

Stanley's Ambiguous Self and Destiny

From the Modes of Representation and the Disguise Motif in *The Birthday Party*

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About *The Birthday Party* (1957), Pinter's first full-length play, Marc Silverstein criticizes earlier critics such as Martin Esslin, Bernard Dukore, Steven H. Gale and Lois G. Gordon for their discussing it "in terms of the tragic scenario (the autonomous self crushed by 'external force')" (28). For example, Gale says that "carried throughout *The Birthday Party* is the theme of the threat to a person's security by unknown outside powers and the disintegration of his individuality under the onslaught of the attacking force" (38). Against such "rhetoric of authenticity and the autonomous self," Silverstein argues that the play dramatizes "the process through which the Other 'integrates' its subjects" (27). He sees, in the play, "the formation, de-formation, and re-formation of Stanley's 'identity'" (26) in terms of the fictitiousness of the self. We wonder, however, which view of the self and the hero's end fits the play best, in the oppositional views of both the autonomous self and the fictitious one, and the hero's disintegration and his integration (re-formation). When we try to discover the answer, we had better take into consideration first the modes of representation in Pinter's plays, and second the disguise motif latent in this play.

Many critics notice that there are objectivism and subjectivism in Pinter's representation in general. The former comes from realism since the nineteenth century, and the latter originates in modernism. Michael Bell calls such coincidence of the opposites "double awareness", which results from such modern scientific revolutions as the invention of X-ray or Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty principle.' He argues that such an awareness influences modern writers such as James Joyce and Thomas Man, who "use realist representation, . . . yet with an X-ray awareness of its constructed, or purely human, character" (12). This double awareness would explain Pinter's enigmatic definition of representation : "what goes on in my plays is realistic, but what I'm doing is not realism" ("*Writing for Myself*" 11). About the double awareness in Pinter's plays and *The Birthday Party*, Varun Begley says that "early plays and late plays alike traverse a spectrum of realism and modernism" (39) with "*The Birthday Party*, . . . with one foot in the mundane and one in a cultural phantasmagoria" (45).

This double awareness gives a hint to an answer as to Stanley's self and his destiny, and throws light on the ambiguity in each of them.

Stanley's ambiguous self and destiny would be discernible also from the disguise motif in the play. It is well known that Pinter was in Anew McMaster's touring company when he was young, and played some roles in Shakespeare's plays which adopt 'disguise' parts¹. There are two kinds of disguise in Shakespearian disguise pattern. One is defined by M.C. Bradbrook as "the substitution, overlaying or metamorphosis of dramatic identity, whereby one character sustains two roles" (160). The female page such as Rosalind in *As You Like It* (1599-1600) sustains both a female and a male role by disguise, and becomes an ideal androgynously unified human being. The other type of disguise is suggested by Lloyd Davis: "The motif of disguise suggests that personal identity is not conceived as essentially or originally present" (4). The latter disguise is typically seen in *Iago* in Shakespeare. He assumes "the disguise of the serpent" according to Bradbrook (161), but his disguise shows he has no essential self, as he says "I am not what I am" (*Othello* [1604-05]1.1.66). In this type, each of two roles or two parts of the self produced by disguise is fictitious. As Pinter made an appearance in *As You Like It* and *Othello*, he should have known these two types of disguise.

From the fact that Stanley Webber has another name, "Joe Soap" (60), the perspective of disguise motif, too, would clarify what Stanley's self and his destiny are like. Focusing the theme of the play on the individual versus the external power such as the Establishment or some organization, this paper investigates how Stanley's self and his end are developed.

1

When we see *The Birthday Party* in the mode of realism, we notice that the play dramatizes the process through which external power threatens an individualist, and transforms him into a man who conforms to the external power or the Establishment, whether such transformation means his death or rebirth. Stanley who is a pianist with "a unique touch" (32) can be considered to be an individualist who makes much of an individual's autonomy rather than conformity to society. So he finds peaceful seclusion in Meg's boarding house in a seaside resort after his bitter experience of the people's humiliation of him at the "next concert" following "a great success" at Lower Edmonton. He narrates to Meg the people's great admiration and betrayal of the genius on piano as follows:

I had a unique touch. Absolutely unique. They came up to me. They came up to me and said they were grateful. Champagne we had that night, the lot. . . . Yes, Lower Edmonton. Then after that, you know what they did? They carved me up. . . . My next concert. . . . I went down there to play. Then, when I got there, the hall was

closed, the place was shuttered up, not even a caretaker. They'd locked it up. (32-33)

Meg sympathizes with such an alienated individualist ("You stay here. You'll be better off. You stay with your old Meg" 33), and though she tries to establish a mother-son-lover relation between her and Stanley, Stanley doesn't submit to her ruling him, but rather stirs up his sense of autonomy. When she takes away his tea before his drinking and makes an excuse for his complaint ("You didn't want it"), he says decisively,

Who said I didn't want it!

.....

Who gave you the right to take away my tea?

.....

Tell me, Mrs Boles, when you address yourself to me, do you ever ask yourself who exactly you are talking to? Eh? (31)

This episode illustrates how he is very conscious of his independent self and identity. There is no doubt that this 'self' in him derives from "the autonomous, unified self-generating subject" (Dollimore 155) which emerges "in the latter part of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth century" (156). Such an autonomous self or "the unified subject of liberal humanism" (Belsey 33), when he is an artist, is a further "threat to the status quo because it (piano playing) is not a thing that everyone can do equally well and because it requires a different set of goals from those held by the ordinary workingman" (Gale 55).

It is Goldberg and McCann that appear in front of such an antisocial independent man. Though their identities are ambiguous, we can surmise that they are representatives of some external power. When Stanley knows their coming to the boarding house earlier, he at once feels a threat and is afraid of the Other searching for him and invading his 'self.' He asks Meg repeatedly, "Who are they?" and declares, "They're looking for someone. A certain person" (34), being convinced that he is the target. His forecast that "They've got a wheelbarrow in that van" (34) proves to be true later ("What would Mr Goldberg want with a wheelbarrow?" 79).

Stanley who is anxious to know their identities and their purpose attempts to spy into their truths by using disguise like Hamlet who disguises himself as a mad man to spy on Claudius and his followers². Maintaining the essential autonomous self, he assumes another false identity. Stanley, who knows one of the visitors has a Irish name, McCann ("My name's McCann" 47), disguises himself as a sociable man, and tries to invite McCann to an Irish pub ("I know Ireland very well. I've many friends there... What about coming out to have a drink with me? There's a pub down the road serves draught Guinness" 52). To

Goldberg Stanley disguises himself as another different man. He assumes the role of the manager of the boarding house, lying to him, "I run the house. I'm afraid you and your friends will have to find other accommodation" (54). He tries to banish them out of the house for the reason that "We're booked out. Your room is taken" (54). Although he continues his extempore disguise toward them, he keeps his original self as he says, "I suppose I have changed, but I'm still the same man that I always was" (50).

But Goldberg is more skillful than Stanley in using disguise. Following Esslin's argument that *The Birthday Party* is "a kind of modern *Everyman*" (Peopled Wound 82), Elin Diamond argues that Goldberg is one of descendants of "the Vice of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century morality plays" (45).

... we can... recognize him (the Vice) in characters as diverse as Diccon, "the bedlam," of Mr. S.'s *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, Iago of Shakespeare's *Othello*, and Goldberg in Pinter's *The Birthday Party*. All three exhibit the Vice's clever scheming, his dissembling, his gulling of simple characters, ... his motiveless malice. (47)

Iago, who is referred to as an heir of the Vice, is typical of the disguise of the serpent, one of the two archetypes of disguise, which originates with the Vice. Bradbrook says

The two archetypes were the disguise of the serpent and the disguise of the Incarnation. The devil's power of deceit furnished plots for many moralities. In Medwall's *Nature*, in *Respublica* and in Skelton's *Magnificence*, the vices take the virtues' names, ... There is no direct disguise in... Iago..., but an assumed personality. (161)³

Considering these arguments and Goldberg's plural names ("Nat," "Simey"[53],"Benny" [88])⁴, it is probable that Goldberg disguises himself as a businessman with "a brief case" (36), hiding his real identity as someone who seems to be a representative or an instrument of the external power or the Establishment. His main purpose for visiting Stanley is finally to force him to conform to some "external force" (60) or society among whose members he is.

To promote his aim, Goldberg makes use of Stanley's birthday which Meg informed him of, proposing to hold party. The strategy which he uses in ruling and transforming Stanley is very cunning like Iago. Firstly he disturbs the autonomous unified self in him, gives disorientation to it, and breaks down it just as Iago sways Othello's strong belief in Desdemona's chastity, cracks and destroys it. Secondly, he forces Stanley to assume a new self or identity which conforms to "an external force" whose follower he is ("Do you

recognise an external force, responsible for you, suffering for you?" [60]).

2

Before the birthday party, Goldberg and McCann interrogate Stanley severely to sway his unified self, and disorient it. First Goldberg asks him, "what were you doing yesterday?" "And the day before. What did you do the day before that?" (57), and disturbs his sense of time. To the perplexed Stanley's question "What do you mean?", Goldberg thrusts on him the identity of a social "washout" who is "wasting everybody's time" (57), substituting it for his native self. And Goldberg starts to disorient his sense of identity, saying falsely, one after another, "Why are you driving that old lady off her conk?" "Why do you force that old man out to play chess?" "Why do you treat that young lady like a leper?" (57), contrary to Stanley's friendly relation to Meg, Petey and Lulu. Goldberg is fabricating the multiple Stanleys to disintegrate his unified autonomous self, and force him to assume a fictitious identity which he presses on him. While he is made a traitor to his organization ("Why did you leave the organization?" "Why did you betray us?" 58), he is thrown into a variety of identities or roles of social, sexual and religious criminal or sinner. He is accused of killing his wife ("Why did you kill your wife?" 59), of raping his mother ("Mother defiler!" 61), and of discarding his belief ("When did you last pray?" [60], "You're a traitor to the cloth" 61). But some of his and McCann's questionings are incoherent and haphazard. Goldberg asks inconsistently, "Why did you never get married?" after his question "How did you kill her?" (59). Further they continue to ask unanswerable questions, "Is the number 846 possible or necessary?" (60). To Stanley's answer "Neither," Goldberg says "Wrong! ", and asks it again. Though Stanley answer "Both" this time, these hit-or-miss replies of his would show the disorientation of his mind. And when Goldberg asks him "Why did the chicken cross the road?", and McCann does "Chicken? Egg? Which came first?" (62), Stanley, at last, "screams" (62) and displays his mind's collapse. Their persistent inquisition which attempts to disorient Stanley has resulted in disintegrating his original unified self. Seeing his disruption, McCann asks him "Who are you, Webber?" (62) while Goldberg declares him dead ("You're dead" 62). As if corresponding to Goldberg saying, "There's no juice in you" (62), Stanley does nothing but groan and repeat "Uuuuuuhhhh!" (62) . The wordless Stanley seems to be as if he has lost his autonomous, and humanist self, lacking reason. Gale argues about the inquisition scene,

The confrontation scene is the crux of the play... it is not a particular which is important; since there is no way to escape the all-encompassing catalogue, the stress is on the idea of inevitability which ultimately defeats Stanley. (53)

Though Gale contends that "the party might better be described as a wake celebrating the death of Stan as an individual" (53), Stanley is 'resurrected' in Act III. In the second confrontation scene there, Goldberg uses disguise again to 'resurrect' him. His way of manipulating disguise is similar to Petruchio's one in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593-94). When Petruchio tries to tame a shrew, Kate, his stratagem of taming her is to thrust a hypothetical modest identity on her, and change identities. It is to force the rude Kate to assume a kind of Griselda-self from the outside. So Petruchio calls her "passing gentle" (2.1.236) or "sweet Katherine" (2.1.260), despite her anger ("Go, fool, and whom thou keep'st command" 2.1.251).

Pet. 'Twas told me you were rough, and coy, and sullen,
And now I find report a very liar;
For thou are pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous,
But slow in speech, yet sweet as spring-time flowers. (2.1.237-40)

What Petruchio aims to do here is to transform her into a woman who conforms to the Establishment. An ideal woman who fits most in the contemporary patriarchy is a modest, silent and obedient woman whom St. Paul shows in *Ephesians* (5. 22), and *I Timothy* (2. 9-12). It is a hypothetical identity thrust on the shrewish Kate by Petruchio.

Goldberg adopts the same strategy as Petruchio to the broken-down Stanley. When the disintegrated Stanley appears the next day after the party to be taken away to Monty, it is "STANLEY, who is dressed in a dark well cut suit and white collar" (91) that we encounter. As Silverstein points out that Stanley's appearance is "the uniform of the conservative English businessman" (47), Stanley is, at the end, made Goldberg's copy. In the first edition of the play, Stanley wore striped trousers and a black jacket, and carries a bowler hat:

He (McCann) ushers in STANLEY, who is dressed in striped trousers, black jacket, and white collar. He carries a bowler hat in one hand. . . . (53)

Such appearance suggests his funeral. "The revised edition," on the contrary, Charles A. Carpenter argues, "changes Stanley's image into a duplicate of Goldberg's" (400), resurrecting him as a conformist who wears a dark suit.

He ushers in STANLEY, who is dressed in a dark well cut suit and white collar. He holds his broken glasses in his hand. (91)

So, in the second inquisition scene after his appearance, Goldberg and McCann force him

to assume a social conformist self.

- GOLDBERG. From now on, we'll be the hub of your wheel.
MCCANN. We'll renew your season ticket.
GOLDBERG. We'll take tuppence off your morning tea.
MCCANN. We'll give you a discount on all inflammable goods.
GOLDBERG. We'll watch over you.
MCCANN. Advise you.
GOLDBERG. Give you proper care and treatment.
MCCANN. Let you use the club bar.
GOLDBERG. Keep a table reserved. (92-93)

As they say, "You'll be re-orientated," "You'll be adjusted" (93), and "You'll be integrated" (94), Stanley is forced to assume social identities such as a "success" (93), "magnate," "statesman" (94), a different socially conformed self from the original autonomous and independent one. It goes without saying that such a "new man" (91) is a puppet manipulated by the status quo or its obedient instrument. This is confirmed by Stanley's remaining silent up to the end except emitting "sounds from the throat" ("Uh-gug... uh-gug... eeehhh-gag... Caahh... caahh" 94), though Goldberg pretends to take care of him, saying to Petey, "We're are taking him to Monty" (95) because he suffered a "Nervous breakdown" (81) at the party. In this reading, Stanley is, as it were, dead as an individual, even if he is to be socially 'integrated.' Gale agrees to this destiny of Stanley: "He has been reduced to the level of a cipher - a nonthinking, nonreacting member of a smoothly mechanistic society in his neat, conservative dress..." (54-55).

3

Monty's institution seems to be not a hospital but a place where Stanley is transformed substantially into a hypothetical conformist self which Goldberg thrust him on by way of disguise. Robert Gordon refers to it as "a state mental sanitarium of the kind used by totalitarian governments to carry out behavior modification treatment on dissidents" (42). Monty's institution might have a Nazi background. As Goldberg says to Stanley, "You'll be integrated" (95), which means his forced assuming of a new conformist self, the word 'integration' is said to mean the forced conformity to the Nazi regime. Charles Grimes argues

Goldberg says "you'll be integrated" (84), reusing a word featured in Nazi oppression against those people (not only Jews) deemed antisocial who needed to be "integrated"

back into productive society. . . . The process by which the Nazis came to regulate and coordinate all dimensions of human activity (political, social, economic, philosophical, artistic, legal) in accordance with Hitler's vision was called Gleichschaltung, literally "parallel switching," often translated as "integration." This system of forced conformity symbolizes in Pinter's political imagination the violent depersonalization of which society is always capable. (41-42)

Whether Goldberg and McCann are agents of the Gestapo or not, their aim was certainly to depersonalize Stanley or rob of him the autonomous liberal self, and install the conformist one instead. But did they succeed in it completely?

Petey who feels Stanley's danger in his being taken to Monty risks stopping their abduction of him ("Leave him alone!" 95). But, being threatened with his own abduction ("Come with us to Monty. There's plenty of rooms in the car" 96), he shouts, "Stan, don't let them tell you what to do!" (96). He encourages him neither to lose your own autonomous self, nor to submit to their despotic vision. He is sure that such original liberal self remains in him, even if he cannot utter words at all.

His conviction of it would be backed up by the voiceless Stanley's sporadic physical resistance to them. We can witness such violence of resistance in his kicking Goldberg after the first inquisition to him in Act II.

GOLDBERG. . . . There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour!

Silence. . . he is crouched in the chair. He looks up slowly and kicks GOLDBERG in the stomach. (62)

The greatest bodily defiance would be perceived in his defecating in front of them. At the end of the second inquisition in which Stanley's "integration" is foretold, Goldberg and McCann ask him again and again about this future, "What's your opinion, sir? Of this prospect, sir?" (94) or "What do you say, Stan?" (95). Stage directions, during their persistent repetition of the question, show his bodily motions as follows:

He draws a long breath which shudders down his body. He concentrates.

.

His head lowers, his chin draws into his chests, he crouches. (94)

.

STANLEY's body shudders, relaxes, his head drops, he becomes still again, stooped. (95)

Carpenter construes a chain of these movements of his parts as "the motions of defecating, baby fashion" (400), and asserts that "Stanley's profanity is his last rebellious gesture" (400). Furthermore, as for "Caahh... caahh" (95) emitted from him then, he points out that "In many countries, 'caca' (from the Greek root kakka-) is 'shit' in little boy's language" (400). Stanley is insulting them here. Pinter admits later that Petey's line to Stanley is one of resistance, saying to Mel Gussow, "Petey says, 'Stan, don't let them tell you what to do.' I've lived that line all my damn life" (Gussow 71). Pinter himself was an unyielding activist late in his life, as is well known⁵.

Although Stanley shows physically that the autonomous self is still existent in him, there is much probability that he is to be transformed into a conformist subject submissive to the Establishment, whether it is one of totalitarianism like the Nazi regime, or one of "the reified, bureaucratized order of advanced capitalism" (Silverstein 47). After all, in the context of realism, it can be affirmed, that Pinter displays the ambiguity of Stanley's self and his destiny.

4

Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane argue that Modernism is "the art consequent on Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty principle', and say further

It is the art consequent on the dis-establishing of... conventional notions of causality, on the destruction of traditional notions of the wholeness of individual character, on the linguistic chaos that ensues... when all realities have become subjective fictions. (27)

As mentioned earlier, this play has a view of double awareness, and crosses "a spectrum of realism and modernism." So seeing it from a viewpoint of modernism, we are aware of some devices in it by which we suspect that realities can be reduced to fictions. Up to the moment when two visitors appear, we perceive domestic realism in the dialogues between three persons in the seaside boardinghouse and the action of the play, which center on a pseudo mother-son-lover relation between Meg and Stanley. The conversation starts between Meg and her husband Petey on his breakfast ("MEG: Here's your cornflakes... Are they nice?/ PETEY: Very nice" 19), and the newspaper he is reading ("What are you reading?" "Someone's just had a baby" 21), and when Meg asks, "Is Stanley up yet?" (20), the action develops toward the relation between her and Stanley. Meg, who goes upstairs to fetch him, calls him "Stan! Stanny!" in a term of endearment (23), mothering him, and when Stanley who enters the living-room and criticizes the fried bread as "Succulent" (27) sarcastically,

she interprets the word sexually ("You shouldn't say that word to a married woman" 27), betraying her love to him.

But with the appearance of Goldberg and McCann, R. Knowles says that "theatricality compromises realism" (32) because "a version of the music hall cross-talk act is introduced, with Goldberg as the articulate, outlandish stage Jew and McCann the mournful Irish stooge" (32).

MCCANN. Is this it?
GOLDBERG. This is it.
MCCANN. Are you sure?
GOLDBERG. Sure I'm sure. (37)

As in *The Dumb Waiter* (1957), the gangster movie echoes are also heard in the two visitors, who seem to be hit men whose aim is to pursue and kill Stanley, a target. Such a sudden mixing of other genres, comedy or thriller in the context of realism may be considered as the Brechtian effect of alienation (*Verfremdungseffekt*) which reduces reality to illusion or fiction. This consideration from modernism leads us to doubt the existence of the autonomous unified self in Stanley. Is a supreme pianist, Stanley with unique touch, genuine?

It is well known that modernist writers wrote of "a vanishing self, an incoherent self, a decentralized self, of a self that possibly did not even exist" (Baumer 420). Man is not considered as a unified person but as "a concatenation of split units" (Behera 51). When we see Stanley in this modernist view, we suspect that the image of himself as an "absolute unique" pianist (32) might be not essential but fictitious. Silverstein considers it as something like an illusion reflected in the mirror stage of Lacan. According to him,

... the "self," rather than some core of being inhering within the subject, issues from the Other. If we ask what defines Stanley's identity as pianist, the answer is not his "unique touch," but the Other, whose gaze and actions become a mirror in which Stanley sees reflected his "essence": (29)

In Stanley's case, the Other is the audience of his concert at Lower Edmonton. Stanley narrates to Meg his remembrance of it: "I had a unique touch. Absolutely unique. They came up to me. They came up to me and said they were grateful" (32-33). The self from the Other or the fictitious self in Stanley may be called the alienation of the subject because "Stanley's definition of identity in terms of an (illusory) 'absolutely unique' essence confines him in 'the armour of an alienating identity,' ... alienating to the extent that it grounds itself in an image and bars him from perceiving his truth" (Silverstein 30).

Whether Stanley's original self is the self issuing from the Other or the alienated one, it has a possibility of fictitiousness. If so, the kind of disguise which is related to him in the play proves to be like L. Davies' definition, according to which disguise suggests that "personal identity is not conceived as essentially or originally present." Though he uses disguise in spying on Goldbergs and McCann as seen above, each of the two selves or identities produced by disguise turns illusory. The absolutely unique pianist as his native self is also fictitious at the same time his assumed self as sociable man or manager of the house by disguise is so.

This argument urges us to infer that Stanley's disguise itself is a symbol of the fictitiousness of his whole self. If so, his narrative of piano concert might be a lie. As Robert Gordon says that "he appears to be pretending to Meg that he has been offered a world tour as a concert pianist" (33), his narrative has a possibility of a red herring to avoid a topic of the two visitors. For Stanley has a chance to run away from the authorities, disguising himself as a pianist. Richard Knowles puts a contemporary topical event behind this possibility. According to him, Irish Republican Army (IRA) activity was prevalent in England after the war. The leader "John Stephenson" was using an assumed name as "Sean Stephenson" or other aliases (36). It means he used disguise. He argues about the influence of it to Stanley

Pinter wrote the play in 1957 with Stanley in mind as having arrived sometime in 1955-56, directly in the aftermath of the Arborfield raid when many IRA men were known to have fled. (37)

Stanley, too, has the alias of Joe Soap. When Goldberg asks him, "Why did you change your name? and "What's your name now?", he answers, "Joe Soap" (60). He might have fled and lied hidden in Meg's house, and been discovered by the agents. Anyway Stanley's self is judged to be ambiguous.

5

Both Goldberg's identity and McCann's identity are ambiguous. While they seem to be the realistic agents of the authorities who pursue Stanley, these threatening strangers are "also coded as stock comedic gangsters, Jewish and Irish" as Begley says (43). Their representation as types would substantiate that an idea of the self as construct or fiction is adopted there. They also might reflect the modernist idea of the self.

Besides such an aspect, they might have another phase, one of the double of Stanley. Knowles points out it, saying that "... Pinter's poem of 1958, 'A view of the Party,' offers an expressionist perspective - 'The thought that Goldberg was / Sat in the center of the room'⁶

- as if the intruders are objectifications of Stanley's mind" (33). Not only Knowles but also Lois G. Gordon regards them as the projections of Stanley's interior. Admitting the complexity of their function, he contends that "they are less external forces - satanic messengers from the void or malign universe - than projections of Stanley's guilt, driving and uncompromising internal furies" (27). Although he recognizes their function as projections of Stanley's mind from the viewpoint of Stanley as the Oedipal son, I see them as the doubles of Stanley's self or the parts of his broken self from the modernist viewpoint. In modernism, Esslin argues

Expressionist drama is full of Doppelganger figures, characters which are merely aspects of the hero's personality which have split off and have taken on an independent existence. . . . ("Modernist" 534)

Let's look at the examples. The first inquisition scene dramatizes what the disintegration of Stanley's self is like, and displays the completely fractured self at the end in the form of its screaming with inarticulate words. And then the succeeding party scene reflects the externalization of the split self in them. There Goldberg seduces Lulu sexually ("Lulu, you're a big bouncy girl. Come and sit on my lap"68) and she accepts it ("I've always liked older men" 70). But in the context of modernism or expressionism, the sexual Goldberg is considered to reflect the voluptuary part of Stanley's self as his double. For the lustful element has been lurking in Stanley. When Lulu allured him to go outside ("Come out and get a bit of air. . ." 36) in Act I, he first agreed to it ("How would you like to go away with me?"), but finally refused it ("I can't at the moment") to her scorn ("You're a bit of a washout, aren't you?" 36). But later at end of the party, Stanley's lust gushes out suddenly when he attacks her, and tries to rape her triumphantly

LULU is lying spread-eagled on the table, STANLEY bent over her. STANLEY, as soon as the torchlight hits him, begins to giggle. (75)

As for the other double McCann, he is liable to be violent. The tendency is discernible early in his irritation at and his order to Stanley ("Mind it. Leave it" 49) when Stanley casually "picks up a strip of paper" (49) which McCann tore from a sheet of newspaper, and we witness, in the party scene, the eruption of his violence when he "breaks STANLEY'S glasses, snapping the frames" (73), and "picks up the drum and places it sideways in STANLEY'S path" so that he "falls over with his foot caught in it" (73). The drum which put Stanley into a danger symbolizes Stanley's tendency of violence, too. Stanley, when he was given the drum as a birthday present by Meg, beat it in return before her. At first he was beating it

regularly, but gradually his beating became more and more "erratic, uncontrolled," he "banging the drum, his face and the drumbeat... savage and possessed" to Meg's "dismay" (46). This savage way of his beating the drum suggests the latency of violence in him. Through the drum McCann also turns out to be the double of Stanley. For the end of the party unfolds Stanley's violence in his strangling Meg with his foot thrust into the drum.

He begins to move towards MEG, dragging the drum on his foot... His hands move towards her and they reach her throat. He begins to strangle her. (73-74)

6

In the context of the modernist reading, from the self's issuing from the Other, Stanley's assumption of disguise and the existence of his doubles, Stanley's self has proved to be disintegrated and therefore fictitious by the end of his birthday party. If so, in this perspective, how can we see the end or destiny of Stanley when he wears a dark well cut suit and white collar to be taken to Monty?

Though Silverstein recognizes Stanley's integration or re-formation in his clothing, that self doesn't mean the autonomous unified one, but the constructed or fictitious self. His rebirth means "his assumption of an identity created by and in the image of the omnipotent Other" (Silverstein 35). "In the mirror of Goldberg and McCann's language," Silverstein contends, "Stanley will see his subjectivity 'through the eyes of the other,' through the Other's codes and categories of evaluation" (37): "His integration is the 'integration within the reified, bureaucratized order of advanced capitalism" (47). Goldberg functions not only as Stanley's double but also as the Other in the play.

Advanced capitalism can also be called "late capitalism", in which we find "the so-called death of the subject, or, more exactly, the fragmented and schizophrenic decentering and dispersion of this last" (F. Jameson 413). As mentioned above, the first edition of the play shows the dead Stanley with the funeral clothes on. The modernist reading would recognize this schizophrenic dispersion of self in the fictitiously integrated Stanley at the end. And the reading would tell that the world where this self lives is existentially absurd. Though Dobretz contends about Len in *The Dwarfs* (1960) that "The Other is able to enter Len at will, ... to deprive him of his kingdom, of his room, of his identity, to reduce him to the state of schizophrenia or loss of Self..." (320), the same is true of Stanley. The Other or Goldberg invaded his self, destroyed it, and reduced it to schizophrenia, although Goldberg describes Stanley's final mental condition as "Nervous breakdown" (81).

Goldberg as the Other is a kind of symbol of the world, too, since he is an agent of the external power or the world. The world surrounding Stanley robs him of words or meaning.

It is the world like that of Macbeth (1605-06), in which a tale is "Told by an idiot" (schizophrenia), "full of sound and fury" ("U h-gug. . . , hehhh-gag. . . Cahhh. ." 94), / "Signifying nothing" (5. 5. 26-28). The meaningless and absurd world is threatening to an individual, and making a man feel anxious and alienated because there are no more absolutes like God. Stanley is alienated from all people except Petey since the arrival of the two came. Meg, at first, seems to take care of him as a surrogate mother, but she does no more than live in her own self-delusion selfishly, which results in her self-conceit as "the belle of the ball" (97) even after the party. Since Stanley's birthday party was proposed by Goldberg, her interest has moved completely from Stanley to her party dress ("I'll put on my party dress" [43], "You like my dress?" [63]), or the visitors' praises and flatteries to her ("Madam, you'll look like a tulip" [43], "Beautiful! A beautiful speech, . . . That was a lovely toast" [65]). Alienating Stanley during the party, she is attracted to McCann ("Oh, what a lovely voice" [70]), and being absorbed in her own fantasy world of the past ("My little room was pink. I had a pink carpet and pink curtains, and I had musical boxes all over the room. . . ." [70]).

Ironically it is not only Stanley but also Goldberg who lives in the same waste land. Whereas Goldberg seems to show an impersonal phase as only an instrument of the external power in destroying Stanley, he also reveals a contrary personal aspect, his self's disintegration or impasse, feeling depressed and alienated like Stanley. Just before he takes Stanley to Monty, he says suddenly, "I don't know why, but I feel knocked out. I feel a bit. . . It's uncommon for me" (86). It is because he has recognized the absurdity of the world.

GOLDBERG.

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

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

Because I BELIEVE THAT THE WORLD... (Lost.) (88)

Goldberg said earlier that "We all wander on our tod through this world. It's a lonely pillow to kip on" (66).

This sudden "Nervous breakdown" (81) of his, which he himself ascribes to Stanley as his symptom earlier, impresses on us that the drama foretells the same destiny of Goldberg as Stanley's one. His being double of Stanley implies this, too. In the age of the absurd late capitalism, a man is destined to be "knocked out" and reduced to schizophrenia, and thereafter he is taken to Monty so that he may be a new submissive instrument of the external power or the world. The world in the twentieth century is one produced subjectively and cruelly. Husserl and Heidegger argue that the world is reconstructed by the human mind or consciousness while an absurdist, Esslin says "the twentieth century world is one of organized cruelty on a large scale" (Harold 30). If the cruel world is reconstructed subjectively,

the victimizer can be a victim in turn. This possibility for Goldberg will be illuminated in the last scene of *The Dumb Waiter*⁷.

Thus in the modernist context *The Birthday Party* shows the self's fictitiousness, and a miserable state of an individual's destiny. But as the context of realism implies the possibility of the autonomous self and the hero's resistance, too, it can be nevertheless concluded that the play as a whole does not negate completely "a human subject unified enough to embark on significantly transformative action" (Eagleton 16), only confirming "the schizoid, disheveled subject" (16) and his destruction, but displays the ambiguity of the self and his destiny. This could be what Pinter argued about this play in his Nobel lecture, "Art, Truth, and Politics" (2005) :

In my play *The Birthday Party* I think I allow a whole range of options to operate in a dense force of possibility before finally focusing on an act of subjugation.

(Various Voices 287-88)

The possibility of Stanley's resistance to the establishment, even if it is doubtful, will be realized in Luth's opposition to Lenny and Max through disguise in *The Homecoming* (1964).

Notes

1. In 1951, 1952 and 1953, Pinter played Charles the Wrestler in *As You Like It*, Horatio in *Hamlet*, Edgar and Edmund in *King Lear*, Cassio and Iago in *Othello*, Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, Hortensio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Cf. Thompson 127-78
2. Hamlet, who heard from his father's ghost his murder by Claudius, decides to "put an antic disposition on" (*Hamlet* 1.5.180) so that he may spy on Claudius and confirm the ghost's disclosure. M.C. Bradbrook includes Hamlet's pretending to be a madman in disguise: "Disguise ranges from the simple fun of the quick-change artist. . . to the antic disposition of Edgar or Hamlet. . . it may be better translated for the modern age by such terms as 'alternating personality'" (160).
3. In *Magnificence*, "Counterfeit Countenance becomes Good Demeanance, Crafty Conveyance becomes Sure Surveyance, Courtly Abusion becomes Lusty Pleasure and Cloaked Collusion becomes Sober Sadness" (Bradbrook 161). In the list of "The partes and names of the plaiers" of *Respublica*, "Avarice" is written as "all ias policie the vice of the plaie" (*Respublica* 1).
4. Goldberg says that his mother and wife called him "Simey" (53, 69) while "My father said to me, Benny, Benny, . . ." (88). As McCann says to his surprise, "I thought your name was Nat" (53), Nat might be an assumed name which is used when he works. For the name of Nat derives from Natham. Bernard Dukore argues

As Natham the prophet, commanded directly by God, rebuked King David for having sinned against the Lord, and brought him back to the paths of righteousness, so does Nat, commanded directly by his organization, bring Stanley back to the paths of conformity.

(52)

Goldberg, who assumes "the disguise of the serpent," might have an alias unlike Iago, but like the vices in *Magnificence*.

5. Pinter continued to attack US foreign policy described as 'low intensity conflict' which means that you establish a malignant growth and watch the gangrene bloom. When the populace has been subdued... and your own friends, the military and the great corporations, sit comfortably in power, you go before the camera and say that democracy has prevailed. (Various Voices 291)
6. The original note number of this quotation is 9, whose quotation is from *Collected Poems and Prose* (London: Faber, 1991), 46.
7. The two killers, Ben and Gus are waiting for an instruction for the next target from their boss, Wilson, in some basement room. Wilson who doesn't appear on the stage at all seems to symbolizes some external power while two men his instruments. After Gus with the revolver in its holster goes out to drink water, Ben receives an unidentified order through the tube, and replies "Sure we're ready" (164). When the "door right opens sharply" after that, and Ben "turns, his revolver levelled at the door," it is Gus "stripped of ... revolver" (165) who appears. "They stare each other" (165), and the curtain falls. This final symmetrical tableau shows that a victimizer Gus will become a victim someday, because in the play the "two appear halves of the whole rather than separate... coherent entities" (88) as Begley says.

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