A Study of the themes of 'Alienation' in the plays of Beckett and Pinter with particular reference to *Waiting for Godot* and *The Birthday Party*

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**Iram Mahmood Khan**

Under the Supervision of

**Prof. Iqbal Ahmed**

**Department of English**

**Aligarh Muslim University**

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This is to certify that Miss Iram M. Khan's M.Phil dissertation on "A study of the theme of 'Alienation' in the plays of Beckett and Pinter with particular reference to Waiting for Godot and The Birthday Party" is the outcome of her own research on the subject carried out under my supervision. It is a fairly satisfactory and original effort.

Iqbal Ahmed
Professor
Supervisor
Dedicated

to

My Loving Khala
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(IRAM MAHMOOD KFAN)
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation after assembling together all the possible interpretations of the word ‘alienation’ in the first chapter tries to apply it specifically to Pinter and Beckett Plays with particular reference to *The Birthday Party* and *Waiting for Godot* in the chapters that follow. This is done in order to see how close or how far is each dramatist from the meaning of the word as generally understood in Chapter I. Though the text of one play each, from both the playwrights, is closely studied, a general perspective is maintained on the works of both. Pinter was found closer to the word ‘alienation’ as described and understood in Chapter-I than was Beckett. In Beckett, the trap was primarily of an Existential Impasse. Thus, in Beckett, there is no colonnade whatever to be dissociated from. How is self-estrangement ever possible from an Existential Grotesque? Furthermore, a Beckett play is more presentational than representational, being not about something but that something itself. In any case the Beckett ouevre is well known for its form being content and content form. Neither of these three propositions can be applied to a Pinter play. Again, the Beckett ouevre not being about something but that something
itself helps understand better the Beckett Existential Grotesque, which he institutes on his stage presentationally. It is in these contexts particularly that a Beckett play can hardly be said to be about 'alienation', each Beckett play being the concretisation on stage of a Grotesque. Existence at its primary is aborted and grotesque and an irrational predicament. Where then is the question of 'alienation' as the dictionaries quoted describe!

Attention is invited to the textual analysis of The Birthday Party and Waiting for Godot in the second & third chapters that follow to help understand how far this hypothesis holds true.
'Alienation', according to The New Encyclopedia Britannica is 'the state of feeling estranged or separated from one's milieu, work, products of work, or self'. However, it insists that the idea remains 'an ambiguous concept with elusive meaning', of which it lists powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation and self-estrangement as the most common. This classification serves as a rough guide only, since radically different conceptions developed within these categories, though the experience of being powerless and the sense of self-estrangement remained persistent features.

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy treats the term in a slightly more special sense: The term 'alienation' (estrangement) has many different meanings in everyday life, in science and in philosophy; most of them can be regarded as modifications of one broad meaning which is suggested by the etymology and the morphology of the word - the meaning in which alienation is the act, or result of the act, through which something, or somebody becomes (or has become) alien (or strange) to something, or somebody else.
This Encyclopedia also insists that contemporary interpretations differ according to the way the writer chooses to understand and define the term. Some authors want the concept applied both to human, as well as, non-human entities (to God, world and nature for instance); but most insist that it applies only to Man, and even here it can refer only to individuals and not to society as a whole. Infact, 'alienation' for these authors is the non-adjustment of the individual to the society in which he lives. Yet still, there are some who maintain that even a society can be alienated, or 'sick'. And, therefore, failure to adapt to such a situation cannot help categorize an individual alienated.

Therefore, 'Alienation' in current parlance is a port-manteau word, over-used infact, to communicate disenchantment of all hues and variety, for, dissatisfaction, healthy or unhealthy, is at the root of all modernisms, post or ante. To a label hunting sensibility, just any description comes in handy and is there for the asking. The first effort invariably is to categorize, mark and label an author or movement because this helps an intellect-dominated society feel itself on the safer side. Thus, the word 'alienation' can be applied to both Pinter and Beckett only if the classification has been done in haste, because while in Pinter the word 'alienation' is consequential to a
perpetually felt threat and menace from the 'other' and is the prime experience, in the case of Beckett such an interpretation would be a complete misapplication. This is because what Beckett institutes on the proscenium from the very start is a universal human predicament, existence in Beckett's perspective being aborted, meaningless and futile. Therefore, there is nothing to be alienated from; the Beckett experience is unipolar; it is an existential impasse from its inception in which a human being is neither a character in the traditional sense nor a conglomorate in its Pirandellian variety. Therefore, what gets instituted on stage is a Non-ent, a Nothing is. There is no psychology or motivation in a Beckett play. The human condition is 'there' on stage, a disjunct between a mentality-at-a-perpetual-swing on the one hand, and, an entrapped corporeality on the other, and from the trap of this disjunct there is no escape. Infact, in Beckett the Self is always in a perpetual state of decantation in which the present is constantly being decanted into the past. There is nothing positive in all existence and the negative should always be kept alive to. Furthermore, Beckett is very adept in concretizing abstractions on stage. Thus, if in Waiting for Godot, it is the abstract notion of a Waiting that gets instituted on the proscenium as a concrete phenomenon, in Endgame it is the abstract
concept of an Ending, almost at an end but still ending. Similarly in *Krapp's Last Tape* the abstract concept of Time is treated, as in *Happy Days* it is Happiness and in *Play*, the life after death. What is more, Beckett starts away directly. There is hardly any need to travel from society to ‘alienation’. The aborted existential grotesque is ‘there’ for everybody to see. In Pinter, the travel to ‘alienation’ is a worked phenomenon, be it Rose in *The Room*, Stanley in *The Birthday Party*, or Ben and Gus in *The Dumb Waiter*, or, Jane in *The Basement*. ‘Alienation’ in Pinter concretizes finally in full when the play is about to end. Pinter does not start with the Irrational right away. Beckett has little to institute on stage but the Irrational from one end of the play to the other end. There is no question of a social context at all, and, the threat or acute consciousness of impending human menace is hardly ever felt because the ‘other’ too is in much the same predicament. In such a situation Man or a human being can have no psychology. He can only be an existential grotesque. In anycase, Pinter’s personae begin as ‘characters’ though they may very well be transformed later into caricatures, whereas the entire Beckett canon bases itself on one single repertoire, i.e., of the grotesque. Infact, the Beckett personae cannot even afford ‘to think’ because to have thought was the worst that Man ever did. In Beckett,
thought is futile and there is no ‘-ism’ or ideology whatever his canon, but this is not so in Pinter. Not that Pinter sets out to dramatise ‘-isms’ or ideologies; however, a recognisable social context is the fundamental feel in a Pinter play. That is the pole one starts to walk away from. Therefore, threat or menace, the Pinter personae cannot be imagined without society, for, of society they are made living, thinking, and feeling members.

Thus, in Pinter the essential dramatic situation is that of Man versus Man and not of a Man versus Cosmos. The situation is that of human beings within society; they are not, to begin with, outsiders in any case. But, the tramps Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting for Godot are in fact outsiders; their society is at best limited to themselves and this two-some-of-a-society too is forever at the verge of disintegration. The Beckett canon is never an experience within the context of any social framework. Pinter begins his plays with fairly well-drawn characters set in a social context, endeavouring to survive in a world, where survival itself is a matter of the use of strategems of tactful attack and defence. As Dukore puts it, "Pinter’s characters may contradict themselves; they may have more than one name; and what they say is open to several interpretations. To state that they fail to communicate
is only sometimes accurate. More often they refuse to. Fearing to expose or reveal themselves, they use words as a violent sly, anguished or mocking smoke-screen which keeps the other in his or her place. Pinter calls this smoke-screen a 'strategem to cover nakedness'. The strategem is not invariably successful. Pinter's characters keep on working upon strategems and communication between them takes the shape of 'a game', in Eric Berne's sense of the word. Pinter's characters also feel secure in the safe havens in which they are living. They dread to go out in the open, as it is 'the outside', i.e., a society that is feared by them, when of this society they are living members, and, from it they cannot escape. Unfortunately, it is within this society or from it that the members feel 'alienated'.

Thus, when the word 'alienation' is given only a very wide and all inclusive interpretation could have within its ambit a situation in which personae-on-stage, as the grotesque itself, jolts audience into an awareness of its existential predicament. Then, everyone would feel himself or herself trapped in an Absured, Grotesque Impasse, and, in so much, cause the people sitting in the hall, to feel alienated from themselves. They would feel alienated too from whatever illusions that help them hold together as single integrated individuals thinking existence full of meaning, purpose,
reason and even joy and charm. Of course, this will only be when, as already said earlier, the word 'alienation' is given so wide a meaning as to include the Beckettian existential grotesque too in it, but this in any case would mean stretching a point to distortion, and mixing up two essentially different existential experiences. A Pinter play, in any case, starts in a specific and very recognisable social context, where human society is not limited only to a two-some and where the threat is essentially from one to the other. It is never a threat of cosmic proportions. And therefore 'language is used only as strategy to ward the menace off'. The fact that the characters or characters are often reduced to caricature may harp on the Absurd or the Irrational cannot help one forget that the personae on stage are very recognisable social beings, and part and parcel of the society the play definitely flaunts. On the contrary, in the Beckett canon, each play begins and ends with the Grotesque and there is no question of there being any psychology or motivation in the personae on stage, because, they are from the very beginning Cartesean Centaur - like disjuncts, in whom mentality is at a perpetual swing, and, whose corporeality, apart from being distorted and even contorted, is in different states of entrappment.
Of course, Pinter does conform to the characteristics of the Theatre of Absurd. However, the effective unsettling quality of its very human and equally social characters, and its fusion of realism and non-realism, distinguishes Pinter’s artistic signature from those of other writers of this genre. It is human events and actions, as also social events and actions that remain unexplained or appear apparently illogical or unmotivated that makes the world seem capricious or malevolent. Indeed, one can rely upon nothing. What is apparently secure is not secure. A haven does not protect. A weapon vanishes without warning. However, ‘man’ and ‘society’, are marked indelibly everywhere. There could be linguistic absurdity too. And, all taken together, could help characterize the human condition in Pinter too as the Absurd or Irrational predicament. This could also be thought a universal predicament. But again, the fear is a fear of people, the suspicion is society under suspicion and the menace or threat is primarily from ‘the other’. There is evasion and stealth on the part of ‘the other’, who evades issues and refuses to reveal himself or herself. The statement of the universal predicament is reached only at the end in a Pinter play.

On the other hand, Beckett begins with instituting on stage the Grotesque, as an existential human
predicament. For in Beckett, form is the content, and content the form. This is important because Beckett was fascinated by 'the shape of thought' itself. This very simply means that at each point in a Beckett play the shape, that far, is very much the dramatic expression of the theme of the play. Of course each Beckett play is a different variation on his theme of Nothing-is. It is also said that the Beckett canon or ouevre is not about something but that something itself, i.e., it is the irrational human predicament itself instituted on the proscenium 'there' and not even so much as a symbolic or metaphoric representation of it. The last point takes us to the situation where Beckett drama is to be considered more presentational and less than representational. Viewed in these perspectives, Pinter is a different experience altogether, although he too is categorised in the list of the dramatists of the Absurd. To repeat, in Pinter, we see this Absurd materialize in a social context, where language is used as a medium to attack 'the other', as also to defend oneself. Beckett on the other hand, according to Esslin, has devalued language as an instrument for the communication of ultimate truths, but, in the process shows himself a great master of language when it is used as an artistic medium. In Waiting for Godot and Endgame plays which are drained of character, plot and even meaningful dialogue, Beckett
has creatively used language to show it at a collapse, that is, failure at all levels can indeed be dramatized. In Pinter, language is never at a triggered collapse. Rather it is powerful with implications that darkly hint at so much that has been left unsaid and therefore at the turmoil in the human relationships in the play. Pinter says that he dealt with his characters ‘at the extreme edge of their living, where they are living pretty much alone’ and ‘at a point, that is when they are back in their rooms, confronted with the basic problem of being’, to further quote Esslin. However, and once again, it is perception of Man, first targeted as a social being.

On the other hand, Beckett works with the Grotesque and not with human or social beings. Therefore, as has already been said, there is no psychology or motivation involved, and there are no characters perceived primarily as social beings, for, however could the grotesque be so social! Beckett deals only with raw corporeality, which is his favourite theme, because for Beckett, existence itself was Irrational, futile and meaningless. This playwright had no illusions to work with. Infact, he demolishes every illusion to institute the Irrational on stage. Quite plainly there can be no heroes in Beckett, for he is interested only in dramatizing failure. Man is
essentially an aborted phenomenon, an entrapped victim, a hapless predicament from the first to the last. Not one, among ordinary mortals at least, can be thought better off. Contrary to this, Pinter's characters, to repeat, are victims of 'the other' in society, and, hence they fear even going out in the open, as there is anticipated threat from 'outside' or 'outsiders'. In Beckett, Estragon, Hamm or Clove, Lucky or Pozzo are themselves 'outsiders'. The threat to Estragon is from 'insiders'. Pinter's rather sociable characters prefer to live in protected havens away from the Menace of 'the Other' 'Outsider'. And yet Menace invades their secure havens also. To begin with Pinter's characters begin as quite sociable. It is only later that the Absurd inherent in their situation catches on and the characters verge later on caricature.

Reference has already been made earlier to Beckett's penchant for concretizing abstractions on stage. If in one play it is a perpetual Waiting concretized. In another it is an Ending not yet ended though still ending, in a third it is the abstract notion of Time, in the fourth it is Happiness and in Play, for example, it is life after death. And, Beckett starts right away with the Irrational because his perception was of a Nothing-is. Existence was an Aborted Grotesque. That was his perception of the human
predicament. It is always the same Existential Grotesque, with appropriate dramaturgy shaping its variation in the particular play from the the start to the curtain. Therefore, just one most representative major play Waiting for Godot, has been thought abundant illustration. Further, the difference in perception between the two playwrights is so manifestly radical, that only one major play of Pinter, The Birthday Party is being considered sufficient to work out the hypothesis in this dissertation. Therefore, if Endgame, Krapp’s Last Tape, Happy Days and Play dramaturgically institute each time a variation on the theme of an Existential Grotesque, in Pinter’s case, each, time it is the society of ‘the other’, a very recognizable society at that, that is the Menace and Threat. The title of Pinter’s plays are tell-tale. If in one case it is The Dumb Waitor, in the next the problem is with The Room or The Basement or at The Birthday Party. Therefore, much rather than repeat and multiply examples from the repertoire of each playwright, a major representative and reputed play from each is being studied from cover to cover to see if there is any ‘alienation’ in both or either or in none. From Pinter then, the major play chosen is The Birthday Party and from Beckett it is Waiting for Godot.
References:


2. Idem.


CHAPTER-II

PINTER’S THE BIRTHDAY PARTY: FROM ALIENATION TO THE ABSURD

What strikes first in a Pinter play is neither the threat and menace of which his characters are famed victims, nor, even the Absurd or Irrational by which they are often later engulfed, but, that unlike the physically deformed and truncated Beckett personae, they are very recognizable inhabitants of quite normal social surroundings. They in any case, are not 'outsiders' ruing an aborted human predicament as in Beckett, with figures and features distorted or physically truncated, cribbed and confined. For, Beckett what is instituted on the proscenium is the general predicament of a trapped and futile human condition of universal and cosmic proportions.

Therefore, while Beckett’s personae have little or no social life, Pinter’s characters are mauled into irrational states by the very society they inhabit. Consequently, it is this society itself which is the menace or the source of their insecurity. Pinter’s people are human enough and social enough. The fear is of the 'other', whom the Pinter victim - character very soon appears profoundly traumatized by. As such, in Pinter there is aggressiveness, evasiveness and even
What is more, the fear is a fear of communication and contact. On the other hand all Beckett's personae are from the outset entrapped victims of a universal existential impasse. Therefore no travelling needs to be done to reach a supposed posture of 'alienation'. In Pinter, it is the 'other' that causes panic and creates insecurity, fear, frustration, despair and is a menace. Strangers from within society, which is for the victim the 'outside world' invade the secure haven of Pinter's victim - characters hound and persue their victims till the unfortunate lot resign to their fates. Thus, Rose in *The Room* is in extreme fear of the 'outside world'; to her the most secure place is her room, and, to it she remains confined till the end. Unfortunately, even to that room her tenant status is questioned, for, when other couples come hunting for accommodation, they are directed to the very place Rose feels fortified in. Similarly, Stanley appears hiding in Meg's boarding house mortally afraid of pursuers, who, in any case, soon arrive and render him psychologically dead.

All seems normal as the Pinter play opens, though there is a profound undercurrent of banality and monotony at the boarding house. Infact, both Meg and her husband Petey are trapped in each other's monotonous response to life. Of course, it is a trap in which human
beings themselves ensnare other human beings. The opening lines are a meaningless articulation in which the language beat and rhythm sets up the futile monotony of the couple's routine existence:

MEG : Is that you Petey? (Pause) Petey, is that you? (Pause) Petey?

PETEY : What?

MEG : Is that you?

PETEY : Yes it's me.

MEG : What? (Her face appears at the hatch) Are you back!

PETEY : Yes

(Act I, p.9)

Pinter's language is at its most banal and could even appear trite and empty and yet it effectively communicates itself! Its very repetitious rhythm is frightening. What should otherwise be an affectionate exchange becomes a meaningless voice repetition. This then is how the Pinter play begins. The key is set at the very beginning. They are human beings trapped in society's routine and lifeless language games. Both Petey and Meg are trapped by each other's routine response to life. However, trap or not, the situation is of human making, that is, of human beings within
society. They are not 'outsiders' in any case, whereas Beckett's two-some are tramps, and are in fact 'outsiders' whose society is at best confined to themselves, and is also forever at the verge of disintegration. Therefore, the Beckett experience is never an experience within the context of a wide social framework comprised of 'the other'. The tramps in Waiting for Godot have actually rejected all society and all ideology, even all contexts of time, place and object, because their's is an aborted existential grotesque!

Almansi and Henderson, in their book on Pinter say that the play The Birthday Party is very ungenerous with information but very exuberant in terms of sheer mindless talk. Further, they pronounce Pinter 'the maestro of the title - tattle of quotidian verbiage'. However, how powerful can mere 'title - tattle of quotidian verbiage' in this terrible social situation can be left by critics to condemnation of those who consider a metaphor-and-symbol weighted language the only form of an otherwise very powerful medium of communication can take. For, here is language at its profoundest simple, effectively communicating the terrible breakdown of human relationship. It is the social cord between man-and-wife that has snapped.
Pinter is only using language creatively to successfully put across that terrible human as well as, social breakdown. It is the portrayal on the proscenium of 'alienation' and 'estrangement' within a family, and a family sustains a society the most. Ofcourse, Almansi and Henderson are quite right when they remark that, 'these conversations, so depressingly banal, so heartrendingly trivial, are at the core of daily life in every household,' Similar is the futile exchange about cornflakes:

MEG: I've got your cornflakes ready. (She disappears and reappears) Here's your cornflakes (-----) are they nice?

PETEY: Very nice.

MEG: I thought they'd be nice

(Act I, p.9)

Almansi and Henderson say that 'in Pinter as in Beckett, people, keep silent in order to avoid talking and talk in order to avoid silence.' That is quite true, but in Beckett the dread is of a cosmic predicament. Meg talks not only in order to make sure that she exists, but also to make 'other' people aware of her existence. Indeed, her's is primarily a social plight. It is the society of human beings that has come to such an impasse. Existence itself is not an aborted
to such an impasse. Existence itself is not an aborted phenomenon, for that would be Beckett! In Pinter, it is an entire society that is estranged from itself, and it is not only Meg and Petey who converse in such futility. Other characters too, all 'alienated islands' by themselves indulge in exactly similar banal exchanges. In fact, added to (or is it one of the causes also) to the estrangement of each character is the consequent fear or dread felt from 'the other'. It is this added fear or dread that compels each character to use language as a weapon and play language - games in order to ward-off the threat from 'the other'. A duece in such games is the use of the newspaper device. Infact, Almansi and Henderson say that contemporary dramatists like Pinter seem particularly interested in the newspaper as a medium perhaps not only because of the alienating effect such trivia can have on its readers; but also because the newspaper is 'one of the most effective barriers to communication divised by man'.

However, it is to be remembered that the newspaper device is used by characters as a shield against active human interaction. The fear then is human interaction and language is used as a convenient barrier to hide away from such threat perceptions. Human interaction is at the root of this fear. Consequently characters
more essential questions. One example of such trivia is at the beginning of the play when Petey speaks out one item in the newspaper: 'Someone just had a baby'

MEG : Oh, they haven't! Who?

PETEY : Some girl

MEG : Who, Petey, who?

PETEY : I don't think you'd know her.

MEG : What's her name?

PETEY : Lady Mary Splatt.

MEG : I don't know her.

PETEY : No

MEG : What is it?

PETEY : (Studying the paper)-Er- a girl.

MEG : Not a boy

PETEY : No

MEG : Oh, what a shame. I'd be sorry. I'd much rather have a little boy. Pause.

(Act I, p.11)

If not a threat then what the whole exchange highlights is the emptiness in the lives of the husband and wife and throws up the underlying estrangement in their lives. The apparently meaningless exchange has
perforce to perpetually continue, for, such is the social predicament of the entire husband-wife class in society. Meg, the wife is submerged in an existence where conversation can only revolve around cornflakes, newspaper's gossip columns fried bread or Stanley. And, Stanley too, is an instance of yet another character almost similarly disposed, only that it appears that he is the one, who, fearing the outside world has taken refuge in Meg's boarding house. It is he who seems pursued by some one unidentified, wanting to wrench him away from whatever safety he enjoyed temporarily at his 'haven' in Meg's lodge. This person is named only 'Monty'. The threat is executed by two agents of Monty, who just appear from nowhere, and take their victim away. Stanley, on the other hand, seems also to be burdened by some guilt, and, after resistance yields easily to Monty's agents, who appear to have kept Stanley in track, and are his pursuers.

Society as 'threat' is what gets instituted on Pinter's proscenium. It is the society in which Stanley lives that appears to threat, pursue and hound him. It is society as 'the other' that is the cause of his insecurity, and it is society that ultimately condemns him to a fate which he has to accept. Thus, in Pinter, it is human society that throws up the Irrational whereas in Beckett the Irrational is universal and even
cosmic. \( \) It is first and last an existential predicament, the predicament of human beings as aborted grotesques.

Therefore, Pinter’s characters, as is obvious, must begin as characters who are inhabitants of a social world first, and only later develop into Irrational caricatures. Thus, Stanley too is invested with the essential of a ‘social character’, which, to begin with, is not a caricature at all. He calls Meg’s cornflakes a horrible feed, considers the milk off and the tea gravy, and also, that the bread was succulent and Meg a bad wife. \( \)

Of course, Pinter’s so-called collapsed language can also be comic, as is evident in the exchanges between Meg and Stanley, when the former asks the latter to apologize for calling her succulent:

STAN: What about some tea?

MEG: Do you want some tea? (Stanley reads the paper) say please.

STAN: Please.

MEG: Say sorry first.

STAN: Sorry first

MEG: No, Just sorry

STAN: Just sorry

MEG: You deserve the strap.

STAN: Don’t do that! \( \) (Act I, pp.17-18)
Infact, Meg and Stanley constantly engage in minor comic struggles for domination, which only evidences how Pinter uses language to show that the struggle to survive in society is plainly manifest in the language games the members of a society perforce play with each other. Dukore comments, 'A person/persons make another do what he does not want to do'. People extract sadistic pleasure out of this and it is this that comes to the fore as a frightening power play of words each time. Beckett's oeuvre on the other hand, does not use language in this way, for, there can hardly be any power play of language between aborted existential grotesques. In any case, it is never a permanent feature to help ward-off the threat from 'the other' because of an 'alienation' or 'estranegement' syndrome.

Eric Berne in *Games People Play* writes about the belief that people play language games in order to avoid the horror of true intimacy. Quite plainly then these games, as in Pinter, are played in abundant bad faith as Almansi and Henderson claim and even further assert, 'his characters play games of chatting with people in the street as a way out of their isolation; games of conversation with their partners as an evasion of hostility, games of concern for the well being of others as if to avoid the awareness of self-seeking; games of politeness on social occasions as if to smile away the
barbarity of their lives; games of love as a defence against hatred or indifference, games of sincerity, above all, to dispel the awful feeling that the word has no meaning whatever'. The following is an example from Pinter's The Birthday Party:

GOLDBERG: Mr Webber, sit down.

STANLEY : It's no good starting any kind of trouble.

GOLDBERG: Sit down.

STANLEY : Why should I?

GOLDBERG: If you want to know the truth, Webber, you are beginning to get on my breasts.

STANLEY : Really? Well, that's....

GOLDBERG: Sit down.

STANLEY : No.
Goldberg sighs, & sits at the table right.

GOLDBERG: McCann

McCann : Nat?

GOLDBERG: Ask him to sit down.

McCann : Yes, Nat. (McCann moves to Stanley) Do you mind sitting down?

STANLEY : Yes, I do mind.

McCann : Yes now, but it'd be better if you did.

STANLEY : Why don't you sit down?

McCann : No, not me-you.
STANLEY: No thanks.  
McCann: Nat.
GOLDBERG: What
McCann: He won't sit down
GOLDBERG: Well, ask him
McCann: I've asked him
GOLDBERG: Ask him again
McCann: (to Stanley) Sit down
STANLEY: Why?
McCann: You'd be more comfortable
STANLEY: So would you.  
McCann: All right. If you will I will
STANLEY: You first
McCann slowly sits at the table, left.
McCann: Well?
STANLEY: Right, now you've both had a rest you can get out!
McCann: (rising). That's a dirty trick! I'll kick the shite out of him.
GOLDBERG: (rising). No! I have stood up.
McCann: Sit down again!
GOLDBERG: Once I'm up I'm up.
STANLEY: Same here.
McCann: (moving to Stanley). You've made Mr Goldberg stand up.
STANLEY: (His voice rising). It'll do him good!
McCann: Get in that seat.

GOLDBERG: McCann

McCann: Get down in that seat!

GOLDBERG: (crossing to him) Webber. (Quietly) SIT DOWN. (Silence STANLEY begins to whistle 'the Mountains of Morne'. - He strolls casually to the chair at the table. They watch him. He stops whistling. Silence. He sits)

(Act II, pp.45-47)

Then again, and in this case it is the agents themselves who resort to language games against each other:

GOLDBERG: Is everything ready?

McCann: Sure

Goldberg walks heavily, brooding, to the table. He sits right of it noticing what McCann is doing.

GOLDBERG: Stop doing that!

McCann: What?

GOLDBERG: Why do you do that all the time? It's childish, it's pointless. It's without a solitary point.

McCann: What's the matter with you today?

GOLDBERG: Questions, questions. Stop asking me so many questions. What do you think I am? McCann studies him. He then folds the paper, leaving the strips inside.

McCann: Well?

GOLDBERG: (With fatigue). Well that?

McCann: Do we wait or do we go and get him?

GOLDBERG: (slowly) You want to go and get him?

McCann: I want to get it over.

GOLDBERG: That's understandable.

McCann: So do we wait or do we go and get him?

GOLDBERG: (interrupting) I don't know why, but I feel knocked out. I feel a bit... it's uncommon for me.

McCann: Is that so?

GOLDBERG: It's unusual.

McCann: (rising swiftly and going behind Goldberg's chair. Hissing). Let's finish and go. Let's get it over and go. Get the thing done. Let's finish the bloody thing. Let's get the thing done and go!

Pause.

Will I go up?

Pause.

Nat!

Goldberg sits humped. McCann slips to his side. Simey!

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

McCann: Who?

GOLDBERG: (murderously) Don't call me that! (He seize McCann by the throat) NEVER CALL ME THAT!

(Act III, pp.75-76)
always appear playing one game or the other, to which the alert audience immediately responds, the compulsion of Pinter’s dramaturgy proding it to do so. It immediately delves between the lines of the text, since it is here, "where under what is said, another thing is being said. To break the rules (of the games) deliberately, is to be a spoilsport".8

Of course, from the very beginning Stanley appears a ‘spoilsport’ since he is not prepared to participate in the ‘seductive Oedipal games of his landlady Meg’.9 Later too, he attempts to spoil his own ‘birthday’ by actually trying to strangulate Meg and Lulu. However, what indeed was this spoil-sport after? Was he not playing his own language-game each time he feared a threat. Infact, it is his ability at his language-game that gives to Goldberg and McCann the pretext to cast him out of their ‘society’ of the moment. Further still, the ‘alienation’ of Stanley is so stifling that whenever he comes into contact with people, he either reacts abnormally or is unable even to protest, letting the audience see for itself that try as he might, Stanley is always fighting a losing language-game. Many other characters in Pinter successfully camouflage their feelings in their language for, ‘to shout... is a weakness, you have to contain everything’.10 Infact, it
is too often that a Pinter character does not show his or her real feeling, since to exhibit the real feeling is to acknowledge defeat in using language as an instrument of survival. As Peter Hall puts it, 'to show emotion in Pinter's world is a weakness, which is mercilessly punished by the other characters'. In such a situation, all Pinter characters work according to a kind of strategy in which 'all try and disturb each other by saying the opposite of what the other one was hoping or expecting'. Such is the dire need of each in a society where threat from 'the other' is pervasive.

In Beckett, on the other hand, the grotesque personae have nothing to fear from the 'other'. Rather, they often fear for each other, the existential trap being universal. And, if Estragon fears society, it is only because he thinks himself an 'outsider' from the rest of it, having rejected all its value-systems about time, truth, belief, object and even place. As such, vis-a-vis themselves, poor Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo and Lucky have no language left to play games with. In any case they cannot, and, do not ever use language as a strategy of survival against each other. From the very beginning their predicament is a general impasse. To escape the fear of an all pervasive Silence they are even trapped into various states of articulation. Their's is a common, in fact, universal trap, therefore,
the question of threatening or intimidating each other hardly arises. Their language is not a strategy to avoid contact. In a Pinter play, on the contrary, and to be more precise in The Birthday Party, characters shadow each other with language, as Goldberg and McCann do with Stanley, carefully working along a specific strategy:

STANLEY: You'd better be careful.

GOLDBERG: Webber, what were you doing yesterday?

STANLEY: Yesterday?

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

STANLEY: What do you mean?

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

McCann: He likes to do it!

GOLDBERG: Why do you behave so badly, Webber? Why do you force that old man out to play chess?

STANLEY: Me?

GOLDBERG: Why do you treat that young lady like a leper? She's not the leper, Webber!

STANLEY: What the...
GOLDBERG: What did you wear last week, Webber? Where do you keep your suites?

McCann: Why did you leave the organisation?

GOLDBERG: What would your old mum say, Webber?

McCann: Why did you betray us?

GOLDBERG: You hurt me, Webber. You're playing a dirty game.

McCann: That's a Black and Tan fact.

GOLDBERG: Who does he think he is?

McCann: Who do you think you are?

STANLEY: You're on the wrong horse.

GOLDBERG: When did you come to this place?

STANLEY: Last year.

GOLDBERG: Where did you come from?

STANLEY: Somewhere else.

GOLDBERG: Why did you come here?

STANLEY: My feet hurt?

GOLDBERG: What did you say?

STANLEY: I had a headache!

GOLDBERG: Did you take anything for it?

STANLEY: Yes.

GOLDBERG: What?

STANLEY: Fruit salts! (Act II, pp. 47-48)
Thus, first they try to prove superior to Stanley in power and position. They ask him to sit down in a chair against his will. And, under these circumstances, the perceived threat being from ‘the other’, the conversation on stage is at the level of a strategy against ‘the other’, where each is against ‘the other’ of each. This of course, cannot ever be a regular feature in Beckett plays. In fact, in Waiting for Godot, for example the tramps Estragon and Vladimir rather prefer a ‘Let us’, that is, ‘Let us converse’, ‘Let us quarrel’, or ‘Let us abuse each other’.

Pinter’s The Birthday Party institutes on stage an ‘estrangement’, which is further accentuated, as the play proceeds, by the actions of the characters. In fact, critics are of the opinion that actions along with manner and style are more important than exposition in a Pinter play. Hence, Goldberg and McCann are made to question Stanley in a rhetoric that is merciless and often incomprehensible:

GOLDBERG: ...Webber, you’re a fake. (They stand on each side of the chair.) When did you last wash 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, crouched). What wife?

GOLDBERG: What have you done with your wife?

McCann: He's killed his wife!

GOLDBERG: Why did you kill your wife?

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

McCann: How did he kill her?

GOLDBERG: How did you kill her?

McCann: You throttled her.

GOLDBERG: With arsenic.

McCann: There's your man!

GOLDBERG: Where's your old mum?

STANLEY: In the sanatorium

McCann: Yes!

GOLDBERG: Why did you never get married?

McCann: She was waiting at the porch.

GOLDBERG: You skeddaled from the wedding.

McCann: He left her in the lurch.

GOLDBERG: You left her in the pudding club.

McCann: She was waiting at the church.

(Act II, pp.49-50)
This interrogation does not seek information. Rather, its aim is to intimidate the victim. Stanley's replies are consequently physical and even violent. A mysterious uncertain past is saddled on to Stanley, who begins to breakdown under its pressure, and, in fact actually suffocates under it. Stanley's almost complete lack of self-defence, and, his easy subjugation makes us believe that it is real guilt which holds him down. Whatever it is, this 'estrangement' makes Stanley lose psychological balance. The pressure builds up gradually and crosses the danger mark and Stanley screams:}

GOLDBERG: Speak up, Webber. Why did the chicken cross the road?

STANLEY: He wanted to - he wanted to - he wanted to....

McCann: He doesn't know!

GOLDBERG: Why did the chicken cross the road?

STANLEY: He wanted to - he wanted to ----

GOLDBERG: Why did the chicken cross the road?

STANLEY: He wanted ------

McCann: He doesn't know. He doesn't know which come first!

GOLDBERG: Which come first?

McCann: Chicken? Egg? Which came first?

GOLDBERG and McCann: Which came first? Which came first? Which came first?

STANLEY SCREAMS

(Act II, pp.51-52)
The particular language strategy used against him makes the tension in Stanley reach its climax. But only Goldberg and McCann are not responsible for it; rather, it is Pinter who builds up the drama. The scream is accurately placed and ensues at a time when the climax of the crafted rhetoric of the stuccato question-sequence is at its peak. Right at this point the scream adds dramatic intensity to the scene.

And then, still at his fine dramaturgy, Pinter makes Goldberg announce to Stanley that Stanley is 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!

(Act II, p.52)

Pinteresque strategy puts after the rhetoric-sequence and the scream an appropriate dramatic silence from Stanley, and after this, Stanley is made completely inarticulate, uttering only a few ‘uuunhhhh’ sounds. By now, he has completely disintegrated emotionally, rationally and psychologically. The ‘threat’ he feared had in fact materialized in Goldberg and McCann. Such a situation is unlikely in a Beckett play, as ‘one’ exterminating ‘the other’ is not possible because each is entrapped in his or her own aborted existential grotesque, which at all times is a mentality-
corporeality disjunct. The predicament instituted on stage in Beckett is the Grotesque itself, and if there is fear, then it is the fear of a Universal Irrational Impasse. Stanley, on the other hand, is rendered a living - dead by his own kind who are as human as he himself is, and are as much a part of society as he. Meg is also used in this 'game' of extermination by Goldberg and McCann, when their game is interrupted by the arrival of Meg, who unwittingly comes prepared for a 'Birthday Party'. Stanley's interlocutors being very shrewd and hard players of their game make the 'party' a game as well. That is, they do not stop playing their game of destroying Stanley but only just change the pattern of the game to include Meg into it also. Meg, of course remains totally unaware of the interlocutor's games and participates with full zest and even unknowingly sides with Stanley's 'killers' thus she too adds to his psychological trauma.

Thus, in effect the 'party-scene' becomes almost a battlefield where Goldberg and McCann have to practically demonstrate their expertise and accomplish the task assigned to them at Bole's boarding house. However, in the process, even Goldberg and McCann also suffer 'estrangement' because of the atmosphere of threat and mental breakdown they themselves have generated. Goldberg, a tormentor par excellence suffers
a nervous break-down too, though C.A. Carpenter considers this breakdown a milder one, and, Goldberg being a man of greater will-power is able to recover from the bout easily also.

Infact, Carpenter gives a further perspective into the play. According to him, the play's pivotal point is the struggle between Goldberg, the Father figure and Meg, the Mother figure, where both struggle to get hold of the child as their prized possession. He argues that this is the reason why Meg pesters Stanley with motherly love on the one hand, and, Goldberg emphasises the value of family, identifying Stanley perhaps with his run-away son. The action of the play, according to Carpenter hinges on the conflict between these highly particularized mother and father figures. The two engage in a semi-conscious tug of war with Stanley's umbilical cord as the rope, until Goldberg triumphs by virtue of superior tactics and manpower. Living upto his first name Nat (Nat-Natal), he succeeds in separating the infantile Webber from an insulated web of Self an indulgent womb life, and in removing him to the exposed web of moral, social and familial obligations outside. Inshort, he effects a forced birth. Carpenter further says that since Meg is a mother-figure, she wants 'her' Stanley to remain close to her and therefore she presents him a toy drum as a gift on his 'birthday',
that is a 'membrane-covered piano for the foetus to
play on'. The first reaction of Stanley at receiving
such a gift is that of 'bemused indifference', but,
later on in the party, towards the end almost, he plays
on it wildly, 'savaged and possessed'. This, according
to Carpenter, is an indication of the panic felt by
Stanley after realising that the safe haven of his womb
-room has been invaded by aliens and therefore it is
not safe to remain inside-'It's not good here' any more
and he wants to get out'.

Now, such interpretations as this may be a bit far
fetched. However, the point to be made is that such
readings in any case can hardly ever be applied to the
Beckett oeuvre, because, the characters in a Beckett
play do not even appear to have the driving force of a
motive, much less an ambition to overshadow 'the other'.
Rather, they are just personae, and, the situation is so
universal that Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo or Lucky can
very much be each other's substitutes or replacements in
the play. They have only a minimum of humanity, which is
just about sufficient to make them look human, though
grotesquely human at that! In any case, even Pinter
would not take kindly to the Carpenter interpretation
because the playwright has his own idea about
'meaning'. He himself has said, 'Meaning begins in the
words, in the actions, continues in your head and ends
nowhere. There is no end to meaning. Meaning which is resolved parcelled, labelled and ready for export is dead, impertinent and meaningless'.

However, this does not interfere with the approach in this dissertation about Pinter’s attitude to ‘alienation’, and, how Beckett can hardly be ‘alienated’ from an Existential Grotesque which he institutes on stage ‘there’ as the predicament itself for every one to see.

Pinter’s play The Birthday Party is enacted in the Bole household where Stanley for some unknown reason has been hiding for quite sometime, fearing strangers. He, in fact, even tells Meg about two mysterious men who could arrive in a van with a wheel-barrow someday. And, the drama does have them arrive that very day. In such a context, everything acquires an aura of mystery and Stanley’s apprehensions prove dramatically true. This helps build up suspense and drama becomes almost palpable. The two mysterious men do indeed arrive, and Goldberg and McCann are their names, and, the two do appear very much to have a job on their hands. To accomplish their objective they too seem to be under tremendous pressure. Of course, Goldberg is the more confident one. The moment the two are told that they happen to be on time for Stanley’s birthday they seize the opportunity, and, quite normally and professionally
themselves announce a 'Birthday Party' indeed! Unwittingly, Meg is overwhelmed by the idea of having a celebration on the occasion of 'her' Stanley's 'birthday'. Stanley's own denials that it is not his birthdate at all appears to have no takers. His protests prove futile, and a 'birth-day party' is organised and Stanley is almost forced to be there in 'the party'. Of course, the two mysterious gentlemen were professional executers of their plan!

In Goldberg's absence, poor Stanley even tries to negotiate with McCann, not quite realizing that both Goldberg and McCann were bound by a 'cause' which neither could be negotiated out of. Instead, in the talk between Stanley and McCann at the beginning of Act II, the drama of a 'menace' is built up by the playwright through casual hints and suggestions:

McCann: Were you going out?

STANLEY: Yes

McCann: On your birthday?

STANLEY: Yes, why not?

McCann: But they're holding a party here for you tonight.

STANLEY: Oh really? That's unfortunate

McCann: Ah no. It's very nice.

Voices from outside the back door.

STANLEY: I'm sorry. I'm not in a mood for a party tonight.
McCann: Oh, is that so? I'm sorry.

STANLEY: Yes, I'm going out to celebrate quietly, on my own.

McCann: That's a shame. (Act II, pp.37-38)

This time, it is Stanley who tries the language game or 'strategy', for, threatened as he is by McCann's unusual ways, he wants to 'walk out of the conversation'. However, but McCann blocks his retreat. Earlier, Stanley was in the kitchen when the strangers arrived, and could very well have escaped through the back door! He does not run away then, and now finds even a temporary exit prevented by McCann. Had the spider's web already been cast when Stanley was in the kitchen? All this is unthinkable in Beckett, because there is no escape whatever from the aborted existential trap for anybody! But then to continue with the 'mystery' in the Pinter play, there is the handshake with McCann and McCann's firm grip of Stanley's hand; then, the short stichomatic exchanges, and, at the background is the idea that a 'birthday' is being celebrated of person who himself for some reason, wants to get away from it all, or, prefers to make it a silent occasion, of it! Earlier, when McCann begins to tear a paper into bits, it is almost hair-raising in its implication. Stanley watches. He gulps down a glass of water, and looks at
McCann through the kitchen-hatch. McCann stands blocking Stanley’s exit and continues to tear the paper into strips, menacingly. The conversation proceeds in stichomatic fashion, in short one or two word articulations:

STANLEY: Evening.
McCann: Evening.

*Chuckles are heard from outside the back door, which is open.*

STANLEY: Very warm tonight. *(He turns towards the back door and back)* Someone out there?
McCann: I don’t think we’ve met.
STANLEY: No, we haven’t.
McCann: My name’s McCann.
STANLEY: Staying here long?
McCann: Not long. What’s your name?
STANLEY: Webber

*(Act II, p.37)*

The paper-tearing-into-strip and the admonition to Stanley not to pick up the torn pieces of paper, as well as, the blockage of Stanley’s exit, add together to build up the intense drama of the ‘threat’ to one human being by another. The source of the threat to each other are human beings themselves. It is from human society itself that this acute sense of ‘alienation’ and
'threat' is aroused. Therefore, it is human society that is at such 'an inhuman impasse'. On the contrary, in Beckett it is an aborted existential impasse and not a social impasse at all. The problems, be they of Stanley, or even of Goldberg and McCann themselves, or, for that matter of Meg and Petey, are part of living an ordinary life in a human society. The context supplied from the very opening of a Pinter play is a social text and the drama of which colours each utterance. Human society is a potential threat. The 'alienation' is a marked social 'alienation'. It could be a case of an Ionesco rhinorictes, portraying the drama of a sick human society, with only some distant possibility of being cured. Of course, such a situation is unimaginable in a Beckett play. The Existential Grotesque that the human predicament is, is imagined continuing even after death, as Beckett's Play so successfully institutes on stage.

To return to The Birthday Party again while Stanley is trying to negotiate with McCann the situation heats up. As the heated conversation proceeds, the utterance of each becomes a struggle against the utterance of the other, which becomes of each dramatically powerful in the context of 'the menace', which after Act I, is now piled pile upon pile through the stuccato exchange between the two, to create a situation on stage in which even the most innocuous utterance or movement adds to
the suspense of the drama of 'threat' now fully at display on the proscenium:

McCann: No. (As Stanley picks up a strip of paper) Mind that.

STANLEY: (quickly) why are you down here?

McCann: A short holiday.

STANLEY: This is a ridiculous house to pick on (he rises)

McCann: Why

STANLEY: Because it's not a boarding house. It never was.

McCann: Sure it is.

STANLEY: Why did you choose this house?

McCann: You know, sir, you're a bit depressed for a man on his birthday.

STANLEY: (sharply) Why do you call me sir?

McCann: You don't like it?

STANLEY: (to the table) Listen, Don't call me sir.

McCann: I won't, if you don't like it.

(Act II, pp.40-41)

At the peak of this intense drama Stanley takes the firm grip of McCann's hand:

STANLEY: (urgently) Look.

McCann: Don't touch me

STANLEY: Look. Listen a minute.
McCann: Let go my arm.

STANLEY: Look. Sit down a minute.

McCann: (savagely, hitting his arm) Don’t do that
Stanley backs across the stage, holding
his arm.

(Act II, pp. 41-42)

Next, Goldberg accosts Stanley for the first time, Stanley responds coldly, whereafter Goldberg prefers a nostalgic trip into an unknown past, which unknown either to Stanley or to the audience, fleats through Goldberg’s consciousness. Very few characters in Beckett are allowed a past. Goldberg, for most of the time, is quite a feeling and thinking human being, having had much to do with other human beings. It is only when the play has far advanced that we feel the Absurd take over in Pinter. In Beckett the play is the Absurd from the very beginning, that is, not even about the Absurd, but the Absurd itself. It is the Absurd instituted ‘there’ as a concrete phenomenon on the Beckett proscenium.

In the Pinter play being discussed, by now we are at the first Goldberg - Stanley encounter because McCann having left, no one else is there. The drama of threat and menace is further reinforced. Stanley vainly tries to ward off the impending tragedy by saying that as manager he knows that the lodge has no vacancies. But, Stanley not only fails to send away Goldberg, his
attempt to do so has Goldberg harden all the more. Stanley's action prompts Goldberg to immediately switch on to the 'job' for which he has arrived:

GOLDBERG: A warm night.
STANLEY: (turning) Don't mess me about!
GOLDBERG: I beg your pardon?
STANLEY: (moving downstage) I'm afraid there's been a mistake. We're booked out. Your room is taken. Mrs. Boles forgot to tell you. You'll have to find somewhere else.
GOLDBERG: Are you the manager here?
STANLEY: That's right.
GOLDBERG: Is it a good game?
STANLEY: I run the house. I'm afraid you and your friend will have to find other accommodation.
GOLDBERG: (rising) Oh, I forgot, I must congratulate you on your birthday. (Offering his hand) Congratulations.

(Act II, p.44)

Next, a series of defensive attacks by Stanley, further confirms how in a Pinter play, the 'threat' is infact from one member of a human society to another member of the same society:

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.
McCann : I can smell it. (Act II, p.50)

In Pinter then, whatever is wrong is first wrong with a human society. The Absurd in Pinter has to be travelled to, and, it is only when the entire journey is completed that the view from the end, in retrospect, is of the Irrational. This can be a little stretched to say that Pinter's ouevre, on stage, is about the Absurd and not the Absurd itself, concretized as it is, from the very start on the Beckett proscenium. Towards the end, Stanley is rattled by Goldberg with multiple accusations:

McCann : You contaminate womankind.
GOLDBERG: Why don't you pay the rent?
McCann : Mother defiler!
GOLDBERG: Why do you pick your nose?
McCann : I demand justice!
GOLDBERG: What's your trade?
McCann : What about Ireland? (Act II, p.51)

The 'threat' is now almost palpable. It materializes almost and Stanley succumbs under its pressure:

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's no juice in you. You are nothing but an odour.

Silence. They stand over him. He is crouched in the chair. He looks up slowly and kicks Goldberg in the stomach. Goldberg falls. Stanley stands McCann seizes a chair and lifts it above his head. Stanley slizes a chair and cover his head with it. McCann and Stanley circle.

GOLDBERG: Steady, McCann.

STANLEY: (circling) Uuuuuuuuhhhhh!

McCann : Right, Judas.

GOLDBERG: (rising) Steady, McCann.

McCann : Come on!

STANLEY: Uuuuuuuuuuhhhhhhhhh!

McCann : He's sweating.

STANLEY: Uuuuuuuuhhhhhhhhh!

GOLDBERG: Easy, McCann.

McCann : The bastard sweatpig is sweating.

(Act II, pp.52-53)

By now, Stanley is psychologically wrecked. He is completely demolished. No such psychological wreckings take place in Beckett. Beckett, in fact, begins and ends with personae who are at best Cartesean Centaurs, that
is, whose mentality and corporeality is, as in *Happy Days* at a 'frightening disjunct'. Even in *Waiting for Godot*, just any of the four could substitute the other three because each of the four, that is, Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo, as well as Lucky is entrapped, because of an aborted birth, in a universal existential predicament.

On the contrary, in Pinter, as in *The Birthday Party* here one human being literally exploits another. Meg is one more example. She unwittingly becomes a part of a party which she genuinely takes to be a real birthday party. And, the contrast between Goldberg and McCann together executing the 'job' on hand, and, Meg used by the executioners as an unwitting foil, is very poignant. Meg is used by Goldberg also to accentuate the parting effect of the already deeply materialized menace felt at the party. He tactfully indulges in a game which by sheer contrast enhances the physical as well as psychological isolation of Stanley. For, when Meg proposes to play blind-man's buff, Goldberg calculates the effect such a game would have on Stanley, and gives a go-ahead signal. In the game, Stanley is blind folded after his glasses are taken away. He then becomes blind for all practical purposes. Next, his glasses are broken deliberately to prevent proper sight when the bandage on
the eyes is off. The drum that Meg gifted to Stanley is then put in his path so that Stanley stumbling steps upon it and the drum breaks. The demented and blindfolded Stanley, under constant psychological and physical pressure, searches for Meg so as to strangle her. Goldberg and McCann and the stage are in total darkness. There is a lot of confusion amidst which Goldberg orders all to keep quiet. In torchlight we see Stanley bent over a spread-eagled Lulu. Now, all this is too human to be the Aborted Existential Grotesque of a Beckett play.

Pinter, like Beckett also uses blackouts and silences as part of a powerful dramatic technique, but only to stress the ‘alienation’ of Stanley, and stress the palpable ‘threat’ that hovers over him even in the midst of others. Again, since Pinter starts with human figures who positively display both psychology and motivation, stage directions become less crucial. However, in Beckett, since the dramatis personae are sheer mentality-corporeality disjuncts there is no psychology and motivation, and therefore, stage directions become very important. In Pinter, by the time the characters with a psychology, are reduced to caricature and the Irrational gets instituted on stage the play is almost over. The pall of the Absurd engulfs the threatening Goldberg and McCann also, but only after
Stanley has been utterly demolished by them and is in a state of complete mental and emotional ruin. The irrational predicament appears in retrospect only. Further, the contrast between a Pinter character and a Beckett personae is quite evident. Thus, while Goldberg and McCann in *The Birthday Party* seem to have some complexity Stanley is indeed quite complex. On the contrary, in Beckett there is only the Existential grotesque as a predicament to encounter from the first to the last. Stanley, like so many other Pinter characters has actually to undergo transformation from a 'character' into 'a grotesque'.

In Act III which is the last Act of *The Birthday Party*, a seeming normalcy has returned to the scene. However, it is only too deceptive and barely conceals what had actually gone on. The context of Act II looms large over Act III and everything said or done now acquires overtones. While Meg frets to go and shop for Stanley's breakfast, she is informed that the two executioners are leaving also. Infact, she has already seen a 'big car' outside the house and Petey tells her that there is indeed a wheel-barrow in it. Everything acquires a sinister context. Indeed, these were the two gentlemen about whom Stanley had expressed fear for over an year now! And they finally catch-up with him and
wreck him emotionally and mentally. Petey tries to prevent the two from leaving but the two 'executioners' of Stanley have a firm grip over the situation. They simply intimidate Petey, whose courage fails him. Of course, Goldberg does, in the beginning try to attribute Stanley's condition to a nervous breakdown and darkly suggests that he and McCann are therefore taking him to a mysterious 'Monty'. In fact, Goldberg calls Stanley's break-down, a regular feature with Stanley, implying that they knew each other! As Pinter's plan would have it, Monty remains a mystery. Who is Monty? Why has he summoned Stanley? Was it Monty that Stanley had feared and was hiding from? Such questions add to 'alienation', 'menace' and 'threat' now firmly in control of the Pinter stage. Petey takes Monty to be a doctor, who would take care of Stanley:

PETEY : What about a doctor?
GOLDBERG: It's all taken care of.
PETEY : I think he needs one.
GOLDBERG: I agree with you. It's all taken care of. We'll give him a bit of time to settle down, and then I'll take him to Monty.
PETEY : You're going to take him to a doctor?
GOLDBERG: (staring at him) Sure, Monty.

(Act III, p.74)
Deprivation of his glasses renders Stanley almost blind. Goldberg even denies access to a doctor saying, 'it's all taken care of', and informs Petey that he, McCann, and Stanley would leave and will not be able to stay for lunch. However, what becomes as a surprise is when even Goldberg is found to suffer a mental breakdown though of a lesser degree! According to Charles A. Carpenter, Goldberg too has his soul shaken even though it is not a mental breakdown. Goldberg is disturbed and feels uneasy. Further, even McCann feels the strain and wants to 'get it over' as quickly as possible. The pressure of the task on hand, on both Goldberg and McCann, is quite evident because they had found this 'job' quite different from the others. Maybe, it had been more demanding. Stanley proved to be more tough than they had expected. It had been hard to tame him into their trap. It was this pressure that had made both feel uneasy. Infact, Goldberg seems almost on the verge of a breakdown. This is evident towards the end of his long speech on family, father and mother:

GOLDBERG: And you'll find that what I say is true.

Because I believe that the world....(Vacant)...

Because I believe that the world....(Desperate)...

Because I BELIEVE THAT THE WORLD....(Lost)....

(Act III, p.78)
As Charles A. Carpenter puts it, 'shaken to his soul Goldberg recovers his aplomb by having McCann (allegedly a defrocked priest) blow air in his mouth'. Goldberg can only recover and retain his composure after asking McCann to blow air in his mouth. Just then Lulu enters and accuses Goldberg of 'playing' with her, though McCann scares her away. The entire perspective then is liable to the interpretation that 'threat' was a perception not for Stanley only. Apprehension, futility and absurdity was quite pervasive and includes Petey, Goldberg, McCann, as well as, Lulu!

When Stanley appears in the last Act, the difference in his appearance is striking. He is dressed in a dark well-cut suit with a white collar, and is clean-shaven. Now, although, outwardly he seems to be in the garb of respectability, yet we know that he is broken. His vision cannot at all be right, for, the spectacles he now carries are only the shattered remnants of the spectacles deliberately broken earlier by McCann. Goldberg and McCann try wooing him by promising a 're-orientation'. What lay ahead were new prospects, he having became a totally 'new-man' now, 're-born' at the 'birthday', what with the sinister materializing of the threat he had felt himself perpetually under all along! Would he be driving new benefits now! Will they be social benefits, because
Stanley, broken as he was, would henceforth be under the full control of a mysterious paternal authority? Stanley will soon be 'adjusted', 're-oriented', and 'integrated' each of which forebodes a frightening future ahead. But there is more to follow yet because Stanley has to stand a trail now. Sahai\(^{19}\) is of the opinion that this trial parodies the 'high' prospects offered by society, which in effect is the savage and grotesque majority's crude joke on the individual and induce the compulsion to conform to society, destroying even all traces of selfhood and self-respect. Free will is denied to the individual and destroyed wherever a protest is made. Whatever is done to Stanley is only representative of the general torture to which individuals 'in society' are subjected. In the contemporary world, the artist stands 'alienated' from society for want of suitable articulation. Now, the Beckett ouevre has scant time to devote to such trivia, even if it be a protest against the savagery of a demented band of human beings! Beckett has no time even for Ionesco's rhinos!

During Stanley's trial only Goldberg and McCann speak. Stanley registers just silent reactions. Even when he does make some effort at speech he fails and is able to emit meaningless sounds from his throat:

GOLDBERG: You'll be integrated.

McCann : You'll give orders.
GOLDBERG: You’ll make decisions.
McCann: You’ll be a magnate.
GOLDBERG: A statesman.
McCann: You’ll own yachts.
GOLDBERG: Animals.
McCann: Animals.

(Act III, p.84)

These are some of the prospects offered by Goldberg and McCann, and the reaction of Stanley are sheer throat sounds:

GOLDBERG: What’s your opinion of such a prospect? Eh, Stanley?

STANLEY concentrates, his mouth opens, he attempts to speak, fails, and emits sounds from his throat.

STANLEY: Uh-gug..... Uh-gug..... eeehhh-gag..... (on the breath) Caaahh....Caaahhh.

(Act III, p.84)

So, the materialized 'menace' has rendered Stanley speechless. He is taken away too, despite Petey's feeble protests. Petey too is unnerved by Goldberg's suggestion of joining them, and the most he can do for Stanley is too feebly sounding pathetic, 'Stan don't let them tell you What to do'. The 'menace' is such that Petey's courage breaks down completely, and when Goldberg and McCann leave with Stanley. He can only go back and sit at the table and pick up his newspaper to read. But
then, from the newspaper fall the strips McCann had torn the paper into. The 'menace' in this case have left behind footprints! Petey stares at the strips on the floor. The appalling menace had thoroughly shaken the otherwise listless people at the boarding house. In its very precincts the spirit of a man was shattered to pieces by two people who had forced themselves upon the lodge and had executed their task with utmost precision for a mysterious Monty. They had literally carried away a person in the vehicle that was already in place for its assignment. Meg, of course, is least aware about what has happened, and, is at her normal chores. She even remembers the 'nice' party. She was away shopping and did not know that Goldberg and McCann had carried Stanley away in their big car! She is once more at her banalities and the play ends as it had begun with so much happening in between within human society, done by human being to the other human beings.

So, a play which began with characters being very much part of society, ends with the same characters in the same confines living as yet that same banal, futile, insecure life, the crux of which is evasiveness and hypocrisy. Each life is brimful of its private nightmare and of whom beginning with Stanley, Meg, Petey and Lulu, even Goldberg, McCann and the mysterious Monty appear typical examples. Of course, Stanley in The Birthday
Party is the chosen example. For some mysterious reason he had kept himself hidden from the outside world by confining himself to Bole's boarding house. But, in here holed in though he was, and did feel some what at peace, danger lurked and did not take long to materialize and harm and hurt Stanley, both physically and psychologically. The problem being 'the other' in Pinter. The palpable threat from 'the other' hurts in Pinter. There has then to perforce the trauma of alienation.

However, in Beckett, the dramatis personae encounter the Irrational from the beginning. These personae are not even Pirandellan conglomerates where characters are just many masks heaped, one top of the other. They begun as disjuncts, being embodiments of a mind at a swing and yoked on to a corporeality with which it cannot ever reconcile. The Beckett personae could be just anything, even plain mouths, or voices after death. They have neither psychology nor motivation. They are just a consciousness that does not appear to die even at death. They are as in Happy Days, a corporeality perpetually entrapped and mentality at a constant swing. To the contrary, all Pinter personae have life-blood in them. They begin as 'characters' and only later end up as caricatures and too because a threat they hid from materialized and broke them. In Beckett
existence itself is aborted, Irrational and Grotesque, so that there can hardly even be a thought of threat from 'the other'. That poor 'other' too is quite plainly in the same aborted irrational, existential predicament, only that he has yet to go through such a self-encounter. The 'other' in Beckett is not a threat. If he beats up Estragon, it is only because he has not as yet taken a good enough look at his existential predicament. In Pinter, even stereo-types can be real because they suffer guilt. In any case, the impasse is only a social impasse, may the impasse experienced by society of a particular variety that may, however remotely may visualize even a remedy. In Beckett, lack of a remedy is not the problem, though being entrapped in a universal existential predicament is! Of course Beckett too has panic and frustration, however this panic and frustration is not because society disagrees but because the entrapped existential impasse is mind-boggling. Thus, though the concern of both playwrights is the Absurd, the contexts each adopts make them utterly different and more particularly on the question of 'alienation'.

Some critics, perhaps encouraged by Pinter's acknowledged debt to Samuel Beckett, see the play as man's decay into death, life as a process of loss. Stanley loses first his sight then his power of speech
and finally ceases to exist as a 'living-man', he is then taken away dressed in funeral clothes, by two men in a large black hearse-like car. Of course, there maybe some points of similarities between the two dramatists yet still there is one major difference between the two. While, in Pinter the situation however absurd later is, yet it is man versus man situation; whereas, in Beckett man is in relation to Cosmos, or, the situation is that of man versus Cosmos. Pinter's characters fear the very society of which they are themselves members and which they cannot escape. It is by the entanglements within this very society from which these members feel 'alienated'. The feeling of threat come from 'the other' members of this society, as Stanley's safe haven is threatened by Goldberg and McCann.

Also, the retreat of Stanley may suggest the enforcing alienation from society, family or even the spirit. As Pinter himself says that he was dealing with his characters, 'at the extreme edge of their living, where they are living pretty much alone; at a point, that is when they are back in their rooms confronted with the basic question/problem of being'. The rooms, nevertheless remain there however deceptive a safe haven. The enclosure that the personae in *Endgame* inhabit are the only survivors of a cosmic apreapocalypse.
And Stanley does carries some guilt from the past, which weighs heavily on him and it is, this feeling of guilt too which alienates him from his erstwhile society. He has already led a secluded life for the last one year, when we are first introduced to him. However, he is still in recognisable social surroundings, and the paradox is that for his alienation Stanley yet is given a social setting where in to hole himself.

There is nothing cosmic about Bole’s boarding house. Goldberg and McCann are assigned by Pinter to ‘menacingly’ institute the Irrational in it through a birthday party, making the play about the Irrational.

In Beckett, what starts concretized on stage from the word go is little else but an absurd existential predicament. The insecurity in Beckett a universal existential insecurity, the human phenomenon itself being an aborted ‘something’, may be, a Cartesean Centaur! There is no mysterious Monty with his Goldbergs and McCanns on the prowl. What is challenged from the outset is truth itself, and belief, and thought, and reason too, and language, as also, time, place and object. Of course, no two authors can even be the same in finer details and for umpteen reasons. Be that as it may, Pinter and Beckett, as playwrights differ also on the point of ‘alienation’ as understood in this dissertation and as stated earlier in the first chapter.
Pinter used 'alienation' to institute the Irrational on the stage. Beckett concretized the Irrational itself on his proscenium. Further still, in Pinter language is used as a weapon to literally 'spar' with 'the other'. In Beckett, the so-called language is only creative and though the 'language theme' as 'theme' is of prime concern to both playwrights, Beckett was its past master having become a classic even in his own life-time. In anycase, Pinter makes his characters use language to evade communication and takes advantage of the fact that the word left unspoken effectively communicates nevertheless. Language hides little in a Beckett play. In anycase it is not such a total weapon as it is in Pinter. Rather, the different attitudes of the two playwrights to the 'language theme' should further confirm what has been repeatedly emphasized in this dissertation about the possible attitude of the two dramatists towards 'alienation' as understood here. In Pinter then, the cause of all the trouble is only society and 'the other' in it, but in Beckett the trouble touted is found in a human being's existence itself, society or no society. For Estragon and Vladimir, the stasis that frustrates and the silence that is dreaded are both because of the human being just thrown 'there' in an essentially aborted existential state. It is this that causes the despair, dread, as also the feeling of a
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futility and meaninglessness. On the other hand, society is the cause of Stanley's despair and frustration. Menacing strangers invade his safe haven, and relish their captive's insecurity and breakdown. Beckett has no pursuers. Infact, he just cannot have pursuers. Both Estragon and Vladimir suffer the same predicament and neither can therefore relish the situation. The condition of Pozzo and Lucky is no better. In Pinter, a Goldberg or McCann cannot ever substitute a Stanley. In Beckett, the waiting is the trap situation for all four, and therefore each can very well be in the other's predicament which is only very slightly different. In Waiting for Godot the tramps keep waiting for an absent presence and nobody arrives. In The Birthday Party, Stanley hides from threatening strangers who soon arrive. In Waiting for Godot it is stasis that is firmly concretized on stage. It is not an 'alienation'. In Endgame it is an apocalyptical ending, not ever ending, and yet, slowly grinding to an end. With Krapp it is the time-factor. In Play it is the case of a consciousness persisting even after death. To say the least, Beckett's is a more powerful experience of the Absurd Irrational than Pinter's for, in Pinter 'alienation' is instead the prime over. Stanley is rendered mentally and spiritually dead by the very strangers he fears. He is taken away, broken and shattered, to be delivered to
some mysterious Monty, away that is, from the cozy haven at Meg’s, be the haven however banal. Of course, the hint could be at a universal predicament. But The Birthday Party begins and ends portraying a profound social trauma. Only, in between, are thrusts at the Irrational, which come through, at best, as an ‘alienation’, concretized but not as an Irrational instituted ‘there’ on stage, that is a Non-ent, or a Nothing-is, which to Beckett human existence is. In Pinter, it is each time an ‘alienation’ re-inforced. There is hardly ever as in Beckett, a mentality-corporeality disjunct, that is a mentality at a perpetual swing, and, a corporeality permanently entrapped. As Hall remarks, ‘All Characters of Pinter have masks. But the mask almost never slips. When it does the result can be catastrophic’. In Beckett the catastrophe is ‘there’ on stage at the raise of the curtain itself. It is not catastrophic just because the threat materializes. It is catastrophic because human existence itself is aborted. Its tragedy is that human predicament is an existential grotesque. Pinter’s character take time to become caricatures. In Beckett, time itself reduces man to krapp. Even Vision, Dream, Nature, Story, Place, Object are dramaturgically debunked. In fact, in Beckett the worst that man could have ever done was to have thought because all thought is futile. Therefore, Estragon and Vladimir cannot even
afford to think. They are just thrown 'there' into an Irrational quagmire. They cannot even afford motives, because they have the minimum of psychology, making stage directions in Beckett very necessary. Pinter's characters have conscious motives. In any case the source of the threat and menace being 'the other', that 'other' must have motives, however senseless. In Pinter the change is from 'alienation' to the Irrational. Beckett could not think ever of being 'alienated' because 'alienation' is so grounded in some medium of 'meaning' which to Beckett was anathema. The next chapter works with Waiting for Godot to test this hypothesis.
References:


2. Ibid., pp.39-40.

3. Ibid., pp.42-43.

4. Ibid., p.37.


8. Ibid., pp.29-30.


10. Ibid., p.28.


15. Idem.


17. Idem.


CHAPTER III

BECKETT’S WAITING FOR GODOT: THE ABSURD
ITSELF AS THE EXISTENTIAL GROTESQUE

Martin Esslin speaks about Waiting for Godot in his book 'The Theatre of Absurd' as a play, loaded with high obscurity along with being intellectual. However, it is not intellectual in the sense that it works out a philosophy beginning with premises and consistently working out a logical conclusion. Rather, it is powerful thought at that, taking different directions for succour and reaching no certain conclusion. Infact, Beckett institutes on the proscenium a general human predicament, because existence at its primary in his perspective is aborted, meaningless, futile and grotesque. His personae are 'outsiders', who do live in insecurity, but it is not a threat from 'the other', who too is a member of the same human society to which the 'threatened' belonged. Rather, the despair, dread and fear is due to an irrational existential condition which is universally pervasive. As a consequence, there is little to be 'alienated' from. There is no travelling away to a state of 'estrangement' or 'alienation'. The situation concretized on a Beckett proscenium is that of a Nothing-is, a failure, an empty, meaningless futility. After that, the question of an 'alienation' with the
meanings which Chapter-I to this dissertation specifies can hardly at all apply to the Beckett ouevre. Each member of every society, the world over, is an aborted phenomenon, an Existential Grotesque, little capable of threatening, anybody. The idea is that existence itself is Absurd or Irrational, and no thought however, far-fetched, can explain this Irrational. It is just there affecting all human-brings, and all universe. The Nothing-is has cosmic reach; Be it Truth, Time, Belief, Thought, Faith, Reason, or Language, or be it Object or Place! The irrational is all pervasive. Consequently reason does not explain, faith does not answer, language hardly communicates, appearing to be at a terrible collapse. In an unpublished thesis on Beckett's dramaturgy, Khalid Rifat Udayli finds Beckett 'relentlessly honest' in his commitment to the themes of the Absurd, that is, to the theme of existence being a Non-ent, a Nothing-is that is, a failure, a futility. Existence is an empty void and what is worse that the artist must express though there is nothing to express, and also nothing in which to express.

What Beckett then dramatizes the existential condition, which just is a Grotesque. His personae are therefore neither 'characters' in the traditional sense, nor, conglomerates in the Pirandellian context. Beckett not only begins by instituting on stage an 'Existential
Grotesque 'there',\(^2\) but also ends with the Existential Grotesque still more profoundly concretized, powerful, and, so demanding attention. Human beings are aborted grotesques. They are disjuncts constituted by a mentality at a perpetual, swing, and, a corporeality, from the trap of which there is no escape. Psychology is therefore unthinkable. So is motive. Beckett's cannon thus bases itself on one single repertoire, i.e., of the Grotesque. Infact, if the Beckett personae can hardly afford to think, it is because, to have thought was the worst that man ever did. In Beckett, thought itself is futile. The situation on stage is that of stasis, where nothing ever happens. One can only move in circles. Out of fear of the dreadful silence, a futile conversation has to be kept going. Beckett, the master of language that he is, makes language appear at a collapse by creatively working on the 'language theme'.\(^3\) The basic metaphysical problem is that of Being, of the Human beings just being "there", without any supportive rhyme or reason. Thus, in Waiting for Godot, we find two tramps standing along an open countryside road, near a mound, 'waiting' under a barren tree for 'Godot'. And the Wait lasts the dramatic length of Act I on stage, yet no Godot arrives! The same situation is repeated with minor changes in Act II, for, still no Godot cares to come. The repetitious Act II intensifies the
'circular' nature of the Waiting phenomenon. Beckett is always profoundly interested in concretizing abstractions on stage. Thus, if in *Waiting for Godot*, it is a *Waiting*, in *Endgame*, it is an *Ending*, in *Krapp’s Last Tape* it is *Time*, and in *Happy Days* it is a questionable *Happiness*, as in *Play*, it is Life-after-death. The aborted existential condition itself makes ideas of an 'alienation' redundant.

Now, the repetitious nature of Act II can be gauged by a brief breakup of salient features of the two Acts of the play in the following way:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act I</th>
<th>(1) Stage Directions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) The Vladimir - Estragon Exchanges before Pozzo enters.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Later Pozzo and Lucky, and with them, the Vladimir - Estragon Encounter</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(4) Lucky’s Speech</td>
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<td>(5) Pozzo’s Departure</td>
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<td>(6) Enter Boy I</td>
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<td>(7) The End with the decision to go though neither Estragon nor Vladimir leave.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act II</th>
<th>(1) Stage Directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Vladimir-Estragon Exchanges again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Pozzo and Lucky enter once more and their encounter with Vladimir and Estragon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Pozzo and Lucky’s departure.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
(5) Enter Boy II

(6) The End with again the decision to leave but once again, neither Vladimir nor Estragon moves.

As it is clear from this break-up of the two Acts of the play it has, 'a circular, repetitive form to dramatize a static situation in two identical acts. The curtain rises to a landscape, bleak and almost empty. The sparse stage is almost barren with a blasted tree on it, and an earth mound and a countryside road. Estragon sits on the earth-mound, struggling with his boots. Vladimir enters and the first few words Estragon utters introduce the theme, 'Nothing to be done', which almost sounds like a death-knell. Vladimir agrees, 'I'm beginning to come round to that opinion'. (Act I, p.39). Thus, begins the long ordeal of Estragon and Vladimir, the two Beckett tramps who wait for Godot, and who, it turns out, never arrives. Khalid Rifat Udayli in his unpublished thesis on Beckett's Dramaturgy, already referred to, further says, 'By the time the play ends, the spectator has had an intense experience of the trap of a purposeless waiting for an absent Godot, who only promises but never arrives'.

Thus, a Beckett play is never an experience within the context of any extended social framework, while a play of Pinter as dramatized against the backdrop of a human society, in which the threat from 'the other', who
is also a member of the same society, is menacingly real. In Pinter, the dramatist personae therefore begin as 'characters' who have a positive social presence around them, ranging between those that are already present on stage, and, those that arrive and actually threaten, as also those others, whose absence is nevertheless a threatening mysterious presence. Real human beings with psychology and motives are Pinter's material. It is a different matter altogether that by the time a Pinter play ends, almost all his characters are reduced to irrational caricatures. However, this notwithstanding, Pinter's dramatis personae belong to a very real and recognisable human society. Without that society in the background, there would be little or no cause of a 'threat' whatever, because the 'treat' is from one human being to another. In effect, therefore, something awry has happened to human society. Infact, Pinter's characters have even to adopt 'stratagems' to protect themselves from other very Pinteresque characters. In Beckett, the predicament is the Absurd itself, from the very beginning, so strategies are unthinkable, much less motives and a psychology. The tramps in Beckett are Existential Grotesque. They are victims, all of an irrational condition which is devastatingly pervasive, and, affects mentally as well as corporeally. The Beckett personae are disjuncts who
comprise a mentality-at-a-swing, and, a corporeality eternally entrapped. Therefore, they cannot ever contemplate conspiracies against each other. They struggle, not against another man, nor ever against society, but against an existence that is pervasively irrational or with Absurd itself. The Cosmos too is affected by that Irrational. Hence, there is no question of devising strategies against one another, as they are all victims of an existential impasse. Rather, Estragon and Vladimir are Man, who has waited for generations, through history for Godot to arrive, but till date no Godots have arrived. The Wait has always proved futile. Nobody has ever arrived. It is an existential human predicament, where nothing ever happens. There is a perpetual STASIS. Existence is futile and purposeless. Beckett concretizes on stage a Nothing-is, a Non-ent itself. A Beckett play is never about the Absurd or the Irrational, but is the Absurd or Irrational itself. Martin Esslin says that Waiting for Godot does not tell a story, rather it explores a static situation. As one of the tramp says 'Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, its awful'. Therefore, in Beckett, there is nothing to be 'alienated' from. On the contrary, in a Pinter play, the setting is essentially social; there is a pillar called society, within the framework of which the characters feel 'alienated'. In Beckett, that pillar
too is absent. There is little to fall back upon. No Truth. No Belief. No Faith. No Reason. Not even a Language. There is just Consciousness of a Self, permanently decanting into the past. And a Silence that is horrifying! Where then could the question of an 'alienation' arise!

Javed Malick in his introduction to *Waiting for Godot*, talking about the setting of the play says, 'such non-specific settings are a common feature of Beckett's drama. They enable him to isolate his characters from any social reality that might deflect attention from the generalised human situation he is portraying'. Indeed, the barreness of the Beckett stage is always a striking phenomenon, and in the instant case there is just a battered tree, and, a mound by a roadside. The situation is that of a meaningless empty void, and Vladimir and Estragon seem tied to this empty 'nothingness'. They try leaving almost seven times, and all seven times they do not leave. The famous refrain of the play, 'Let’s, go/We can;t/Why not!/We’re waiting for Godot/Ah!’ reiterates this everytime. Even at the end of each of the two Acts their resolve to leave proves futile, because each time they do not move and the Act ends on that. It is a situation the tramps cannot escape. It is an empty, irrational, existential predicament. It is the predicament of Man then and Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo
and Lucky are just interchangeable representatives. Language is used creatively to be shown at a collapse. It only helps keep up a futile conversation to ward off an eerie silence. It is the Absurd itself instituted on a Beckett proscenium. On the contrary, Pinter uses language to help his characters hide from each other. It is language used as a weapon to escape a possible 'threat', from 'the other'. To outdo 'the other' is always the language stratagem. Language is a weapon of offence also as well as of defence. In Beckett, Language expresses a general disillusionment that affects everybody. Therefore, it is a language loaded with cliches, used creatively, to communicate intense thought, but equally, a complete lack of meaning. Khalid Rifat Udayli also says, 'Trite and stale torso movements on stage are deliberately calculated stylized movements and lend their own theatre to the drama of the existential trap situation. The two characters (if we at all can call them characters), from the beginning of the play, indulge in banal cross-talks while beginning a long ordeal of waiting for Godot. 'A context of an existential bind is built-up', through their cross-talk, their movements and the reader/spectator has 'an intense experience of the trap of a purposeless waiting.  

In *Waiting for Godot*, an otherwise small play, Beckett extensively makes use of Pauses and Silences. In
all, the play contains 65 pauses and 95 silences. This, besides lengthening the duration of the play, serves as an important dramaturgical device for creating dramaturgical effects, which help the dramatist to situate on the proscenium an irrational, meaningless existential impasse. It is then the condition itself, the impasse, the trap of an irrational existence that is concretized on a Beckett stage.

Contrary to Pinter, then, Beckett’s Waiting for Godot is a sheer ‘irrational predicament’ from end to end, whereas in Pinter’s The Birthday Party this ‘predicament’ aspect catches on only after the first Act is almost through. Beckett has a penchant for just a predicament ‘there’ and this should not be overlooked. Though both Beckett and Pinter are categorized as dramatists of the Absurd, and do have their own markedly different dramaturgic, as well as, thematic characteristics, even a cursory reading of a Beckett play makes us reach the conclusion that it has little of ‘alienation’ and more of a ‘predicament’ in it. It is because of this, therefore, that there can be no ‘characters’ in Beckett and only ‘grotesques’. Body and Mind being disjunct, Beckett personae can hardly ever function in harmony. ‘Therefore’, as Khalid Rifat Udayli says, ‘Beckettian Man... could just be a Vladimirian mannequin, or, a Cartesian Centaur’. A Beckett play is
not about success at all. Rather, importance or, failure or a Non-ent is itself instituted on stage 'there'. Hence, Beckett play's lack 'plot', for as Martin Esslin says, 'Beckett's plays lack plot even more completely than other works of the Theatre of the Absurd: Instead of a linear development, they present their author's intuition of the human condition.'\textsuperscript{11} The tramps find themselves in an existential situation in which nothing ever happens and yet they wait for something to happen. And, this is the universal condition. It has been the phenomenon down all history. Man has forever waited and no Godot has ever arrived. This is Beckett's perception. Man has been a no better tramp than Estragon or Vladimir, or, for that matter a Pozzo or Lucky! Infact, these are just four of the many Grotesques Beckett concretizes on stage. Krapp and Winnie, Hamm, and Clove are some and a few others. Each Grotesque is trapped within an Irrational Existential Impasse, be it of a Waiting, an Ending, or, of Time, or of a a Mind-Body disjunct, or, a Life-after-death predicament. And, as Udayli rightly points out, each play is a slight variation on the same theme, the theme of the Absurd, and dramaturgy is adjusted to suit the variation. Beckett achieves powerful effects on stage. To quote Udayli, 'Just an empty stage, with a lone tree, a mound, country road and to be able to include in his
sweep and range not only the grotesque, but also the void of a cosmos, with the help of only two concrete stage-images of a sheer corporeal presence and some banal words at the appropriate places, is quite a marvel of technique’. Keeping this in mind one gets the experience of witnessing on the stage sheer human predicament, a presence thrown, ‘there’ on the stage, an Existential Grotesque. Udayli further says that, ‘Added to this is the repetitive hat and boot stage-business and a thrice repeated, appropriately spaced one line refrain of ‘Nothing to be done’. All this concretizes into instituting on the proscenium an Existential Impasse. There was literally nothing to be done except prolong an Endless Wait. Hence, Estragon and Vladimir are ‘there’, doing just nothing. Only, they wait for Godot. Their situation is primarily existential, and in this context it is a futility that grips the Beckett stage from Estragon’s very first utterance, ‘Nothing to be done’. It is indeed an impasse. It is safer to do nothing but cross-talk. Also, right at the beginning Estragon is found struggling a futile struggle with his boots. Was existence just a matter of putting on and taking off boots, a ‘measuring out life in coffee-spoons’.

Infact, both the boot as well as the hat stage-business, add to the existential grotesquery. And both
are frighteningly comic, being profoundly tragic also. The two tramps are 'outsiders' having rejected all society, and, are a two-some alone by themselves. There is only one threat, and that is of being physically beaten, and this too, only Estragon fears, for, he is on occasion assaulted, may be, for being a non-conformer. However, Vladimir can defend himself, and in fact feels himself an Estragon-protector also. In any case, Estragon Vladimir do not fear each other. They suffer the same predicament. Also, those that beat up Estragon up do not give themselves a proper size-up or else they too would suffer as Estragon and Vladimir, Pozzo and Lucky did. The Irrational was a universal condition. Each human being was in fact a Grotesque, a Cartesian Centaur in whom a mentality was needlessly yoked to a cumbersome corporeality. Where was then the question of the 'threat' and 'menace' that Pinteresque creatures fear from each other as members of a recognisable society. This human society is very much in function and process. Beckett tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, have Time virtually sitting on them, and they have little to do. They only keep up a futile effort appearing to do something. They quarrel, abuse each other, make-up, do exercise, keep up a chatter. Chatter is kept up in particular because a Silence would otherwise be dreadful. It is an existential predicament which both
share, and therefore, there is no question relishing a worse situation that the other is in. The existential impasse is universal. For both tramps, in fact for all four, that is, Pozzo and Lucky included, the condition is identical. Therefore, there is little question of one threatening to subdue or overpower another. Pinteresque drama is full of such 'threat' and such attempts to subdue and overpower'. A Pinter play has a functioning social set-up. Whatever happens has to happen within this set up. The social context in Pinter is palpable. Therefore, it is society that could have deteriorated and its members transformed caricatures. It is a futile social set up in which each appears to be desperate to dominate the other, for the other's blood. There is mystery in the way human beings behave with each other and with themselves. The 'alienation' in a Pinter play is palpable.

The situation instituted on a Beckett proscenium is different. When Act I of Waiting for Godot has sufficiently advanced, we find Vladimir at one point stifle a hearty-laugh, contorting his face out of shape; and then, suddenly he smiles 'from ear to ear'. If the stifling of a laugh had earlier disfigured his face, next, the effort to be all smiles does little better than depict him a grotesque all the more. It is a frightening smile, particularly in the context of a
'nothing to be done'. It is a piquant existential condition. Even smiles showed themselves futile and misshaped. Suicide too was out of question. Infact, as one of the tramps says early in the play, it was too late even for a suicide. All that could be kept up was a meaningless chatter. An 'alienation' would imply a better past or an unproved future. In Beckett it is an out-and-out hopeless existential condition. Where then was the question of 'alienation', because how is 'alienation' thinkable if existence itself is aborted. Further, language is a deliberate chatter, a game may be ending up in non-sequities, yet it is never a weapon used as a weapon of attack and defence. Language in Beckett is not a strategy to ward off a 'threat'. Rather, Beckett, the master of language that he was, uses language creatively to show it at a collapse. It is wrong to call the Beckett language trite and banal, because it is deliberately made to appear banal and trite. In any case language at its most simple can often be awfully profound. And, when a language is called 'banal' or 'trite', the fear is that there has been a conditioning of the mind for a language full of metaphor and other figure of speech. Infact, language as 'theme' is an obsession with both Beckett and Pinter, though once again their approaches differ significantly. Pinter uses the drama in language to concretize on his stage
the intense drama of 'threat' and 'menace' amongst human beings who happen very much to inhabit a functioning society. They do have to cope with the question of existence but it is not existence itself, at its primary but at the social level. Existence at its primary, is the material of a Beckett drama, and the author finds no rationale either in existence or for existence. Existence at its very existential is aborted and irrational. A human being is an Existential Grotesque, a Mentality - Corporeality Disjunct, to begin with. Pinter's characters do often arrive at futility and caricature, but in Pinter the Absurd or Irrational is arrived at as a result of the play's entire effort. The hints of futility and caricature often concretize in retrospect. In Beckett, the assault of the Existential Grotesque is immediate and direct as the condition itself not even as its portrayal. Under the circumstances, therefore, the Beckett personae are born victims of an aborted existential condition. Therefore, they cannot ever victimize each other, each suffering almost the same existential predicament. Infact, Estragon is emotionally weaker than Vladimir and is extended protection by the latter, who even sings him to sleep.

In Beckett, The conversation and behaviour is an essential ingredient of the tramps' irrational
condition. Thus, to while away Time, which is awfully burdensome, they at times decide to abuse each other, quarrel or even make up:

Estragon: I was asleep! (Despairingly). Why will you never let me sleep?

Vladimir: I felt lonely.

Estragon: I had a dream.

Vladimir: Don't tell me!

Estragon: I dreamt that -

Vladimir: Don't tell me!

Estragon: (gesture towards the universe). This one is enough for you? (Silence) It's not nice of you, Didi. Who to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?

Vladimir: Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that.

Estragon: (coldly). There are times when I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part.

(Act I, pp.45-46)

An attempt at an embrace is also dramaturgically debunked:

Estragon: (gently). You wanted to speak to me? (Silence. Estragon takes a step forward). You had something to say to me? (Silence. Another step forward). Didi........

Vladimir: (without turning). I've nothing to say to you.

(Act I, pp.46-47)

The tramps indulge in stage business, now of hats, now of boots. The hats were donned on heads, the seat of thought:

Estragon : Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful!
Vladimir : (to Pozzo). Tell him to think.
Pozzo : Give him his hat.
Vladimir : His hat?
Pozzo : He can’t think without his hat.
Vladimir : (to Estragon) Give him his hat.
Estragon : Me! After what he did to me! Never!
Vladimir : I’ll give it to him

He does not move

Estragon : (to Pozzo). Tell him to go and fetch it.
Pozzo : It’s better to give it to him.
Vladimir : I’ll give it to him.

(Act I, pp.71-72)
The hat stage-business also debunks the idea of truth:

Estragon: Why don’t you help me?

Vladimir: Sometimes I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer. (He takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again). How shall I say? Relieved and at the same time... (he searches for the word)... appalled. (with emphasis) AP-PALLED. (He takes off his hat again, peers inside it.) Funny. (He knocks on the crown as though to dislodge a foreign body, peers into it again, puts it on again.) Nothing to be done.

(Act I, pp.40-41)

Indeed, hats brought forth no pigeon truths. After Vladimir’s effort with his hat, it is Estragon’s turn to arrive at truth through the stage business of his boots:

Estragon: People are bloody ignorant apes. He rises painfully, goes limping to extreme left, halts, gazes into distance off with his hand screening his eyes, turns, goes to extreme right, gazes into distance. Vladimir watches him, then goes and picks up the boot, peers into it, drops it hastily.

(Act I, p.43)

Indeed from hat to boot, that is, from top to toe existence was without an iota of reason or truth. It was irrational, futile and meaningless. Earlier, the tramps’ cross-talk had debunked Belief in general and then the specific tenets of Christianity. The Evangelists are
questioned and so is the logic of Redemption, and also the concepts of Saviour, Heaven and Hell.

Dramaturgy first focuses on the Bible:

Vladimir: .... Nothing to be done. (Pause) Gogo.

Estragon: (irritably). What is it?

Vladimir: Did you ever read the Bible?

Estragon: The Bible... (He reflects.) I must have taken a look at it.

Vladimir: Do you remember the Gospels?

Estragon: I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That’s where we’ll go, I used to say, that’s where we’ll go for our honeymoon. We’ll swim. We’ll be happy.

(Act I, pp.41-42)

Next, the concepts of Saviour, the logic of Redemption and Heaven and Hell are bereft of their meanings:

Vladimir: Ah yes, the two thieves, Do you remember the story?

Estragon: No

Vladimir: Shall I tell it to you?

Estragon: No.

Vladimir: It’ll pass the time. (Pause) Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One -

Estragon: Our What?

Vladimir: Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other... (he searches for the contrary of saved)... damned.
Estragon: Saved from what?

Vladimir: Hell

Estragon: I’m going.

*He does not move.*

Vladimir: And yet... (pause)... how is it -- this is not boring you I hope -- how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved. The four of them were there -- or thereabouts -- and only one speaks of a thief being saved (Pause.) Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can’t you, once in a way?

Estragon: (with exaggerated enthusiasm). I find this really most extraordinarily interesting.

Vladimir: One out of four. Of the other three two don’t mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.

Estragon: Who?

Vladimir: What?

Estragon: What’s all this about? Abused who?

Vladimir: The Saviour

Estragon: Why?

Vladimir: Because he wouldn’t save them

Estragon: From hell?

Vladimir: Imbecile! From death

Estragon: I thought you said hell

Vladimir: From death, from death

Estragon: Well what of it?

Vladimir: Then the two of them must have been damned.

Estragon: And why not?
Vladimir: But one of the four says that one of the two was saved.

Estragon: Well? They don't agree, and that's all there is to it.

Vladimir: But all four were there. And only one speak of a thief being saved. Why believe him rather than the others?

Estragon: Who believes him?

Vladimir: Everybody. It's the only version they know.

Estragon: People are bloody ignorant apes.

(Act I, pp.42-43)

Even the certainty of Time, Place and Object is not left sure:

Estragon: Let's go.

Vladimir: We can't

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.

Estragon: (despairingly) Ah! (Pause) You're sure it was here?

Vladimir: What?

Estragon: That we were to wait

Vladimir: He said by the tree. (They look at the tree). Do you see any others?

(Act I, p.44)

The Waiting is perpetual:

Estragon: He should be here.

Vladimir: He didn't say for sure he'd come.
Estragon: And if he doesn't come?
Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.
Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow.
Vladimir: Possibly. (Act I, p.44)

Of rights and prerogatives, the less said the better.

Man entered on hands and knees:

Estragon: (anxious). And we?
Vladimir: I beg your pardon?
Estragon: I said, And we?
Vladimir: I don't understand.
Estragon: Where do we come in?
Vladimir: Come in?
Estragon: Take your time.
Vladimir: Come in? On our hands and knees.
Estragon: As bad as that?
Vladimir: Your Worship wishes to assert his prerogatives?
Estragon: We've no rights any more?
(Laugh of Vladimir, stifled as before, less the smile).
Vladimir: You'd make me laugh, if it was not prohibited.
Estragon: We've lost our rights?
Vladimir: (distinctly). We got rid of them.
(Silence) (Act I, p.49)
The fear is that this existent condition shall continue after death:

Estragon: All the dead voices.

Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.

Estragon: Like leaves.

Vladimir: Like sand.

Estragon: Like leaves.

Silence.

Vladimir: They all speak together.

Estragon: Each one to itself.

Silence.

Vladimir: Rather they whisper.

Estragon: They rustle.

Vladimir: They murmur.

Estragon: They rustle.

Silence.

Vladimir: What do they say?

Estragon: They talk about their lives.

Vladimir: To have lived is not enough for them.

Estragon: They have to talk about it.

Vladimir: To be dead is not enough for them.

Estragon: It is not sufficient.

Silence.  

(Act II, pp.92-93)
The existential tragedy is a live Consciousness decanting its Selfs, but never actually ceasing to exist, continuing the irrational existential predicament on even after death. Infact, the examples of voices extending their articulation even after death is the subject of a whole drama Beckett calls Play, even as the experience of the ravages of Time is dramatized in Krapp’s Last Tape. Another instance of Waiting for Godot supplying material for a later dramaturgic effort is Happy Days, in which the abstract notion of happiness is concretized on stage as meaningless and futile also. This extended play on the futility of the concept of happiness has its seed in Vladimir grotesque ear-to-ear smile, as also in the Estragon and Vladimir exchange which begins with ‘Say you’re happy’. It only requires close attention to find out how an otherwise ‘banal’ exchange between tramps drains meaning out of the word ‘happy’:

Vladimir: You must be happy, too, deep down, if you only know it.

Estragon: Happy about what?

Vladimir: To be back with me again.

Estragon: Would you say so?

Vladimir: Say you are, even if it’s not true.
Estragon: What am I to say?
Vladimir: Say, I am happy.
Estragon: I am happy.
Vladimir: So am I.
Estragon: So am I.
Vladimir: We are happy.
Estragon: We are happy (silence.) what do we do now, now that we are happy?
Vladimir: Wait for Godot.        (Act II, p.90)

After the so-called 'banal' conversation, the tramps destroy all thought of 'certainty' and reduce existence to an irrational waiting for Godot who has never ever arrived. Estragon is merciless:

Estragon: He should be here.

Vladimir: He didn’t say for sure he’d come.

Estragon: And if he doesn’t come?

Vladimir: We will back tomorrow.

Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow.

Vladimir: Possibly.
Estragon: And so on.

Vladimir: The point is--

Estragon: Until he comes.

Vladimir: You're merciless.

(Act I, p.44)

And yet the tramps do not move because of the terrible existential bind: The refrain oft repeated is:

Estragon: Let's go.
Vladimir: We can't.
Estragon: Why not?
Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.
Estragon: Ah!

(Act II, p.101)

Often both Estragon and Vladimir actually indulge in physical acts of waiting, now walking to one end of the proscenium and screening their eyes to look into the distance, and, then to the other, to repeat the posture. The play powerfully institutes a waiting on its stage. It is a pathetic irrational predicament indeed.

Beckett is deft at his dramaturgy and even has the concept of 'time', and 'place', 'object' questions.
Were they sure of the place? It was by the tree. Was it a tree, or a bush or a shrub? Or may be the place is wrong? Also, were they sure Godot would come? What if he didn’t? They will then come back the next day and also the next, and the next...! Had this not been the practice always? In the past also they kept waiting without Godot ever arriving. The existential predicament compels Man forever to keep waiting, and no sure answers are ever forthcoming! No Godot ever arrives! This is Beckett’s perspective. There has to be despair. There being uncertainty about Time, Place as well as Object. Nothing could either be planned or controlled. Godot becomes an absent presence, because the reference to Godot, direct or implied is perpetual. The Wait too is purposeless, perpetual and futile. And, the implication is that even if Godot arrives the situation will not change for the better. Under the circumstances, Even sleep can be a horrible nightmare! Dreams, Visions, Stories, Nature are all out of question also. Dramaturgy is made to destroy all thought of visions:

Vladimir: You must have had a vision.

Estragon: (turning his head). What?

Vladimir: (louder) You must have had a vision!

Estragon: No need to shout!

(Act II, p.105)
Dreams are nightmares. In any case, the present one is:

Estragon: Why will you never let me sleep?
Vladimir: I felt lonely
Estragon: I was dreaming I was happy.
Vladimir: That passed the time.
Estragon: I was dreaming that.
Vladimir: (violently) Don’t tell me?

(Act II, pp.119-120)

And so, Dreams, Vision, Stories, and Nature too are only induced illusions and only kept hard boiled harsh thought away from the tragedy, that existence was, as an abortion and a grotesque. This again is Beckett. This is not Pinter. It cannot be Pinter. And, as in Beckett, the predicament is itself so harsh and nasty that questions of ‘alienations’ do not arise. The existential condition itself is sad. The Waiting is concretized, on stage, as far too prolonged a phenomenon. Infact, it ‘promises even to be perpetual’. Under its strain Estragon falls asleep, and Vladimir left all alone to confront the ‘Waiting-torture; paces agitatedly to and fro. The wait has indeed been perpetual, down generations and all history, and, as Beckett situates it on the proscenium, no Godot has ever arrived. The plight of humanity is ‘there’, on stage,
for the audience to look at, see and realize how this Wait has always been a futile and depressing phenomenon of universal implication. All humanity, forever shackled in profound though futile thought, had little else to do but to despair, be depressed, and, keep up a meaningless chatter out of the fear of a frightening Silence which was all too pervasive. Existence at its core, was empty meaningless and futile, a void, a Nothing is, and, Beckett, has no illusions to offer by way of solace. Rather he has dramaturgy bereft existence of all illusions one after the other. What becomes situate on the Beckett proscenium. Therefore, is a profound metaphysical anguish. An embrace too makes Estragon recoil, Vladimir smelt of garlic! Nothing at all could be trusted, that is, neither the branch of the tree, nor the rope! And therefore, the idea of suicide is also abandoned. The uncertainty because of the Irrational was so gripping that it was safer to do nothing except keep waiting for Godot:

Vladimir: Well? What do we do?
Estragon: Don’t let’s do anything. It’s safer
Vladimir: Let’s wait and see what he says
Estragon: Who?
Vladimir: Godot.
Estragon: Good idea

(Act I, p.48)
The Wait was an existential trap, and trapped as they are, both Vladimir and Estragon prefer language games to pass their time. However, unlike as in Pinter, the perception being deeper and more profound the use of language is not as weapon to ward-off 'threat' from each other. Rather, they are 'games' played in earnest to while away time, as it sits with its heavy burden upon them while they wait for Godot. Pinter character use language as a weapon to evade each other. On the other hand, the Beckett tramps just try to while away time because Godot has, as ever before, not arrived:

Vladimir: We could do our exercises.
Estragon: Our movements.
Vladimir: Our elevations
Estragon: Our relaxations.
Vladimir: Our elongations.
Estragon: Our relaxations.
Vladimir: To warm us up.
Estragon: To calm us down.

(Act II, p.106)

They could have even asked Godot for some kind of prayer, 'a vague supplication', and his answer would have been that he would have to think it over, consult his family, friends, agents, correspondents, books! But then, how did man ever enter this existential trap? How did he come in? Was it on hands and knees as has already
been quoted? The futility of talking about rights and prerogatives was apparent. Or, was it that the tramps had preferred to get rid of them! In such a situation the two tramps could at times only stand motionless, arms dangling, heads sunk, sagging at the knees. They needed no Goldberg to do this to them. Goldberg, in Beckett's perception would also be a victim of the same existential predicament. Human corporeality itself is dramatized on the proscenium as one more concretization of the existential plight. And, it has forever been a wasteful, futile 'waiting'. The tramps have nothing else to do, and to spend the time they decide eating carrots and turnips! But then they are not even sure whether it is a carrot or a turnip! As Udayli says, 'The stage-business of hats, boots and trousers as also of carrots and turnips, further sink human existence to its most trite and crass, added to which the metaphysical slant makes it a grotesque tragedy'. The tramps do not even try to struggle, as its no use struggling or wriggling, for the essential predicament remains the same; it does not ever change. A terrible cry further frightens them, but instead of Godot, Pozzo and Lucky enter the proscenium. The tramps are disappointed once more. Lucky, on fours, enters first, and is followed by Pozzo, his master, who holds the end of the rope which drives Lucky. Thus, they appear tied to each other. Pozzo is a
brazen idol, massive, smooth and rigid and from the very beginning Pozzo establishes his stage presence through a 'versatile use of voice, gesture and language.' There was no other will than his own: The Universe is ME. Of course, Pozzo too was in for a terrible disappointment when he could only fall in a heap and repeatedly call for help. But, till then, he is a self-conscious tyrant a Man-in-God's image, and conducts himself as a deity almost. He tells Estragon and Vladimir that they are, 'of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image!' (Waiting for Godot, Act I, p.53). This was his image of himself prior to the utter disillusionment and even blindness that was to follow. Together the four, Vladimir and Estragon, Pozzo and Lucky become four representatives of a 'faceless humanity'. Four concepts appear to overlap here: the Pozzo-Godot overlap that hints further at Man-in-God's image; the grotesque and pathetic existential predicament of Man, be it of Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo or Lucky, and, the ridiculed response to a deity. Each concept contributes to the play's thematic penchant for a Non-ent, an empty meaningless void, and the corresponding dramaturgy which institutes on stage, a powerful Non-ent. This is not 'alienation' as defined in the first chapter of this dissertation. It is the pathetic existential impasse itself laid bare 'there' on the proscenium for all to
see, a phenomenon unthinkable in Pinter. In Pinter, the characters, so to say, 'travel' to the Irrational, which of course does lurk from the beginning on stage, but is never actually begun with as in each Beckett play. In Beckett questions of 'alienation' do not arise as the condition concretized on stage is itself an aborted Grotesque.

Now, if Estragon and Vladimir are tramps, and, Pozzo is the diety doing the 'thinking act', Lucky is an act of self-inflicted slavery. Was Man too in a voluntary bind? In either condition, it was a state of a futile and pathetic existential impasse. People off-stage hardly realised it. Pozzo and Lucky travel too but travelling has become a deadening habit with them. They feel they are going somewhere, but they are actually going round and round in a circle, and are in fact trapped in Time which strikes as frighteingly circular. 'Gogo and Didi too are trapped within this unchanging circularity of time in which day and night follow each other cyclically. Pozzo's sense of time, kept with a watch that keeps ticking is hardly able to time Time's unending circularity. The tramps have, in fact, lost all sense of day, date and time. Their wait is perpetual, unending circular, and, also futile. It is a cruel situation, in which even to think is futile, though thought nevertheless is at its extreme powerful.
However, even profound thought is shown to lead nowhere. It only evidences a powerful mind yoked on to a complicated corporeality. The predicament is awful. 'Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, its awful'. (Act I, p.71) Three Adieus are exchanged, yet no one moves; there is a Silence, and again there are three Adieus, and yet, not one of them moves, and, once more there is Silence. This is followed by a series of Yeses and Nos., after which, there is once again a Silence. Still nobody moves and then Pozzo says:

Pozzo : I don't seem to be able.... (long hesitation).... to depart.

and Estragon remarks

Estragon: Such is life

(Act I, p.77)

They were indeed in a trap of a Waiting from which there is no escape, it was a Stasis; they were fixed and could not move. Even when Pozzo and Lucky move, they do so to return, one blind, and the other dumb. After Pozzo's departure there is a Long Silence and Vladimir and Estragon continue their wait for Godot, the 'absent-presence'. Accentuating the Wait by mutterings, now and then 'Nothing to be done'. Such mutterings add concretions to an already concretized grotesque existential condition on stage. Pinter's Irrational comes via the 'alienation' syndrome, while Beckett's remains first and last an Existential Impasse. A Boy
arrives to inform the eternally waiting tramps that Godot will not come that day also but 'surely tomorrow'. So, they have to wait another day. Had they not waited the day before too? Was it not an exercise that they had been through each day for the past half a century! The waiting goes on unrelentingly through the first Act and continues, still futile, unrelenting, and circular till the end of Act II, accruing, on stage, bit by powerful bit, Universal Stasis. The Stasis is 'there' itself, a Beckett play is not being about something but that something itself. In a Pinter play a 'threat' and a 'menace' from 'the other' are the root causes of it being a play about 'alienation'. Therefore, the Absurd materializes only as the Pinter play progresses. A Beckett play, on the other hand, is the Absurd itself 'there' on stage, from the play's very inception, and to this, only powerful concretions accrue as the play progresses for the reader or the audience. To say the least, the Pinter characters do have a certain control over their situations, or, over the other characters in the play. In a Beckett play, nothing being certain, the personae have no control over the existential situations, or, over each other for that matter. Infact, what Beckett institutes on the proscenium from the very beginning is an Existential Impasse. The Absurd is on
stage to begin with. It does not take over later as in Pinter. Thus in *Waiting for Godot* virtually 'nothing happens for three hours on stage while the play is on. The play has two Acts and as a critic has remarked nothing happens twice' in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The existential trap is itself the primary experience. A lost sense of time, a frightening silence, and a futile waiting are the essential thrusts in the play. Infact, to dramatize this Stasis fully, Beckett makes Act II differ little from Act I. The metaphysical anguish is accentuated by 'the persistent cycle'. It was just a futile Waiting. And it is concretized on stage through banal corporeal actions, for, this indeed was the existential plight of Man. In both Acts, the repetitious torso-movements accentuate the phenomenon of a Waiting. Here is a glimpse of the tramp's tortuous predicament:

Vladimir: Say something!

Estragon: I'm trying

Long silence

Vladimir: (in anguish) say anything at all!

Estragon: What do we do now?

Vladimir: Wait for Godot.

Estragon: Ah!

(ACT II, p.93)
It is a desperate 'Ah'!, and the entire exercise is a desperate 'language game'. Of course this language game is entirely different from a language strategy in a Pinter play, for it is not, as in Pinter a clever move to outdo, or to attack, or, demean 'the other'. Language in Beckett is nobody's weapon. Rather it is a futile effort to keep the conversation going in order to ward off an excruciatingly frightening Silence. Infact, as has already been noticed, Beckett's plays have several Silences and Pauses, both long and short, and each Silence or Pause proves to be quite deafening as the Waiting becomes a tortuous trauma. For Beckett, existence is bereft of all illusions and is nothing but an empty void. Dramaturgy reduces existence to a Non-ent and 'the reduction is positioned on stage as an intense condition 'there'.

Beckett plays are said to be more presentational than representational. The situation on stage is the condition itself, presented as it is. It is not so much a representation than a presentation, an existential grotesque concretized 'there'! Under the circumstance the hat, boot or trouser stage-business, or, the raddish and turnip stage-business or a banal chatter to keep the talk going is each an abundantly futile exercize. The refrain recurs again and again:

Estragon: Let's go.

Vladimir: We can't
Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.

Estragon: Ah!

(Act II, p.114)

Silences in between intensify the Waiting all the more. Physical exercize too does not help, for, when the tramps try deep breathing to pass away time Estragon gets tired -- 'I'm tired breathing', he says and the implication is obvious. In the context built up, it adds to the tragic situation on stage. When Pozzo and Lucky re-enter, one is blind and the other is dumb. Earlier Pozzo's eyes were brilliant, and, Lucky spoke and sang well. Time conscious Pozzo felt 'furious' at the mention of 'time':

Pozzo: Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time!

(Act II, p.119)

May be, Time itself has taught him not to measure it with 'clocks and calenders'. Pozzo leaves and the second Boy-messenger arrives to announce once again that Godot will not be able to come that evening also but emphazizes yet again, 'surely tommorrow'. Therefore, the Wait has to continue, still another day, or, who knows for days and days together! The bored Estragon falls asleep. The awake and lonely Vladimir can only
soliloquize. The play heads to a close but there have been hints enough and far too abundant that the ordeal will continue the following day, and the next, and the next also, as forever and always it had. In Beckett, the primary as is the final situation, an Existential Impasse. The tramps want to leave but they do not because they cannot, for Godot, the absent-presence has promised to come the next day. The tramps are in an existential trap, not at all of either’s making. They were born aborted, the Cartesean Centaur that each was with a mentality perpetually at a swing yoked on to a corporeality it hardly ever matched. An attempt at suicide fails miserably. The tramps try Estragon’s belt, but then Estragon’s trousers fall down. The existential situation is tragically comic. Silence, again and again, punctuates each futile corporeal movement. Of course, the powerful impact of the play could shock an audience ‘out’ of itself, and thus be ‘alienated’ from itself. However, what is ‘there’ on the proscenium is not an ‘alienation’ from anything, for, it is the aborted Existential Grotesque itself in respect to which ‘alienation’ is hardly the word. It is the condition itself; it is not about something but that something itself, that is, existence at its primary, and that is a Grotesque. The hats in that situation cannot produce ‘pigeon-truths’. Indeed, Man was a ‘bare two-forked
animal', as Udayli says, quoting Lear. The tramps talk of going but they once again do not move presaging that the events of the next day shall be exactly as repetitiously circular as were the events of the previous two days, each day taking up one Act. On stage 'there' is instituted an existential Non-ent, an empty void, a Nothing-is, a failure and a futility, and, the tramps are trapped in it. As Udayli remarks, 'The stage through its sparseness assists the drama create the context of a near-void'.

Therefore, in Beckett, far more than 'alienation', what one gets is the feel of a purposeless existence in which mentality and corporeality were at a perpetual disjunct. Characters or personae in Beckett have no psychology and therefore no motives. It is this that makes stage directions very important in a Beckett play. The Beckett personae are victims of an existential trap, and their condition is set on stage more presentationally than representationally. It is an existential state of a perpetual impasse, an overwhelming stasis. That is how Beckett looked at life or what he found life was. As he himself says he found it a terrible mess and instituted it on stage as it was. Indeed a dark and bleak vision it was of human existence! Beckett dramatized the metaphysical anguish as a general and universal human condition. The range in
Beckett is cosmic, and societies for the likes of Vladimir and Estragon were anathema, because they were 'outsiders'. The 'threat', if there was a 'threat', it was universal and cosmic. Each individual was a victim and could hardly be a 'threat' to the 'other'. The language used was not a weapon used by the 'alienated'. It was a futile game, a chatter to keep up a meaningless conversation. Not one Beckett personae tries to hide behind an utterance because he fears 'the other'. In Pinter, the 'threat' from 'the other' helps 'alienation' as well as the Absurd to materialize on stage as the play progresses. In Pinter, the social link is important, because the drama has to have its run. The Beckett tramps are not 'alienated' so much as they themselves bereft themselves of all illusions. They prefer to have nothing to do with Visions, Dreams, Stories, Nature, Belief, Truth and the so-called certainties of Time, Place and Object. For them, language does not communicate, Faith does not satisfy, and, Reason does not explain. In Beckett 'alienation' is not possible because existence at its primary is itself the trap of an Existential Grotesque. Thus, in Beckett there is no colonnade to be dissociated from. There can be no 'self-estrangement' either from an aborted Existential Grotesque.
References:


10. Ibid., p.20.

11. Esslin, Martin, op. cit., p.44.


18. Ibid., p.23.


22. Udayli, op. cit., p.93.
CONCLUSION

After close textual readings of The Birthday Party and Waiting for Godot as representative examples, and a general consideration of the Pinter and Beckett repertoire, it was found that whereas 'alienation' as defined and generally understood in Chapter I, is the primary experience in Pinter, it is not so in the Beckett ouevre. For, if the Pinter ouevre is about something, being very representational, the Beckett ouevre is a something itself, being more presentational than representational. That is, the Beckett repertoire institutes on the proscenium presentationally an Existential Grotesque, which, it envisions the human predicament to really be: an abortion, meaningless and futile. Thus, there is little to travel to by way of an 'alienation'. It is just 'there', a Cartesean Centaur, where a mentality-at-a-swing is yoked on to a corporealilty perpetually entrapped as in Happy Days. In Beckett, abstractions like Waiting, Time, Happiness, Life-after-death, or, a Not-I get instituted on stage as concrete, palpable phenomenon, and effective dramaturgy is used to achieve this. Each play is a variation on the theme of the Absurd, and the form is evolved to suit the content so that, at any moment in a play, the content is the form and the form is the content, for, Beckett was
fascinated by the shape a thought could take. Thus, to begin with, the Beckett personae are grotesque and existential caricatures. Therefore, the Beckett ouevre is unipolar. In *Waiting for Godot* ‘nothing happens twice’. What gets concretized on stage is a *Nothing-is*, a *Non-ent*, and it is ‘there’ from the very beginning. Of course more concretions accrue as the play is enacted. The predicament is existential and also universal. No one is in a position to threaten anybody. Even Pozzo is blinded and lies in a heap crying repeatedly for help. Infact, Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo or Lucky are all out of a faceless humanity whose aborted existential predicament is instituted on stage. Consequently, Estragon could be Vladimir or Pozzo or Lucky and vice-versa. In consequence, Jonathan Kalb’s assessment that in Beckett there is no ‘alienation’ should stand vindicated, for, in Beckett there is nothing to travel to, the Existential Grotesque being unipolar and a universal condition. There is society in Beckett, but it is limited to a two-some or a four-some. Thus, in Beckett there is little to be ‘alienated’ from unless it is the smug audience that gets jolted into a self-recognition of its predicament as Beckett institutes it ‘there’ on stage.

On the other hand, the Pinter ouevre has human beings to begin with, who are definitely not existential
caricatures. They travel to that predicament and eventually are all engulfed in an 'alienated' irrational predicament. Pinter's personae have a hierarchy. Thus, Stanley thinks himself superior to Meg and Petey and Lulu. He even tries his best to resist Goldberg and McCann. The Goldberg-McCann duo too have hierarchy, Goldberg being the dominating partner. And both are in any case, a mysterious Monty's agents. The atmosphere of a 'threat' and 'menace' pervades the play. And, the 'threat' is intra-society, because all Pinter personae are society oriented. They have a past and a future to begin with. Their's is not a universal existential predicament. They are members of a recognizable society from which each has his or her own expectations that ultimately get belied. Their predicament is therefore bipolar. They have to travel to, or, are already on their way to an 'alienated' condition. The 'threat' Stanley feels is palpable. And it is from some mysterious 'other' who too is a member of the same social set-up. Starting out as very human members of a definite social set-up, they end up as caricatures. Ofcourse, Stanley carries the brunt of the 'alienation' syndrome but Goldberg and McCann too have their problems. However, the problems of Monty's two agents come as a surprise, for, Stanley is the one who is shattered and broken by Goldberg and McCann so that
for him it is almost a new birth whence the title *The Birthday Party*. It is 'alienation' at its powerful best. However, once again Stanley has literally to travel to it, it is this trauma of Stanley that gets most of Pinter's dramaturgic attention. The Absurd or the Irrational gets instituted on stage in Pinter only after the entire play is almost through, the journey being plotted with that end in sight. It is because of this that the use each playwright makes of the 'language theme' is characteristically different. For, while Pinter has his personae play language games as strategy to ward off an impending menace or threat, the Beckett personae keep up their chatter out of fear of a frightening Existential Silence of a Non-ent, of which, everybody on stage is the victim.
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