A SLIGHT OR A STINGING ACHE?: THE FREUDIAN UNCANNY IN HAROLD PINTER'S A SLIGHT ACHE

İNCE YA DA KESKİN SIZI?: PINTER'IN İNCE SIZI'SINDA FREUDYEN UNCANNY

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Abstract

Set in a country house's relaxing atmosphere of a modest breakfast scene accompanied by a cup of marmalade, Pinter's A Slight Ache (1959) seems to present a world of utmost simplicity over where a sense of complete tranquility and utter nakedness rule. However, as clarified by a reading of the play in the light of Sigmund Freud's "The Uncanny", Pinter presents not a world of simplicity but a convoluted world of bewildering complexity, impending danger, and emotional repression, hiding beneath the 'slight ache' of its characters 'a stinging ache' that vigorously resists both definition and resolution. Based on this, the present study analyzes Pinter's one-act play A Slight Ache from the perspective of Freud's psychoanalytic concept of 'the uncanny' and aims to show that although the play gives the impression of reflecting simplicity for its such known characters as a married couple set at a modest breakfast table or a matchseller silently standing on their back gate, it arouses uncanny feelings beneath the surface because its 'familiar' characters are uncovered to be potentially dangerous and battling towards each other with their repressed intentions and evil thoughts relating to their blurred pasts guised in an illusionary veil of ordinary-looking words.

Öz

Bir kâse reçelin eşlik ettiği mütevazı bir kahvaltı sahnesinin huzurlu atmosferindeki kır evinde geçen Pinter'ın İnce Sızı (1959) isimli oyunu, eksiksiz sükunet ve yalınlığın hüküm sürdüğü sıradan bir dünya sunuyormuş gibi görünür. Ancak, oyunun Sigmund Freud'un "The Uncanny" ("Tekinsiz") makalesi ışığındaki analizi gösteriyor ki, Pinter sıradan bir dünya sunmaz ve karakterlerinin 'ince sızıları' gerisine tanımlanmaya ya da çözümlenmeye karşı şiddetle direnen 'keskin sızıları'nı saklayarak, şaşırtıcı bir karmaşıklığın, her an tehdit teşkil eden tehlikenin ve bastırılmış duyguların yer aldığı anlaşılması zor bir dünya sunar. Buna dayanarak, çalışma Pinter'ın tek perdelik oyunu İnce Sızı'yı Freud'un psikanalitik kavramı "the uncanny" ("tekinsiz") kapsamında analiz etmektedir ve oyunun mütevazı kahvaltı sofrasındaki evli çiftiyle bu çiftin arka kapılarında sessizce dikilen kibritçi gibi bilindik karakterlerinin oyuna sıradanlık izlenimi vermelerine rağmen, sıradan görünümlü kelimelerinin yanıltıcı maskesiyle örttükleri şüpheli geçmişlerine dayanan bastırılmış niyetleri ve düşmanca düşünceleriyle birbirlerine karşı potansiyel olarak tehlikeli ve çatışmacı oldukları için, oyundaki görünen yüzeyin gerisinde uncanny hissiyatının yer aldığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

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> "The desire for verification is understandable but cannot always be satisfied. There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is false. The thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false"*

Opening by a scene accompanied by the modesty of an old married couple seated at a breakfast table, Harold Pinter's A Slight Ache (1959) appears to offer a simple view of a comfortable family life in countryside and the couple's ordinary encounter with a matchseller standing on their back gate. In this way, the characters of the play, Edward, Flora, and the Matchseller, seem to be everyday characters leading a life of complete tranquility and utter nakedness enhanced by the seemingly relaxing atmosphere of the flowering garden surrounding them.

* (Pinter qtd. in Esslin 212)

However, as unveiled by the analysis of this Pinteresque world in the light of the Freudian Uncanny, the play cannot be associated with simplicity because notwithstanding its real-life appearances and surroundings fallaciously integrating Edward and Flora in the name of a family or showing the Matchseller as an ordinary member of society by assigning him a familiar job as 'matchselling', it presents a sense of bewildering complexity, impending danger, and emotional repression, hiding beneath the 'slight ache' of its characters 'a stinging ache' that vigorously resists any easy definition and turns it into a menacing labyrinth on each corner of which waits a different secret. Based on this, the present study analyzes Pinter's *A Slight Ache* from the perspective of the Freudian Uncanny and argues that despite its seemingly simple appearances and surroundings, the play arouses feelings of the uncanny by Edward, Flora, and the Matchseller set in a mysterious atmosphere with their complex and threatening intricacies misleadingly guised in the veil of familiarity.

To begin with, despite its seemingly simple appearances and surroundings, *A Slight Ache* arouses uncanny feelings as illustrated by the huge gap between the ordinary-looking characteristics and the complicated true self of Edward. As a man belonging to the Pinteresque world where "the apparently knowable is always remote and strange in essentials" (Misra 133) encircled by an atmosphere becoming gradually "more stale" and "more tense" (Cohn 26), Edward displays uncanniness as shown by the revelation of his complex self going far beyond the figure of a humble husband. This uncanniness signifying in Freud's own terms what is "familiar" and "congenial" on the one hand and "concealed" and "kept out of sight" on the other hand (420) is felt in Edward, firstly, by the moment when he stubbornly focuses only on the growing "convolvulus" at their back garden and feels disturbed by its blooming, though remaining indifferent to Flora's mention of the "honeysuckle" that is flowering at the same time:

> FLORA: Have you noticed the honeysuckle this morning?
> EDWARD: The what?
> FLORA: The honeysuckle.
> EDWARD: Honeysuckle? Where?
> FLORA: By the back gate, Edward.
> EDWARD: Is that honeysuckle? I thought it was…convolvulus, or something.
> FLORA: But you know it's honeysuckle.
> EDWARD: I tell you I thought it was convolvulus.

[*Pause.*]
FLORA: It's in wonderful flower.
EDWARD: I must look.
FLORA: The whole garden's in flower this morning. The clematis. The convolvulus. Everything. I was out at seven. I stood by the pool.
EDWARD: Did you say-that the convolvulus was in flower?
FLORA: Yes. (Pinter 153).

While Flora mentions the flowering 'honeysuckle', Edward gives his whole attention to the 'convolvulus' and feels a sudden fear deep in his heart for its presence as he again asks her "Did you say-that the convolvulus was in flower?" (Pinter 153). Edward's remaining indifferent to the flowering of the 'honeysuckle' and getting alarmed by the blooming of the 'convolvulus' show that the 'convolvulus' takes on the role of a threatening enemy for his delusive integrity guised in the veil of a familiar husband and suggests that he suffers from a repressed sense of inner void. Illustrating Pinter's presentation of an "unreal reality" or a "realistic unreality" (Dukore, *The Theatre of Harold Pinter* 45), this uncanniness in Edward sensed by his transformation from 'a plain man' "reading the paper" at "a country house, with two chairs and a table laid for breakfast at the centre of the stage" having "a minimum of scenery and props" into 'a dark figure' terrorized even by the thought of getting destroyed through his convolvulus-like enemy, the Matchseller, is confirmed also when he denies the existence of 'the convolvulus' by replying Flora with "That?" and "I thought it was japonica" after she says "That's convolvulus" (Pinter 153-154). He gets intimidated by 'the convolvulus' due to his identification of this ordinary-looking plant with a silent force triggering the exposure and the empowering of his fears, repressed thoughts, and most importantly his weaknesses that he tries very hard to keep in secrecy. The silent force is embodied in the figure of the Matchseller who acts like a convolvulus by standing outside their house for two months and entrapping him in a panoptikon-like universe through his disturbing gaze. Thus, he feels so anxious for the presence of the Matchseller that he interprets the growing of 'the convolvulus' as the Matchseller's gaining more strength and gets seized by the sudden fear of being extinguished by him, supposing that just as a 'convolvulus' worms its way into whatever around and annihilates any other plant by insidiously strangling them, he will be strangled by the Matchseller silently waiting outside: Bermel's comparison of 'the honeysuckle' and 'the convolvulus' confirms the reason behind Edward's terror

for the presence of 'the convolvulus', in a way giving insight into also his troubled relationship with Flora:

> True to her name, Flora begins the action by mentioning the flowers, some honeysuckle near the back gate. Edward insists that the honeysuckle is convolvulus. The disagreement has bearing on the play. Honeysuckle and convolvulus are both wild plants, but honeysuckle has fragrant yellow blossoms, while convolvulus is a weed that strangles other plant life: if allowed to sprout freely, in a matter of weeks it can destroy a garden. Convolvulus has beautiful, white, bell-like flowers; when you look at them close up you notice they are crawling with tiny insects. Through this back gate, where the honeysuckle and convolvulus grow, the Matchseller will enter. He will become the honeysuckle in Flora's garden, the convolvulus in Edward's. (229).

As the first indicator of their disquieted relationship, Edward and Flora's contradiction over 'the honeysuckle' and 'the convolvulus' digs out that Edward feels afraid of 'the convolvulus' as it foreshadows the annihilation of his presence as a husband. Edward's uncanniness unveiled by the unease he covertly expresses for the growing of the convolvulus openly shows the conflict between how he presents himself to the outer world as an ordinary man and how he feels a deep sense of insecurity beneath his mask of a simple family man. The uncanny surrounding him is brought to light secondly with his treatment of 'the wasp' that acts like an intruder while they are seated at the breakfast table, reflecting the impossibility of eliminating menace defined by Pinter as unavoidable: *"Menace is everywhere. There is plenty of menace in this very room, at this very moment, you know. You can't avoid it; you can't get away from it"* (qtd. in Chiasson 32). Showing how menace ceaselessly disturbs man, Edward's battle with the wasp reveals the conflict between his mask as a strong man on the one hand and his timid self victimized even by the thought of outer forces' arrival on the other hand, in addition to reflecting how threatening even a small wasp can be to a Pinteresque character living in a "closed, womblike environment" (Dukore, "The Theatre of Harold Pinter" 47) as "enveloped by darkness" (Dukore, *The Theatre of Harold Pinter* 49) so as to detach his unconscious mind from the outer world:

> FLORA: It's the height of summer today.
> EDWARD: Cover the marmalade.
> FLORA: What?

EDWARD: Cover the pot. There's a wasp. [*He puts the paper down on the table.*] Don't move. Keep still. What are you doing?
FLORA: Covering the pot.
EDWARD: Don't move. Leave it. Keep still.
[*Pause.*]
It's landing.
FLORA: It's going in the pot.
EDWARD: Give me the lid.
FLORA: It's in.
EDWARD: Give me the lid.
FLORA: I'll do it.
EDWARD: Give it to me! Now…Slowly…
FLORA: What are you doing?
EDWARD: Be quiet. Slowly…carefully…on…the…pot! Ha-ha ha. Very good.
He sits on a chair to the right of the table.
FLORA: Now he's in the marmalade.
EDWARD: Precisely.
Pause. She sits on a chair to the left of the table and reads the 'Telegraph'.
FLORA: Can you hear him?
EDWARD: Hear him?
FLORA: Buzzing.
EDWARD: Nonsense. How can you hear him? It's an earthenware lid. (Pinter 155).

Reflecting that man is confined to "the unknown" in the present-day world where "everything is uncertain and relative" and nothing has a "fixed point" (Pinter qtd. in Esslin 212), the arrival of the 'wasp' disturbs Edward's seemingly comfortable breakfast atmosphere by engaging all his attention all of a sudden and makes him feel as if entrapped by a rival. Accompanied by all "the aural", "the visual" and "the tactile" bringing out "tension" and "conflict" during the scene, the wasp represents Edward's "internal destruction" (Deason 40) though acting as "a proof of his supremacy, his kingship for the time being" (Bermel 239). What a serious threat the wasp means for Edward's survival is clarified through his giving it evil human attributes and demeaning Flora with such words acts as "Cover the marmalade", "Cover the pot", "Don't move", "Leave it", and "Give me the lid" (Pinter 155) in order to immediately put an end to its existence. Given that "where emotional or physical security is threatened there appear aggressive negotiations

and powerful struggles at multiple levels" such as at the level of "the scenic territory", "the linguistic games of manipulation", and "the subjective memory" (Rosça 91), by this way of his unusual treatment of the wasp, it is confirmed that the wasp mirrors his "inner hostility" contrasting with his "cool" and "detached" appearance (Dukore, *What's in a Name?...* 175). In this way, it comes to mean for him beyond just an animal having a disturbing noise and takes on the role of a dreaded enemy or a murderer threatening him with uncovering his true self which is no wonder the greatest risk to his so-called integrity. The wasp is implied to be unsafe similarly through Edward's acting "as if he were repressing a dark side of himself" when he forcibly makes it fall down "through the spout and into the airless, black, and sticky prison of the marmalade" (Homan 34) in his very first encounter with it. Its serious role in exposing a parasite-like uncanny feeling in Edward is better enhanced given that although he tries to give the impression of being indifferent to his environment, he in fact stays on alert about threats. This is understood by his paying attention to the standing of the Matchseller outside and making secret plans about slaughtering him sooner or later so as to clear his mind off the tyranny of his suspicions about his own safe survival even if this comes to mean the replacement of the Matchseller with the wasp: as he fears his safety due to the Matchseller's presence and suspects that he will overpower him by taking all his possessions and even his wife, he replaces the Matchseller with the wasp and struggles with it as if fighting with him. Likewise, the consideration that it is only after the death of the wasp that he expresses his satisfaction with the time shows his uncanniness traced back to his complicated self's having an awareness of anything around though appearing to be out of touch with the outer world: although he seems to be unaware of the time and the flowers in the garden before the death of the wasp, after burning it, he mentions the refreshing atmosphere with such words as "What a beautiful day it is. Beautiful. I think I shall work in the garden this morning" and feels hopeful as he says *"Ah, it's a good day. I feel it in my bones. In my muscles. I think I'll stretch my legs in a minute. Down to the pool. My God, look at the flowering shrub over there. Clematis. What a wonderful..."* (Pinter 158). Thus, he does not conform to his presentation of an ordinarily integrated man shaped by innocence and psychological fulfilment. Behind the reason why he does not openly tell Flora that he kills the wasp for his fright for the Matchseller and why he hides even his awareness of the Matchseller's presence long before his encounter with the wasp lies his wish to hide his masked identity he presents to his wife as Dukore states that *"unwilling or perhaps afraid to tell the truth about his*

confrontation with the matchseller, Edward ineffectively employs evasion to maintain a posture of superiority with his wife" (*What's in a Name?...* 176). In this way, what kind of an uncanny state he has as drowned in a sea of familiar appearances on the one hand and suspicious inner worlds on the other hand is openly seen. In the same way with the wasp that evokes the uncanny in Edward by serving "as a prelude to his own sacrifice" with its foreshadowing the Matchseller's sneaking into his house and putting an end to his survival as a family husband (Burkman 134), thirdly, the 'slight ache' beginning in him reflects his uncanny state as a man refusing to face truths. An analysis of the moments when Edward mentions having 'a slight ache' no wonder clarifies its role in evoking his uncanniness: Edward expresses having 'a slight ache' when faced up with the 'wasp' and 'the Matchseller', the two main forces both menacing to his false security and integrity, showing that unable to resolve his existential aporia resulting from his state of in-betweenness as stuck between appearances and realities, he consults to 'a slight ache'. Moreover, afraid to reveal his split personality, he avoids even openly expressing his eye trouble by defining it simply as "a slight ache" (Pinter 156) although it means nothing but a terrible 'stinging ache'. For instance, when Flora asks him "Have you got something in your eyes?" upon seeing him "clenching, blinking them", he puts her off with "I have a slight ache in them" (Pinter 156) and refuses to answer her about his eye trouble so as to hide his fear for facing truths:

> FLORA: Your eyes are bloodshot.
> EDWARD: Damn it.
> FLORA: It's too dark in here to peer…
> EDWARD: Damn.
> FLORA: It's so bright outside.
> EDWARD: Damn.
> FLORA: And it's dark in here.
> [*Pause.*] (Pinter 162).

When asked about the reason for his troubled eyesight and his preference to remain in darkness, Edward does not give a relevant answer and instead continuously repeats the expression "Damn" (Pinter 162), refusing to let Flora into his repressed feelings. Given man's lapse into silence for fear of revealing his true self as Pinter points out "communication is too alarming" because "to enter into someone else's life is too frightening" and "to disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility" (qtd. in Gale, *Sharp Cut: Harold...* 65), the reason why Edward avoids talking about himself and instead expresses feeling an ache in

his eyes in times of trouble is implied to be that he hides a second self the revelation of which would shaken his fallacious present self. Hence, his declining eyesight acting as a representation of his "inner crisis" that reduces his "balance" (Sakellaridou 80) reveals his uncanny nature by showing that behind his mask of an "insulated" "gentleman scholar dwelling in privileged privacy on his own country estate" with "a book-filled study, ample garden, and attentive wife" lies his "lack of self-knowledge" (Diamond 29) that he tries to hide so as to cloak his cowardice and to establish a secure position within his surroundings. As "a manifestation of his psychological ache as he deteriorates to the point of helplessness", Edward's "physical ache" (Dukore qtd. in Deason, 48) gives insight into his uncanny nature shaped by the conflict between his strong appearance and his lack of confidence also through the consideration that he blinds himself for his shame towards Flora whom he regards as 'the desired mother' as Gabbard states that in a similar way with Stanley and Gus who are "punished or rendered helpless" (38), Edward "wants to be punished for his sins against the father" with his anxiety resulting from the "repressed oedipal guilt embodied in the intruder" (71). Burkman's likening Edward's blindness to that of Oedipus by stating that man is the victim of his inner sicknesses not of the outside world better clarifies why his troubled eyesight mirrors what an uncanny nature he has with his psychologically and emotionally integrated appearance and his actual timid self as he points out:

> Man is no longer a mere victim of outer forces in this play; the menace is within. Like Oedipus, Edward would escape man's fate only to find that it lies within him. Oedipus, seeing the murderer of the king, found himself and suffered his own decree of banishment. So, too, Edward sought to rid his home of a menace. When he invited the menace in, confronting the matchseller in hopes of dispelling him for good, he too, in a sense, was faced with himself, and was himself banished from his home (62).

In a similar way with Oedipus, Edward's vision grows worse when he confronts his true self. Also, with his "uncertainty" and "insecurity" turning his relationship with Flora into "a mother-child relationship" and making him to visualize "both himself and his wife in archetypal terms", "he lapses into an infantile, impotent state" and sees Flora as "a threatening, omnipotent Mother figure-the terrible Mother" (Sakellaridou 80). Thus, in the same way with Oedipus who blinds himself when faced with the threatening exposure of his own deeds, Edward prefers blindness to ignore the truths menacing to his concealed self and

established status. Given that his eye-trouble is followed by a "growing insight about his own identity" (Burkman 62), however, it is shown that his troubled eye-sight acts no more than as a signifier of his "mental disintegration" (Gale, *Butter's Going Up…* 79). Besides, it acts in Homan's terms as a force reducing the uncertainty about "whether he's really seeing what he thinks he's seeing" based on that he develops this ache after Flora "corrobates" his "vision of the Matchseller" (qtd. in Strunk 119) through bringing him closer to the source of his repressed fears.

Despite its seemingly simple appearances and surroundings, *A Slight Ache* arouses feelings of the uncanny also as illustrated by the huge gap between the ordinary-looking characteristics and the complicated true self of Flora. The sense of the uncanny shaping Flora is revealed firstly by that although she gives the impression of having no traumatic experience at all, she hides a deep mark related to her mysterious past. For instance, at the beginning of the play, she continuously expresses satisfaction with her environment as she says "The whole garden's in flower this morning. The clematis. The convolvulus. Everything" (Pinter 153). Moreover, she goes on telling Edward that she woke up at a very early hour to behold the scene outside as she repeats "I was up at seven. I stood by the pool. The peace. And everything in flower. The sun was up" and then happily says "It's the height of summer today" (Pinter 154-155). Flora's hopeful statements about the nature suggest that she has never experienced a traumatic event. However, with the Matchseller reminding her of her rape, it is shown that she cannot be simply reduced to the definition of a woman having no mental derangement in her past:

> Between ourselves, were you ever a poacher? I had an encounter with a poacher once. It was a ghastly rape, the brute. High up on a hillside cattle track. Early spring. I was out riding on my pony. And there on the verge a man lay-ostensibly injured, lying on his front, I remember, possibly the victim of a murderous assault, how was I to know? I dismounted, I went to him, he rose, I fell, my pony took off, down to the valley. I saw the sky through the trees, blue. Up to my ears in mud. It was a desperate battle (Pinter 174-175).

Unveiled by her own words, Flora gets raped while riding out despite trying very hard to escape from that "desperate battle" (Pinter 175). Her exposure to such kind of a humiliating experience distorts the happy woman image she presents at the beginning by reflecting how a woman of secure appearances can at the same time present a chaotic inner world. Furthermore, illustrating that "Pinter's world is

plausible and understandable in so far as everyone attempts not to be understood" (Cohn 73), the fact that it is not until after she encounters the Matchseller and talks to him about her rape that her traumatized nature is revealed increases the degree of her uncanniness. Given that she tells her painful experience to a stranger, to the Matchseller, it is implied that she has such a distant relationship with her husband that she needs even a stranger so as to unburden herself from the stress of her fears related to her traumatized past. Reflecting what an "ambiguous commerce" the language is since "so often, below the words spoken, is the thing known and unspoken" (Pinter qtd. in Burkman 5), Flora's simple but sharp statements reveal her uncanny nature similarly by showing that although she presents herself as a faithful and a caring wife, she does not feel sympathy towards her husband but instead looks for some other source of happiness she is denied in her marriage and makes dangerous plans to this end. She gives the impression of a caring wife when she puts up the "canopy" so as "to shade" Edward "from the sun" (Pinter 154) although behind her putting up that canopy lies her aim to prevent him from facing the truth. Similarly, she appears to be a faithful wife when she behaves well towards Edward in order to hinder his access to her menacing plans. Flora's uncanniness resulting from her transformation from a faithful wife into a manipulative liar is shown, for instance, when she denies knowing the exact moment of the Matchseller's arrival to allay her husband's suspicions about her chastity:

> FLORA: He's always there at seven.
> EDWARD: Yes, but you've never…actually seen him arrive?
> FLORA: No, I…
> EDWARD: Well, how do you know he's…not been standing there all night?
> FLORA: Do you find him interesting, Edward? (Pinter 159).

When asked how she knows that Matchseller does not stand all night there, Flora replies "Do you find him interesting, Edward? (Pinter 159) and changes the topic of the dialogue. Flora's irrelevant answer implies that although she shows inclination towards the Matchseller, continuously watches him, and knows even the exact time of his arrival, she hides her interest towards him through silences and deliberate interruptions. Almansi's discussion about Pinterian characters whom he regards as "inferior" to "noble animals" in their "verbal efficacy" discloses this uncanniness presented in the guise of silences and interruptions:

> Although the Pinterian hero is often as inarticulate as a pig, stumbling pathetically on every word, covering a pitifully narrow area meaning with his utterances, blathering through his life, he does not, like any honest animal, seem to whine or grunt or giggle or grumble to give an outlet to his instincts, desires, passions, or fears. He grunts in order to hide something else. Even when he grunts…, his grunt is a lie. Pinter's characters are often abject, stupid, vile, aggressive; but they are always intelligent enough in their capacity as conscientious and persistent liars, to hide the truth if they know truth's truthful abode. They are too cunning in their cowardice to be compared to noble animals. They are perverted in their actions and speech; hence human (72).

Pinter's characters speak not for expressing their thoughts and feelings but for masking themselves, acting in Irving Wardle's terms as "humanized animals fighting for territory" (qtd. in Misra 105). Similarly, Flora makes use of evasive answers. Flora's uncanny nature uncovered by her insistence on lapsing into silence with irrelevant answers on topics threatening for her masked role as a faithful wife is likewise shown by that she defends the Matchseller against Edward in order to take revenge on him. While supporting the Matchseller, she tries to appear as a caring wife and behaves as if her only aim in supporting the man was nothing but consoling Edward. However, her sympathy for the stranger is motivated by her need to meet her "sexual" needs as Gale claims that "Flora's interest in Barnabas certainly involves some sort of sexual desire" (*Butter's Going Up…* 79). For instance, when Edward expresses his anxiety for the presence of the Matchseller, she says "He's a poor, harmless old man" and then opposes him by openly stating "I can't say I find him a nuisance" (Pinter 162-163). Additionally, when Edward gets annoyed by the constant standing of the Matchseller, she makes him feel pity for him with such opposing words as "What are you going to do with him, Edward? You won't be rough with him in any way? He's very old. I'm not sure if he can hear, or even see. And he's wearing the oldest" (Pinter 165). By this way of reflecting that "menace is no longer an indeterminate threat derived from a vague source" as it stems in Pinter's own words from "love" and "lack of love" or generally from "need" (cited in Gale, *Butter's Going Up…* 18), Flora's uncanniness resulting from her secret interest for the Matchseller is confirmed especially when she tries to persuade her husband to get off the Matchseller's back:

> FLORA: Have you found out anything about him?
> EDWARD: A little. A little. He's had various trades, that's certain. His place of residence is unsure. He's…he's not a drinking man. As yet, I haven't discovered the reason for his arrival here. I shall in due course…by nightfall.
> FLORA: Is it necessary?
> EDWARD: Necessary?
> FLORA [*quickly sitting on the right arm of the chair*]: I could show him out now, it wouldn't matter. You've seen him, he's harmless, unfortunate…old, that's all. Edward- listen-he's not here through any…design, or anything, I know it. I mean, he might just as well stand outside our back gate as anywhere else. He'll move on. I can…make him. I promise you. There's no point in upsetting yourself like this. He's an old man, weak in the head…that's all (Pinter 172-173).

While Edward insistently wants to learn the Matchseller's identity, Flora prevents him from reaching this end by claiming that there is nothing to worry about this man. Considering that behind the reason why Flora tries to discourage her husband from learning the Matchseller's true identity lies her repressed sympathy for this stranger, it is uncovered what an uncanny nature she has with the aching discrepancy between her presentation of a faithful wife and her concealment of a true second self so somber as to seek elation even from a stranger. Though portraying a "respectable, well-behaved, amiable middle-class matron" at the opening of the play (Sakellaridou 74), "when contextualized", Flora stands out as a "baffling, ambivalent figure" (Sakellaridou 76), as explicitly exposed by her sustained attempts to defend the Matchseller against Edward so as to conceal her secret inclination for and hopeful plans with him, especially, when she makes sexual advances on him. Illustrating that in case of the "numinous experience", man finds "beliefs and feelings qualitatively different from anything that 'natural' sense perception is capable of giving" him (Otto qtd. in Dawson 297), Flora's all attitudes arouse doubt and menace by taking on serious roles as indicative of her second self of an unfulfilled woman. For instance, challenging the schematic assumptions for a loyal wife expected to get angry with a strange man whose mysterious presence and constant gaze distort her husband's 'illusionary' security, she treats the Matchseller kindly and in Deason's words "falls into the societal trap of niceties to entice him into the house" (43) by modestly inviting him in with such gentle words as "Do come. This way. Ah now, do come" and by asking him even

whether she can take his arm for fear of "a good deal of nettle inside the gate" (Pinter 164). In addition to coquettishly flirting with the Matchseller, Flora also asks him such seducing questions as "Shall I mop your brow?", "Have you ever… stopped a woman?", "Tell me, have you a woman?", "Do you like women?", "Do you ever…think about women?", "Have you ever… stopped a woman?", and even "What have you got under your jersey?" (Pinter 175-176). Bringing to light her husband's failure to "satisfy her psychological demands", Flora's resorting to the care of the Matchseller as "desperate in her need" and assigning him such a serious meaning as a "symbol of fulfillment" (Gale, *Butter's Going Up…* 80) confirm that in the same way as Edward remains "out of touch with things that grow, with the examples of fertility in his own garden", he stays "out of touch too with Flora, whose name reflects the garden over which she presides as a kind of goddess" (Burkman 54). In this way of reflecting that "danger is internal" and man whose mental integrity is threatened by "the disparity between the need and the absence of certain psychological elements" is forced to meet his needs "through relationships with other people" (Gale, *Butter's Going Up…* 75), it is disclosed that Flora's uncanniness results essentially from her confused state for being stuck between her familial responsibilities as a wife and her emotional and sexual unfulfillment as an individual.

Thirdly, despite its seemingly simple appearances and surroundings, *A Slight Ache* arouses feelings of the uncanny as illustrated by the huge gap between the ordinary-looking characteristics and the complicated true self of the Matchseller. The sense of the uncanny shaping the Matchseller is felt firstly by that although he appears to be a familiar figure with a tray of matches in his hands, he goes beyond simplicity. For instance, while he is expected to stand on a well-trodden path where he would have more chance to sell his matches, he does not stand on the "main road" or "by the front gate" but unreasonably stands for "two months" on a "lane" which is so "off everybody's route" that it is not used even by monks as they "take a short cut to the village" (Pinter 160). Likewise, while he is expected to make some effort to sell his matches, he does nothing at all to sell them as Edward states "He's sold nothing all morning. No one passed. Yes. A monk passed. A non-smoker" and then adds "He made no move towards the monk. As for the monk, the monk made no move towards him. The monk was moving along the lane. He didn't pause, or halt, or in any way alter his step" (Pinter 163). The Matchseller shows uncanniness, moreover, by standing as still as a statute even when it heavily thunders (Pinter 165) and by wearing a "balaclava" (Pinter 169) although "it's the height of summer"

(Pinter 155). His such unfamiliar attitudes as not standing on a crowded road where he can encounter more customers, not striving to get in contact with people passing near him in an attempt to sell his matches, not escaping from thunder, and not taking of his 'balaclava' in the middle of the summer suggest that his standing at the back gate of the married couple's home has inarticulate and threatening aims having nothing to do with selling matches. By this way of his silent transformation from a familiar man engaged in such a simple-sounding job as matchselling into a dark figure that has no aim in selling matches, he takes on an uncannily menacing role. This sense of the uncanny evoked by the Matchseller's incongruous attitudes is heightened especially by that although his lack of vision and hearing shows him as if ignorant of the outer world, his inability to hear and see well actually make him stronger in using his other senses and thus superior even to those having both of the seeing and hearing abilities as Deason points out that "the lack of literal vision and hearing does not make the Matchseller a useless character. It makes him more powerful because his lack of senses makes him more aware of other things" (49). The strength revealing his uncanny nature is confirmed correspondingly by his endurance against the difficulties as reflected by his rejection to escape from thunder and to take off his 'balaclava' despite the unbearable heat and by his ability in silencing whomever he watches closely. The Matchseller's uncanniness is reflected secondly by his insidiously exposing the repressed terrors, thoughts, and weaknesses of both Edward and Flora through his state as guised in the veil of a harmless person as Strunk points out that after letting the Matchseller into the house, Flora and Edward "project onto him their respective desires and fears" (113). Thereby, the source of the Matchseller's uncanniness is shown to be his acting as the married couple's 'double'. To begin with, serving as a "passive menace" and "a disruptive force" acting more "in the mind" than in the outer world (Taylor qtd. in Gabbard 71), he unveils Edward's lack of self-confidence through making him feel the need to pique himself on things having nothing to do with his personality and to talk in a way enhancing his positive face in contradistinction to his lack of sympathy for him. The scene when Edward for the first time engages in a verbal contact with him gives a deep insight into what a serious role he plays in revealing Edward's weakness. For instance, illustrating that "expression is no longer the specular reflection of an emotion nor the word of a thing" with the "mirror" being "slanted" and with "each sound and image" being "systematically distorted" (Guido 72), Edward politely invites the Matchseller in and treats him gently with such flattering words as "Mind how you go", "Make yourself comfortable", and "Thought

you might like some refreshment, on a day like this" (Pinter 166) despite feeling distressed with his constant presence. Resorting to such complimentary words, Edward aims to hide his fear of the silent Matchseller and his related anxiety for being annihilated by him. This clarifies that the Matchseller does not stand out as harmless as he seems to be since he prompts Edward's fears about his life and reveals his lack of confidence which is so little as to force him to use words not belonging to his true self. Apart from addressing the Matchseller with words of praise in an attempt to repress his hatred for him, which is a clear signifier of the Matchseller's uncanniness resulting from his power to threat his security and to expose his dissatisfaction with his true self, Edward also prides himself on knowing several brand name drinks as he asks him without a breath "A glass of ale? Curaçao Fockink Orange? Ginger beer? Tia Maria? A Wachenheimer Fuchsmantel Reisling Beeren Auslese? Gin and it? Chateauneuf-du-Pape? A little Asti Spumante? Or what do you say to a straightforward Piesporter Goldtropfschen Feine Auslese (Reichsgraf von Kesselstaff)?" (Pinter 169). Edward's this unreasonable speech that "ends in a monologue where he hysterically affirms an efficiency and vitality which either he did not possess or fears to have lost" (Misra 75) reflects that he is not self-confident enough to present himself without feeling any need to mention such irrelevant brand name drinks that have nothing to do with his personality. Edward's mentioning brand name drinks one after another reveals the Matchseller's uncannniness better, given that it suggests also his mechanic state poisoned by the modern world contrasting with the natural world of his flowering garden outside as Begley claims that "there is a psychotic quality to the litany, a sense in which the exaggerated sonority of the drinks and the bizarre civility they symbolize can no longer effectively sublimate the dark truth of this [his] damaged life" with the "overflow of names" putting him in the position of a "pedantic consumer, losing sight of the world through remorseless classification" (111). Aside from praising himself on drinks that help him take the "control of the uncomfortable situation of having this stranger in his house, his room" (Deason 43), Edward goes on praising himself likewise by mentioning how people respect him with his such immodest explanations as "I'm not the squire, but thy look upon me with some regard (Pinter 166); by boasting about his experience of both studying "maps" and writing "theological and philosophical" essays with such expressions as "Often when I'm working, you know, I draw up one chair, scribble a few lines, put it by, draw up another, sit back, ponder, put it by…[absently]…sit back…put it by…"; by reducing him to the position of an ignoramus with his such vast account of geographical

knowledge as "Africa's always been my happy hunting ground. Fascinating country. Do you know it? I get the impression that you've…been around a bit. Do you by any chance know the Membunza Mountains? Great range south of Katambaloo" (Pinter 167); and by humiliating him indirectly with the expression that "Perhaps you never met Cavendish and never played cricket" (Pinter 178). Illustrating how "people fall back on anything they can lay their hands verbally to keep away from the danger of knowing and being known" (Pinter qtd. in Gale, *Butter's Going Up…* 30), Edward, feeling "obsessed with his lost virility", consults to "his supposed achievements in the past" in order to "impress the silent matchseller" (Misra 124). In this way, he also gets the chance of escaping from the exposition of his true self, which is confirmed more explicitly by the consideration that he remains unaware of himself though appearing as an intellectual so cultivated as to write on a wide range of topics as Diamond states that his "attainment of abstruse knowledge disguises his lack of self-knowledge" (29). Edward's weakness is sharpened also by that even his intellectuality veiling his self-awareness sounds artificial given the exposition that "the essays he is so proud of" "have not taught him that the Gobi is in Asia" (Gale, *Butter's Going Up…* 75): after stating "Africa's always been my happy hunting ground", Edward adds "I understand in the Gobi desert you can come across some very strange sights" (Pinter 167) as if the Gobi desert was located in Africa. In this way, he contrasts with the image of an intellectual he presents with his self-flattering expressions. In the same way acting uncannily by turning from an ordinary man into a strong force and revealing Edward's weaknesses, the Matchseller shows his uncanniness also through his role in uncovering Flora's repressed self. For instance, through his "silence" that "makes his very existence questionable" (Prentice 64) he enchafes her and brings her repressed fears and related complex wishes into surface by reminding her of her rapist as she asks him "Between ourselves, were you ever a poacher?" and then feels the need to mention him about her traumatizing experience, saying "I had an encounter with a poacher once. It was a ghastly rape, the brute" (Pinter 174-175) in an attempt to make sure of his identity. Displaying the helpless state of Flora as feeling an unbearable tension mounting within her about her security and as failing to absent herself from her fears about the possibility for his involvement in her terrorizing experience of rape, thus, the Matchseller acts as an uncanny force for her. His such uncanniness revealed by his manipulative force in making Flora confess her distressing memory occupying her mind is strengthened by that Flora's account of

her rape involves also some thirst for being satisfied as a woman having sexual desires: as Sakellaridou states,

> The speech has an unmistakable air of nostalgia, a lingering tone even in the narration of her supposed rape by the poacher. The way she indulges in this scene, her romantic memory of the rapist as a man with a red beard, her acquittal of him at court and her eagerness to revise him in the figure of the Matchseller, all these suggest that it was not such 'a ghastly rape' after all. Flora actually enjoyed it despite her 'desperate battle' (76).

Although Flora's expression of her painful experience implies her constant state of anxiety for having been attacked by an unknown man, it also gives insight into her secret satisfaction for the realization of her sexual needs which are understood to be left unmet by her own husband. Ascertained by her longingly telling the Matchseller about her past with such statements as "Of course, life was perilous in those days" and then tempting him with such seducing words as "And I am the only woman on hand" (Pinter 175) just after her memorization of the experience of rape, which is no wonder expected to make her feel too bad to make a sexual move towards an ambiguous man whom she suspects of having raped her, Flora's feeling in some way as contented with her rape for its fulfillment of her sexual needs becomes clear. This, moreover, unveils that behind the reason for her incomplete self lies not only her ignored sexual needs but also her psychological needs so desperate as to force her to desire sex with a man she criticizes for having "vile smell" and an unattractive appearance (Pinter 176): as stated by Gale, her "interest may not be entirely sexual" because "after all, she seems attracted by a dirty, sick, passive old man" whom she addresses as a "bullock", which is used to refer to "a castrated bull" despite coming to mean "an ox or young bull- a large, powerful animal full of vitality" as well, when she states in surprise "Is that a bullock let loose? No. It's the matchseller!" (Pinter 161) in a way implying his lacking even male sexual power despite appearing as a dominant figure (*Butter's Going Up…* 80). The uncanny nature of the Matchseller that is felt openly by his cruelly unclothing Flora and confronting her with silenced fears related to her past and complicated desires resulting from her ignored needs is more intensely felt when he brings to light what a disintegrating relationship Edward and Flora have as a married couple and unmasks their emotional detachment they veil by their inarticulate expressions, through acting in Misra's words as "a catalyst to precipitate Flora's fantasy and Edward's anxiety" (75). For instance, the scene when

Edward is forced to pour his heart out to him openly shows the intensity of his uncanniness in revealing the unhappiness felt in their marriage: Edward suddenly bares his heart before the Matchseller with such a sincere statement of his as

> Yesterday now, it was clear, clearly defined, so clearly.
> [*Pause.*]
> The garden, too, was sharp, lucid, in the rain, in the sun.
> [*Pause.*]
> My den, too, was sharp, arranged for my purpose…quite satisfactory.
> [*Pause.*]
> The house too, was polished, all the banisters were polished, and the stair rods, and the curtain rods.
> [*Pause.*]
> My desk was polished, and my cabinet.
> [*Pause.*]
> I was polished. [*Nostalgic.*] I could stand on the hill and look through my telescope at the sea. And follow the path of the three-masted schooner, feeling fit, well aware of my sinews, their suppleness, my arms lifted holding the telescope, steady, easily, no trembling, my aim was perfect, I could pour hot water down the spoon-hole, yes, easily, no difficulty, my grasp firm, my command established, my life was accounted for, I was ready for my excursions to the cliff, down the path to the back gate, through the long grass, no need to watch for the nettles, my progress was fluent, after my long struggling against all kinds of usurpers, disreputable, lists, literally lists of people anxious to do me down, and my reputation down, my command was established, all summer I would breakfast, survey my landscape, take my telescope, examine the overhanging of my hedges, pursue the narrow lane past the monastery, climb the hill, adjust the lens [he mimes a telescope], watch the progress of the three-masted schooner, my progress was as sure, as fluent… (Pinter 179-180).

Edward longingly mentions his past and idealizes his old times in a way implying that he no longer lives within an environment of tranquility with his good old days left behind. His idealization of the past with such statements as “my grasp firm, my command established, my life was accounted for, I was ready for my excursions to the cliff, down the path to the back gate, through the long grass, no need to watch for the nettles” (Pinter 179) reveal that he is dissatisfied also with Flora since she is implied to fail in giving him any life force as his wife. Besides, his

"confessional conversation" with the "inert" Matchseller brings to surface his "barely hidden anxieties about productivity and potency" (Roof 39). His such fears are reflected by his pouring "hot water" on the wasp from "the spout of a 'jug"' "down the 'spoon hole"' (Pinter 157) as "the spout of a 'jug"' takes on the role of a penis and the "spoon hole" takes on the role of a womb badly damaged, as an indication of a troubled sexual relationship in a marriage (Bermel 229). Likewise, the seriousness of Matchseller's uncanniness in uncovering Edward's dissatisfaction with Flora is shown when he forces him to say "Fine figure of a woman she was, too, in her youth" (Pinter 168) implying that he no longer finds Flora attractive. In the same way revealing Edward's unhappiness in his marriage through acting either as his "double", "a confessional father figure", or even "a black screen" for his "own projections" and reflecting his "futile parade of accomplishments, predilections, and worldly observations that thinly veil" his "impotency" and "inadequacy" (Roof 39-40), the Matchseller reveals Flora's discontentment with her husband in the best way when he forces her to unbosom Edward's indifference towards her and to passionately ask for his love with such bold statements as "Tell me about love. Speak to me of love" (Pinter 176) as if she were not already married. Most importantly, the Matchseller shows his uncanny force by awakening his manipulative force he guises in the veil of simplicity and innocence, disrupting the illusionary maintenance of Edward and Flora's troubled relationship they keep going not out of love but out of habit as two strangers, and putting an end to Edward's existence. Foreshadowed by Flora's mistaking him for a "bullock", which is an indication of the growing danger (Burkman 55), and asking in surprise "Is that a bullock let loose?" for feeling anxious due to his getting "bigger" (Pinter 161), the Matchseller's uncontrollable growing ends their disharmonious relation slowly but cruelly. The Matchseller's uncannily acting as a destructive force for the married couple as if he aimed to "sell a match between Flora and himself" (Bermel 241) is openly illustrated by the final scene where having named him as 'Barnabas', Flora gives his tray of matches to her husband and leaves with him:

> FLORA [*off*]: Barnabas?
> [*Pause.*]
> *She enters.*
> Ah, Barnabas. Everything is ready.
> [*Pause.*]
> I want to show you my garden, your garden. You must see my japonica, my convolvulus…my honeysuckle, my clematis.

> [*Pause.*]
> The summer is coming. I've put up your canopy for you. You can lunch in the garden, by the pool. I've polished the whole house for you.
> [*Pause.*]
> Take my hand.
> *Pause. The MATHCHSELLER goes over to her.*
> Yes. Oh, wait a moment.
> [*Pause.*]
> Edward. Here is your tray (Pinter 183-184).

Reflecting that she "merely recognizes her new god as the incarnation of summer itself, the advent of which is considered to take place at its height" with the "day of Saint Barnabas", the eleventh of June in the old calendar, being "the day of the summer solstice" and with "Barnaby-bright" being "the name for the longest day and the shortest night of the year" (Burkman 60), Flora calls the Matchseller as 'Barnabas'. Having named him as 'Barnabas', she surprisingly tells him "I want to show you my garden, your garden. You must see my japonica, my convolvulus…my honeysuckle, my clematis", acting "almost as if she were naming the parts of her body, which is the garden that she will give to him so that he can satiate and renew her" (Adler 381) and with her "peremptory" statement of "Edward. Here is your tray" (Pinter 183-184) "exchanges him for the Matchseller", in a way making his feared consequences come true (Roof 40). Showing that she actually "divorces one husband and finds another", her giving the Matchseller's tray to Edward (Homan 34) thus confirms what a serious role the Matchseller takes on in upsetting their delusive balance through his uncannily manipulative force. Moreover, Edward's not giving any reaction to the Matchseller who "usurps his position and home" after shaking his "mental equilibrium" (Diamond 183) makes the Matchseller's uncanniness more serious by the realization that he takes on the role of a 'feared' "father" for Edward and thus renders him helpless with his threatening power: Gabbard points out that as Flora is implied to be an 'envied mother' for Edward with her carrying out the role of "a motherly-wife", "always fussing over" his "physical well-being", the Matchseller takes on the role of the 'feared' "father" and makes him desire to "be punished for his sins against the father" (71). In this way, the destructive uncanny force of the Matchseller is shown to be lying behind the reason for Edward's passive and unresponsive state despite being exposed to such a demeaning negative face threatening act as being left alone all of a sudden with 'a tray of matches'. The disintegration between Edward and Flora is implied at several

scenes: where they cannot agree even on the names of the blossoming flowers in their garden (Pinter 153); where Flora supposes that Edward is writing about "the Belgian Congo" although he has been working "on the dimensionality and continuity of space…and time …for years" (Pinter 161); and where she then wrathfully complains of Edward's ignorance towards her by her statement "You should trust your wife more, Edward. You should trust her judgment, and have a greater insight into her capabilities" (Pinter 174) and calls him with the "childish name" "Beddy-Weddy", in a way getting "far from being help" to him and instead implying with the "subterranean nature of her destructiveness" she "disguises behind her easy, self-assured, graceful manners" how afraid he feels of the Matchseller (Sakellaridou 78). However, the troubled state of their relationship is disclosed and brought to an end by the uncanny role of the Matchseller, challenging the thought that Edward's expulsion from the house, the end of their relation, is merely the result of his sexual indifference to Flora, as Gale states that his "failure to fulfil his wife's psychological demands" is the factor which leads to "his downfall" (*Butter's Going Up...* 21). Consequently, acting as a symbol of "his fears of loss", "his rival", and "his semblance" as suggested his being addressed by Edward with such sincere terms of address as "My oldest acquaintance. My nearest and dearest. My kith and kin" (Pinter 180) (Bermel 238), the Matchseller causes Edward's "fears of loss" to "push their way out of a dream world or the unconscious and into the no-man's land between nightmare and reality, where they assume the repellent and familiar embodiment of himself as his successor" (Bermel 242). Thus, although Edward pretends to be sincere towards him by calling him as his "kin" (Pinter 180) hiding that "only in this way can he approach the mysterious depths in himself which he has feared and now is forced to accept" (Burkman 9), the Matchseller does not believe his sincere words and kills him with the poisoningly uncanny power of his silence so that his expulsion provides him an entrance to the house.

To conclude, although Pinter's *A Slight Ache* appears to offer a simple view of a comfortable family living in a countryside and their ordinary encounter with a matchseller standing outside their house, a close insight into this Pinteresque world in the light of the Freudian Uncanny divulges that the play can never be associated with simplicity because notwithstanding its real-life appearances and surroundings fallaciously integrating Edward and Flora in the name of a family or showing the Matchseller as an ordinary member of social life by assigning him a familiar role as 'matchselling', it clandestinely presents a sense of bewildering complexity, impending danger, and emotional repression, hiding beneath the 'slight ache' of its

characters 'a stinging ache' that vigorously resists any easy definition or solution and that turns it into a menacing labyrinth on each corner of which waits a different concealed truth. As revealed by Pinter's mirror metaphor, this labyrinth-like universe of the play never allows for certainty:

> When we look into mirror we think the image that confronts us is accurate. But move a millimetre and the image changes. We are actually looking at a never-ending range of reflections…it is on the other side of that mirror that the truth stares at us (qtd. in Owens 57).

In a similar way with the mirror presenting "a never-ending range of reflections" (Pinter qtd. in Owens 57), the members of the play, Edward, Flora, and the Matchseller, all hide dangerous worlds by belonging to the group of Pinterean characters using "words" not as "bridges" but as "barbs" so as "to protect the wired enclosure of the self" (Almansi and Henderson 12) despite appearing to be everyday-world characters silently leading a life of complete tranquility and utter nakedness enhanced by the seemingly relaxing atmosphere of the flowering garden surrounding them. To begin with, despite its seemingly simple appearances and surroundings, the play arouses feelings of the uncanny as illustrated by the huge gap between the ordinary-looking characteristics and the complicated true self of Edward. Edward's uncanny state is firstly felt by the moment when his fear of the growing 'convolvulus' implies that he goes far beyond the figure of a familiar husband due to his suffering from cowardice and inner void from which he insists on escaping. Edward's uncanniness unveiled by the unease he covertly expresses for the growing of the 'convolvulus' that openly shows the conflict between how he presents himself to the outer world as a modest man of complete security and how he experiences an irremediable ontological insecurity beneath his mask of a simple family man is brought to light secondly with his treatment of 'the wasp' that acts like an intruder and threatens him with uncovering his true self. Thirdly, his 'slight ache' reflects his uncanny state by mirroring his refusal of gaining insight despite appearing to conform to an intellectual schema as if shaped by thirst for truths. As a manifestation of his bearing "the germ of destruction in himself" with Flora and the Matchseller only helping to "bring his malaise out and precipitate his doom" (Sakellaridou 82), Edward's "insecurities" demolish his "superficial detachment" and lead to his annihilation (Dukore, *What's in a Name?...* 176) in a cruel way not corresponding to his definition of this downfall as 'slight-aching'. *A Slight Ache* arouses feelings of the uncanny in spite of its seemingly simple appearances and

surroundings, secondly, by the exposition of the huge gap between the ordinary-looking characteristics and the complicated true self of Flora. The sense of the uncanny shaping Flora is revealed firstly by the consideration that although she gives the impression of being a contented individual shaped by no traumatic experience at all when she mentions about the flowering plants and welcomes the arrival of summer with hopeful statements, she hides a devastatingly deep mark related to her past as understood from her experience of rape. Flora emerges as an uncanny being likewise by that although she presents herself as a faithful and a caring wife sincerely tied to Edward with genuine love and rigorous honesty, she does not feel sympathy towards him but instead looks for some source of happiness and benefits from word games to carry out her dangerous plans against Edward. In a way reflecting also "how language becomes an arena for interpersonal and territorial negotiation, dramatizing the characters' desperate effort of replacement and exclusion" with the "manipulation of speech, physical objects, and material surroundings" serving not only as "a field of domination" but also "of erasure" (Rosça 97), Flora's uncanniness is most importantly mirrored when she makes a sexual move towards the Matchseller, distorts the image of a simple housewife she presents to the outer world, and annihilates Edward by excluding him from the house. Due to the state of her true self which is so incomplete as to seek affection from an unknown man, Flora's making a sexual move towards the Matchseller and excluding Edward from her world thus uncannily comes to mean a new beginning for the stranger and an unhappy end for her husband: as Sakellaridou states, *"the rejection of the ageing, dried-up Edward", "the sudden rejuvenation of the old Matchseller", "the confusion of two men's identities", and "the final reversal of position between the two" appear to be "a re-enactment of the death-birth ritual and a celebration of sexuality"* (80). Finally, *A Slight Ache* arouses feelings of the uncanny as illustrated by the huge gap between the ordinary-looking characteristics and the complicated true self of the Matchseller. The Matchseller's going beyond simplicity is firstly sensed by his defiance of a matchseller schema through waiting on a deserted path, making no effort to sell his matches, standing as still as a statue, and even wearing a 'balaclava' in the middle of summer. The Matchseller's uncanniness is reflected secondly by his insidiously exposing the repressed terrors, thoughts, and weaknesses of both Edward and Flora, through his menacing power guised in the veil of familiarity. Lastly, the Matchseller shows his uncanny force by awakening his manipulative force lying behind his mask of simplicity and innocence; through disrupting the illusionary maintenance of Edward and Flora's

troubled relationship they keep going not out of love but out of habit and putting an end to Edward's existence. The exposition of the utterly naked threat lying behind all the characters and even all the plants and insects, thus, presents a frightening portrait, implying that man can no longer lay trust on anything. However, more frightening than this portrait no wonder becomes the thought that man presents threat even for himself let alone for others, through his uncanniness resulting from his need to wear different masks and his having difficulty in controlling or hiding his true self lying behind these masks, which is perhaps the most unbearable burden on modern man enslaved by the chains of his own lies and the constant danger of his unconscious mind.

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