

The challenge of life and identity: Game theory and Pinter's dramatic menace

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Abstract

The detection of the application of Game theory, a method of applied mathematics, has been tried out with different topics and has attracted the view of many researchers. Its application to literary genres proves to be highly novel and interesting. Characterization as the major element of the dramatic genre has proved to lend itself to this theory. If one detects literary materials as a series of decisions in which each character's decision or action relies on the previous thoughts and wishes of others, it sounds to be a game, based on the formal game-theory introduction. Hence, implausible decisions or deeds prove to be rational in the course of a game. The current study has tried to appraise Pinter's plays, Birthday Party and Caretaker, in light of the game theory and model them in trees and matrices. These plays prove to be nonzero-sum Games in which the characters' dominant strategies are associated with Nash Equilibrium, none of the characters is a winner at the end, and they sound to be involved in the absurd and endless game of life controlled by invisibly menacing systems and forces.

Keywords: game theory, literature, Pinter, plays, game tree model, characterization
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1 Introduction

Interdisciplinary research has received profound attention recently. Game theory has been applied to economic problems, but its applications in psychology, sociology, politics, warfare, biology, and many other fields develops every day. Among the many interdisciplinary studies, the application of game theory to literature and its genres proves novel and interesting. This has appraised game theory as a framework and instrument for literary analysts to have a mathematical outlook of the elements of literature genres.

As De Ley [6] has asserted the application of mathematical game theory to literature is a "neglected field". One of the earlier works in the field of mathematical game theory to literature is Brams' Biblical Game, a book published in 1980. Brams [3, 4] deals with the applications of game theory to novels, short stories, plays, opera librettos, and narrative poem. In another study, he revisits Bible narratives based on game theory and strategic interpretation. He argues that, "the reader gains not just new insights into the actions of certain literary and historical characters but also a larger strategic perspective on the choices that make us human". As a pioneer in the application of game theory to literature, hinging on game theory, he has tried to clarify the moves, actions, and tricks made by the characters in stories. This theory has proved to be useful in illuminating the characters' strategic choices by relating or linking the

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motives and actions in the plot closely. Turocy and von Stengel [23] have defined game theory as a formal study of decision-making where several players must make choices that potentially affect the interests of other players. Howard [13] deals with game theory, drama theory, and their relationship as well as the way they can be interpreted. Mozafari and Eghbal [12] have applied game theory to the works of Shakespeare. They assert that Shakespeare's "tragedies are nonzero-sum Games and there are no winners at the end". In this study, first main characters' dilemma, vicious thoughts, actions, and preferences are introduced. Thereafter, the players' options and the outcomes of each different possible combination of their choices, considering the main plot, are modeled in trees and matrices to detect the possible relationships and the probable outcome of their actions for interpretation. Extracts from the plays are provided to shed more light on the real game like nature of the characters' actions and thoughts. In this research, two of Pinter's main plays namely Birthday Party and Caretaker are scrutinized from the viewpoint of game theory; this puts forward a new layer of understanding the play, its theme, and characterization which proves promising for the analysis of dramatic works. Accordingly, "a psychological game-theoretic approach" [14] is deployed to explain the choices the characters make and achieve a new understanding of Pinter's plays as the research goals via the framework of game theory.

2 Game Theory and Pinter's plays

2.1 Birthday Party

Harold Pinter has authored plays which voice both elements of absurd and menace. In Birthday Party, Stanley a young man has ended up in a lodging house at the beach and is leading his life in sheer luxury and absurdity. He has formed a good human relationship with the landlord and the lady as well as a young woman called Lulu with whom he is more affectionately attracted. His previous identity is anonymous and has introduced himself as a great musician. In his perfect remote life, he has detached himself from the city and the devilish deeds of the city dwellers. All of a sudden and out of the blue, he is intruded by two vagrants, system missionaries or whatever title one may assign on them. They found him in a good family condition; they introduce themselves as the system officers who are on a mission to take him back to the authorities for forging his real identity. On this line, he is tortured by these two intruders called Goldberg and McCann. To drive him to the ultimate threshold of psychological panic and threat, they organize a birthday party for him and treat him badly. Their vicious thoughts and deeds are crystalized in the paradoxical birthday party which in reality has been held to drive him out of the lodging house and throw him out to the corner in the campaign of using that condition. The vagrant's own identity is under perfect suspicion and there is no body to detect and discover their real identities.

They hurl at him a host of confusing questions regarding his identity and his presence in this lodging house. They make arrangement to cut his friendship with the house dwellers with whom Stanley has made affective fulfillment.

The so-called detectives realize his Achilles hills and do their best to throw him out in the game of existence and try to put an end to his final being by depriving him of his very identity in public in front of other members of the lodging house and at the very deep part of his mind. The victim tries to defeat them back but he cannot outperform them; he is being driven to the corner by Goldberg and McCann due to his own weak belief in his identity and being as well as the in- tumult-state of the society in which he is living. The following matrixes illustrate their relationships in the games of their lives.

		Intruders	
		McCann Menace	Goldberg Do not Menace
Stanley	Manage	4, 2	3, 2
	Do not manage	1, 3	1, 3

Figure 1: Stanley vs. Intruders matrix where $(x, y) = (\text{Stanley}, \text{Intruders})$, 4=Best, 3=Next Best, 2= Next Worst, 1=Worst

The best outcome for Stanley would be the capability to manage the menace, the second best would be when he has the managing power and there is no menace, the worst outcome for him would be when he cannot manage and

there is menace. The seemingly victorious intruders will prove to be the victims of a bigger system power in the next matrix. The chain relationship, their roles, and their power is successively changed and altered.

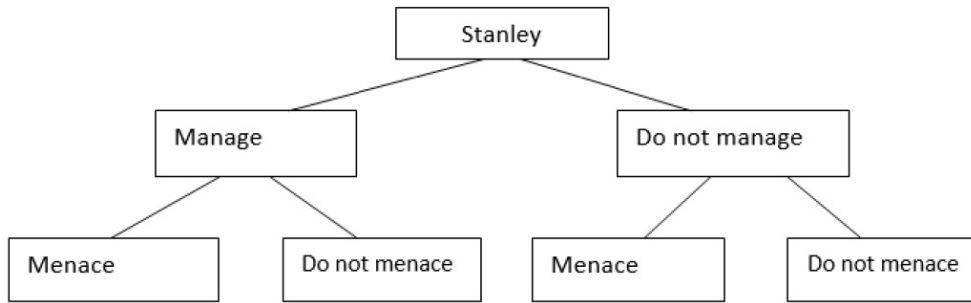


Figure 2: Game Tree of Stanley vs. Intruders

		McCann	
		Compromise	Do not compromise
Cooperate Goldberg		2, 1	2, 3
	Do not cooperate	4, 1	3, 4

Figure 3: Goldberg vs. McCann matrix where (x, y)=(Goldberg, McCann), 4=Best, 3=Next Best, 2= Next Worst, 1=Worst

The best outcome for Goldberg is to act freely. He wishes not to cooperate and not to compromise to McCann companionship. The worst one would be to cooperate and compromise. Indeed, in these extremes, they both are in the same boat.

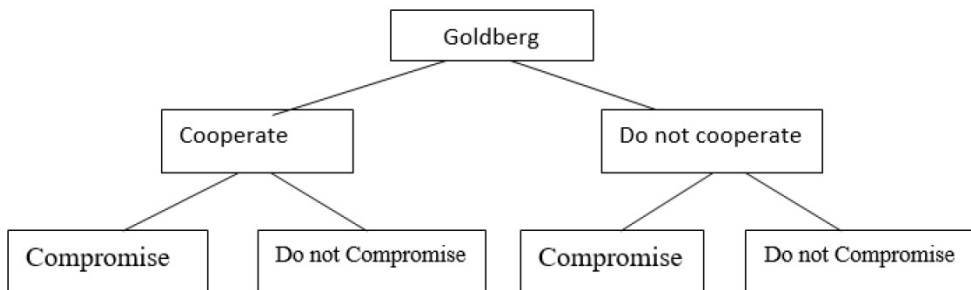


Figure 4: Game Tree of Goldberg vs. McCann

			Intruders	
			McCann Possess	Goldberg Do not possess
Stanley	Succumb		1, 3	2, 1
	Do not succumb		4, 3	3, 1

Figure 5: Stanley vs. Intruders matrix where (x, y) = (Stanley, Intruders), 4=Best, 3=Next Best, 2= Next Worst, 1=Worst

In the final game of existence and identity, the best chance for Stanley is not to succumb to the menace of intruders, possess his lodging house, and maintain the forged identity under which he is leading his life. The worst one for him would be to succumb and lose his possession of his current life condition.

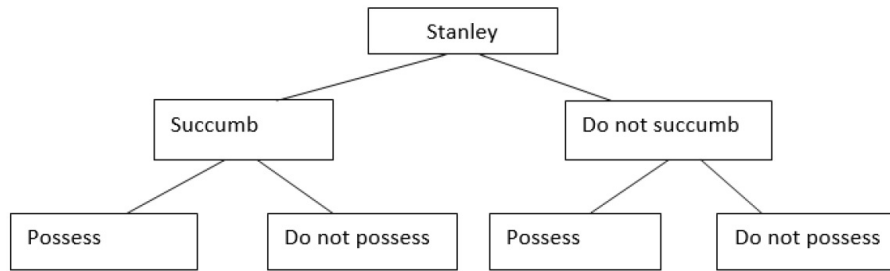


Figure 6: Game Tree of Stanley vs. Intruders

2.2 Menace in birthday party

Birthday party for embodying the comic and threatening mood has been labelled as "comedy of menace". "Coined by David Compton, who has used the term for his collection of one-act plays, the expulsion became associated with Pinter's early plays since Irving Warble applied it in reference to the Birthday Party in a critical article in the Magazine Encore" [15]. The very title is ambiguous as it incorporates both comical and terrorizing elements. This play is mainly concerned with the depiction of those who possess power and those who try to achieve or maintain their current status in the game of existence. Upon scrutiny, one can see that most of "Pinter's plays begin comically but turn to physical, psychological, or potential violence-sometimes, in varying sequences, to all three" [7] which turn out to be the offshoot of the existential game of the characters. In this play, the very name 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. 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 a remote lodging house while he is supposed to be leading a luxurious life. What kind of menace may have given rise to his imprisonment? Menace may show up in different ways as asserted. Each one is manifested in its own special way. In mental type of menace, the highest in abstraction, menace resides in the mind where the individual defines his self; the failure to do so is the extreme level this menacing feeling can get to. The first two in their severe forms can proceed and, in turn, give rise to the third type culminating in the existential malady of Stanley as a paradigm of modern man which Pinter has tried to portray in a micro-level in the Birthday Party. To him fear of menace "may suggest the universal trauma of man in the universe" [7].

He spends most of his time inside a boarding house at the beach, outside of which is full of mysteries and terror. As long as he is here, he feels secure as if temporarily he has escaped from an imminent danger which is open to diverse interpretations. His safe heaven," menaced by an intrusion from the cold outside world" [8] is finally shattered by the unexpected intrusion of the two strangers Goldberg and McCann. In this play one can detect "the element of uncertainty about the motivation of the characters, their background, and their very identity" [8]. This feature proves to be the initiating element of game theory which is theoretically noticeable in Pinter's work.

Seemingly, the intruders know everything about Stanley which remains a surmise, but they initially reveal nothing about themselves except revealing some vague references to the organization on its behalf they are working. The rules of the game of Stanley's life are not clear and are illusive. The attitudes of the players about their counterparts' intentions remains elusive as what happens in Pinter's play; the ambiguity about the intruders, their intentions, and their mission remains elusive as "ambiguity generates fear and terror" [20]. Stanley is psychologically overwhelmed by the sense of the imminent menace; that is why on the unexpected arrival of the two strangers, he is driven into a state panic to death. The illustrative extracts show the real act of the characters in the game designed by Pinter in Birthday Party.

Stanley: Who are they?

Meg: I don't know.

Stanley: Did he [Petty] tell you their names?

Meg: No.

Stanley: (pacing the room). Here? They wanted to come here?

Meg: Yes, they did. (She takes the curlers out of her chair.)

Stanley: Why?

Meg: This house is on the list.

Stanley: But who are they? [Birthday Party, henceforth, BP 14]

Stanley, maybe, in his mind, has not been able to reside the norms and has been discarded as a social outcast ending up in a lodging house. This may interpersonally stand for his impotency at the beginning of the play to respond to maternal love of Meg and gentle affection of Lulu as his opposite gender players in the social and familial game of life.

His identity, job, and family background are nebulous; this never-if-ever-has-been pianist has nothing upon which he himself can build a clear vision of his past. Based on his never-proven-assumed identity, he has managed to find a shelter for himself. In his depth of mind, he is suspicious of every threat that deprives him of this. But "the threat is somehow beyond articulation-literary unspeakable" [5]. This unfathomable nature of menace in the existence of a nameless authority poses the character mental menace because "in a universe devoid of meaning and dominated by anxieties and fears, characters fight to defend themselves from intruders and to preserve autonomy" [22].

Stanley succumbs to this chaos as there had already been confusion and polarity in his mind regarding his sense of self. The presence of the never-proven mission and identity of the emissaries ignites this already in-tumult psyche of Stanley.

McCann: This job. . . , is it going to be like anything we have done before?

Goldberg: The main issue is a particular issue and quiet distinct from your previous work... . [BP 21]

His very awareness of his guilty identity as a premise on the one hand, or his currently innocent, selfless assumed identity on the other hand, both have exposed him to danger and menace. Moreover, his previous familiarity with the intruders or his sheer lack of information has left as much susceptible to danger and menace as the first assumption. One simple justification for this can be the fact that "menace depends on ignorance; the terror of it stems from the vagueness of the threat" [5]; this bibulous state of threat add to the unpredictability of the output of this dramatic game.

The detection of the origin of this panic drives the game to move ahead; this "sort of corporate threat" [11], in case of Stanley, is mainly due to his ignorance of the identity of his tormentors and their unknown role in the game of his life.

McCann: Where are you going?

Stanley: I want to go out.

McCann: Why don't you stay here?

Stanley moves away, to the right of the table.

Staley: So, you're down here on a holiday?

McCann: A short one? (Stanley picks up a strip of paper. McCann moves in.)

Stanley: What is it?

McCann: Mind it. Leave it.

Stanley: I've got a feeling we've met before.

McCann: No, we haven't. [BP 33] Stanley tries to dominate the intruders and establish himself the prestige of a long-term resident of the boarding house, on the one hand, and conceal information about his identity by his initial hurling of questions at them, on the other hand.

Stanley: You're here on a short stay?

McCann: That's right.

Stanley: You'll find it bracing.

McCann: Do you find it bracing? [BP 33].

The intruders, on their arrival, catch on Meg's word and arrange a birthday party for Stanley which is the beginning of the game. He resists and denies his birthday knowing that his personal territory is in danger. The party leads to a fight in which Stanley faces physical as well as psychological menace in the unwanted, disgusting birthday party the intruders arranged for him. This is the beginning ceremony for bringing him under control and forging his identity which can be construed as the game of identity and existence. He tries to conceal the truth about his birthday party but bears no practical fruits." It isn't my birthday [...] It's not till the next month" [BP 35]. The game is controlled

by other characters on the line of capturing the playwright's intended theme.

In the course of the play, he is assaulted, driven to the corner to the throw him out of the ring, and as his complete physical torture is deprived of his glasses to become totally submissive. His present identity is violated and gradually succumbs to the identity they want to assign him.

Goldberg: What can you see without your glasses?

Stanley: Nothing.

Goldberg; Take off his glasses.

McCann: Snatches his glasses and as Stanley rises, reaching for them, takes his chair downstage center, below the table, Stanley stumbling as he follows. Stanley clutches the chair and stays bent over it [BP 43].

By removing his glasses, he becomes physically half-handicapped and unable to counteract the intruders. He gets submissive and is left into an irretrievable state of blindness. In the game process of violation of his identity, they try to sustain his impotency by preventing Petty, the lodging house owner, from mending his glasses. "Sellotape? No, no, that's all right, Mr. Boles. I'll keep him quiet for the time being; keep his mind off other things" [BP 68]. On the line of exposing him to psychological threat, the intruders plan a game, Blind man's bluff, with Stanley by switching off the lights and shining a torch on Stanley. By losing his insight, he gradually loses his view of himself as an individual as he "has been reduced to a broken, possibly blind, gibbering shell of his former self" [20].

He is also accused of every crime including racial, national, and personal ones from picking his nose to killing his wife depriving him psychologically of his normal state of mind as it has been designed by the game designers and Pinter as the game designer of the acts of the play.

Goldberg: When did you last wash up a cup?

Stanley: The Christmas before last. [...]

McCann: Why did you leave the organization? [...]

McCann: You betrayed the organization. [...]

McCann: He's killed his wife! [...]

McCann: You throttled her.

Goldberg. With arsenic.

McCann: Where's your mum? [...]

Stanley: In the sanatorium.

Goldberg. Why did you never get married?

McCann: She was waiting at the porch.

Goldberg. You skedaddled from the wedding. [...]

Goldberg: You stink of sin [BP 42-43].

They finally target his mental sense of his self. What becomes clear after the intruders' confessions in their own privacy is the fact that they are at the mercy of their own misery on the one hand, or in case they are right at the mercy of a cruel system in both cases they are in the same boat as Stanley. This stands for the fact that both Stanley and the intruders have come up with the "recognition of one's sinful individuality, the dissolution of reason, blindness, silence, and finally, the true ecstasy of true self-lessness" [2] as the basic assumptions of this dramatic game.

As Stanley is taken away, Petty as the game coach "says one of the most important lines I have ever written. 'Stan, don't let them tell you what to do.' I've lived that line all my damn life. Never more than now" [10].

This aesthetically dramatic expression in the game of existence has proved to be core of man's existential obsession as it becomes obviously clear in case of the intruders' wishes and suppressions that can be noticeable in Goldberg's words.

Goldberg (interrupting): I don't know why, but I feel knocked out. I feel a bit. It's uncommon for me. You know what? I've never lost a tooth. Not since the day I was born. Nothing's changed. (He gets up.) That's why I've reached my position, McCann. Because I've always been as fit as a fiddle. All my life I've said the same. Play up, play up, and play the game. Honor thy father and thy mother. Follow the line, the line, McCann, and you can't go wrong. What do you think, I'm a self-made man? No! I sat where I was told to sit. I kept my eye on the ball. School? Don't talk to me about school. Top in all subjects. And for what? Because I'm telling you, I'm telling you, follow

my line? Follow my mental? Learn by heart. Never write down a thing. No. And don’t go too near the water. And you’ll find—that what I say is true. Because I believe that the world (Vacant.) ... Because I believe that the world. (Desperate) Because I Believe That the World (Lost). [BP 79-80]

As it was supported by the clues and extracts, what the matrices and the game trees revealed indicate this fact that all the characters’ existence and identity is loose and they are all at the mercy of a bigger system power. According to Nash Equilibrium, they all neutralize each other and no winner is left at the end.

2.3 The caretaker

In the majority of the works of Harold Pinter, a sort of dominant theme of social orientation is prevalent. They serve the purpose of clarifying the obsessions of postmodern man which illuminate the characteristics of postmodern era. Their setting mainly revolves around a room with some dwellers and visitors whose behavior is strange in some way touching upon the newly emerged threats and dilemmas targeting the security, identity, and existence of postmodern man. The theme and mode of presentation of this play also lends itself best to be analyzed via game theory.

The Caretaker was the first major success of Harold Pinter; it has three characters, two brothers, Aston and Mick and a tramp named Davies. Aston who has suffered from mental illness and undergone electric shock treatment, invites Davies into his house after rescuing him when he is about to be beaten up. Mick, a builder and sadistic character, who has difficulty communicating with his brother, appears to resent this intrusion and virtually terrorize Davies. An attempt to gain the support of Mick fails and the play ends with Davies appealing to Aston to be allowed to stay, an appeal that looks doomed to fail. The very beginning act of the play revolves around the game of gaining human relationship which turns the stage scene to a sort of game and playground.

In the Caretaker, too, the image of a room which functions as a refuge soon may be broken into by an intruding outsider who will serve the source of ambiguous menace to the dwellers though the intruders’ entrance may be a little different; this opens up the flames of bitter quarrel of the characters over controlling the game of their existence. To keep their rooms and shelters, they are exposed to threats of different types against which they resist to keep their rooms. They do their best to possess the room to be mentally satisfied but as seen the misery and arduous stages they go through show the futile attempt of the characters.

		House Dwellers (Brothers)	
		Mick Menace	Aston Do not Menace
Davies	Resist	3, 2	4, 3
	Do not resist	1, 2	1, 4

Figure 7: Davies vs. Brothers matrix where (x, y) = (Davies, Brothers), 4=Best, 3=Next Best, 2= Next Worst, 1=Worst

The best outcome for Davies would be to achieve the power to resist menace. The worst one for him is when he cannot resist the menace originated from the society and the house dwellers.

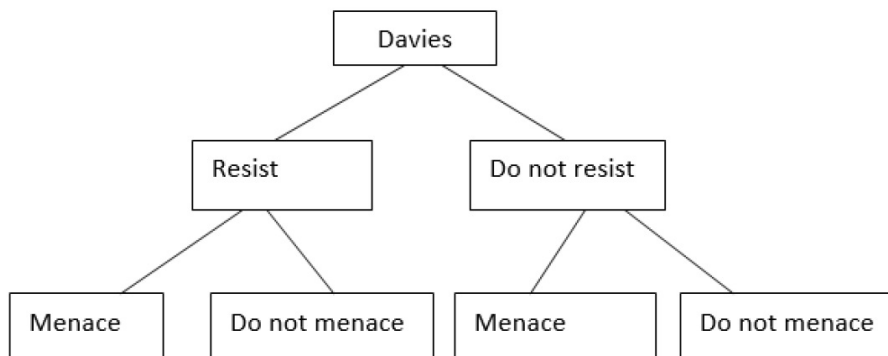


Figure 8: Game Tree of Davies vs. Brothers

		Mick	
		Control	Do not Control
Aston	Obey	4, 3	3, 2
	Do not Obey	2, 3	1, 4

Figure 9: Aston vs. Mick matrix where $(x, y) = (\text{Aston}, \text{Mick})$, 4=Best, 3=Next Best, 2= Next Worst, 1=Worst

The best outcome for Aston due to his mental condition would be to obey the control exercised upon him to remain alive. The worst one would be not to obey and do not let Mick to lead his life; otherwise, he would end up as a social vagrant as Davies. Although they are brothers, they are in an inner mental conflict over the ownership of the house and the way it is run. Mick, the seemingly controller, is controlled by the city roads on which he is driving his car and his ambitions for having a penthouse, is controlled by the social and economic rules. Like Aston, if he does not obey the rules and does not succumb to the control of the society, he has to face the menace of the system and the society.

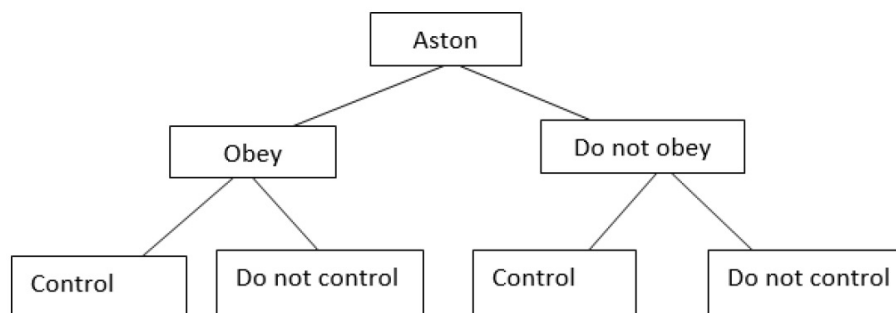


Figure 10: Game Tree of Aston vs. Mick

To them, all outside the room is a world which is demanding on them, which is panic-bearing, and which is unpredictable. The play opens when "Mick is alone in the room, sitting on the bed [...] A door bangs. Muffled noises are heard [...] they draw nearer and stop. Aston and Davies enter. A stranger, the impending menace, accompanies his brother". "The menace comes from the outside, from the intruder whose arrival unsettles the warm, comfortable world bounded by four walls, and any intrusion can be menacing, because the element of uncertainty and unpredictability the intruder brings with him is in itself menacing" [21]. Initially, Davies has received a great physical menace in that quarrel." Davies: If you hadn't come out and stopped that Scottish git, I'd be inside the hospital now" [Caretaker, Henceforth, CT 42]. The characters experience impending menace demanding on their sense of Identity. The two brothers live their life. These characters" battle for a position on the implicit assumption that maintaining and gaining an advantage is required to gain the love and respect of others and to preserve one's sense of self-worth, superiority and, ultimately, Identity" [20]; this has turned int an invisible and inner bitter game that has obsessed the characters.

Just like the opening of the play, Davies experiences physical assault at the end of the play. "Mick seizes his arm, puts his other hand to his lips, then puts his head to Davies' lips. Davies quietens [...]. Mick holds out a warning finger" [CT 33]. Davies finds himself at the mercy of menace starting and ending in act one with physical assault. Psychologically, he is mistreated frequently in the course of the play by the shoemaker and more often by Mick who hurls at him a host of curses. Mick: You're stinking the place out. You're an old robber, there's no way of getting away from it. You're an old skate. You don't belong in a nice place like this. You're an old barbarian [CT 33].

Davies characterizes "psychological portrayal of individuals trying to create viable relationships with one another in attempts to fulfill the emotional needs which produce a threat to their welfare" [9]. He is an old man, in need of help, deprived of love, and terrified by the terror of loneliness, helplessness, and misery. This old man who is in search of the fulfillment of his needing assigns menace on the peaceful routine life of the two brothers. According to Gale "each is trying to protect that relationship from an outside interference, the third member, which threatens to destroy it by forming a new pairing" [9]. The role each character acts out in this stage game mainly reveals what obsesses their minds and what the playwright desires to depict through their viewpoints.

Davies, due to his rescue from the quarrel by Aston, hinges on this situation and tries to develop a kind of emotional relationship, and feels sense of self and identity which he has always been deprived of. For the time being, out of mercy, he has been respected, offered a bed to sleep in, and given some bucks for himself. To make up for his suppressed

self-esteem and recovery of his self-view as a resident, unravels his prevailing, volcanic eruption of feelings and boasts over his past life style, his youth, his contempt for the blacks, and his prestige. Davies: "I got respect; you won't find anyone with more respect" [CT 33]. As Mick is involved in a deep quarrel with Davies, Aston enters.

Mick, surprisingly, calls Davies a friend to create a kind of friendly relationship with him as a bulwark against his possible violation of his brother's relationship. Mick: I was telling my friend you were about to start decorating the other rooms" [CT 35].

They are constantly in the process of mental thinking and decision making about their situation and their relationships upon which they lead their lives. What acts as the key point in game theory is the question of decision making processes. Any potential threat to their mutual emotional welfare may panic them to death. Each craves for love and affection due to the fact that this enables them to build and maintain their sense of themselves in their mind and lead their life based on that self-view. This alarming concern for the maintenance of relationship can well be detected in Mick's, the youngest member, twofold treatment of Davies. The threat of losing his brother's love makes him aggressive and restless towards Davies.

Mick: Jen... kkins. Davies makes a sudden move to rise. A violent bellow from Mick sends him back. (A Shout.) Sleep here last night? [CT 31].

Mick has a strong tendency to annihilate this threatening third member who has appeared between him and his brother. As he fails to eradicate this threat, he follows another strategy that is getting alliance in relationship. From Pinter's point of view, love means" a psychological need for acceptance or affection or emotional attachment" [9].

Therefore, Mick does not want to be an outsider, changes his tactics and tries to develop an emotional attachment with Davies. Mick: Like a sandwich?

Davies: What?

Mick: [taking a sandwich from his pocket.] Have one of these.

Davies: Don't you pull anything.

Mick; No, you're still not understanding me. I can't help being interested in any friend of my brother's. I mean, you're my brother's friend, aren't you?

Davies: Well, I...I wouldn't put it as far as that.

Mick: Don't you find him friendly, then?

Davies. Well, I wouldn't say we were all that friends. I mean, he did me no harm, but I wouldn't say he was any particular friend of mine. What's in that sandwich then? [CT 41].

Mick feels secure when he hears that his emotional attachment has not been expelled by another rival, here Davies. Instead, to make himself more secure, he starts expanding this relationship by offering him a position as the caretaker and even more consulting his advice on his brother's carefree consideration of the affairs assigned on him. Davies catches on his words and tries to get the best advantage out of this opportunity. Now, Davies intends to expel Aston out of the circle of relationship when he says to Mick:" you and I, we could get this place going"[CT 60] turns to a big menace to Aston. But this turns out to be just a mirage.

Davies: Who would live there?

Mick: I would. My brother and me. Pause.

Davies: What about me?

Mick (quietly). All these junks here, it's no good to anyone [CT 61].

Once more Davies gets dislocated and disillusioned. His already violated sense of self and identity finds himself at the edge of catastrophe. To make up for that as a remedy, he offers Mick some help for decorating the house:" I got that worked out. You want to tell him... that we got ideas for this place, we could build it up, and we could get it started. You see, I could decorate it out for you, I could give you a hand in doing it.... between us" [CT 6]. Having learned about Aston's frailty of mental state and his being to an asylum before for that, he tries to get advantage of his Achilles Heel." They had you inside one of them places before; they can have you inside again. Your brothers got his eye on you!" [CT 67]. His endeavors to soothe his own psychological state by deploying any of these tactics for creating and rebuilding the relationship bear no practical fruits. This battle for relationship which is the essence of the character's sense of self and role for leading his life game finally culminates in the sheer expulsion of Davies from this game. He is introduced as a liar as has never been an interior decorator and source of trouble as Mick says: "ever since you come into this house there's been nothing but trouble" [CT 73]. Davies, now the same social outcast as before, is

left dislocated, miserable, lonely, and defeated. This is in a sense because "social connections are untrustworthy and often deadly; [...and] that man is alone in this miserable world" [1].

The way Pinter has tried to unravel the existential delicacy of human condition and his problems in his plays are not that of spoon feeding the reality. He has employed 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" [16] which is targeting all characters on the whole. This is what Pinter has been getting at; "that despite the enormous odds which exist, unflinching, answering, fierce intellectual determination, as citizens, to define the real truth of our lives and our societies is a crucial obligation which devolves upon us all. It is in fact mandatory" [17, 18, 19].

3 Conclusion

The application of theories of other branches of science to literature has recently achieved profound consideration. The application of game theory in the field of mathematics to drama as one of the powerful genres of literature proves promising on the line of the plays' better appraisal. Harold Pinter's plays *Birthday Party* and *The Caretaker* deal with modern man's obsessions. Going through tragedies in light of game theory provides insights to better understand the characters' irrational (as we infer) decisions. It provides answers to the questions like the detection of the ordinary calculations of literary characters which can stand for their extraordinary actions in some of great plays like Pinter's introduced ones.

The mathematical counteracting and calculating the characters' actions and thoughts in their endeavor forms a life play which provide hints for the better understanding of the real outcome of their deeds, activities, wishes, and thoughts. In this article, the cross comparison of the role and actions of the characters in the two plays revealed that they are all at the mercy of a bigger and invisible system known as postmodernism phenomenon and its idiosyncrasies. The characters either escape this system, work for it, or try to adapt to it. According to Nash Equilibrium, what is clear is the fact that they are just playing at different angels of this playground and none of them proves to be the winner; on the contrary, they are all entrapped and victimized by this system. They are deprived of their very beginning identity and self and have to compromise to the rules, instructions, and expectations of the system; otherwise, they are discarded as social outcasts. The matrices and game trees of the characters' relationships with each other well depict the outcome of their roles in the introduced plays.

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