinter, 1983:6-7)

It is apparent that Rose never goes outside her room, and she can't prevent Bert from going out even though she tries to influence him by filling him hot food and light tea, and bundling him up with several clothes. Briefly, Rose's room defines her security, and it is an extension of her personality. In order to reflect and protect her sense of self, she builds up a fence around herself saying the room is all right for her and she knows where she is (Pinter, 1983:6).

The essential thing in this play is that the menace in this play attacks the qualities of light, warmth and certainty. Rose's landlord's, Mr. Kidd, and the couple's, Mr. and Mrs. Sands, who are looking for an apartment, visits, brings an uncertainty carrying cold and darkness which is like a denial of Rose's very existence. Those visitors, actually, intruders are threats for Rose's security because they carry the unknown and arouse suspicion in her. For instance, the threat to Rose's security becomes stronger when the couple, Mr. and Mrs. Sands, brings the cold and dark up to her threshold. They cause confusion when they are talking about whether they were going up or down the dark stairs, and deny that the man has just left is the landlord. Most importantly and frighteningly, they present the first attack from the

enemy that is a ghostly voice in the cold, dark basement who said them that room number seven, Rose's room, was vacant.

The next visit of the landlord is a kind of preparation for Rose's encounter with a blind Negro from the basement. The Negro is a kind of human form of the darkness, coldness, and uncertainty that she is afraid of most in her life. He threatens her identity when he calls her with a different name and insists that she 'come home' to some other place. At the end of the play, Bert returns and attacks the Negro, but he has already completed his mission; that is, Rose has accepted her new identity imposed by the Negro and she doesn't have condolence from her room anymore. Finally, she becomes blind losing her sight which was precious to her. She is defeated by the enemy and she loses everything she had defined herself.

In Pinter's plays, outside powers define characters' sense of self gradually and they cannot protect their sense of self. Because of this, characters experience a menace which is based on a problem of identity. "Identity in *The Birthday Party*, and much of Pinter's work, grounded in outward position, remains relative to other people who grant or withdraw approval" (Prentice, 1991:34).

In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley is the one who is stuck in his past identity and in this past identity what he seeks is security which is a way out of his current distorted sense of self. He always mentions about his old times as a successful pianist. In a way, remembering and mentioning his past identity gives him comfort, and recalls that he had played the piano all around the world and the country. Yet, because he has a lower status now, missing his old days is the only thing he can do. According to his remembering the past, he was an important person as a pianist. However, one day, some unknown powers closed down the place where people come to listen to him. After that day, he has changed. He has become a person who has no aim in life and he has lost his status as a musician in the society. Now, he has a lower status. For all these reasons, he has no self-confidence and there is no belief in him in relation to his own capabilities any more. When Meg asks when he is going to play the piano again, he says he can't. He knows that

everything is very different now. He says how people look at him would make Meg think he was a different man. He thinks he has changed, but he is still the same person. As a result, he is surrounded by anguish for his self. He looks for a way to assert his identity. Therefore, he asks Meg to tell him who she is really talking to when she introduces herself to him. He has a wish which many people are unsuccessful to achieve; that's to say, he desires to be accepted as a valuable individual.

The others' "gaze and actions become a mirror in which Stanley sees reflected his "essence"" (Silverstein, 1993:29). Unfortunately, he sees a self in the mirror but it is similar to the one he expects. When he is lowered to an unimportant state, menacing forces change and rebuild his sense of identity. That's why; he wishes to be someone different from himself in the eyes of the people. For this reason, he tells a lie to Lulu about his day. He says he has been at the beach because he wanted her to think he was busy and also he is not a person who is sitting at home whole day. Lulu doesn't believe him and she offers him a mirror which will clearly give him an understanding of himself. He has a new identity now but this doesn't make him happy; his self-image doesn't shatter because he loses his self-confidence. He doesn't see himself as the old successful pianist. He feels a big disappointment in himself; therefore, he looks in the mirror again when Lulu leaves. He washes his face immediately as though he is trying to take off the image which is rebuilt for him. When he wears his glasses, he sees who he is actually. He is nothing but just a victim for whom the two men come. He comes to a realization that Goldberg and McCann are representatives of the system. Hence, a sense of guilt is imposed on Stanley, who is the victim of mental menace.

Martin Esslin states that "the problems of identity" is one of the most significant problems Pinter characters deal with, especially in *The Birthday Party* (1970:38). Stanley becomes aware of menace when the two men come to take him. Because of fear, his manners change noticeably; he becomes unreasonable like a child. Behaving like a child, Stanley can't play the boy's drum which is a birthday present from Meg. He gets hysterical by the two

men who are indifferent into his routine life. He loses his previous sense of self when he plays the drum as if he were a child though the instrument he plays is not even a piano. Playing this instrument, which is easier to play, shows that he accepts his new deconstructed identity which is formed after he is made to quit his musical profession and as well as to give up receiving people's respect. What's more, he is nothing now under the control of mysterious organization. Goldberg and McCann weaken his identity with their questions: "Who does he think he is?"; "Who do you think you are?" (Pinter, 1996:42). In conclusion, when he thinks himself as a helpless little boy, or no one, he acts in accordance with their aim of deconstructing his self-image.

After all, Stanley starts to shatter; he loses his self-confidence. He is not an individual anymore. Because the interrogation of the two men controls his ability to give a response to them, he begins to suffer from some disorders and this shows that he disintegrates as an individual.

His mental situation causes a physical breakdown. He is not able to express himself appropriately anymore and starts to stumble at the end. He starts to hesitate and become unreasonable. At the end, he loses himself completely, and "screams" (Pinter, 1996:46). Moreover, Stanley's drum is broken during his birthday party and this symbolizes the loss and the destruction of his musical identity, which he finds comfort with.

Stanley experiences an existential fear and this is shown in his intense desire for a change of name, and finding comfort in a new identity rather than his own. It is not certain to know that Stanley has already changed his name but it is implied in the two men's accusations that he has adopted an assumed name, and he accepts that he doesn't remember his real name. William claims that in this play the sense of identity is shadowy and enigmatic since "names are confused, identities shuffled" (1983:20). Stanley's original name reminds him a sense of failure, so he finds himself another name although his essence won't change with his new name. Goldberg thinks it as sin:

GOLDBERG: Webber! Why did you change your name?

STANLEY: I forgot the other one.

GOLDBERG: What's your name now?

STANLEY: Joe Soap.

GOLDBERG: You stink of sin. (Pinter, 1996:44)

He is not successful to give a proper self-definition of himself; thus, he is left without a sense of self. This menace ruins his unity as an individual and this makes him absolutely helpless against the threatful powers.

As it can be understood, in Pinter's plays, the characters lose their identity which is the only thing they build their lives on. Hence, the problem of identity is the most dangerous type of menace. Since characters lack a healthy identity, their lives end with a literal or figurative death. In the end, they bow to the inevitable hands of the system.

Pinter employs a pessimistic attitude towards his characters' end. They often meet a figurative death after a long struggle with the menace. Most of his characters are not able to get rid of the menace captivating them and most of them experience an ambiguous end. It is not important to be exposed to either a physical or psychological menace, but the characters experience a failure in terms of their protecting their existence any way.

In respect to a failed identity, *The Birthday Party* is the best example revealing the existential anxiety of the protagonist. Stanley's end of existence falls on his birthday; in other words, this indicates his being reborn into a different identity from his original one. It is also ironic that the menace draws his being to its end on his birthday. It is also ironic that the two men, Goldberg and McCann, who oppress Stanley, organize his birthday party and they say: "There's a gentleman living here. He's got a birthday party today, and he's forgotten all about it. So we're going to remind him. We're going to give him a party" (Pinter, 1996:27). It is clear that Stanley's birthday is more important for his oppressors than for himself. Therefore, it can be understood that this is an implication of the real meaning of rebirth, or death. It won't be possible for Stanley to be the same after that as they are going to make him someone who has a sense of self reformed by the organization. Goldberg has an aim to turn Stanley into a "corpse" and this is presented in his description of Stanley's, the victim's, birth:

What a thing to celebrate – birth! Like getting up in the morning. [...] Your skin is crabby, you need a shave, your eyes are full of muck, your mouth is like a boghouse, the palms of your hands are full of sweat, your nose is clogged up, your feet stink, what are you but a corpse waiting to be washed? (Pinter, 1996:39)

His definition shows Stanley's situation; namely, it is not only a celebration of his birth but also of his death. Because of this, he has a rough breakdown after his birthday. He becomes invisible, and he looks like a dead person. Goldberg explains his existential catastrophe. He says the celebration was too much for him. It is a nervous breakdown for him. Petey Boles is also puzzled with the rush in which his disintegration takes place: "But what brought it suddenly?" (Pinter, 1996:65). Goldberg replies that it is an inevitable end with some people. He thinks Stanley's fate is not something extraordinary because he knows the fact that he is doomed to this end by the powerful system and Stanley can't escape from his end.

For the system, Stanley is just a dead man; Goldberg and McCann announce his figurative death:

MCCANN: Who are you, Webber?

GOLDBERG: What makes you think you exist?

MCCANN: You're dead.

GOLDBERG: You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There is no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour! (Pinter, 1996:46)

For them, Stanley doesn't exist; his symbolical death can be seen because they leave him without essence or without the capacity to think or love. He becomes unresponsive and motionless at the end as if he departed from this life. He becomes unresponsive, so he looks like a dead person; he also shows no movement. The menacing organization wants to put him into a certain shape and it achieves this perfectly. Goldberg admits that he will be under their control throughout his life. They will be at the centre of his life; they will lead his every movement. Stanley has no purpose for living as he has no centre of his own and he starts to fall apart. He cannot control his

body; he loses the control of his hands and his head; the loss of physical abilities shows his death and his loss of identity. To confuse and do more harm Stanley, McCann and Goldberg use a new tactic. They give him alternative promises. They say they will watch over him, give him advice and give him suitable care and treatment with lowering his situation saying he has gone from bad to worse and he is on the verge as a dead man. Moreover, they tell him that they will recreate him, “you’ll be re-orientated [...] You’ll be adjusted [...] You’ll be integrated” (Pinter, 1996:77-78). All these messages make him completely unresponsive. He tries to speak but he can’t. He just makes meaningless sounds. Esslin asserts that Stanley “is in a state of catatonic trance, unable to speak, without any human reaction” (1970:79). He fails to have a self-definition and this brings his figurative death. His real death is not suggested, but they tell Petey that “He needs special treatment” (Pinter, 1996:79), and that’s why they’ll take him to Monty, the unknown leader of the organization. He will be taken to Monty and this is a really destructive end for Stanley; it is not possible to talk about his existence anymore.

Stanley is accompanied by two agents of the mechanism on his way to death; they also make him dress in a dark suit and he is led by McCann. Stanley is rather obedient on his last journey. He allows his torturer to lead the way for him. “STANLEY *stares blankly at the floor*” (Pinter, 1996:75). He is sent to his death and he becomes more silent and obedient.

On the other hand, *The Dumb Waiter* brings a question which is hidden in the picture of Goldberg and McCann in *The Birthday Party*: if individuality leads to destruction, does the hope for survival lie in voluntary facelessness? The only centre that the two gun-men, Ben and Gus, working for an unknown mafia-like organization, adopt is a bureaucratic system that holds the control of their lives, giving them orders and assignments, providing rooms, beds, dishes and even matches, diverting their victims in their direction, and even cleaning up afterwards. As a matter of course, the organization has some demands in return. These demands are unquestionable in terms of obedience and they have to be fulfilled

unconditionally. At the beginning of the play, Gus says he would like to have a view. He wishes to have scenery to look but it isn't possible to have it in that job. Ben says he is complaining in vain because they are not working every day. Even if Ben and Gus have last pieces of individuality, this doesn't match with the demands of their job. For example, Gus likes football and he is disappointed at missing a big game:

BEN: Anyway, there's no time. We've got to get straight back.

GUS: Well, we have done in the past, haven't we? Stayed over and watched a game, haven't we? For a bit of relaxation?

BEN: Things have tightened up, mate. They've tightened up. (Pinter, 1996:3)

The deprivation of his customary cup of tea, absence of a radio, and the dirty bed sheets in this hiding place also make Gus sad. Ben does not talk much about these kind of things, which are related to individual preferences. Nevertheless, he has his own interests and tastes such as model boats, football, and newspaper accounts of violence. There is an evidence of conflict with his growing tension and anxiety and the organization and the job.

Ben and Gus are in a basement room, under which was once a restaurant. With lowering of a dumb waiter carrying mysterious orders for food the central attack on two men starts. They send up what they have as food unquestioning and being instinctively obedient, but each time they are answered with more complex orders like Macaroni Pastitsio, Ormitha Macarounada, Char Siu and Beansprouts. With a fear inside him, Gus comes to a realization that it is a kind of test:

What's he doing it for? We've been through our tests, haven't we? We got right through our tests, years ago, didn't we? We took them together, don't you remember, didn't we? We've proved ourselves before now, haven't we? We've always done our job. What's he doing all this for? (Pinter, 1996:18)

What they want to test is clear; that is, they try to see whether Ben and Gus are reluctant or not to do anything to obey orders, even the orders are

impossible to carry out, and also to give up everything they have in their hands even it is not necessary and meaningful to sacrifice. Certainly, they fail the test. The organization is not satisfied with the things like biscuits, milk and chocolate bar they send up. This makes Gus speak about his personal rights ineffectively:

I'm thirsty too. I'm starving. And he wants a cup of tea. That beats the band, that does. ... I could do with a bit of sustenance myself. What about you? You look as if you could do with something too. ... we sent him up all we've got and he's not satisfied. No, honest, it's enough to make the cat laugh. Why did you send him up all that stuff? (*Thoughtfully*) Why did I send it up? (Pinter, 1996:13)

The climax of the play is shocking as it is in the other plays of Pinter. It is Ben who is given instructions they are waiting for, and the victim of that job is Gus. The curtain falls the moment Ben decides to kill Gus or not. Gus is the one who fails the test because he didn't know his place and dared to assume that he had a right to do anything, and now he is the one that must be destroyed. On the other hand, even though Ben has his commitment for the organization, there is no reward for Ben, too. He is even given a harder test. Berkowitz indicates "The organization – the universe of Pinter's plays – demands complete abrogation of self, and no reserve of will or independence will be permitted" (1978:89). Therefore, it is possible to say that these characters of Pinter also lose their existence as an individual. In the end, the sense of fear implies the murder of Gus playing the character who questions everything. Not only Gus but also Ben loses his existence figuratively as he continues to follow the organization's orders putting his own feelings, ideas and tastes aside and most importantly performing the probable murder of a man who he worked with and shared something anyhow.

3. REFLECTION OF EXISTENTIAL ANXIETIES

Existing in this world and protecting their walls of existence is very important for Pinter's characters and they fight for it in different ways. His early plays, mostly, present characters that are prone to anxiety. Pinter makes his characters show peculiarities of behavior which can be identified as characteristics of anxious minds. However, because of menace mentioned above, and because they are not strong enough to fight with menace, Pinter's characters live or die with an anxiety to be able to exist. To illustrate their existential anxieties Pinter uses language. For Pinter, language is a good tool to express characters' anxieties. He uses language from different aspects. He attributes some peculiarities to language.

For one thing, Pinter's characters have a feature to talk at length. Rose in *The Room*, Gus in *The Dumb Waiter*, Meg and Lulu in *The Birthday Party* are some of them. Rose is a woman in her sixties. She seems to be a dutiful wife and very much concerned about her husband and herself. In the opening scene she speaks of many things, especially about the security she feels in the room and her obligations she owes to her husband as a wife. However, her words have indications that she is noticeably tense at heart, although her husband is there to protect her in the room.

In her first dialogue, about ten minutes, Rose speaks about the threats she feels outside, and the security she feels inside her room:

ROSE: Here you are. This'll keep the cold out ... Still the room keeps warm. It's better than the basement anyway. (Pinter, 1983:7)

When Rose talks to her husband, she expresses anxiety of various kinds. In addition to her fear about the outside, she seems to be anxious about her neighbors. She says she doesn't know how the people live down there. It must be trouble. She keeps on telling him to eat because she thinks it'll do him good. Later she speaks again and she talks about darkness' coming in a minute and soon she rocks. This feeling is reflected in her words:

In these words it is possible to see a disturbed state of mind which makes her speak in the same way for a long time.

Being right in her fear about an external interference, Riley, a stranger, comes in with a message for her. She becomes eloquent again.

ROSE: What do you think you are up to? We are settled down here, cosy, quiet, and our landlord thinks the world of us, we're his favorite tenants, and you come in and drive him up the wall, drag my name into it! (Pinter, 1983:29)

Whenever Rose talks at length, she is tense and her words indicate some unspecified anxiety in her.

In the play *The Dumb Waiter*, Gus seems as tense as Rose in *The Room*. While Gus and Ben speak through the speaking tube, Gus often becomes eloquent and rebellious. When he realizes that they are not in a position to satisfy the demands made by the authority upstairs, he goes on speaking at length about their pitiable situation and their masters' indifference. Gus says, "What are we supposed to drink?" (Pinter, 1996:63). They are totally ignorant about what happens upstairs and this causes anxiety in them. Again he asks: "You don't think they're going to sit here and wait for stuff to come up from down here, do you?" (Pinter, 1996:64). According to Martin Esslin, "the main element of comedy (in the play) is provided by the brilliant small talk behind which the two men hide their growing anxiety" (1970:69). Gus's too much talking shows his effort to mask his anxiety.

In *The Birthday Party's* opening scene, Meg repeats her questions thirty three times almost serially. She does not really seek any relevant information, and have a serious desire to know when she asks questions. These questions show her anxiety indirectly. Her questions are mostly silly and insignificant, her husband, Petey's, responses are casual and indifferent in tone, too. While giving Petey cornflakes, Meg asks him:

MEG: ... Are they nice?

PETEY: Very nice.

MEG: I thought they would be nice. (She sits at the table.) You got your paper.

PETEY: Yes.

MEG: Is it good?

PETEY: Not bad.

MEG: What does it say?

PETEY: Nothing much. (Pinter, 1996:9 – 10)

Their small talk does not have a focus and it reveals a disturbed mind. Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson find here “the paradigm of existential chat” (1983:43). They point out that “Meg plays her futile word games for the serious purpose of having her own existence confirmed by the sound of a reciprocal voice, by the mere sequence of mutual exchange” (1983:43). This sequence of mutual exchange comes out of existential anxiety. This anxiety makes their words and sentences short and brief.

Stanley becomes sad when he hears that two men are coming there to stay. Meg realises this and asks whether Stanley knows those men and Stanley remembers the name of one of them. Meg feels his anxiety. She becomes tense, too and starts speaking in the way that as if she was sharing his state of mind.

Stanley also speaks too much when he is anxious. When he is informed of the arrival of the visitors, he asks many questions.

STANLEY: Who are they?

MEG: I don't know.

STANLEY: Didn't he tell you their names?

MEG: No.

STANLEY: (pacing the room) When was this? When did he see them? (Pinter, 1996:20)

The arrival of the strange visitors causes curiosity and anxiety in Stanley. When he hears that they have come, his curiosity grows and when Stanley is asked about his past, he becomes anxious and eloquent again:

MCCANN: (sitting at the table, left). You in business?

STANLEY: No. I think I'll give it up ... (Pinter, 1996:40)

Stanley behaves in a state of anxiety and tension when speaks at length. The same kind of anxiety can also be seen in Goldberg and McCann when they arrive the seaside boarding house. His short answers indicate his anxiety. Goldberg asks McCann:

GOLDBERG: McCann. What are you so nervous about? Pull yourself together. Everywhere you go these days, it's like a funeral.

MCCANN: You may be right. (Pinter, 1996:28)

Another point necessary to highlight is that Pinter's characters are not only those who talks at length to reflect their anxieties but also those who remain or prefer to remain silent or talk little. Pinter uses silences in his plays and Pinter expresses his attitude to language and silence in these quoted lines:

There are two kinds of silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of language locked beneath it. That is its continuous reference. The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. (Pinter, 1977:14)

Pinter uses these two kinds of silences to express the feelings and states of mind of his characters. Pinter's some characters speak too little. People suffering from anxiety become thoughtful and absent-minded and too much anxiety sometimes makes them silent for a while. They remain silent to their surroundings and do not show reaction or respond the others properly. So, silence in some characters in Pinter can be taken as "meditative repose" that can be "a part of all anxiety disorder ... the major symptom in the overanxious disorder" (Duke and Nowicki, Jr., 1986:426).

Bert, in *The Room*, Rose's husband talks too little. He is like a deaf and dumb. He almost always keeps his silence throughout the play. In contrast to Bert, his wife, Rose, is really talkative. She asks foolish and meaningless questions all the time and speaks of her concern over Bert and the security she feels inside her room. Meanwhile, Bert seems like a deaf giving no response to her, even with a nod. Bert does not answer the questions asked to him even when Mr Kidd is there with them, in the room. Almansi and Simon Henderson comment on Pinter's such characters: "There

is a garrulous partner, usually female, who tries to communicate with a laconic friend, usually male ..." (1983:35). Here the garrulous partner is Rose and the laconic friend is Bert. Both suffer from anxiety. Rose shows it through eloquence and Bert shows it through silence.

In *The Dumb Waiter* Gus keeps on asking irrelevant questions, sometimes foolish. Sometimes what they do is like a game of words to spend time. They wait for their victims and it creates anxiety in Gus and Ben. Ben is quiet while Gus is eloquent. Gus's questions are so weary that Ben flares up at a point. He asks why he is always asking questions.

It can clearly be understood that Ben is also in a state of anxiety. However, he stays silent and he warns Gus just to do it and shut up.

They suddenly get orders from upstairs through the speaking tube and the dumb waiter but they are running short of the things ordered, so they can't really satisfy the orders and their anxieties increase. Even in that situation, they respond in their own way of characteristics; Ben is silent and Gus is eloquent. Gus speaks at length and asks: "Who knows what has got upstairs?" ... (Pinter, 1996:63). He protests again: "You don't think they're just going to sit there and wait for stuff to come up from down here, do you?" (Pinter, 1996:64). Here, not in the same way that Rose and Bert are but similarly, Ben is laconic and Gus is garrulous.

Pinter uses characters like these in his plays. One keeps silent and the other one keeps on talking at length. There is a talkative wife and silent husband, and a talkative friend and a silent listener. Both characters reveal their anxiety although their means of expression is different.

Another way to reflect anxiety of characters is repetition. Pinter uses repetition in dialogues. This may create laughter for audience. However, behind the repetition there lies characters anxiety.

The device of repetition, so prevalent here, is not, of course, Pinter's own discovery. It is the stock-in-trade of oratory, comedy and drama, and of all speech. But Pinter uses it with astonishing persistence, repeating the simplest phrases until they yield the secret of their character's hidden activity. (Brown, 1971:25)

Pinter's characters' 'hidden activity' is because of their anxiety. Characters have their own emotional crises in different contexts. They use certain words and sentences repeatedly which reveals their anxiety.

In *The Room*, Rose meets Mr and Mrs Sands. They start arguing about a trivial subject. Mrs Sands is a bit tense. She asks about a star during their discussion:

MRS SANDS: You didn't see a star?

MR SANDS: Why not?

MRS SANDS: Because I'm telling you, I'm telling you I didn't see a star. (Pinter, 1983:20)

Similar repetition can be seen again when Rose asks Mr Kidd whether he is the landlord:

ROSE: Listen, Mr Kidd, you are the landlord, aren't you? There isn't any other landlord?

MR KIDD: What? What's that to do with it? I don't know what you're telling about. I've got to tell you, that's all. I've got to tell you. (Pinter, 1983:25)

Rose asks about a thing that Mr Kidd wants to suppress. He is embarrassed by her questions. That's why; he repeats certain words in his speech.

Mr Kidd tells her that somebody in the basement wants to see her but Rose is not ready to entertain the visitor and she continuously gives the same answer to the question why she does not want to see him:

MR KIDD: ... Mrs Hudd, have a pity. Please see him. Why don't you see him?

ROSE: I don't know him.

MR KIDD: You can never tell. You might know him. (Pinter, 1983:27)

Petey and his wife Meg are presented sufferers from anxiety in the first act of *The Birthday Party*. Meg's anxiety is reflected through her excessive conversation over her husband yet Petey stays silent most of the time. He does not talk much and avoids Meg's questions with some repeated words. While he is chatting with his wife, the word 'nice' is used many times. As

Richard Dutton says “The irritatingly all-purpose ‘nice’, in fact recurs ten times in three very spare ages of dialogue” (1986:91). When Meg tells Stanley that two gentlemen are coming there to stay for a couple of days, Stanley asks for some details about them. Meg hides many things and she doesn’t give him any satisfactory answer; instead calls him “a liar,” and this is repeated several times.

When Stanley learns about the arrival of the two guests, he suddenly becomes anxious and repeats hysterically that they’re looking for someone. Meg tries to make him believe the opposite by repeating, “They’re not” (Pinter, 1996:24).

While Goldberg and McCann are questioning Stanley with their questions, they also repeat many questions. For instance, they ask Stanley whether he knows an external force.

Goldberg and McCann have a dispute about how they should be called when they are about to go back, towards the end of the play:

GOLDBERG: (opening his eyes regarding McCann). What – did – you – call – me?

MACCANN: Who?

GOLDBERG: 8murderously). Don’t call me that! (He seizes MCCANN by the throat.)

NEVER CALL ME THAT!

MCCANN: (writhing). Nat, Nat, Nat, NAT! I called you Nat. I was asking you, Nat. Honest to God. Just a question, that’s all, just a question, do you see, do you follow me? (Pinter, 1996:76)

Some of these repetitions are natural response of the characters because they want to make sure that their words have been heard. However, there are contexts in which repetitions of words or sentences are visibly out of place. This is a part of Pinter’s method. These repetitions are meant to show the unsettled mind of the characters.

Another way to express anxiety is characters actions. Pinter portrays their actions which are caused by their anxieties. For instance, he uses act of violence in his plays as a reflection of characters’ anxieties.

A pattern of violence declares itself in Pinter's first plays – visible violence in *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter*, imminent in *The Birthday Party* (Pesta, 1967:58).

Violence is a major theme in Pinter's plays. When the characters are filled with anxiety, they turn violent. It is visible in *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter* and *The Birthday Party*.

In an interview with Besky, Pinter justifies his depiction of violence, saying the world is full of violence, so as a matter of course, there is too much violence in the plays. He thinks it an important and unavoidable element (1967:3). Violence in a Pinter play indicates characters' anxiety. Tom Milne sees violence in Pinter as a reflection of social problems. He says that we are, as any reader of the daily press, "living in an Age of Violence the individual, unable to come to terms with society, unable or unwilling to place his ideals at its service, is crushed by society" (1968:40).

Tension in the individual is expressed through violence in Pinter's plays. Some characters become violent all of a sudden expressing their inner conflicts resulting from anxiety.

Peter Hall, a well-known Pinter director, comments on the different inside of Pinter characters:

So most of the characters preserve their cool, however hot their cool is inside. Equally, physical violence can suddenly be unleashed, which is an expression of the tensions that have been developing beneath this often very urbane surface, and people crack each other over the head or beat each other up or kill each other ... (1981:76)

This is true even in the case of his first play *The Room*. Bert is very cool in this play from outside, but he is actually very tense inside. His tension grows throughout the play and reaches its climatic stage when he sees Riley, the blind Negro with his wife in her room. Then he becomes violent. He is shocked to see the Negro in his room when he is back.

(He regrets the NEGRO for some moments. Then with his foot he lifts the arm-chair up. The NEGRO falls on to the floor. He rises slowly).

RILEY: Mr Hudd, your wife –

BERT: Lice!

(He strikes the NEGRO, knocking him down and then kicks his head against the gas-stove several times. The NEGRO lies still. BERT walks away.) (Pinter, 1983:32)

Bert sees the NEGRO with his wife and his anxiety doesn't have any endurance. Thus, Bert's suspicion about his wife come true and he becomes violent; namely, his anxiety finds its expression in violence.

In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley becomes violent when Meg teases him while she is offering tea. His strong language shows his violent nature:

MEG: It's good tea. Good strong tea.

STANLEY: This isn't tea. It's gravy!

MEG: It's not.

STANLEY: Get out of it. You succulent old washing bag. (Pinter, 1996:18)

When Stanley rejects Lulu's invitation to accompany her for an outing, the same manner can be observed with Lulu while speaking to him.

LULU: So you're not going out for a walk.

STANLEY: I can't at the moment.

LULU: You're a bit of wash out, aren't you? (Pinter, 1996:26)

In Act II of *The Birthday Party*, Stanley becomes a victim of torture put by Goldberg and McCann, he can't keep his temper and gets violent:

Stanley rises. He begins to move towards MEG, dragging the drum on his foot. He reaches her and stops. His hands move towards her and they reach her throat. He begins to strangle her. MCCANN and GOLDBERG rush forward and throw him off. (Pinter, 1996:63-64)

Goldberg and McCann are waiting impatiently for Stanley to take him. While they are waiting, they are talking to each other and their talk reveals their anxiety and it turns to a heated exchange. During their talk, McCann calls Goldberg 'Nat' and 'Simey' and this drives Goldberg crazy. He catches him by the throat and warns him not to call him as Nat. They have a row and exchange. This is the manifestation of their anxiety and this anxiety turns out to be violent action.

In *The Dumb Waiter*, Ben and Gus become violent from time to time as they are waiting for their victims and this shows their anxiety. Ben asks Gus to light the kettle and Gus disagrees with Ben about the accuracy of grammatical usage. He tries to correct Ben by changing it into 'put on the kettle'. With this, violence comes out:

BEN: Light the kettle! It's common usage!

GUS: I think you've got it wrong.

BEN: (menacing) What do you mean?

GUS: They say put on the kettle.

BEN: (taut) Who says?

(They stare at each other, breathing hard)

(...)

GUS: What does the gas --?

BEN: (grabbing him with two hands by the throat, at arm's length).

The kettle you fool!

(Gus takes the hand from his throat.) (Pinter, 1996:47-48)

Their argument about the accuracy of the phrase easily causes a fight. This is another indication of their anxiety. Later, Gus criticizes Ben as he repeats reading of newspaper. Ben gets angry again and comes forward to give him a swipe.

Sometime later, Ben finds a pack of crisps from Gus's bag. He suddenly becomes suspicious of him and this feeling arouses his curiosity.

BEN: ... Where did these come from?

GUS: What?

BEN: Where did these crisps come from?

GUS: Where did you find them?

BEN: (hitting him on the shoulder). You're playing a dirty game, my lad! (Pinter, 1996:56)

Through the end of the play, Gus gets an order through the tube for food and he gives a negative answer that they are running short of supply. When Ben hears this, he gets angry. He grabs the tube and flings Gus away. Then he slaps Gus hard.

Another action shown by characters as a response in Pinter's play is evasiveness. Those characters have a tendency to avoid strangers and strange and unpleasant situations. This is a way of "avoiding all situations, thoughts or feelings which might arouse anxiety" (Horney, 1937:53). They don't want 'involvement'. Barbara Kreps observes that involvement "is shunned in Pinter's early dramas, not because it is impossible, but because it is potentially threatening" (1979:55). This is more apparent in his early plays.

In *The Room*, meeting strangers makes Rose afraid. Even in her own room she is tense. She seems to be agoraphobic and sometimes xenophobic. Marshall P. Duke and Stephen Nowicki Jr. observe: "To reduce the likelihood of setting off an anxiety reaction, agoraphobic people may limit their outside activities even to the point of never leaving home" (1986:245). In a way, her lengthy speech shows her anxiety and at the same time she seems to be xenophobic. She speaks about the security of the room comparing to the insecurity of the outside, because expects an "inscrutable stranger arriving into a set piece, traditionally organized situation and threatening to overrun it" (Eveling, 1984:76). She thinks she is secure in her room. Therefore, she makes others and herself believe that she doesn't bother about others, and says to her husband that she is rather happy there, in her room. Everything is all right there. Nobody disturbs them and this is something good for her. Here it is possible to talk about a kind of 'self-alienation' caused by her xenophobia. Actually, when she meets strangers she treats them hospitably. When she is afraid since she is going to meet a stranger, she has a tendency to become evasive, just as when Mr Kidd knocks at the door.

When Mr Kidd goes out, she has a couple as guests. Mr Sands, one of them, asks her if she knows Mr Kidd. Her answer is mystifying. She says she doesn't know him exactly. They do not interfere each other. They have their own places to live, so they don't disturb each other and it must be like that.

Here she wants to keep herself to herself. She doesn't want to be with others or entertain others. She is lonely and does not want to go out of her room. It's been a long time since she went out. Mr Sands asks her about it:

MR SANDS: Why haven't you even been down there, Mrs Hudd?

ROSE: Oh. Once a long time ago. (Pinter, 1983:26)

She dislikes strangers and she has agoraphobic fear of outside. With these feelings, she is not only afraid of the basement but also the outside generally. The visitors arouse her anxiety although she treats them hospitably when they come. A. C. Dobrez comments: "As always, uncertainty and confusion add to her tension" (1986:324).

In this play, Bert is also not eager to entertain strangers, and his uneasiness is expressed through his silence. Even he shows almost no response to his wife. He doesn't even have a look at the guest, Mr Kidd. They don't want to learn the message he brings. This evasiveness is caused by excessive anxiety.

It is also possible to see this action in the play *The Birthday Party*. Rose hides herself in her room. Similarly, Stanley hides himself in the boarding house. He does not want the two men there. Their coming is a shock for him. It is worth noticing the excitement he shows when he hears the news of these two men:

MEG: I'm expecting two gentlemen.

(He turns)

STANLEY: What?

MEG: You don't know that, did you?

STANLEY: What are you talking about?

MEG: Two gentlemen asked Petey if they could come and stay for a couple of nights. I'm expecting them. (She picks up the duster and begins to wipe the dust on the table.)

STANLEY: I don't believe it. (Pinter, 1996:20)

Stanley refuses to believe the two men's coming. This shows his uneasiness about meeting strangers. He goes on to say:

STANLEY: They're coming in a van.

MEG: Who?

STANLEY: Do you know what they've got in that van?

MEG: What?

STANLEY: They've got a wheel-barrow in that van. (Pinter, 1996:24)

Actually, the visitors do not bring any wheel-barrow. They haven't informed him anything like that, either. Because of his anxiety, Stanley is seeing things. When he hears the name 'Goldberg', he trembles. Meg tries to ease him realising his anxiety about the guests. She promises not to wake him up and she will make them be quiet. She also guarantees that they won't stay there long. For her he mustn't be sad because it is his birthday. But Stanley gives no reaction. He isn't satisfied with her words. He flares up and speaks to their face when they are making plans to celebrate his birthday:

STANLEY: Let me – just make this clear. You don't bother me. To me, you're nothing but a dirty joke. But I have responsibility towards the people in this house. They've been down here too long. They've lost their sense of smell. I haven't. And nobody is going to make advantage of them while I'm here (A little less forceful). Anyway, this house isn't your cup of tea. There is nothing good for you, from any angle. So why don't you just go, without any more fuss. (Pinter, 1996:45)

It is clear that Stanley says he feels very tense in their presence, and his anxiety makes him so ordinary about it.

In *The Dumb Waiter*, the two men are waiting for their victim and an envelope slides under the door. This frightens them and Ben orders Gus to open the door and check whether there is anybody. Gus seems evasive at first and behaves hesitantly and opens the door only at the second command:

BEN: Open the door and see if you can catch anyone outside.

GUS: Who me?

BEN: Go on.

(Gus stares at him, puts the matches in his pocket, goes to his bed and takes a revolver from under the pillow. He goes to the door, opens it, looks out and shuts it.) (Pinter, 1996:46)

He goes on to say: "I wonder who it'll be tonight" (Pinter, 1996:49). His words and taking his revolver indicate that he is afraid and anxious.

What's more, some of Pinter's characters are absorbed in reading. Bert and Rose in *The Room*, Petey and McCann in *The Birthday Party*, and Ben and Gus in *The Dumb Waiter* are characters who use newspapers and magazines to hide themselves behind them. Guido Almansi and Simon Henderson comment:

Pinter's laconic males tend to hide behind the propped-up newspapers, reading out the occasional snippet, while their blabbering wives try to engage them in proper conversation ... (1983:38)

In *The Room* and *The Birthday Party*, Bert and Petey are engaged in reading while their wives Rose and Meg chat. In *The Dumb Waiter* it is a male character who chats. The act of reading is meant as an action to present characters in a disturbed state of mind.

At the beginning of the play, *The Room*, the stage direction says that "Bert is at the table, wearing a cap, a magazine propped in front of him" (Pinter, 1983:7). While Rose is talking to him, Bert is absorbed in his magazine. He does not answer any of the questions thrown to him. Rose's talking is because of her anxiety and Bert's reading is a result of his anxiety; actually it is a good way for him to hide his anxiety. When Bert goes out, Rose is left alone. That moment her anxiety about the outside grows and she takes the paper, but puts it down quickly. She takes it to read but the expectation about menace outside and her loneliness make her more tense, and she puts the paper back. The same act is seen again when she is alone as Mr and Mrs Sands go out. Again she takes the paper.

In *The Birthday Party*, Petey is always seen with a paper. In the beginning of the play, he appears with the paper and reading it while his wife Meg is asking him a series of questions. The next morning, Petey is again seen with a paper. He leaves the paper behind him and McCann tears it into pieces. Petey comes back and sees the paper torn into many pieces. He takes the strips and studies them. It is as if he had to read the paper and had no way out without reading it.

The next time when he is seen absorbed in the paper is when Goldberg and McCann take Stanley away by force although he attempted to

prevent them. He is helpless and anxious at that moment. With these feelings, he turns back on reading the paper but not a new paper but the strip of papers left there by McCann.

Petey knows that there is some intrigue related to Stanley's disappearance. However, through the end of the play, when Meg asks him where Stanley is, he lies to her, and pretends to read even though he knows that Stanley has been taken by Goldberg and McCann. He lies because of his shyness and anxiety, as Charles Carpenter says:

Petey conceals his shame behind the daily paper, then unwittingly exposes it in the form of an emphatic wish, lying to her that Stanley is asleep. (1984:109)

In *The Dumb Waiter*, the action of reading is apparent, too. In the opening act of the play, the characters, the two thugs, are waiting for their victim. They are very tense. Ben, at regular intervals, rattles a paper and reads it while watching his partner, Gus. The first word he produces in the play is 'Kaw' (Pinter, 1996:35), which is here an interjection expressing the anxiety and impatience he feels as he goes through the paper. In the play, *The Room*, Bert is keeps on reading while Rose is talking to him. Here, Ben keeps on reading while his partner Gus talks to him. Whenever he reads something from the paper, he uses the word 'Kaw', which happens five times in the play. When they are talking about Wilson, who is most probably their master, Ben gets angry and he grabs the paper Gus is reading. Gus becomes irritated and asks him:

GUS: ... How many times have you read the paper? (Pinter, 1996:52)

This indicates that Ben is not really reading the paper for any information, but reading is just a way to cover his anxiety.

They expect their victim soon. Ben gives Gus instructions about how to handle him when he faces him. These instructions make Gus anxious. He goes to lavatory and comes back asking Ben why the matches had been sent to them if the master knew that there was no gas. This makes Ben uneasy and he asks:

BEN: What are you asking about?

(Gus stares down at him)

GUS: (thickly). Who is upstairs?

BEN: (nervously). What's one thing to do with another?

GUS: Who is it though?

BEN: What's one thing to do with another?

(Ben fumbles for his paper on the bed) (Pinter, 1996:67)

Here his question 'what's one thing to do with another' is nervous and repeated and it is followed by his fumbling for the paper. When Ben gets the last message, he seems very upset and here the stage direction makes the point clear

(Ben hangs the tube. He goes to his bed and lies down. He picks up his paper and reads ... Ben throws the paper down.)

BEN: Kaw!

(He picks up the paper and looks at it.)

Listen to this!

(Pause)

What about that, eh?

(Pause)

Kaw!

(Pause)

Have you heard such a thing. (Pinter, 1996:69)

His picking up the paper and throwing it down again and again indicate his anxiety and agitation at the moment. Again he picks up the paper and throws it down as he gets ready to murder his victim. Unexpectedly, it is understood that the next victim is Gus. When Ben gets the message saying that he should murder his friend and partner, Gus, he is upset.

In addition to what has been mentioned above, mutual distrust can also be observed in Pinter's plays. Mutual distrust is common in modern life. Karen Horney says that "a great majority of us have to struggle with problems of competition ... distrust of others and of our own selves ... that may be present in a neurosis" (1937:34). This neurotic can be seen in Pinter's plays. Most of the characters are not successful in having strong and solid

relationships, though they want them. One doesn't trust another and this is the main cause of this failure. In Pinter's characters this distrust can be observed deeply. The presence of another person creates insecurity in the mind of the individual.

In *The Room*, Rose seems to be anxious in her own room even when she is with her husband. In the beginning of the play, she is talking about the security she feels inside her room and the insecurity of the outside. She appears to be concerned about her husband very much. However, later in the play, she evokes suspicion in the audience about her intentions. She is over-anxious about her husband and this seems to be fake. Through the end of the play, when she talks to a strange Negro, it is understood that she is a prostitute tired of entertaining customers:

ROSE: ... oh, these customers. They come in here and stink the place out. After a hand-out, I know all about it. (Pinter, 1983:29)

There are clues in her words to Bert that she is persuading him to go out. She tells him that she had talked to Mr Kidd about him that he would be doing a run today. While Rose tries to send him out, he shows unwillingness to leave the room. This also shows his distrust of her. It is caused by his suspicion about her loyalty. As he is concerned, his anxiety comes true when he sees Riley with her. This anxiety makes him murder Riley at that moment. Rose expects punishment from outside at any moment and her punishment anxiety created by her guilty conscience causes distrust of her husband. Even her husband can turn to be a menace. She is aware of the fact that Bert can be violent and dangerous as he proves at the end of the play. Thus, she is afraid that he can be violent towards her at any time.

It is possible to see the similar distrust between Petey and Meg in *The Birthday Party*. Petey's indifference is a reflection of his distrust and his evasive answers are indication of indifference:

MEG: (...) What time did you go out in the morning, Petey?

PETEY: Same time as usual.

MEG: Was it dark?

PETEY: no, it was light. (Pinter, 1996:10)

Whatever attitude he has, she continues to be very dutiful to him. Here she looks like Rose appearing as dutiful and loving. Petey has some doubts about her relationship with Stanley. She has an uncertain relationship (mother / whore) with Stanley. She wants the company of Stanley.

Stanley also has his mistrust in his relationship with Meg and Lulu. He rejects to accompany them when they approach him, especially with sexual proposals:

MEG: Are you going out?

STANLEY: Not with you.

MEG: But I'm going shopping in a minute.

STANLEY: Go.

MEG: You'll be lonely, all by yourself. (Pinter, 19)

He responds Lulu's invitation like this:

LULU: So you're not coming for a walk?

STANLEY: I can't at the moment.

LULU: You're a bit of washout, aren't you? (Pinter, 1996:26)

Stanley seems to be very indifferent in both situations. His indifference is the result of his distrust of them.

Goldberg and McCann seem to be very nervous when they come to the boarding house to take Stanley away. The reason for this can be seen in their words:

GOLDBERG: McCann, what are you so nervous about? Pull yourself together. Everywhere you go these days it's like a funeral.

MCCANN: That's true.

GOLDBERG: True? Of course it is true. It's more than true. It's a fact.

MCCANN: You may be right.

GOLDBERG: What's it, McCann? You don't trust me like you did in the old days? (Pinter, 1996:28)

Here Goldberg complains that McCann doesn't trust him as he trusted in the past. McCann has the same case; he cannot trust Goldberg. This mutual distrust caused by their anxiety. They've lost their trust in each other and this is one of the reasons for their anxiety. Even if they trust each other, it

is only with a fear of disillusionment of one another. The expectation of disillusionment creates anxiety in their relationship. Therefore, they distrust each other because of their anxiety.

In *The Dumb Waiter*, Ben and Gus are waiting for their victim. They have concerns about their master, their victims and even about themselves. Gus asks several questions and he doesn't feel secure about the room they are in.

GUS: I wouldn't like to live in this dump. I wouldn't mind if you had a window, you could see what it looked like outside. (Pinter, 1996:39)

This is a sign of his distrust in many other things. His distrust of his partner revealed when he wants to examine Gus's bag:

BEN: ... (Gus exits, left. Ben looks in the bag. He brings out a packet of crisps. Enter Gus with a plate.)

(Accusingly, holding up the crisps.)

Where did these come from? (Pinter, 1996:56)

This question makes it clear that Ben doesn't have confidence in his partner, too. With the words of Gus, it is possible to see a similar distrust:

GUS: Why did you stop the car, this morning in the middle of the road?

BEN: (lowering the paper). I thought you were asleep. (Pinter, 1996:41)

Ben has no clear answer. He is evasive while answering the question. There is a reason behind these repeated questions and evasive answers; it is their anxiety which is created by mutual distrust.

4. CONCLUSION

Harold Pinter is one of the admired and acknowledged playwrights of the world. He is a playwright who experienced WW II and he lived in post war society which poses a big threat to human existence. It was inevitable for Pinter to escape from its effects. That is a hostile society which affects individuals trying to protect their existence negatively. Hence, Pinter deals with the existential problems of man in this hostile society. He depicts man's experience in that. In his works man is presented to be the prisoner of uncertainties, ambiguities and ambivalences. All these situations man experiences are because of his existential anxieties created by menace and so man experiences a vacuous existence. Neither the past nor the future can protect him. He is trapped in the dark present and he realizes that there is no hope, escape or peace for him. Thus, Pinter defines man's existence in the universe as a tragic and pathetic experience.

Existence is precious for people. They don't want to lose this precious thing and they continue their lives with the idea of protecting their existence. They have to live with an anxiety to protect their existence because life is full of hindrances which are acting to block their very existence, or even to eradicate it. These hindrances dwell in their life under the cloak of different things. Almost all people see these as menace. And Harold Pinter covers this issue of menace which is threatening man's existence and causing existential anxieties in his works.

Pinter's notion of menace means a sense of imprisonment which infiltrates human existence. Characters are entrapped in a prison-like enclosed area, mostly a room, embodies this imprisonment. Menace can appear from outside of the room with the interference of some unknown powers. Actually, the anxiety, mainly, exists in relation to a remote mechanism as it has no an identifiable or concrete form. Man fails to comprehend the potential terror of outside and this decreases his chances of survival against all odds.

Pinter's characters are destroyed by sinister people or mechanisms. Menace can suddenly come out into the room from outside. Pinter's characters face the threats coming from outside. In *The Birthday Party*, one impression the play leaves on the viewer is that he is alienated from the society and that's why, he is hiding himself in his room and he sees outside as a menace. The news of the arrival of the two guests Goldberg and McCann creates anxiety in him. Meg tries to convince him otherwise. She consoles him by making him believe that the guests aren't a threat to him. In the end, the fear of the menaced character Stanley comes true and he is victimized by the menacing members of an unknown system, who arrive unexpectedly. As Bernard Dukore says "Pinter paints a variety of pictures of modern man beaten down by the world around him, of man reduced and of man in the process of being reduced to cipher in the vast social structure" (1988:47). From an existentialist aspect, an individual is condemned to be free, and this sense of freedom alienates him from his society. In his first play, *The Room*, Pinter presents Rose as an alienated person. She bothers outside. For her, the outside is a hostile force. Apart from her room, everywhere outside is the other and the other is hell. Every guest is a nuisance for her. Menace does not leave her alone and she is haunted by it. She tries to protect her womb-like room, which is actually her existence, in her own way. However, she lives a life surrounded by these existential anxieties. Rose is aware of the existence of menace, still she tries to ignore it, but "menace does creep in" (Gale, 1977:27), and the menace felt by Rose comes true and it proves to be destructive, whether it is Riley or Bert.

Menace can also be already in the room. In *The Dumb Waiter*, Gus doesn't know who he will kill as hired gunman but he asks many questions about his duty. In the course of the play he becomes aware of a threat. Then it is understood that he is the victim, and his partner, who is already in the room, is his killer.

Moreover, as it is mentioned before, the central subject of Pinter's plays is the anxiety and menace experienced by man. Pinter conveys these mental states through the words and the behaviour of the characters, instead

of through any action in a conventional sense. Pinter shows his characters' existential anxieties in two ways; language and actions. As for the language of anxiety, Pinter uses pauses and silence. In his plays, there are some characters such as Bert, Petey and Ben who talk little and/ or have pauses or silence while interacting with others. On the other hand, Pinter's some characters are really talkative like Rose, Meg and Gus. Furthermore, some characters like Rose and Meg use a repetitive language. With respect to actions, firstly, Pinter uses characters' being evasive and violent. For instance, Ben in *The Dumb Waiter* uses violence to get rid of Gus' constant questions. Also action of reading is common in his plays. Some of his characters like Petey and Bert read most of the time instead of talking. As a result, the aim of using these different uses of language and also actions is to show how anxious the characters are when they face with menacing factors.

Although the characters' powers are insignificant, they do not give up to struggle at once. They try to do their best to challenge and overcome the menace. In order to do these, they question the system with an aim of understanding. They also find solace in their silence, or in evasion of the reality.

All in all, Pinter's characters find themselves in a trap inevitably. They struggle hard to get rid of this confusion of an undefined life but they are not successful to do it. Sometimes questioning the system is a way to fight but their questions remain unanswered. Sometimes, they try to escape from reality since they think they find comfort in a world of delusion. In this way, they just deceive themselves and also others in relation to their real identities and situations. As Prentice remarks:

Pinter places the microscope on the private level of human relationship to show once again the inevitable destruction that occurs when self-knowledge is absent, consciousness, unawakened, and characters are driven by a need to supplant any inner identity with an exterior label constructed of illusion. (1993:95)

Characters employ their own way of coping with menace to protect their existence; however, their methods become ineffective because it is not

easy for individuals to survive in this vortex of menace. Thus, they end up in defeat feeling an existential anxiety, in which they are no longer alive either literally or metaphorically. The challenge of the menacing systems deprives them of their energy and desire for life.

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ÖZET

Mutlu Yılmaz B. Harold Pinter'in Oyunlarında Tehdit Unsurunun Yarattığı Varoluşçu Endişeler. İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı. İstanbul. 2014

Harold Pinter (1930-2008), en çok göze çarpan ve en önemli İngiliz oyun yazarlarından biridir. Tiyatro ve radyo oyunları, beyaz perde için senaryolar, skeçler ve şiirler yazmıştır. Tehdit komedisi (Comedy of Menace) ile tanınmaktadır. Eserlerinde, esas olarak yabancılaşma, şiddet, kıskançlık, korku, endişe, aldatma, gizli sırlar ve cinsel siyaset konularını ele almıştır. Eserlerinde kullandığı komik diyaloglar ve sahnelerle, Pinter komedi ve trajediyi harmanlamıştır.

Yahudi asıllı olan Harold Pinter 1930'da doğmuştur. Çocukluk döneminde savaşı ve Yahudi düşmanlığını ve bunların getirdiği tüm korkuları yaşamıştır. Tüm bu yaşadıklarından etkilenmemesi mümkün olamazdı ve bu nedendir ki ikinci dünya savaşından önce Yahudi düşmanlığına maruz kalmış ve Alman bombardımanından dolayı yaşadığı topraklardan daha güvenli bir yere gönderilmiş biri olarak, o zamanlarda yaygın olan varoluşçu düşüncelerden etkilenmiş olması anlaşılabilir bir durumdur. İkinci dünya savaşı ve sonrasında, insanlar kendilerini daha kötü, parçalanmış ve karmaşık bir toplumun içerisinde bulmuşlardır. İnsanlar savaş sonrası hayal kırıklığına uğramış ve amaçlarını yitirmişlerdir. Artık onlar için önemli olan sadece kendi varoluşlarıdır. Yaşadıkları toplum onlar için artık tehditlerle doludur. Tabi ki tüm bu tehdit oluşturan unsurlar Pinter'in de hayatını etkilemiş ve yaşadıklarını ve etkilendiklerini eserlerinde yansıtmıştır. Pinter'in karakterleri her zaman absürt varoluşsal durumlar içerisinde ve kendi varlıklarını anlamlandırmak adına mücadele vermektedirler. Bu varoluşsal durumlar genelde karakterlerin kendi varoluşsal endişeleridir çünkü karakterler hep bir tehdit ile karşı karşıyadır. İçerisinin verdiği görünürdeki güven, dışarıda olması beklenen tehdidin dış dünyadaki tehlikeyle mukayese edilmektedir. Ancak Pinter, tehdidin sadece dış dünyada değil, ev de dahil olmak üzere herhangi bir yerde olabileceğini göstererek izleyicisini şaşkırtır.

Bu tez Harold Pinter'in oyunlarında, İkinci Dünya savaşı sonrası toplumsal hayatta ortaya çıkan tehdit unsurunun yarattığı varoluşçu endişeleri incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır ve bunun için Harold Pinter'in Oda, Doğum Günü Partisi ve Git Gel dolap adlı eserleri çalışılmıştır. Bu üç oyunun seçilmesinin

nedeni bu oyunlardaki tehdidin yarattığı varoluşçu endişelerin çok açık olması ve bunun bu oyunlarda ana tema olmasıdır. Bu çalışmanın giriş kısmında Harold Pinter'ın biyografisi, eserleri ve Comedy of Menace (Tehdit Komedi) üzerinde durulmuştur. İkinci kısımda seçilen oyunlardaki tehdit unsuru ele alınmıştır. Üçüncü kısımda tehdidin ne gibi varoluşçu endişeler getirdiği hakkında bilgi verilmiştir. Son olarak, sonuç kısmında bu tezde çalışılan konunun genel bir değerlendirilmesi yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Harold Pinter, Tehdit, Varoluşçuluk, Varoluşçu Endişeler

ABSTRACT

Mutlu Yılmaz B. Existential Anxieties Created by Menace in Harold Pinter's Plays. Istanbul Aydın University, Institute of Social Sciences, English Language and Literature. İstanbul. 2014.

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) is one of the most outstanding and important British dramatists. He wrote theatre plays, radio plays, screenplays for films, sketches and poems. Harold Pinter is well-known for his comedies of menace. In his works, he mainly deals with alienation, violence, distorted memory, jealousy, fear, anxiety, betrayal, hidden secrets and sexual politics. By inserting comic dialogues and scenes, Pinter blends comedy and tragedy in his works.

The Jewish playwright Harold Pinter was born in 1930. That is, in his childhood he experienced war and the anti-Jewish tendencies and all the fears and terrors coming from that. It wasn't possible for Pinter to remain unaffected. Therefore, it can be clearly understood that he was influenced by the existential thoughts which were in the air at that time of history as a person who experienced anti-Semitism before the WW II and who was sent to a safer place from German bombing. People found themselves in a worse, fragmented and complex society. After the war, they were disillusioned and they lost their aims in life. After all, the only thing important for them is their own existence since the society they lived in is full of threats. As a matter of course, these menacing factors played an important role in his life and he reflected what he lived and what he was influenced in his works. Pinter's characters are kept in an absurd-existential situation and they struggle to make sense of their own being. These existential situations are actually characters' existential anxieties because the characters are threatened by the menace, and in return, react to the danger of the invasion of their lives by this threat. The seeming safety of inside is compared with the danger of the outside world where the menace is assumed to dwell. However, Pinter shocks his audience by showing that the menace dwells not necessarily in the external world but can be anywhere, including the inside of the house.

This study aims at exploring existential anxieties in Harold Pinter's plays created by menace which appeared in social life after WW II. In order to do this, this study covers Harold Pinter's three plays; *The Room* (1957), *The Birthday Party* (1957) and *The Dumb waiter* (1957). The reason why these three plays are chosen to study is that existential anxieties and the menace

creating them are so apparent in them and it plays the central theme in these works. The introduction part of the thesis gives general information about Harold Pinter's biography, his works and *Comedy of Menace*. The second part of the thesis covers the concept of menace in these selected plays. The third part of the thesis gives information about what sort of existential anxieties reflected because of menace. Lastly, the conclusion gives an overall evaluation about the subject of the study.

Key Words: Harold Pinter, Menace, Existentialism, Existential Anxiety

