

Review

# The theme of self and identity in the 'Theater of the Absurd'

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Adam's idea of emergence of life out of habit and order out of chaos implicates the idea of getting to identity from nonentity. Dramatic literature, and more specifically, the *Theater of the Absurd*, has proved promising in revealing the existential obsessions of man imposed on him by the demanding characteristics of the postmodern era. In the realm of theater, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, are seen as two major proponents of this theater, have illustrated the theme of self and identity, one of the greatest obsessions of modern man. This paper reflects Beckett's deployment of entropy technique as well as Pinter's concept of identity via the framework of chaos theory to show how they have tried to depict this existential problem of man in their major works from their own idiosyncratic view points: philosophical and psychological respectively to project upon the audience or the reader a better view of modern man's sense of his self and identity and enable the reader/viewer to get to a stabilized sense of self and identity amidst the maximum communicative entropy based on the butterfly effect principle that one's chaos can result in order in the other.

**Key words:** Theatre of absurd, self, identity.

## INTRODUCTION

We live in an era in which there have been drastic advances in all aspects of science, art, and literature. The advances in these fields have been roughly harmoniously concerned with the revelation of the passives, and above all, have been promising in the revelation of the themes pertinent to the very needs and problems of modern and post modern era. What is clear is the fact that with the advent of 20<sup>th</sup> century and its idiosyncrasies, the already taken-for-granted defined creature has turned to the most passive of all, bewildered, disillusioned, alienated, dislocated, and purposeless. Philosophers, intellectuals and even ordinary people all encounter the bewilderment of simple questions: Who am I? What am I? Why am I here? Among the many genres of literature, the one proved to be more promising in providing answers to these questions has been dramatic art. This view has been complemented by (Metman, 1955) who has the great variety of its subjects, modes, and styles, expressed that within the realm of literature, in spite of

dramatic art has always been concerned with man's relation to the great archetypal powers which can determine his attitude to life (83). Influenced by the many characteristics of the time, dramatic art has lent itself to diverse orientations to satisfy the requirement of the time. Among the many orientations in contemporary drama, a new orientation is crystallizing in which man is shown not in a world into which the divine or demonic powers are projected but alone with them. This new form of drama forces the audience out of its familiar orientation. It creates a vacuum between the play and the audience, so that the latter is compelled to experience something itself.

Such a drama enjoyed labels ranging from minimalism to reductionist, existentialist, nihilist, and absurdist which were applied in the description of a dominant trend in the twentieth-century theoretical canon that is commonly associated with dramatists like Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Aderno, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter, (2006) and a number of avant-garde be known as 'the theater of absurd' writers in France, Britain, Italy, Spain, the United States, and elsewhere (Besbes, 2007: 9). The theatre that emerged from this trend of theoretical production has come to (Esslin, 2004: 2-3). As (Metman, 1955: 88) has further

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stated, by far the most profound and daring writer associated with this development in drama reflecting the man condition in twentieth century is Samuel Beckett, who has gone considerably further than any of his contemporaries. That is to say, he shows that the vacuum between what is shown on the stage and the onlooker has become so unbearable that the latter has no alternative but either to reject and turn away or to be drawn into the enigma of plays in which nothing reminds him of any of his purposes in and reactions to the world around him.

Another dramatist who through theater of absurd and hinging on his idiosyncratic theater of menace has captured the same notion and has kept Beckett company in the 20<sup>th</sup> literature is the noble-prize winner, (Harold Pinter, 2006). As (Gussow, 2006) puts it in more than 30 plays – written between 1957 and 2000 and including masterworks like "*The birthday party*", "*The caretaker*", "*The home coming*" and "*Betrayal*", Mr. Pinter has "captured the anxiety and ambiguity of life in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with terse, hypnotic dialogue filled with gaping pauses and the prospect of imminent violence"(21).

The last thirty years have witnessed a strong impact of chaos theory, also known as nonlinear dynamical systems theory on various fields in the humanities and the social sciences whose implicit or direct deployment can be detected in the works of art and pieces of literature of different genres. As Aman (3) has surveyed the theory's characteristics, its concepts, and principles are explained in a number of books such as James Gleick's *Chaos: Making a New Science*, Tien-Yien Li's and James A. Yorke's *Period Three Implies Chaos*, and Katherine Hayles's *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* and her edited volume *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*. Gleick's book shows how chaos theory opposes the deterministic Newtonian viewpoint. Moreover, it highlights the claims of the theory's advocates that it will be remembered as the third landmark of twentieth-century science, being preceded by relativity and quantum mechanics. The same view of Gleick's is supported by other postmodern advocates of the theory (Kiel and Elliott 1996, qtd in Aman). The theory, per se, has got four principles doing a part in the whole process of chaos. The first one is butterfly effect indicating that a minute change to the system can result in subsequent unpredictable number of other changes. Its second principle, dynamic adaptation, deals with the potential characteristics of the system in taking intelligent actions in congruence with the oncoming alterations done in the whole system. The third one, self similarity, more from a literature and art view point, indicates that the current and seemingly chaotic state of things in the long run, at another time, or at a different distance shows some unpredictable order governing the whole system.

The final one, the strange attractions, deals with the

manifestation of some bizarre features which are attributed to the system as its idiosyncratic specialties, highlighting them as the system's identifying characteristics. These principles can be detected based on their applicability to the genre of literature under discussion. Dramatic art of Beckett and Pinter can be studied and analyzed in reference to some of these most manifested principles: butterfly effect, strange attractions, and a few trace of dynamic adaptation.

What has acted as the motive behind this study is the idea that the applicability of chaos theory in humanities scholarship is based on a similarity between theory, (post)modernism, and systems studied by social fiction and science. In practice, chaos and postmodernism disregard the logical systems which preceded them: Newtonian science and modernism as can be learned about more in (Zimmerman, 1993)' assertions (13). In this research, the author deals with the idea that the two dramatists well aware of this modern man's great obsession have tried to illustrate it in their major plays through deploying different techniques and concepts from their own idiosyncratic view points; accordingly, the paper more delicately, analyzes Beckett's theme of entropy from philosophical as well as Pinter's concept of menace from psychological view points- within the framework of some of the more deployed and pertinent characteristics of the chaos theory- to highlight the ambiguity of self and identity as one of the great obsessions of man afflicted by the post modern era characteristics. For sure, the application of chaos theory and this obsession justification, henceforth, would lead to a vivid view of self and identity which is the ultimate end of the theater of the absurd.

## DISCUSSION

As Besbes has put it, Beckett's theatre is one that engages a large spectrum of subjects and concerns that touch upon multiple aspects of human experience (22). This theatre, known as the Theatre of Absurd, more in congruence with the characteristics of chaos theory, has been drastically modified and altered to be more in harmony with the revelation of the existential themes which were already inaccessible by the realistic theater of earlier centuries. It has the characteristics of departing from realistic characters, settings, and already accepted traditions, being assigned upon the multi dimensional entropic and chaotic characteristics, having been tuned in a way in which time, place, and identity are ambiguous and fluid which per se, try to provide the framework, pave the way for the existential arguments, and demonstrate man's attempt in his query for his self and identity which has proved to be the great existential obsession of man at the post modern era. However, more recent writings emphasize the possibility that discarding teleology and emphasizing materiality could also, with the help of chaos

theory, lead to a humanistic view of identity (Polvinen, 2008: 141), an idea which is one of the main purposes of the theatre of the absurd. Philosophically, Beckett's dramatic works implicationaly "point to an obvious failure in Western thought and culture" (Afroghe: 2010: 165) - a justification of which may be deduced from his "preoccupation with the problems of being and identity of the self [which] might have sprung from the Anglo-Irishman's inevitable and perpetual concern with finding his own answer to the question of 'who am I?' but while there may be a truth in this, it is surely far from providing a complete explanation for the deep existential anguish that is the keynote of Beckett's work" (Esslin, 2004: 30). Personally, he has asserted what I have revealed may, in part, be a reflection of my life; inciting him to "present the old questions in a new way to enlarge our awareness and to help us towards a greater insight" (Barnard 1) whose examples can be detected in his oeuvre through the lenses of his specific theatre and his idiosyncratic techniques indicating, regarding the theme of this research, the fact that, as Beckett puts it, the self [has] fought steadily to avoid immersion in nonentity, to assert identity (Proust 2-3). Beckett, as the major proponent of the theatre of the absurd, as can be inferred, wants to present us with a state in modern man existence in which fear and fight clinging to some recognized deity of the past mixed with doubt and bitterness on the one hand, with tired indifference, the upside down entropic state of doctrines, on the other; illustrating a state which has made modern man selfless and devoid of any stabilized identity whose social and psychological level manifestations have emerged in the works of his disciple, Harold Pinter. The two dramatists are indeed dealing with the chaotic state of identity which to one has a philosophically entropic state and the other a psychological one. To one, the violated state of philosophical thinking has made man detached from a stabilized self and identity and to the other the obstacles which have psychologically targeted this aspect of man's personality is at issue.

From the chaos and entropy view point, one can see that on all aspects of this new theatre trend, specifically characterization, Beckett from the individuality view point paves the way for Pinter and his other adherents in this theater to portray man's condition in other view points which is indeed the consummation and continuity of his views illustrating this reality that although his characters, like the famous Krapp's Last Tape, fail to create identities for themselves, they brilliantly portray the existence of the individual as well as the absurdity of human condition (Ehlers, 2007: 299) which has been intensified by the hovering sense of menace of different types depriving man of his true self and identity whose real manifestation can be detected in Pinter's characterization, too.

As for the deployment of strange attraction principle and butter fly effect to show the impotency of man in his behavior and mode of thinking, Beckett in his

characterization divides ego into two selves each necessarily incomplete, so that he may create his own world of fantasy, and on the other hand, he builds up a false or a pseudo self in order to deal with external reality. That is why in Beckett's fiction and drama, especially *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, the characters are in pairs and these pairs are actually not separate but two halves of one individual bound together via a kind of threat of mutual interdependence. They have been interpreted in this way that they have been chaotically divided into two halves who are together not because of a biological urge but because some metaphysical necessity (Armstrong, 1999: 149). They behave so strangely and suffer the existential anguish revealed in their endless and absurd waiting for Godot which to the reader or the viewer this idea is captured that this philosophical deprivation has proved to be the very immediate need of their life. The characters' chaotic state of behavior and thinking implicate the dramatist's tact in implicating existential vacuum of their life at a higher level.

On this line, Pinter has created characters who are psychologically threatened to death and at the exposure of social or higher system identity purification. Beckett's characters are nearly all as Sass says grotesque, repellent, and devoid of any physical grace or dignity. Beckett's characters have unpleasant traits; they are for the most part, cruel, violent, obscene, selfish, and blasphemous, finding a strange pleasure in their own squalor and the abject helplessness of others (71). In the *Waiting for Godot*, this entropic style of characterization gives rise to the appropriate atmosphere and bed for the revelation of the desired purpose and thematic end. They behave so immaturely and paradoxically that one can realize the same impact of butter fly effect and its nonlinearity. Here, the characters' behavior, their mood, speech, and very future movement are not predictable. That is why the play is nothing about nothing. No body comes and no body goes. No meaning is conveyed and the characters are left absurd-afflicted, at the mercy of indefinite obsessions, and amidst chaotic absurdity:

Vladimir: ...so there you are again.

Estragon: Am I?

Vladimir: I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone forever.

Estragon: Me too. (*Waiting for Godot*, P.11)

This go-togetherness goes on in all the course of the play as can be seen. Act 1 ends with:

Estragon: Well, shall we go?

Vladimir: Yes, let's (they don't move)

And also at the end of Act II:

Vladimir: Well? Shall we go/

Estragon: Yes, let's go. (They do not move)

Man's lack of identity, his limitations and his place in the chaotic universe dominating his existence which is at issue in Beckett's plays like what we see in the same act, may have been the creation of chaos of certain type Beckett may implicitly-though probably unaware of the physical characteristics it may arouse in the reader and the viewer-has developed in his plays whose very to the point existential manifestation may be seen in this play:

Estragon: (restored to the horror of his situation). I was Sleep! (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 toward the universe). This one is enough for

You? (Silence) It's nice of you, Didi. Who am telling 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. (*Waiting for Godot*, 12)

More in congruence with such features of chaos, we can detect that Pinter, too, has created characters- the major media of stage performance- who are dependent on each other due to the force of imminent chaotic threat demanding on them in the form of their relationships, their affective needs, or tolerating the social and psychological expectations which on the whole have targeted their senses of their selves and identities. To find answers for the very essence as well as the nature of identity, Pinter, for example, in *Dwarf*, has created an outrider to search the outer layers of the solitary life of the spirit, psyche, imagination, mind, and sense of self; in *Homecoming*, what other characters conceive as illusion, exterior role, etc. gives rise to the emersion of identity; in *A Slight Ache*, Edward, is replaced in his own elegant home by a voiceless and smelly match seller who doesn't even sell matches; certain identities are adopted by the characters on the line of achieving a purpose of certain ilk deliberately in *The Collection* and *The Lover*. As (Higgins, 1979) has put it, it seems to be assumed that a greater identity-in the sense of a greater capability and scope- is qualitatively better than a lesser one. This may be one of the ways the theater of the absurd through which tries to restore back the shattered identity and self of the characters and in reality that of the audience.

The question of existence that the individual is often doomed to an inner turmoil culminating in his loss of his sense of self has been delicately selected as the dominating theme haunting and obsessing characters in the plays of Pinter advocating his master, Beckett, in the *Theatre of Absurd* whose major chaotic characteristic is quoting Esslin to strive to express its sense of

senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought (24). Pinter's idiosyncratic theatre-the *Theatre of Menace*-which gives rise to the chaotically violated identities and the psychologically ever menacing atmosphere harbinger of threat of different types can be interpreted and justified as acting on the way of instilling the butterfly effect principle of the chaos theory. This question may arise regarding the how of this justification. The best example regarding this principle is the saying that a bird's flapping of its wings in Africa may give rise to the creation of a tornado in North America; or in humanistic terms the idea that one person's order creates another's chaos (Amen, and Khames, 2007); accordingly, Pinter by creating a menacing atmosphere mainly through his characterization and their speeches at a macro level implicitly, to the researcher's best reflection, projects the question of identity and self of the humanity at postmodernism at macro level one.

This atmosphere of menace of self and identity in its different forms and tenets as one of the dominant themes running through the majority of Pinter's oeuvre has directly been rooted from the influence of Beckett's theatre and can be detected in other writers of this theater trend. For example, in his major work *The Birthday Party*, the very name is suggestive; Stanley's strong denial of attendance in his own birthday party climaxes the drama that his birth celebration eventually results in the reluctant celebrant's death, be it physical or spiritual. On the arrival of the two intruders, Stanley's flux state of sense of identity tests itself when he tries to terrify Meg with the possibility that she may be taken away by the visitors who carry a wheel barrow in their van for the purpose revealing the fact that Stanley tries to escape from the world that hovers upon him in the form of Goldberg and McCann who try to annihilate the forged sense of identity this has-been-if-ever pianist has adopted signifying the dynamic adaptation principle of chaos theory which has resided in the mind of Stanley. Such a psychological consciousness of Goldberg and the sheer negligence of Stanley derives one to conclude that he may have" already been debilitated and rendered impotent by his life as a child like, sheltered man locked into a parasitic relationship with an incestuous mother figure, his landlady. Second, Stanley is powerless to resist his own destruction because Goldberg and McCann who confront him with his weaknesses and pretensions, are personifications of his cruel superego, upbringing him for his self-indulgence and failure in life (Schneider man, 1988:193) which roughly replicates Pozzo's maltreatment of Lucky in the *Waiting for Godot* and Aston and Mick's challenging of Davies in *the Caretaker*. In a close scrutiny, what Pinter and Beckett do in their characterization, though may not intentionally, is a resemblance of the exercise of chaos theory. Beckett, in this game of relationship, chaotically violates the power

beholder within one act to the next in order to manipulate different layers of self and limit it within one single individual rather than assigning it on the others in the labyrinth of relationships an example of which can be seen in the second act when Pozzo turns blind unable to find even his way and is still dependent upon Lucky for his life like a child.

Additionally, Pinter has created characters that are doomed for no good reason leaving them amidst of threats in a vicious milieu. In case of Davies in the *caretaker*, this control is far beyond personal control and sounds widespread, the whole universe has turned hostile to him leaving him with no where to go, nothing to prove his being and identity, and even no feeling of easiness in his mind regarding himself and the world. The only tact in his hand is the forged stories and never-proven-claims to protect himself temporarily from the chaotically flooding of threats on the way of his life and identity. His claims, scrambled assertions, and loud thinking are all on the line of projecting the viewer/reader the dynamic adaptation principle of chaos theory. Davies' in tumult state of life and identity arouses the feelings of the audience and amidst this turbulence the audience dynamically tailors, challenges, and modifies his own view of identity. That is why the theater goes in the theater of the absurd, for sure, do not find any sheer pleasure; instead he is called back to his own deep unconsciousness regarding what is happening on the stage. Personally, I have felt the same and I have tried this with some cases for the sake of confirmation of my own sensations:

Davies: (with great feeling). If only the weather would break! Then I'd be able to get down to Sidcup!

Aston: Sidcup?

Davies: The weather's so blasted bloody awful, how can I get down to Sidcup in these shoes?

Aston: Why do you want to go to Sidcup?

Davies: I got my papers there. (*The Caretaker*, 17)

He has changed his name to forge a temporary identity for himself, but this new identity in a sense exposes him more to danger as may one day one person on behalf of an organization like the case of Stanley may come and catch him:

Davies: You see, what it is, you see, I changed my name! Years ago. I have been going around under an assumed name! That's not my real name.

Aston: What name you been going under?

Davies: Jenkins. Bernard Jenkins. That's my name. That's the name I'm known, anyway. But it's no good going on with that name. I got no rights (*The Caretaker*, 18).

Within the framework of chaos theory, one can see that the theory acts as a catalyst to the formation of a

humanistic view of the self; accordingly, such a chaotic state of Davies and other characters' mind regarding their sense of their selves and identities, in the end and the long term, restores order and stability to the mind of the audience.

Beckett's characters' involvement in their search for the self, identity, and the real nature of existence (Rahimipoor, 2010: 156) has come into existence at the result of philosophical deprivation and chaotic state of post modern world whose real exemplification and illustration can best be envisaged, from another view point, in Pinter's Plays in the case of the existence of a totalitarian system which tries to adjust and tailor the people in the society to which Pinter's characters react differently depending on the type and intensity of the threat hovering over them. Davies in the *Caretaker* ends up as the usual vagrant, alienated, dispossessed, and alone; Aston is left half forged; therefore, is not considered as a qualified person suitable for a normal social life and has succumbed to his brother for help and shelter; in the *Birthday party* Stanley goes through the arduous process of incantation and rebirth; and Goldberg and McCann remain the subservient, ignorant puppets of the totalitarian system. The atmosphere the two dramatists have created deploying the butterfly effect (changing its orientation) is one the line of capturing the intended theme and conveying the desired message.

The two playwrights have been complementary to each other in their selection of the appropriate technique for the clarification of the theme. Highly delicately, Beckett's creation of utmost chaos in all aspects of the theater and more specifically characterization is consummated by Pinter in his staging of characters that are in constant process of self trial, self search, and menace exposure. To provide a macro level of justification of the individuals in their idiosyncratic characteristics and their behavior, Beckett has turned to the entropy principle violating all the already established principles of drama and the status of the world to create an open system not the closed one based on the traditional linear ones in setting, theme, etc. which leads to maximum entropy with which the reader or the viewer would be able to interact with the text or the stage, creates his own meaning, assign his own interpretation and with regard to his existential problems come up with his true definition of self, but for the characters on the stage such an entropy acts as the main cause giving rise to their blockage of their existence (*Waiting for Godot*), and the menace of different types in Pinter's Plays. Accordingly, they exercise their most impressive maneuver upon the creation of entropy in the characterization and language on the line of creating utmost communicative entropy which is Beckett's aim as well as provision of menace of different types, physical, mental, and psychological which is what Pinter desires so that as Heisenberg puts it man would be able to interpret the text at a personal level and within the catastrophe of chaotic meaning and psychologically violated state of

mind could come up with a stabilized condition of man, his purpose, and above all the nature of his true self. The way the two stage these complementary techniques in their theaters has raised their status above all others who have been involved in the delineation and illustration of the question of self and identity at postmodern era.

The chaotic state of time at once demanding and unbearable and at times elusive and destructive has been one of the basis upon which the two dramatists' characterization and setting creation hinge upon. The two playwrights, specifically Beckett, have been aware of the concept of time and its connection with entropy that received drastic changes with the works of Newton, Kepler, Descartes and many more intellectuals who viewed the world as a mechanical system within which man was viewed as a machine. Efforts to bring back increasing entropy and defense against the death of the individual or society can be seen in the concepts like Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, literary utopia, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Einstein's Theory of Relativity, and Max Plank's Quantum Theory. Upon the observation of some negative effects of technology such as Atomic Bomb, time revealed its devastating effect whose manifestation can be seen in the devastating catastrophe hovering over the characters and their setting in the *Endgame*, the existentially wondering vagrants of *Waiting for Godot*, the ever on the move condition of Davies in the *Caretaker* reminding one of the case of many people after world war II and other civil wars. The world they stage is the one which has turned into a kind of resurrection in all philosophical, physical, and existential aspects driving the writers bored with everything to write about a time that was approaching, suppressing everything on its way, turning all the established social and philosophical doctrines upside down, and revolving humanity in its waves. Amidst these alterations, for sure, literature is no exception. This is the time that in the realm of literature, as Holton has asserted, theatre of chaos and entropy emerges, a time when all absolutes changed into indefinites and all perfect premises turned into incomplete ones. We can detect that Beckett delicately has manifested this aspect of time from the philosophical view of the shattered doctrines of post-modernism and Pinter has revealed through highlighting the postmodernism psychological threat of different types crystallized in the language and atmosphere of his theater. What the two have done has been the deployment of the dynamic adaptation principles harmonizing smoothly the other tenets and devices of the theater to put their message across the viewer/ reader. Such view, initially, could be seen in Beckett's article on Proust in which his statement about time properly reveals the increasing entropy targeting humanity, his existence, and his self. No doubt, he has understood time and maximum entropy better than anybody else as can be detected in his works and his subsequent impact on the works of his disciples like Pinter in the themes they stage in the

theatre; he has detected the existence of increasing entropy in almost everything and tells (Israel Shenker, 1997) that I see no discipline anywhere (147) even in prose believing that time not only has changed physical things but also has affected written elements and that this entropy would lead to the full destruction of everything like what he has staged in the skull like setting of *Endgame*. Within this entropy incorporating menace of different types, man and his view of his identity and self have been left at the mercy of entropy and menace staged in the form of a boarding house in a remote shore and its only in tumult guest, Stanley Webber. Beckett's employment of physical entropy as the dominant theme of his introduced two major plays smoothly paves the way for the communicative entropy upon which he bases the building blocks of enabling the viewer and the reader to challenge himself and deal with his existential problems like what Pinter has similarly staged via the chaotic social norms threatening the identity of characters forcing them pursue their selves and identities desperately. Where Beckett in *Waiting for Godot* turns Pozzo blind, motivates Vladimir and Estragon to commit suicide in their anguish of absurdity of existence and being, kills Nell and mistreats Nagg as a father figure, haunts Hamm by the blackness and imminent danger waiting outside, and assigns Clov the drudgery of endless, meaningless servitude, and obedience to Hamm in the *Endgame* as well as the whole absurdity of life in both plays, his selection of setting, that is, a deserted place with no sign of life and modernity in *Waiting for Godot* and a far remote Skull-like room in *Endgame* enable him to project in the reader/viewer mind his intended theme. Having turned all other aspects of the theater chaos-stricken, to penetrate into the sheer core of the theme, Beckett deploys his most impressive technique, namely, his annihilation of the structure of language in every aspect violating its syntax, semantics, etc for the sake of utmost communicative entropy creation whose best exemplification can be detected in Lucky's supposedly meaningless and uncontrollable stream of words. He talks seriously and delivers a long, gabled monologue about the fate of man caught between an indifferent God and an inhospitable nature (Pattie, 2000: 76) highlighting the exact dilemma of modern man and the dangling philosophical paradoxes, that is, his speech is in fact "carefully structured so as to address in turn the nature of the divine, the human and the mineral, and to suggest a movement towards complete entropy (Sass, 1992:367). Through Lucky's speech, Beckett places "emphasis on new moves and even new rules for language games, having exceeded and subverted the old rules and limits (Afroghe, 2010: 177) enabling him to convey meaning through nonsense and pave the way for the better reflection of the absurdity and misery of post modern era; what has been staged through the creation of utmost imminent threat of different types and nature by his disciple, Harold Pinter.

Harold Pinter, with this regard from his own view point, at times turns to the menacing role of language and at other times deploys silences which are more penetrative and more menacing than the language itself. He incorporates such delicate nuances of maneuver over the use of language and characters in the framework which lends itself to chaos. To shed light on the plight of modern man within his really ordinary setting and routine jobs, he, essentially, remains on the firm ground of everyday reality (Esslin 36) a bit different from the chaotically created characters and settings of Samuel Beckett to approach the reader/viewer's view of his self and identity right through the horizon of his/her thinking mode and status. The very rudiment of each ordinary setting and activity may give rise to a kind of unpredictable menace which gives way to themes of ambiguity, mystery, and terror in his plays in the very core of the social and personal life of the characters implicating the idea that the whole existence is chaos-governed and at the initiative of chaos. He creates an atmosphere of chaotic menace hovering over the characters in which nothing is predictable; neither the characters nor their motives can be easily detected. The outside forces as well as the individuals either within or between them-selves can act as the source of menace enabling Pinter to employ the possibilities of the kind of situation giving rise to these types of menaces in his plays in which both the characters and the audience face an atmosphere, apparently funny but actually having suggestiveness of some impending threat from outside (Poonam, 2009: 87). Such a chaotic psychological status is only captured through the characters' speech created by the playwright maneuvering over the chaos principles. In a more close scrutiny, we see that as (Dukore, 1988) asserts most of "Pinter's plays begin comically but turn to physical, psychological or potential violence-sometimes, in varying sequences, to all three (24). In *The Birthday Party* the very name as mentioned is suggestive; the danger of "the weasel under the cocktail cabinet" is imminent. Birth, the harbinger of a new life, a new identity and self, here, turns out to be a new form of resurrection. Stanley's strong denial of attendance in his own birthday party climaxes the drama as if he knew it would result in his reluctant death. If he knew, then why should he have attended the party? As it seems, the key point to the question lies in the emergence of menace, inevitable, and unpredictable in nature threatening every aspect of man's existence. Stanley is seemingly entrapped in remote lodging house. What kind of menace may have given rise to his imprisonment? To him fear of menace may indicate the universal trauma of man in the world. In *the Birthday party*, Stanley's real entrapment, his biggest mental menace and obsession is his own sense of self and identity hovering over his existence. Stanley, the protagonist, and other minor characters of the play in their own idiosyncratic behavior and way of living just like Davies in *Caretaker* are in a constant power struggle to

maintain their identity and live their lives amidst the oncoming problems of different types. This manifests the fact that in Pinter's plays dominance assertion (Abolfateh and Khalid, 2006:52), another chaotic motive, over another servers as the primary means characters not only establish identity but survive in a world where to allow oneself to assume a subservient position, for even a moment, can result in annihilation-physical, psychological, or both (Prentice, 2000: 28).

In *The Caretaker*, Pinter's second major work, the three characters are actively involved in the process of revising their condition and mind their identities. The room is cluttered with so many appliances of suburb bourgeois life style. But the majorities are out of functions. This chaos-stricken room per se is in need of redecorating which is indeed adopting the identity of a modern house. Its current condition is a reflection of the values and order symptomatic of a modern home. This dilapidated house which is on the way of achieving a new identity shelters characters who are in pursuit of their selves and identities, too. Davies, the major character, lives under an assumed name and claims to have left his certificates in Sidcup clings to this opportunity to make the best out of it. On the line of enjoying a secure identity, both Davies and Stanley turn to their past; Davies as mentioned time and again refers to and wishes to go to Sidcup to fetch his documents which he has left with somebody fifteen years ago. The chaotic state of time, weather, and low self-esteem of the characters can be seen as the evidence of the presence of chaos theory principles in Pinter's staging.

His assumed name, his identity should be verified by who! But just like Stanley Webber is stuck in his past identity. They are both attempting to find a way of getting rid of present distracted and dispossessed sense of self. Stanley turns to his past identity, his having a job as a great pianist to soothe himself; an insurance company confirms Davies Card to stabilize his assumed identity; Vladimir and Estragon need Godot confirmation of their existence. To all their dismay there is one way to salvation just like this idea, for example, that Stanley's socially chaotic status as a respected pianist should be revised and crystallized in order to gain his already identity.

Davies' assertions about his past, his own comparison with those who are inferior to him like the Blacks, Greeks, Poles, and other aliens like the scotch git and the Irish hooligan are endeavors on the way of attracting Aston's attention, gaining his favor, and defining his shattered, baseless identity on that relationship. Waster has nicely summed up this idea that: Pinter's characters are at the mercy of each other on the periphery of life. Their identities, backgrounds and histories are vague, and different versions exist depending on whom one is remembering (Waster 2005): Davies: All them toe-rags, mate, got the manners of pigs. I might have been on the road a few years but you can take it from me I'm clean.

I keep myself up [...] I've eaten dinner off the best of plates. But I'm not young anymore. I remember the days I was as handy as any of them (Caretaker 7).

He craves for acceptance as a respected individual just like Stanley in *The Birthday Party*. Both, deeply obsessed by the anguish of their selves, are in pursuit of legislating and asserting their identities and "are relatively in a flux state of their sense of self and identity (Rahimipoor, 2011: 597) replicating the same quest for meaning in Beckett's works. The susceptibility of his identity has deprived him of inner self-esteem, so he is left with nothing at hand to set against his miseries, the insults, and his inner feelings of self disillusion. He has been afflicted with the modern age absurdist characteristics: "the sense of an ominous yet uncertain fate; [and] the implication a senseless, random universe (Grimes, 2006: 14) which has shattered the sense of selves of characters in Beckett's major plays a good justification of which may be due to upside down status of philosophical doctrines regarding the view of life and existence. That is why Stanley, too, asks Meg, "Tell me, Mrs. Boles, when you address yourself to me, do you ever ask yourself who exactly you are talking to? (Pinter Birthday 15). Davies does not even have a minute tinge of familiarity even with his birth place and his nationality which makes his past as his present blurred. Aston: What did you say your name was?:

Davies: Bernard Jenkins is my assumed one.  
 Aston: No, your other one?  
 Davies: Davies, Mac Davies.  
 Aston: Welsh, are you?  
 Davies: Eh?  
 Aston: You Welsh? Pause.  
 Davies. Well, I been around, you know ....what I mean ....I been about...  
 Aston: Where were you born then?  
 Davies: (darkly). What do you mean?  
 Aston: Where were you born?  
 Davies: I was....uh....oh, it's a bit hard, like, to see your mind back....see what I mean....going back ...a good way....lose a bit of track, like...you know...(The Caretaker, 23)

All these agitated states of behavior remind one of Edward Lorenz's concept of the "butterfly effect" suggesting that chaos lies at the heart of nothingness felt by the for-itself and order is the appearance of the for itself seeks, the achievement it tries to realize, temporary it may seem (2) as well as the idea that these characters act as (Hale, 2010) people who impress us so strongly that we are moved forward in the discovery of something vital yet indefinable (7).

Sociologically speaking, touching upon postmodernism characteristics, one may presume that the world has become decentralized; faith and beliefs have been smashed, humanity has been forgotten, one can in a

deeper level detect that these features have come true and crystallized in case of Davies. Being deprived of the very beginning needs of human being like shelter, affection, and respect, he is even rejected by the Monk for getting a pair of shoes and is treated like an animal. This is the most chaotic status one can imagine for a human being that Pinter has converged all at one on his protagonist. He collates the situation through menace and chaos and projects it on the viewer/reader to tranquilize like a painkiller or a medicine the audience sense of self and identity whose crystallization can also be seen in *Birthday party* and its protagonist. That is why when he turns, shambles across the room, come face to face with a statue of Buddha standing on the gas stove, looks at it and turns (Pinter Caretaker 7) striking the mind the endless waiting of the vagrants in the *Waiting for Godot* for the meaning of their being and the impatient waiting of the half paralyzed characters of *Endgame* for somebody or something to end their lives demanding on them more than the real nature of death.

One can clearly see that *Birthday Party*, too, has become a mirror in which Stanley sees reflected his "essence" (Silverstein, 1993: 29). "Do you want to have a look at your face? [...] You could do with a shave, do you know that? [...] Don't you ever go out? (He does not answer.) I mean, what you do, just sit around the house like this all day long? (Pause) Hasn't Mrs. Boles get enough to do without having you under her feet all day long?" (Pinter Birthday 19). Lulu's suggestion revitalizes his awareness of his identity. He rushes to the mirror, washes his face, looks again to see his new image. His previous view of himself as a pianist shatters and gets deeply disillusioned in himself. This is accompanied by what happens in the course of play when McCann "snatches his glasses and as Stanley rises, reaching for them, takes his chair downstage centre, below the table, Stanley stumbling as he follows. Stanley clutches the chair and stays bent over it (Birthday 43) indicating that what Pinter stage via the performance of the characters acts as the tangible manifestation of stream of consciousness of the chaotic state of the characters' view of their selves and identities. The vagrants' time and again flashback to their consciousness on the way of the reality of their being and identity in the waiting for Godot and the storytelling or thinking aloud of half paralyzed characters of *Endgame* from the existential orientation shows the chaotic state of their being too. Stanley this time again looks at the reality of his self and identity through the real view of the world not that of his assumed one. Aston's efforts to bring back identity and self respect to Davies through offering him a job as a caretaker also culminate in no practical fruits:

Aston: You could be ...caretaker here, if you liked.  
 Davies: What?  
 Aston: You could ...look after the place, if you liked. You know, the stairs and the landing, the front steps, keep an



eye on it. Polish the bells. [...]

Aston: You see, what we could do, we could ... I could fit a bell at the bottom, outside the front door, with "caretaker" on it. And you could answer any queries. (*The Caretaker*, 41)

It is clearly seen that Godot in the *Waiting for Godot* never comes; the misery of characters in the *Endgame* never ends; Stanley succumbs to the wishes of Goldberg and McCann; and Davies ends up as the forever wonderer all reflecting the technical manifestation of chaos theory which can be detected in many other aspects of the works of the two playwrights. Their efforts is one in the line of helping out humanity through their theater to get to better view of their selves and identities and this is exactly-via the framework of chaos theory-what I agree with: that theatre cannot change the world, but it can allow us a moment of liberated space in which to change ourselves. (Greig qtd. in Inan, 2009))

## CONCLUSION

The chaos theory which was developed and introduced in the field of physics can now be seen and traced in almost in any other field. The characteristics of this theory can be easily traced and detected in the works of art literature. Dramatic literature has delicately staged and illustrated the same mode of signification the theory has followed in its texts and performances. At postmodern era, (Samuel Beckett, 2007) and Harold Pinter through the lenses of the *Theater of Absurd* and the *Comedy of Menace* have tried to depict and highlight post modern characteristics and "these contemporary conflicts [which] all deal with a re-demarcation of our identity. They are rejection of those ideas, of economic and ideological governmental violence, which disregard who we are individually. They are also a rejection of a scientific or administrative questioning which establishes one's identity (Afroghe 2010: 22) in a linear manner. In this post-modern society, which to modernists had come to the point of savagery, chaos, absolute entropy and disorder, people who have lost all their hope and belief in a metaphysical, trans-historical, absolute basis for their existence, whose dream of a philosophy for this existence justification has smashed, try to legitimate their existence, forge their identities based on their fabricated values; hence, People get involved either in an endless game like that of Beckett's *Endgame* or fall in the reverie of the game of waiting like that of *Waiting for Godot*, take refuge in the seclusion like Stanley in the *Birthday Party*, or end up everlasting wondering under an assumed name like Davies in *the Caretaker*. In their own idiosyncratic styles they have touched upon the existential problems of the modern man who has been driven to the corner, dislocated, alienated, disillusioned, and left with a blurred view of his self and being. Within the framework of chaos theory justification, in the theater

of absurd what the two dramatists are following is bringing back stability and order regarding the audience view of self and identity through the creation of-based on the butterfly principle of chaos theory- chaotic and turbulent view of self and identity in the characters in their theater. This is alongside this idea that one person's chaos and turbulence can culminate in another's order and stability which is the gist of the butterfly effect of the chaos theory.

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