



## A Theatrical Eco-Quest: Adding Shades of Green to the Gray Stage of the Absurd

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### Research Article

#### Abstract

*This study seeks to delve into less-charted territories by carrying out an ecocritical investigation of *The Birthday Party* (1957) by Harold Pinter, widely examined as one of the quintessential offsprings of Theatre of the Absurd, delving into existentialist waters flowing into meaninglessness and pointlessness of human existence. From an ecocritical perspective, its puzzlingly layered story infested with portrayals of not only decaying and isolated settings in general but also the human's dire disconnection from the nonhuman in particular is aimed to be explored to unravel the subtle dialogue the play enters with the Anthropocene. As a predominantly indoors play whose absurd narrative is expected to be centered around the celebration, its eponymous birthday party devolves into a disorienting and disruptive spectacle following the arrival of the unexpected, literally and figuratively. In this sense, the eco-quest of this study seeks to build an unveiling bridge between Pinter's absurdist play and its veiled dialogue with the Anthropocene and its haunting repercussions to bring what is celebration-worthy, if any, into question. Such an eco-spotlight shed on the play in question and its latent dialogue with such timely matters is oriented towards unearthing its subtle eco-seeds that could pollinate into greening the gray stage of the Absurd.*

**Keywords:** Theatre of the Absurd, Anthropocene, Ecocriticism, Anthropocentrism.

As an unorthodox and unsettling movement in modern theatre, the Theatre of the Absurd appeared on the 20<sup>th</sup> century stage in the wake of World War II, primarily during the 1950s and 1960s. Considering the horrific period in which it sprouted, this unprecedented genre of theatre was unsurprisingly gravitated towards mirroring the profound impacts of the war and related terrors on human beings including the existential angst, spiritual desolation, confusion and disillusionment. Introduced by Martin Esslin who also coined the very term in *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961), the term is rooted, not merely in ridiculousness, commonly evoked by the word absurd, but in nonsensicality of it all, lacking any meaningfulness or purposefulness (37). In this regard, purposelessness, pointlessness, and absurdness of life and existence of the human, coupled with hopelessness looming over the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, evidently ended up fanning the flames of severance of ties with conventional theatre of the pre-war era. During the post-war years, this nonconformist theatrical genre, theorized by Esslin, took over the stage and sought to not follow in the long-established footsteps of the pre-war theatre but to map out its own uniquely absurd routes. Rooted in the philosophical belief that human existence is doomed to be futile in an always already indifferent universe, most offsprings of this 20<sup>th</sup>-century movement in theatre tended to feed off of human beings grappling with feelings of alienation, powerlessness, frivolousness, absurdity of it all and defy traditional structures of the theatre by favoring irrationality, circular logic, nonsensical monologues and/or surreal dialogues filled with repetitions and pauses by characters that often find themselves in situations characterized by futility and/or in pointless loops (Esslin 1961). Considering what a radical departure this is from traditional theatre, playwrights of this movement including Beckett, Ionesco, Genet and Pinter to



name a few, are credited by their subversion of the longstanding theatrical dogmas regarding the necessity of logical narratives, moral lessons embedded, clear and smooth progressions by means of their inclination towards embracing more of chaos, fragmentation, and circularity to shed more of bright light on the absurd condition of humanity and existence. As a then-new theatrical genre eclipsing the long-established traditions of the pre-war theatre and bringing the overall nonsensicality of existence to the spotlight, it draws so heavily from existential philosophy that the gravitation between the two is overwhelmingly intense. Despite its emergence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through foundational ideas of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche among others, existentialism can be fairly said to have come to widespread recognition in the same century as the theatre of the absurd, following unprecedentedly despair-inducing events of the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, through the works of prominent philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus among others.<sup>1</sup> At its core, it can be pointed out that existentialist school of thought grapples with the human condition in general and the absurdity of life, the futility of existence, the existential angst and anxiety that go hand in hand with the radical freedom of the human in particular, all of which can be fairly said to add various shades of gray to the always-already gray stage of the Absurd.

In this direction, considering such conventional bridges already built between the theatre of the absurd and existential school of thought on the common ground consolidated via emphases put on the senselessness of it all, what this study seeks is to build unconventional bridges between the Absurd, going hand in hand with existentialism, and the Anthropocene. Besides such existential struggles of a human-centered nature which demanded the spotlight around the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it is possible to draw attention to one particular, particularly multifaceted, sort of an existential crisis of a different nature that has been denied to be shed bright light on since even prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, preceding the dawn of the Theatre of the Absurd, which springs from eco-existential crises on a planetary scale. Since especially the industrial breakthrough, modernization processes and a wide range of techno-scientific advancements have added fuels to the flames of humanity's deep-rooted inclination towards inhabiting the planet in ways that are based on human exceptionalism, which inevitably led up to the coinage and introduction of the term Anthropocene in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century by two atmospheric scientists, namely Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer,<sup>2</sup> who opted via this relatively new term to refer to "the geological epoch that the Earth entered with the industrial revolution, around 1800" (qtd. in Clark 1). This proposed act of renaming the most recent epoch of the planet is primarily based on the ever-growing impacts of human activity on the planet's natural processes, which have been excessively interfered with and radically altered since the "Great Acceleration" and resulted in a wide range of interconnected, sustainability-threatening issues such as global warming, deforestation, acidification of the oceans, loss of biodiversity and so on.<sup>3</sup>

In this vein, such unconventional bridges aimed to be built in this study are oriented towards offering a relatively new perspective to explore the intersection of existentialism, embedded in the Absurd, and anthropocentrism, eponymously embedded within the Anthropocene, which leads to not only opening a new window to get a grip on it all but also adding shades of green to the dark gray stage of the former. In this regard, it is possible to articulate that the Anthropocene as an existential, as well as potentially extinction, level crisis on a planetary basis can be said to lend itself already to be engaged in deep eco-dialogues with existentialism since the latter is very likely to provide a unique lens to gain further insight about not only the human condition in an indifferent universe but also the human role and agency on a planet that is far from being indifferent. The despair looming over the totality of existence in an



ever-present way is portrayed by both the Anthropocene and existentialism via the former's emphasis on the severe threats posed by unprecedented consequences of anthropogenic influences on the planet's natural processes and the latter's emphasis on the overwhelming threats posed by senselessness and absurdness of it all. However, both certain contemporary conceptualizations of the Anthropocene and certain conceptualizations of the Absurd, such as that of Camus', can be said to meet on the common ground via them being oriented towards offering insights into navigating such inherent meaninglessness of it all but also radical independence, coupled with immense responsibility, of the human in it all. While Camus' philosophy encourages the human to revolt against the absurdity of life by owning up to their own free will that comes with responsibilities so as to lead an individually meaningful life that is unique to them,<sup>4</sup> certain contemporary philosophies with regards to the Anthropocene<sup>5</sup> tend to encourage the human to revolt against the absurdity of life that is led in excessively self-seeking ways of the longstanding anthropocentrism by embracing a new perspective that recognizes the gravity of human agency as well as responsibilities that come along with so as to lead not only an individually but also a collectively meaningful life. In essence, such philosophies relatively in parallel seek to encourage the human not to succumb to despair and/or nihilism when it comes to existential crises of any nature that might stress the ultimate frivolousness of it all and/or seem harbingers of an imminent end of it all, but to keep on engaging with life by embracing the radical freedom to act, though in consideration of responsibilities of any potential actions.

From an eco-existential angle framing the global eco-crisis, and consequently the Anthropocene, as an existential challenge, it can be said that such a distressingly liberating aspect of freedom is possible to end up leading to a sort of inertia, already looming over the existentialist school of thought, in responding to eco-matters and sustainability on a planetary level for two reasons in parallel. On the one hand, one of them is driven by the standpoint that human will and agency, coupled with radical freedom, have evidently been overtly anthropocentric and fanned the flames of such eco-existential tensions at hand, which paints inaction, keeping any further human action and interference out of the equation, in glowing colors and ends up with bringing forth further alienation from both the rest of the human and the nonhuman world. On the other hand, the overwhelming scale of eco-existential crises at hand and on the horizon that actually demands immediate action is possible to seem too vast for the human to comprehend one's complicity in it all and put faith in the possibility of any individual action to matter on this level, which burns the coals of inertia and alienation to the fullest. In light of such bridges built between the Anthropocene and existentialism for the purpose of shedding some existential light on the global eco-crises, driven by the former, in general, the eco-spotlight of this study can be put particularly on Pinter's profoundly absurdist play and the eco-undertones it echoes. Through framing the planetary eco-anxieties as existential challenges, it is aimed to be delved into such implicit echoes of Pinter's play and its subtle dialogue with the Anthropocene.

In this sense, *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter is one of the most prominent plays of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century which are widely recognized for their engagements with overwhelming existential matters. While its conventional analyses are primarily based on existential, psychological and/or political frameworks, it is possible to unearth its more latent eco-seeds, including eco-neglect, eco-alienation, and eco-psychosis that could burst out into subtler dialogues on overwhelming eco-matters that are latently but tightly tied to existential ones as well, rendering any sorts of Anthropos-oriented celebrations nonsensical on an anthropogenically deteriorating planet in an already absurd universe. Even though it is worth elucidating that his play does not fully lend itself to be examined as a prominent example of *the*



*Theatre of the Anthropocene*,<sup>6</sup> it can be regarded as one of the earliest theatrical examples that refer, albeit implicitly, to the Anthropocene, whose dawn already precedes the Absurd itself. In this direction, what instantly catches an ecologically informed eye is the setting of the play in a ramshackle boarding house in an isolated seaside town along with its seemingly mundane environment and the nonhuman's almost entire erasure from such environment, which inevitably paves the way for an environmental lens to be carried into effect to analyze portrayals of severe eco-disconnection and spatial decay even in the first place. Considering vitality, recreation and renewal among those that are conventionally associated with seaside towns, they are, not only in real life but also in literature, commonly portrayed as liminal spaces between the land and the sea, the domestic and the wild, the human and the nonhuman and so forth. However, such conventional emphases on therapeutic and/or renewing and/or liberating qualities of such places seem to be elaborately subverted by Pinter. The one in the play is not portrayed in great details but only a glimpse of it is provided. As barely a faded backdrop, the town is notably far from such common associations of seaside locations and seems to be in contrasting conditions such as in decline, isolation and neglect. Considering a relatively long time ago in the play when this seaside boarding house in this town had been in operation and had been presumably resided by many others, the once-vibrancy of this coastal town comes to light. However, such light is now so dimmed that, due to almost humanlessness of the town, Petey's job as a deckchair attendant, which is a seaside occupation conventionally rooted in leisure and interactions between the human and the nonhuman natural world, seems to become not only radically rotted and absurdly irrelevant but also symbolic of the rotted cord between the human and the nonhuman. In this sense, the absurd fact that even the sea is not actually seen in the play and the portrayals of no sensory interaction with the sea, no waves, no seagulls, no trees, no animals, coupled with no visitors, no beachgoers, no indication that the seashore preserves its traditional vibrancy, make it possible to point out that the town now seems to have become a space of bleak eco-decay where its ecosystem and its overall vivacity seem to be in retreat. To put it another way, the town, whose vibrancy can be presumed to have been provided by both its own eco-thriving and its bridge-building qualities in mutually effectual senses between the human and the nonhuman, seems to have become nothing but a forgotten and/or an exploited space mirroring the human's growing neglect of the nonhuman, which adds latent fuel to the existential, and eco-existential for that matter, dread of the human in return.

As a result, such an absurd absence of the nonhuman components of the planet in a seaside town, coupled with the human's eco-neglect and apparent inability to show any eco-emotions<sup>7</sup> even in times of timely need, can be said to reinforce the idea of eco-erasure by modernity. By eco-erasure, what is meant in the context of the play is the damage done over time by modernization processes characterized by industrial expansion and exploitation to name just a few, via either the erasure of crucial meaningfulness of not only the nonhuman world in general, the natural world of the coastal town in the play, but also the deep entanglement of the human and the nonhuman or the erasure of the nonhuman world itself over time through severe exploitations and depletion of its natural resources for any sorts of solely self-seeking purposes of the human driven by principles charting the excessively anthropocentric route of modern life. In this vein, shedding some ecologically sourced light on the non-portrayal of the nonhuman in the broader setting of the play, ironically a coastal one though, makes it possible to assert that the seaside town in which the play is set comes to be stripped of its not only eco-vibrancy but also traditional function by a much larger eco-malaise which is not characterized by explicit eco-disasters but by implicit and more insidious post-industrial ways of anthropogenic erosion. Thus, what the town seems to be severed from due to the gravity of eco-neglect is not only the human



in general but also natural rhythms in particular.

Furthermore, such lifelessness looming over the town, setting the tone of the play in general, is accompanied by the lifelessness of where all the action, or lack thereof, is particularly located. As a play taking place almost entirely indoors, its main stage, which is the seaside establishment run by Meg and Petey Boles, comes to represent not just a mere setting but a manifestation of decay, a decaying human-made space where the absurdness of the absence of the nonhuman goes hand in hand with even more absurdness of human existence in such absence. In terms of the absurd severance of the nonhuman from this space, Boles' establishment becomes a symbolic representation of the eco-neglect followed by the consequent eco-decay outside of its walls owing to its own deteriorating environment within. The spatial decay fueled by the crumbling infrastructure of the establishment, narrow rooms, dimmed lighting, sparse furniture as well as its peeling wallpaper<sup>8</sup> speaks volumes about the global eco-existential malaise that was either long-denied to be shed bright light on or provided with one as dimmed as the one in the setting at best. As an establishment whose atmosphere is filled with stagnancy and environment with mundaneness, the disrepair of the boarding house lends itself to be associated with the sense that everything in it is on the verge of disintegration, if not further, which echoes the eco-existential threats fueling some sense of entrapment and paralysis. As for the former, due to the narrowness and barrenness of its rooms that are also already dimly lit, the sense of entrapment becomes almost so palpable that what can be said to be sensed by its overall atmosphere is that the house is slowly but surely closing in on them in particular and the imminence of an entire collapse in general, referring to that of both the human-made establishment and the long-established, vital bridges between the human and the nonhuman to a larger extent. Such a sense of confinement intertwined with a sense of inevitable collapse of it all seems to be followed by a sense of paralysis to take action to avert neither such a life-threatening danger of the impending collapse of the house nor such eco-existential crises worsened by the burnt bridges between the human and the nonhuman.

Considering the decay portrayed in the play as not only external, referring to that of the seaside town, what makes it possible to point out that it is also internal is the portrayal of deep deterioration of identities, memories, and meanings within the lives of the occupants of this house. This is arguably most evidential via the portrayal of Stanley Webber, who is a former pianist living as the only lodger in idle seclusion in one of the dingy rooms of Boles' boarding house. As a woebegone character within this anthropogenically sealed world, Stanley comes to become a figure of eco-disconnection and eco-alienation from an ecocritical stance which allows the layers of his psychological instability and nonsensicality of his routines, language, and his overall insensibility to be read not only personal and/or political but also environmental. His reclusive existence, marked by paranoia and inertia, positions him as someone withdrawn from a world that he is no longer able to sustain any meaningful connections to due to not only his existential distress on an individual level but also his latent eco-existential angst resulted by longstanding disconnection from the nonhuman world, fueling even further eco-alienation. In the context of the Anthropocene, he can be said to become a symbolic representation of the human whose sense of self is not fully stained by excessive anthropocentrism because he seems quite out of touch with his environment, echoing the global anthropogenic decay, as though he has been displaced from a more ecologically coherent mode of being. His being out of touch with his environment due to his sense of sort of displacement is followed by his being out of sync with his mind, memories, identity, and overall sense of self, evidenced by meaningless routines and senseless dialogues in general and his erratic speech and denial of even simple facts such as the existence of the piano in particular. In this light, his mental and emotional



fragmentation suggests that his deep eco-estrangement contributes to his psychological unease, existential dread, stagnation and apathy.

In this direction, from an ecocritical stance, it is worth pointing out what can be inferred from how eco-alienation, existential dread and extreme inertia loom over the establishment and its occupants. On the one hand, the boarding house comes to turn into a non-space haunted by the non-presence of the nonhuman and detached figuratively from the land of the living as well as literally from the living nonhuman components of the planet. On the other hand, Stanley, one of its woebegone occupants, though already quite few, can be said to become a haunting emblem of the human that is not only stripped of ecological grounding and crucial interactions with the nonhuman due to anthropocentric flights of fancy imagination, driving this current epoch in general. His sort of confinement, along with that of other few human occupants, to the decay inside the ramshackle house, echoing the eco-decay outside, can also be said to lead to sort of eco-paralysis due to the overwhelming extent of eco-malaise at hand. As a result, the world crafted by Pinter ends up being so claustrophobically populated by the human in terms of it being sterile, closed off and cut off from the rest of the organic components of the planet that human existence, already inherently meaningless, is stripped of any possibilities of being attributed any sorts of individual meanings to since any quests for such meaning-making purposes become more meaningless than ever in this virulently human-centered epoch, sterilized from the nonhuman to such an unsettling extent. In this sense, the senselessness of the birthday party and celebration comes even more to the fore because, due to the severe severance of the human from the nonhuman, rendering the possibility of attributing any individual meanings to an already meaningless existence in order to cope with all meaninglessness looming around even more meaningless, any sorts of human-oriented celebrations are rendered even more absurd on an anthropogenically deteriorating planet in an already indifferent and absurd universe from an eco-existential perspective.

Hence, such a subtle dialogue of the play with the terrors of the Anthropocene comes even more to the fore and what arguably deepens such a dialogue is the arrival of Goldberg and McCann. As a symbolic representation of the human with a more eco-oriented and/or a less anthropocentric mode of being, Stanley's eco-existential terrors are intensified with such a terror-inducing arrival of the Goldberg-McCann alliance composed of two mysterious and sinister men who arrive at the Boles' establishment in pursuit of Stanley. This ominous arrival of two men of an unnamed association, functioning as aggressive agents of normalization within society in general, and the symbolic representation of the arrival of overly human-centered modes of being and living, normalized in the Anthropocene in particular, is followed by them helping throwing Stanley a birthday party to cover up their insidious plan to interrogate him and eventually take him away. Therefore, viewing them particularly as the symbolic representation of the Anthropocene makes it possible to assert that their arrival is oriented towards domineering it all and derailing them all, especially those who have not yet embraced anthropocentric modes of being to a fuller extent, if needed by force. Their tendency to not think twice about exerting their force in a way becomes clear especially during Stanley's interrogation when his glasses are intentionally taken away by Goldberg for the purpose of rendering their target not only blind but also dependent on them in his time of need. In this way, the symbolic representation of the Goldberg-McCann alliance as the Anthropocene closing oppressively in on humans to make them more dependent on it, if not force them to, can be said to come more to the fore.

Such a force is also evidenced in the form of a linguistic one in the scene of the eponymous birthday party, dissolving into a series of unsettling and aggressive acts including a bizarre cross-examination and a bombardment of ruthless allegations and accusations. In their



quest for wearing Stanley down, by bringing up bizarre topics such as chicken-egg matter and which came first, among others in a way that is devoid of any moments of silence, pauses, repetitions or interruptions, they brutally beleaguer him and put their pressing power on him on both psychological and mental levels, which can be said to refer to the menacing influence of the Anthropocene. Furthermore, in the course of this absurd interrogation, their demeaning remarks and insults are not only accelerated but also pointed directly at Stanley's overall existence, reducing his identity to "a washout," "an odour," "a plague" (Pinter 32-6). At this point, from an ecocritical perspective, the chicken-egg account and which one actually came first can be extended to the anthropos-anthropocentrism account, represented by Stanley as the former and Goldberg-McCann as the latter, and which one came across as the actual plague.

While which one is what is open to interpretation, shedding some eco-critical light makes it possible to point to the latter as the actual plague by bringing forth that such strategies of Goldberg and McCann, using language as a weapon, lead to the intensification of Stanley's paranoia and his detachment further from his presumably once-coherent sense of self in more of eco-sync, laying the foundation for his imminent breakdown towards the end. From the eco-angle of this study, Stanley's eventual psychotic episode<sup>9</sup> following the arrival of the Goldberg-McCann alliance in general and their psychological tormenting in particular can be read as a sort of eco-psychosis, fueled by dysfunctional and consequently disorienting rupture of relations between the human and the nonhuman, kindled by a self-seeking figment of human imagination favoring severe separation of the human from the nonhuman on the grounds of the supposed superiority of the former over it all. Hence, viewing the Goldberg-McCann alliance as a symbolic representation of the Anthropocene and Stanley as a symbolic representation of the human with, so to say, a pre- or less anthropocentric mode of being, who, as previously discussed, presumably goes through a sense of displacement from his prior modes of being in more of eco-sync within the walls of the decaying house, it is possible to frame what occurs between these two parties as a sequence of events symbolizing the gruesomely growing influence of the Anthropocene on the human, which gravitates towards deepening the rupture of any meaningful relations between the human and the nonhuman. In this sense, the fact that the Goldberg-McCann alliance's inveigling offerings<sup>10</sup> and insidious deeds to mess with the mind of and penetrate to the marrow of Stanley leads to his dreadful downfall towards the end can be said to refer to the Anthropocene's both allurements on the surface and entrapment, if not effacement, underneath.

To conclude, a fairly unconventional perspective to interrogate what has been widely examined on conventional grounds is at the heart of this study which is oriented towards adding shades of green to Pinter's gray stage by unearthing latent eco-seeds in his absurdist play and revealing its subtle dialogue with the Anthropocene. From an ecologically informed standpoint, the ways in which lifelessness looms around in Pinter's play become deeply discernible even in the first place through the eco-stagnation of the seaside location. What seems to have replaced the once-vibrant coastal town and community is a ghostly one haunted by certain eco-horrors fueled by the longstanding eco-neglect of the human lacking or pressing any eco-emotions even in times of pressing eco-malaise. In a similar vein, the ramshackle house along with its woebegone occupants comes to be the center of further lifelessness, albeit figuratively, due to further eco-alienation and inertia of those non-revolting denizens trapped in absurd and senseless routines, dialogues, and modes of being. The arrival of Goldberg-McCann alliance, representing the symbolic arrival of the Anthropocene plagues more deeply the denizens, particularly Stanley, who can be viewed as the symbolic representation of the human not-yet fully plagued by, given in to and devoured by excessively anthropocentric modes of being and living. At its core, besides conventional examinations of the play under similar rays of light, or more



conveniently put, under similar shades of gray light, the eco-spotlight of this study reveals that not only does adding shades of green to this gray stage prove to be only possible via darker shades of green but also such an eco-end endeavor for greening intends up reddening it as well. What is meant by that is, unearthing the subtle engagement of the play with the Anthropocene for the sake of greening it ends up dark-greening it at best due to the fact that the play comes to bear no refreshing fruits inducing any hopes for non-anthropocentric ways of inhabiting the planet to outweigh overly anthropocentric ones, considering the triumph of Goldberg-McCann alliance, the Anthropocene, and the surrender of Stanley, the human, which ends up figuratively painting the stage in blood-red. What unveils under such light is that the dialogue of Pinter's play with the human-oriented nature of existential struggles extends to the existential crisis of a different nature, referring to eco-crises on a global scale because the flames of the inherent existential dread of the human have been fanned to a more dreadful extent by crimson flames of eco-existential angst, fueled by a sort of fright that the end of it all is already imminent as a result of the human's accelerating severance of vitally deep ties with the nonhuman especially since the dawn of the Anthropocene. Such trepidation seems to get so numbing that further inertia and a sort of self-surrender to the futility of it all end up being kindled in terms of both existential and eco-existential matters. Ultimately, in light of such unearthed eco-seeds in an attempt to add shades of green to the gray stage, which ends up being also reddened to a certain extent, coupled with the portrayal of celebrationlessness in the play in spite of the eponymous birthday party, it is possible to assert that Pinter's play puts a subtle emphasis on the nonsensicality of any sorts of human-oriented celebrations on a planet whose celebration-worthy animateness and habitableness are on the verge of human-induced extinction in an already indifferent universe.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Walter Kaufmann (1956) for a more detailed examination of the paralleled and unparalleled aspects of the conceptualizations of existentialism outlined by Sartre and Camus.

<sup>2</sup> See, for more, Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene,'" in *IGBP Newsletter* 41 (2000), 17–18.

<sup>3</sup> See, for more, Clark (2015) among others.

<sup>4</sup> See, for more, Camus (1959).

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the philosophy outlined by Clive Hamilton (2017).

<sup>6</sup> *The Theatre of the Anthropocene* is a unique and such a timely initiative, founded by Dr. Frank M. Raddatz and Prof. Dr. Antje Boetius in Germany in 2019. By bringing together scientific findings on contemporary eco-matters and theatrical responses to them, it comes into existence at the intersection of art and science as a well-resourced eco-theatre, addressing and contributing to growing debates regarding the multifaceted realities of the Anthropocene. See, for further details, *The Theatre of the Anthropocene* (2023) by Frank M. Raddatz. See, also, "Anthropocene Play Company: Theatre for the Modern Age" (2018) by Bronwen Coleman, Pia O'Meadhra and Claire Larman, <<https://www.anthropoceneplaycompany.com/about>>.

<sup>7</sup> See, for further details regarding what eco-emotions refer to, Louise Chawla (2020), <<https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pan3.10128>>.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that even though the peeling wallpaper effortlessly lends itself to be read as a symbol of further deterioration of identities, memories, and meanings within the lives of the occupants of the boarding house, there is no direct mention of the wallpaper which is specifically peeling in the original manuscript. However, Pinter's original stage directions are as sparse as the furniture in the boarding house and make enough room for those in charge of a given production to stretch their imagination in terms of how to project the atmosphere of decay and



neglect in the play onto the stage. In this direction, certain productions of *The Birthday Party* such as the one, staged at the Harold Pinter Theatre and designed by The Quay Brothers in 2018, include the peeling wallpaper in order to put emphasis on the ramshackle condition and harsh realities of the establishment while projecting the tone of the play onto the stage and visually enhancing the haunting atmosphere of the spatial decay in the manuscript to a greater extent. In this regard, see, <<https://www.londontheatre.co.uk/reviews/review-the-birthday-party-at-the-harold-pinter-theatre>>.

<sup>9</sup>Despite the fact that Stanley is not explicitly diagnosed with any mental health issues in the play, what is drawn attention to here is his exponentially increasing paranoid ways of thinking and acting which worsen in the aftermath of the arrival of Goldberg and McCann and their absurd but maddening interrogation, all of which culminate in him being stripped of his ability to communicate, his sanity, his own sense of self, and his overall existence.

<sup>10</sup>What they offer him towards the end of the play to convince him to go along with them includes promises about being “rich,” owning “yachts” and “animals.” From an ecocritical standpoint, this can be said to put emphasis on the false promises of anthropocentrism not only plaguing human perspective but also beguiling them and standing in their way of reawakening to the bigger picture, painted by interconnected and interdependent relationships between the human and the nonhuman, and living accordingly. See, for further details, the final act of Pinter’s play.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The study utilizes primary and secondary sources of data and can be available from the author if requested.

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