

Inauthentic Responses in the Plays of Harold Pinter and Edward Albee

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Abstract This paper carries out a comparative analysis of Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*. It achieves this by exploring how the dramatic structure, characterization, and use of language in these plays display the playwrights' tendency to employ similar themes of existentialist philosophy and man's self-quest in the face of existential anxiety and despair. Man shows a variety of inauthentic responses in order to escape the lack of meaning in life, freedom to choose and burden of responsibility. The aim of this study is to discuss these inauthentic responses given by the characters in the above mentioned plays.

Keywords Existentialism, Inauthentic, Authentic, Anxiety

courage and strength to confront with the meaninglessness of human existence, emptiness of the universe and lack of justification for subjective choices, willingness to make choices in order to have value and meaning in a contingent and unpredictable universe, and finally responsibility for these choices. When contingency and isolation cause overwhelming anxiety, man shows inauthentic responses in order to protect himself from the disappointing effects of his isolated and guideless situation in an insecure and malevolent universe. Through inauthentic responses, man tends to avoid his sense of vulnerability and powerlessness by controlling the perceived source of distress in the outside world. He shows reaction within a tendency of overt hostility against the threatening outside world. In other words, he projects his anxieties onto external threats. In this way, he tries to escape the meaningless and insecure world by destroying, manipulating and dominating the selves around him.

1. Introduction

According to existentialism, which emerged as a philosophical movement giving voice to modern man's reaction to the sense of overwhelming meaninglessness and absurdity of life, each individual finds himself separate from the outer world and his fellow human beings. He does not see his existence as necessary as he cannot see the totality. This leads to anguish of being. In anguish of being, man sees no meaningful relationship between his existence and the world. As nothing is certain, man feels anxious about his predicament in the universe which is unknown to him and of which he is no longer a part.

Heidegger, whose philosophy will be the focal point in this study, introduces two states of being: authentic being and inauthentic being. According to him, each human being is characterized by individuality. "This individuality is not a static quality of a person, but is a potentiality, a set of possibilities for every individual [...] Among these possibilities are two kinds, namely the possibilities of authentic and of inauthentic existence"[24]. Heidegger claims that one can achieve authentic self by realizing his possibilities and shaping his own values and meaning in life. However, it is not easy to attain authenticity as it needs

2. Forms of Inauthentic Responses in Pinter's Plays

Pinter is preoccupied with the power relations among individuals in a hostile universe which renders them powerless and helpless. One of the central themes of his plays is the dominant and subservient relationships. According to Prentice, the urge in the dominant/subservient relationship is one character's struggle to assert dominance over another[2]. Assertion of control and dominance are inauthentic responses given by Pinter's characters to ensure survival in the face of unspecified menace which springs from their insecure identity and to appease existential anxiety caused by their sense of meaninglessness of existence. In Pinter's plays, since the characters feel insecure, they are shown in a constant struggle to assert their identity and give meaning to their existence. They feel the need to insist on the sovereignty over what they possess by dominating others. Overpowering others is a way of feeling confident about themselves and their surroundings. "Characters are frequently acting in self-defense or are seeking to dominate (which is another form of

self-defense)"[18]. Thus, Pinter's plays are like battlefields where each character is on guard to fight against the other. Assertion of power shows itself in language games through which characters are engaged in overly critical communication or in physical violence. Pinter himself acknowledges that "the world is a pretty violent place" and that violence "is really an expression of the question of dominance and subservience" (qtd. in[21]). It originates in man's sense of powerlessness and insecurity of his autonomy and desire for maintaining respect and position in the world.

2.1. The Birthday Party

In *The Birthday Party*, inauthentic responses to existential anxiety and despair generally take the form of assaults. The play is set in a living room of a boarding house owned by Meg and Petey whose only boarder is Stanley Webber. There is not much information about Stanley's past and background except for his reference to his career as a pianist, which creates a mystery and ambiguity in the play. Stanley Webber protects himself from the threatening outside world as he barely goes outside the house and lives an idle life without any responsibility to carry out. Meg treats him like his son and shows him love and affection; whereas, Stanley is rude and critical. He teases her by calling her a bad wife, or expressing his dissatisfaction with the breakfast she has prepared. He believes that he has the right to be aggressive to Meg as "he knows how much she wants him to be pleased with her"[18]. He criticizes her inadequacy as a housewife:

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

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

MEG. *It's not.*

STANLEY. *Get out of it. You succulent old washing bag. (Birthday 12)*

Stanley needs to project his inner disturbances and own inadequacy onto Meg. This urge to externalize his inner insecurities turns Meg into an object of domination and manipulation. Moreover, Stanley releases his repressed disappointment against Meg. Whether it is pure fantasy or it has some basis in reality, he refers to his old job as a pianist and tells how they shut down the place where he was supposed to have his next concert. To hide his vulnerability and disappointment in life he insults her: "Look at her. You're just an old piece of rock cake, aren't you? That's what you are, aren't you?" (*Birthday 17*). To feed his ego he threatens her by leaving the house mentioning a supposed job offer. He knows that it will upset Meg, who feels dependent on him to show motherly affection and ease the pain of loneliness. Stanley feels secure by dominating, controlling and manipulating her with his threats and insults.

When Meg announces that two men will come to the house to stay for a couple of nights, Stanley is alarmed at the news. He starts to pace up and down the room and insists that they are not coming. He is nervous about the arrival of the unknown intruders since his shelter will be shattered and his safety will be in danger. "They are intruders, emissaries from

an outside world with which Stanley has for years no contact"[16]. For what purpose these intruders are coming and why Stanley is so alarmed at their arrival remain elusive. Stanley's internal psychological disturbance is manifested in violent utterances to Meg, which suggests his inauthentic response to insecurity. He projects his troubled mind and anxiety by cruelly suggesting that two men in a van are coming to take her away in a wheelbarrow. The characters' fear of the world outside the room is explained by Pinter as "we are all in this, all in a room, and outside is a world [...] which is most inexplicable and frightening, curious and alarming"[11]. The frightening possibility of an intrusion is an instrument at their hands to dominate each other through fear and intimidation. As Sartre states, "the fact of the other is incontestable, and touches me to the heart. I realize him through uneasiness; through him I feel myself perpetually in danger"[15] Pinter's characters are overwhelmed by the presence of the other as a threat to their identity, autonomy and existence.

Stanley's anxiety increases so much with the arrival of Goldberg and McCann that he slips off to avoid them. They have come to do a job which is not explained, which denotes ambiguity. According to Misra, Goldberg and McCann act as "the agents of violence" and "media for conjuring the sense of fear and incertitude" both of which relate to existential anxiety the most fundamental form of which is man's awareness of the threat of annihilation of his self (66). Goldberg and McCann are represented as destructive and dominating powers which shatter individual's autonomy and remove him from his shelter as Pinter himself expresses in his poem "A View of the Party": "Allied in their theme /They imposed upon the room/ A dislocation and doom." (qtd. in[23])

Stanley's secluded place is disturbed and he is forced into a circumstance that he cannot avoid people. In order to protect himself from the upcoming threats, he resorts to manipulation and domination, again by using language, this time not to attack but to pacify. First, he tries to establish closeness with McCann to win him by referring to his admiration of McCann's roots: "I know Ireland very well [...] I love that country and I admire and trust its people" (*Birthday 36*). Next, he tries to form an alliance with him, whispering and advancing: "Has he told you anything? Do you know what you're here for? Tell me. You needn't be frightened of me." (*Birthday 36*). What he is doing is triggering McCann's insecurity and thus rendering him powerless. In fact, McCann does not feel secure either and expresses it to Goldberg as: "I don't know, Nat. I'm just all right once I know what I'm doing. When I know what I'm doing, I'm all right" (*Birthday 23*).

As a final strategy, to control Goldberg and McCann Stanley exhibits hostility. He claims his power against them: "Let me –just make this clear. You don't bother me. To me, you're nothing but a dirty joke [...] So why don't you just go, without any more fuss?" (*Birthday 39*). Stanley becomes more aggressive when he is left alone with Goldberg.

STANLEY. [...] *You'll have to find somewhere else*

GOLDBERG. Are you the manager here?

STANLEY. That's right.

GOLDBERG. Is it a good game? (Birthday 38)

However, his manipulating techniques, which work with Meg, fail and he recoils. After a battle for domination regarding who will sit down, Stanley is forced to sit down and rendered as a victim by Goldberg and McCann, who start to cross-examine him. They ask meaningless and contradictory questions one after another, not to elicit any answer but to confuse and overwhelm him:

GOLDBERG. What have you done with your wife?

MCCANN. He's killed his wife?

GOLDBERG. Why did you kill your wife?

[...]

GOLDBERG. Why did you never get married?

MCCANN. She was waiting at the porch.

GOLDBERG. You skeddadled from the wedding.

[...]

GOLDBERG. Webber! Why did you change your name? (Birthday 43-44)

This verbal bombardment aims to evoke sense of guilt in Stanley and make him inarticulate and defenseless. They accuse him of killing his wife, not getting married, being a traitor, or not taking a bath. "The isolated [is] individual trapped in a hostile world, a fear of authority, a sense of guilt ... and the expectation of punishment"[20]. Their attack through unceasing questions allows Stanley no opportunity to respond and defend himself so that they can dominate him with groundless accusations and language games.

In Pinter's plays, language is shown not as a means for communication, but domination and violence. His characters "are mostly using language for purposes of self-defence or domination, which points to their essential insecurity and isolation"[18]. Goldberg is supervising the dominating language games. He is displayed as a secure, outgoing and cheerful man who has high self-confidence. However, McCann is more silent, introvert and nervous, which is indicated in the scene where he tears the newspaper into even pieces. His act suggests his destructive attitude towards the world and his desire to destroy the selves around him in order to feel secure. "The tactic employed by McCann is to behave as if nothing is untoward"[18]. Although they are powerful, both Goldberg and McCann are playthings in the hands of authorial forces, and they are themselves insecure. Their mindless violence indicates that they are "lacking in power but incessantly attempting to obtain it"[14]

Goldberg and McCann make use of clichéd tactics in all of their questions and accusations during the interrogation, and "they seem to be gradually overtaken by the verbal terrorism which is the source of their power"[16]. They competently use language to get what they want, and their superior control over language makes Stanley inarticulate and a victim to be manipulated and dominated. They verbally attack Stanley's dignity and degrade his self-value:

GOLDBERG. You stuff yourself with dry toast.

MCCANN. You contaminate womankind. (Birthday 45)

[...]

GOLDBERG. You're a plague, Webber. You're an overthrow.

MCCANN: You're what's left! (Birthday 46)

By attacking his human dignity, they aim at his psychological breakdown. They express their contempt of him, curse him, and even threaten his identity and very existence. Goldberg states: "What makes you think you exist? [...] 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're nothing but an odour!" (Birthday 46). They increase the existential anxiety that resides in Stanley indicating that he does not exist even in a world where man desperately tries to prove and ensure his existence.

Goldberg and McCann's sadistic impulses motivate them to have absolute and unrestricted power over Stanley. Fromm claims that there is dependence on the object of sadism since one's "own feeling of strength is rooted in the fact that he is the master over someone"[13]. Goldberg and McCann want to control Stanley's identity, gain power over his thoughts and freedom so that they can go on ensuring their power, their own identity and masking their own insecurities. They regard other people as nothing but instruments to manipulate and control. This attitude towards the world and other human beings can be considered an inauthentic response since as Barnes points out, "my refusal to see the Other as a subject means that I must surely fail to realize many of my own potentials" (118). The mainspring of this attitude resides in man's desire to feel secure by making others wholly objects which cannot stand as a threat. Man destroys others so that the world ceases to be threatening. That is, he hopes to minimize uncertainty and existential anxiety that accompanies it.

Meg tells Goldberg that today is Stanley's birthday. Upon this, Goldberg proposes a party for him. After the interrogation, they move on with Stanley's birthday party. During the party Stanley is silent. In other words, he is "emptied of his own language, rendered speechless"[16]. They play blind man's buff at the party. The game leaves Stanley bereft of sight, which again turns him into a victim. Blindfolded Stanley first begins to strangle Meg and then during the blackout, tries to rape Lulu, their neighbour. When Goldberg and McCann advance upon him, he "begins to giggle. GOLDBERG and MCCANN move toward him. He backs, giggling the torch on his face" (Birthday 59). His response to his desperate and helpless situation is violence. His violence and giggling suggest both his inability to sustain his equilibrium in the face of overwhelming anxiety and his need to project his anxiety by exhibiting aggressive, brutal and violent acts and thus to victimize others.

At the end of the interrogation and the brainwashing session, Stanley's freedom is terminated and his individuality is destroyed. Stanley will be "re-oriented", "adjusted" and "integrated" as Goldberg claims (Birthday 77-76). He appears as a speechless and deranged person.

"[I]n the realm of inauthenticity, everyone is the other and no one is himself"[15].

GOLDBERG. You'll be able to make or break, Stan. By my life. Well what do you say?

STANLEY. Stanley concentrates, his mouth opens, he attempts to speak, fails and emits sounds from his throat. Uh-gug...uh-gug...eeehhh-gag...(On the breath.) Caahh...caahh... (Birthday 78)

Stanley is in a catatonic state; however, he still attempts to resist the domination and usurpation. As Pinter acknowledges in a letter, "In the rattle in his throat Stanley approximates nearest to the true nature of himself than ever before and certainly ever after. But it's late. Late in the day. He can go no further" (qtd. in[23]). Thus, a relationship can be established between the title of the play and Stanley's predicament. His birthday party signifies his rebirth as a member of the conformist society who is not allowed to think and act differently. "When Stanley appears in the last act, the very sight of him indicates the intruders' triumph and his conformity. He is as immaculate as a corpse and walks like a zombie"[10]. Goldberg states that Stanley is suffering from a nervous breakdown, they will take him to Monty, and he will be assumingly taken care of. Petey, who is not there during the party, is helpless in the face of their usurpation of Stanley. His last words to Stanley are: "Stan, don't let them tell you what to do!" (80). However, Stanley is already taken over by the usurpers and the game is lost as Pinter states in his poem: "Found the game lost and won,/ Meg, all memory gone/ .../Petey, impotent" (qtd. in[23]).

3. Inauthentic Responses in Edward Albee's Plays

Like Pinter, Albee, in his plays, explores modern man's predicament, and he mostly focuses on the great isolation and alienation man suffers from, the lack of communication between an individual and the other members of society. Albee believes that outside forces such as social institutions and other people apply pressures on the individual who tries to establish and preserve his identity in an uncertain and sinister world. Thus, the question of individual identity becomes central to Albee's plays as well. His characters yearn for their existence and identity while they are aware of its pain which has its mainspring in living in a meaningless void. "His fundamental theme is the collapse of communality, the Other as a threat...His subject is loss, desolation, spiritual depletion"[5]. Albee's people are overwhelmed by the sense of abandonment and alienation; thus, they show aggressiveness to the indifferent world which isolates and abandons them in a menacing situation. Albee shows "the polar opposites of freedom vs. imprisonment, conformity vs. confrontation" (Kolin 18). Closely paralleling Pinter's characters, his characters' "verbalization is indeed a response to their terror of a silence in which the real questions will assert themselves" [5]. Their

bravado suggests the sense of insecurity and unwillingness for confrontation. Albee's drama is similar to Pinter's dramatic world in the sense that they both introduce violence, destruction and domination as defensive behaviors used in order to abstain from authentic acknowledgement of life.

3.1. The Zoo Story

When *The Zoo Story* opens, on a park bench in New York's Central Park sits Peter, an editor reading a book. He is a happy conformist with a nuclear family and a good income. He is disturbed by an intruder, Jerry who appears all of a sudden and tries to communicate with him by abruptly stating that he has been to the zoo. As the play develops, Jerry's attempt to make contact with Peter takes various forms; questions are followed by personal confessions, torturing remarks leave their places to physical attacks, all of which end with the murder/suicide of Jerry who throws himself on the knife held by Peter.

Jerry, in his late thirties, is carelessly dressed and growing fat. According to stage directions, "his fall from physical grace should not suggest debauchery; he has, to come closest to it, a great weariness"[1]. He is depicted as a drained person who is disgusted with his own existence and the alienation that the universe thrusts upon him. With his weariness and shabbiness, he signifies the dreadful and exhausting aspects of life. Camus states that "weariness comes at the end of acts of mechanical life" and he adds that "it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness" (10). The most important characteristic of Jerry is that he has the consciousness of man's finiteness, his being condemned to make choices in a contingent world, and the isolated territories that alienate people from themselves and other human beings. However, Jerry has difficulty in accepting that predicament; he is shocked and dismayed by the human circumstance. In other words, Jerry is trapped in his own sense of anguish and cannot set himself free from the restrictive bounds of this desperate situation. He is projecting his inner conflicts onto external world; he has the great need for relatedness and connection, which results in aggressive reactions.

From the very beginning of the play, Jerry is depicted as an intruder who barges into Peter's petty comfort, which is reading his book on a park bench. The interaction between Peter and Jerry, two people who have never met before, is initiated due to Jerry's impulse to make connection with someone and tell his story. Jerry attempts to engage Peter in a conversation without the latter's consent:

JERRY: I've been to the zoo. [PETER doesn't notice.] I said, I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I'VE BEEN TO THE ZOO!"

PETER: Hm?What? I'm sorry, were you talking to me?

JERRY: I went to the zoo, and then I walked until I came here. Have I been walking north?[1]

Peter is not sure whether Jerry is addressing to him and does not know how to respond. He is annoyed with the

stranger who forces him to react to his invasion and he is “anxious to get back to his reading”[1]. Jerry, who has not got any interest in manners and respect in personal space, ignores Peter’s need for privacy and goes on disturbing him with his questions. Like Pinter, Albee employs the theme of menace through the intrusion of an outsider in order to unfold the existential threat to one’s existence and security. Peter wants to protect himself and keep his distance since he does not seek any connection. However, Jerry challenges Peter’s desire for solitude and reluctance to communicate. His attitude indicates that he lacks understanding of an authentic and mutual human relationship which is based on reciprocal understanding and respect for others.

Jerry proceeds with his persistent questions on Peter’s private life with the compulsion to overshadow his isolation. However, the communication between them is confined to superficial interrogation. Peter, who is “*bewildered by the seeming lack of communication*”, reveals that he is married and has two daughters[1]. Jerry abuses Peter’s self exposure by suggesting his inability to conceive a male child. He mocks and attacks Peter’s masculinity. Most of the time, Jerry simply ignores Peter’s remarks and fails to acknowledge his total personality. He confesses that he asks these questions because he has the desire to connect with someone:

JERRY: I don’t talk to many people except to say like: give a beer, or where is the john, or what time does the feature go on, or keep your hands to yourself, buddy. You know- things like that.

PETER: I must say I don’t ...

JERRY: But every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really talk; like to get to know somebody, know all about him.

PETER[lightly laughing, still uncomfortable]: And am I the guinea pig for today?

JERRY: On a sun-drenched Sunday afternoon like this: Who better than a nice married man with two daughters and ...uh...a dog?[1].

Although, Jerry has authentic awareness of his isolation and loneliness, he has inauthentic perception of relatedness and connection as he considers Peter as a means to an end. Moreover, when Jerry simply asks quick-fire questions such as: “What do you make?” [1]; “Where do you live?”[1], Peter explains how uncomfortable he is with being questioned: “It’s that you don’t really carry on a conversation; you just ask questions. And I’m ...I’m normally ...uh...reticent”[1]. In their interaction, it can be observed that “the one who can talk fluently imposes his authority over the one who is reticent or less articulate”[17]. Jerry confuses and attacks Peter with his unpredictable questions; he mocks and frightens him in a patronizing manner:

JERRY: Say, what’s the dividing line between upper-middle-class and lower-upper-middle class?

PETER: My dear fellow, I...

JERRY: Don’t my dear follow me.

PETER [unhappily]: Was I patronizing? I believe I was;

I’m sorry. But, you see, your question about the classes bewildered me.

JERRY: And when you’re bewildered you become patronizing?

PETER: I...I don’t express myself too well, sometimes. [He attempts a joke on himself.] I’m in publishing, not writing.

JERRY[amused but not at the humour]: So be it. The truth is: I was being patronizing. [1].

Jerry verbally dominates Peter and makes him subservient and more reticent. He gains power and control over the situation. Peter is exposed to lunatic remarks which are full of violent elements. When he tells that he has two cats and birds at his house, Jerry reveals the violence found within him:

JERRY: Do they carry disease? The birds.

PETER: I don’t believe so.

JERRY: That’s too bad. If they did you could set them loose in the house and the cats could eat them and die, maybe. [1]

These statements imply Jerry’s longing for death, and his suicidal tendencies find their outlet in violence directed to other creatures. Jerry is angry at his powerlessness in front of a contingent universe; thus, he fancies destruction as a means to gain control. He tries to make sense of a senseless world; however, he is dependent on another person or creature to externalize his anger and aggression while creating his personal meaning.

The reasons for Jerry’s awful sense of isolation should be considered in order to understand his present motives. Jerry is shaken by his realization of the world as a dissonant and chaotic place which desolates people. Charles Lyons claims that “the play assumes the absurdity, the chaos of the human condition and its essential loneliness” (qtd. in Bailey 31). Although he displays how unsafe he feels at the risk of overwhelming chaos, he, at the same time, is shaken by the fear of abandonment.

With the fear of abandonment, Jerry starts telling his experience with his landlady’s dog to make Peter stay and listen to him. He captures Peter’s attention by tempting him with his vivid narration of stories. As the climax of the play, Jerry’s story about the dog has a very important role as Albee admits: “I suppose the dog story in *The Zoo Story*, to a certain extent, is a microcosm of the play by the fact that people are not communicating ultimately failing and trying and failing” (qtd in Bailey 32-33). The dog story, in fact, illustrates Jerry’s desperate attempt connect with anything and his ultimate failure. He explains how important any contact is in an alienating world that staves off communication:

If you can’t deal with people you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS! [Much faster now, and like a conspirator] Don’t you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people...SOMETHING. With a bed, with a cockroach, with a mirror...no, that’s too hard, that’s one of the last steps. [1]

Jerry's goal is to make a meaningful contact with anything however small and insignificant the object is.

Jerry starts to tell his story "[as if reading from a huge billboard]: THE STORY OF JERRY AND THE DOG"[1]. Bailey points out that "with his isolation and painful sense of alienation, Jerry wants his story to make a difference; he wants to earn his marginalized story a memorable place in the larger narrative of society" (32). He wants to fill the existential void he feels with his stories so that he can reduce the alienation of his existence. Jerry is wearied because of the indifference. His deprivation of relatedness and his struggle for demolishing indifference result in extreme acts of aggression and violence. Before the dog story, he tells Peter: "What I am going to tell you has something to do with how sometimes it's necessary to go a long distance out of the way in order to come back a short distance correctly"[1]. Jerry is ready to go out of his way and to perform vicious acts to create meaning, to act upon something and to provoke confrontation at the end. He complains about the indifference of the universe and people: "Animals are indifferent to me ...like people. [He smiles slightly]...most of the time. But this dog wasn't indifferent. From the beginning he'd snarl and then go for me, to get one of my legs"[1]. Jerry made up his mind; he would either "kill the dog with kindness, and if that doesn't work", he would just kill him[1]. He could not bear the idea that the dog did not love him. He decided to answer violence with violence if kindness would not work. He wanted to prove the dog that he was there to be loved and gave it a bag of hamburgers. The dog ate the hamburgers but then again it snarled at him. Jerry was hurt and offended because his sense of loneliness was augmented. As a hostile and violent respond, he poisoned the dog with the rat poison he put in the hamburgers.

The main purpose of Jerry was not to kill the dog, but to provoke a response. He confesses to Peter: "I wanted the dog to live so that I could see what our new relationship might come to"[1]. He was curious about whether they would be friends or enemies because in either way he would make a connection which is preferable to indifference. However, he failed as he discloses to Peter: "I had tried to love, and I had tried to kill, and both had been unsuccessful by themselves"[1]. Jerry describes the current relationship with the dog as: "Whenever the dog and I see each other we both stop where we are. We regard each other with a mixture of sadness and suspicion, and then we feign indifference [...] We neither love nor hurt because we do not try to reach each other"[1]. His attempts ended in indifference which he tries to escape in the first place. *The Zoo Story*, as Esslin suggests, displays "an outsider's inability to establish genuine contact with a dog, let alone any human being" [11].

Jerry has learned something from that experience; "neither kindness nor cruelty by themselves, independent of each other, creates any effect beyond themselves; and [...] the two combined, together, at the same time, are the teaching emotion"[1]. He exerts kindness and cruelty on other people to shock them out of their senses and apathy. He

uses what he has learned from the dog to communicate with a human being, Peter. He hopes that his tactics will work well in his next endeavor.

Jerry's behaviors to the dog are identical with his attitude to Peter. First he achieves "a hypnotic effect on Peter" [1], and then he exerts his power on him by saying: "I'm here, and I'm not leaving" [1]. Jerry reveals that he is a potential threat to Peter and he urges him to confront the threat. Peter wants to leave; Jerry tickles him as a distraction, and he starts poking and punching him in the arm, demanding him to move over so that he can sit on the bench, "using the paradoxical blend of kindness and cruelty he exercised with the dog" (Kolin 23). He tempts Peter to defend his territory like he has done with the dog. Jerry finally starts talking about the zoo, which he has been postponing from the start. He states that he went to the zoo "to find out more about the way people exist with animals, and the way animals exist with each other, and with people too" [1]. Jerry points out the separation of animals from each other and people. He suggests that people are separated from each other like the animals in cages. In that sense, there is a parallelism between Jerry's zoo story and Albee's *The Zoo Story*. Through Jerry's story, Albee explores the loss of communication, the difficulty of establishing human contact and man's growing isolation.

As Jerry describes the isolating conditions at the zoo, he gradually pushes Peter off the bench, "forcing him literally and in every other sense off balance"[19]. He wants Peter to break through the civilized manners and pick up an animalistic and brutal fight. He attacks his self-respect by treating him as a child:

JERRY: I said I want this bench, and I'm going to have it. Now get over there.

PETER: People can't have everything they want. You should know that; it's a rule; people can have some of the things they want, but they can't have everything.

JERRY [laughs]: Imbecile! You're slow-witted!

PETER: Stop that!

JERRY: You're a vegetable! Go lie down on the ground.
[1]

Jerry knows that this bench is important for Peter since he has "hours of great pleasure, great satisfaction, right here" [1]. That is why he provokes Peter through usurpation. After a long argument which revolves around whose bench it is, Jerry exerts physical violence on Peter by slapping him. He forces Peter into a duel for the bench, attacking his identity and masculinity: "You fight, you miserable bastard; fight for that bench...fight for your manhood, you pathetic little vegetable [*Spits on Peter's face*] You couldn't even get your wife with a male child" [1]. As in Pinter's plays, in *The Zoo Story*, the desire for territorial security is identical with maintaining personal autonomy and self-respect. Jerry tries to reveal the savage in Peter in order to prove his idea that all humans are territorial animals which cling to their isolated spaces, which mean certainty for them.

Jerry takes out an ugly-looking knife and tosses it at

Peter's feet. Infuriated and threatened, Peter picks up the knife for self-preservation against the raving lunatic who threatens him. Jerry traps Peter in a situation where he cannot get away as he is forced to exert his will and power. For the conclusion of the play, Albee depicts a shocking and violent scene. Jerry impales himself on the knife at the end of Peter's still firm arm and falls on the ground. Jerry suggests that he has planned all this just to end his life in an unforgettable way. Without this violent action, Jerry's existence will remain insignificant and unrecognized. Jerry asserts his desire for taking attention: "And now I'll tell you what happened at the zoo. I think ...I think this is what happened at the zoo [...] And now you know what you'll see in your TV" [1]. He anticipates that his death, consequently his story, will take the attention of media and it will be historicized.

The final image of Jerry's brutal death and his scream are likened to "the sound of an infuriated and fatally wounded animal" [1]. As Jerry reveals the savage in him, he appreciates Peter's confrontation too: "It is alright, you're an animal. You're an animal, too." [1]. As long as there is confrontation, Jerry does not care the means to the end. He wants the dog and Peter to understand his motives; however, both the dog and Peter act not with empathy but with the desire to protect their territory, which is an animalistic instinct.

It can be claimed that Jerry has awakened from the ordinary trance of life; he has the consciousness of man's inescapable mortality and the deadening isolation. "Because life is lonely and death inevitable, Jerry seeks to master them in a single deed of ambiguous suicide-murder"[9]. Camus comments on suicide as: "Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized the ridiculous character of meaningless life, the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation and the uselessness of suffering" (86). In terms of confronting death, Jerry may be defined as an authentic character since he has overcome the anxiety of death "in which our ontic self-affirmation is threatened by non-being" [7]. He has made a free choice to end his life and his agitation. However, he has betrayed his own existence in the sense that he has abandoned his responsibility and opportunity to create himself. As one of the requirements of authentic existence, even in the face of contingency of life, human beings are expected to assert their freedom by passionate commitment to life which determines the actual meaning of life. "The legitimate existentialist view holds that life may be meaningful [...] only if one is willing to engage in action where everything is at stake and without any guarantee either of outcome or of any essential rightness" [4]. Jerry cannot recover from the sense of helplessness and powerlessness and he is overtaken by the urge to put an end to his agitation through death.

4. Conclusions

The characters in *The Birthday Party* and *The Zoo Story* are imprisoned in the midst of insignificance and finiteness of their existence, the threat of dispossession and

disintegration, and the fear of confrontation with one's self. This sense of helplessness and impotence triggers their need to protect themselves through inauthentic responses which help them confirm their existence and dispel the profound sense of powerlessness. Both playwrights portray the destruction of the illusory sense of stability and security by introducing menace against which the characters start a territorial struggle, a struggle for power which is communicated through attempts of domination, aggressiveness and manipulation that can be defined as inauthentic responses. Another similarity between Pinter's and Albee's drama is that language is not presented as a means of communication but as a weapon to assert power, which points to the characters' insecurity and isolation.

In addition to similarities, there are also differences between Pinter and Albee in finding an expression for man's existential dilemma. Although they both believe that existential redemption and authentic existence are possible through man's confrontation with the nature of his own being and his existential choices, Albee seems to depict a more hopeful and affirmative vision of man's existential predicament. In Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, the characters, especially Stanley, remain trapped in the midst of absurdity and they alienate themselves from existential growth due to their preoccupation with power relations. There is complete destruction and disintegration without any hope and quest for authentic existence. However, in Albee's drama, certain characters experience a momentary and painful consciousness of their false security. In *The Zoo Story*, Jerry engages in a confrontation with the conflict in human relationships and man's need to establish authentic relationships, which can be observed in the dog story.

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