1982

Pinter's "The Birthday Party"| A director's analysis and production process

Steven A. Schwartz
The University of Montana

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PINTER'S THE BIRTHDAY PARTY:
A DIRECTOR'S ANALYSIS AND PRODUCTION PROCESS

By
Steven A. Schwartz
B.A., State University College at Oswego, New York, 1973

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
University of Montana

1982

Approved by:
Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

12.20.82
Pinter's *The Birthday Party:*

A Director's Analysis and Production Process

by: Steven A. Schwartz*

University of Montana

December 16, 1982

Thesis Committee: Dr. James D. Kriley
Dr. Randy Bolton
Dr. Lois M. Welch

* In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts Degree
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INTRODUCTION

When The Birthday Party, Harold Pinter's first full-length play, opened in London on May 19, 1958, the immediate critical response was unanimous. The critics hated it. Milton Shulman in The Evening Standard said it was "like trying to solve a crossword puzzle where every vertical clue [puts] you off the horizontal. It will be best enjoyed by those who believe that obscurity is its own reward."\(^1\) The Times reported, "The first act sounds an offbeat note of madness, in the second the note has risen to a sort of delirium, and the third act studiously refrains from the slightest hint of what the other two may have been about."\(^2\) While The Manchester Guardian chimed in with, "...what all this means, only Mr. Pinter knows."\(^3\) The play closed after only a week's run, though it has been produced successfully since.

If Mr. Pinter is, indeed, the only one who knows, he is not telling. Such answers as, "All I try to do is describe some particular thing... The meaning is there for the particular characters as they cope with the situation."\(^4\) and "You can make symbolic meat out of anything."\(^5\) typify his responses whenever he is questioned about the meanings of his plays.

\(^3\) "Pinterview," p. 69.
The widely different interpretations of *The Birthday Party* that I read while researching the play illustrate how susceptible Pinter's plays are to personalized literary molding. The following are some of the contrasting opinions I observed about the so-called hidden meanings and symbols contained in Pinter's script.

Lois G. Gordon, author of *Stratagems to Uncover Nakedness: The Dramas of Harold Pinter*, proposes that Stanley's sin and crime was involved "in an effort to deny an amorous relationship with his mother, whereupon he usurped his father's place in the household. Stanley [thus] has moved to a new land and become the hopeful son of his present family. In doing this, however, Stanley has similarly and unknowingly displaced the present father to establish a lover-son relationship with his wife. Not until his confrontation with Goldberg and McCann does Stanley admit his sin and suffer a kind of internal purgation. *The Birthday Party* builds upon the Freudian interpretation of the Oedipus myth."  

Katherine H. Burkman, in her book *The Dramatic World of Harold Pinter: Its Basis in Ritual*, views the play "as an agon (battle) between Stanley, who has challenged the reigning priest-king, and Monty, who has sent Goldberg and McCann to take care of the rebel." Burkman also sees Stanley as "the sacrificed and resurrected God, the scapegoat king who is destroyed only to be reborn in the image of Monty."  

Steven H. Gale, in his analysis of Pinter's dramas *Butter's Going Up*, proposes that the play "celebrates the death of Stan as an individual (symbolically an artist [which] is more useful as a conventional representation of human sensitivity than as a literal fact. . .) and his rebirth as a nonentity conforming to the dictates of society."  

NEWSWEEK editor Jack Kroll compares Goldberg and McCann to a couple of "fallen angels, doomed to run grim and grubby errands for Satan" while Stanley is seen as "the artist who has committed the supreme sin of letting his art die."

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8 Burkman, p. 23.  
11 Kroll, p. 104.
James R. Hollis, author of *Harold Pinter: The Poetics of Silence*, sees Stanley as a man who "clings to the security of that house and refuses to go out," and the play as "the story of the destruction of Stanley's security by that external world." 

Finally, Martin Esslin, author of *The Peopled Wound: The Work of Harold Pinter*, believes that questions of background, motivation, identity and destiny "are not raised by Pinter to be answered; nor are they...merely to create spurious curiosity and suspense. They are raised as metaphors of the fact that life itself consists of a succession of such questions that cannot or will not, be capable of an answer."

A theatrical director intending to develop a stage production of Pinter's play will find the consideration of these varied scholastic interpretations to be quite helpful. He (or she) may discover answers to some of the ambiguous moments that have escaped him. But they are only an aid to the director's primary responsibility, which is to find a functional interpretation ("a consistent and cohesive action line that supports the scriptual

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13 Hollis, p. 32.
14 Esslin, pp. 37-38.
15 Conversation with Dr. James D. Kriley, Chairman, Department of Drama/Dance, University of Montana, 2 September 1982.
evidence of the author's intent" to serve as a foundation, on top of which he, together with his cast and production staff, can develop the play. And his best blueprint is the script, for through the script the playwright most directly communicates his intentions.

It was with this belief in mind that I began the process of directing a production of The Birthday Party, scheduled to run November 12-15 and 19-22, 1980 on The Great Western Stage at the University of Montana. After extensive research I came to the conclusion that each of the interpretations I have cited, along with numerous others, was valid. They could all be supported by Pinter's script, and could be utilized as the foundation of a theatrical production.

As the director, I determined that, since there was no consensus of literary opinion on how to interpret the play, it was more important to arrive at my own interpretation. Otherwise, there would be no clear commanding image with which the cast and production staff could work.

I believe that Pinter did intend for the questions of background, motivation, identity and destiny to be capable of answers. As the director, it was my primary responsibility to find them, otherwise, the characters would seem to be following no clear path of action, and the characters have too much at stake for that. That path of action begins with Pinter's commanding image, which places Stanley at the center, as the individual beset by those, especially Goldberg and McCann, who would have him behave as they desire. Another image important to the path of
action involves a cyclical relation in the four male characters of the play, in that what any of them are at this time in their lives, the others have either been or will become.

The following text is my attempt to detail just what those answers are, and the processes I employed to create a clear and consistent production of *The Birthday Party*. The answers lie not in what the characters say, but in what they do not say. Behind so many of the banalities lie unmentioned, but very real, fears, intentions and compromises, which I believe the playwright meant to be discovered.

Since there is so little personal history which Pinter's characters wish to reveal, I had to imagine how the characters were communicating, or not communicating, through their lines. A line that seemed to mean nothing, would receive from me a second look, or a third or fourth, until I could determine what relationship it had with the general scheme of things that was slowly revealing itself to me.

What follows is a two-part account of all that went into the production process of this particular presentation of *The Birthday Party*. Part One consists of an analysis of the script, in which I make bold to answer the questions that might occur to those who read it. This is an interpretation dependent upon certain lines being said with certain underlying meanings, and certain conditions existing with which such interpretations are harmonious. Part Two is an account of how the production was staged, including the processes used most often to help each of my six cast members achieve a moment-by-moment connection with the
play, and a record of the activities, positioning, levels of intensity and other directorial decisions used (or that I now wish I had used) to visually clarify the play, moment-by-moment, for the cast and audiences.
HARMONIOUS HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS

In the opening dialogue between Meg and Petey, one of overwhelming banality, Meg initiates the conversation. Meg asks the questions, Petey, still reading his paper, answers them. There seems to be no crucial communication between them, yet Meg still feels the need to try. Petey feels no need to try to communicate with Meg; his responses are automatic, reassuring her that the cornflakes, the paper, and the fried bread are all "very nice." ¹

But a closer look will reveal that not all of Petey's responses equal Meg's questions in banality. Occasionally his responses include just a trace of humor. For example:

MEG: You got your paper?
PETEY: Yes.
MEG: Is it good?
PETEY: Not bad.
MEG: What does it say?
PETEY: Nothing much.
MEG: You read me out some nice bits yesterday.
PETEY: Yes, well, I haven't finished this one yet.²

¹ Harold Pinter, "The Birthday Party," in Complete Works: One (New York: Grove Press, 1976), pp. 19-22. (All references from this volume are of the revised 1967 script version.)
² Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 19-20.
Or:

MEG: Is Stanley up yet?
PETEY: I don't know. Is he?
MEG: I don't know. I haven't seen him down yet.
PETEY: Well then, he can't be up.  

And finally:

MEG: What time did you go out this morning, Petey?
PETEY: Same time as usual.
MEG: Was it dark?
PETEY: No, it was light.
MEG: But sometimes you go out in the morning and it's dark.
PETEY: That's in the winter.
MEG: Oh, in winter.
PETEY: Yes, it gets light later in winter.
MEG: Oh.

Petey demonstrates a flair for the obvious in these three passages, which is made humorous when Meg remains totally oblivious to it all. It also becomes apparent that, despite the banality of their conversation, Petey possesses a little more wit and keenness than the vacuous Meg.

There is also a little playfulness in Petey. He seems to delight in toying with Meg, twice delaying her attempts to awaken Stanley, once by calling her attention to a new show in town and once more by asking if she brought him his morning tea, which he knows she has, because she always does.

There is the potential for some readers to see an irritation in Petey, and perhaps some jealousy motivating him to delay Meg's

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3 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 20.
4 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 20-21.
ascent up the stairs to Stanley's bedroom. But right in the middle of the two delaying tactics, after trying to explain the difference between a musical and a straight show, Petey, by his own volition, tries to warmly communicate with Meg:

PETEY: You like a song, eh, Meg?
MEG: I like listening to the piano. I used to like watching Stanley play the piano. Of course he didn't sing.  

Unfortunately, Meg is oblivious to this effort of Petey's to make contact with her in a personal way. Instead she is thinking of Stanley, and her thoughts associate the subject of a song with his piano playing, much as she did when Petey brought up the subject of the new show in town ("Stanley could have been in it."). Meg never forgets Stanley. Her obliviousness to Petey must be disappointing to him, but disappointment has probably been the condition for quite a while, and, for reasons not revealed until later in the play, Petey has come to accept this situation.

One final little tease comes from Petey when Meg returns from Stanley's bedroom, or more specifically from Stanley's bed, as one might surmise from the shouts we hear from Stanley and from the wild laughter heard from Meg, as indicated in Pinter's stage directions.

MEG: He's coming down. I told him if he didn't hurry up he'd get no breakfast.
PETEY: That did it, eh?
MEG: I'll get his cornflakes.
Of course, Petey is aware of what is going on upstairs, but to interpret his response in this exchange as being genuinely bitter would belie that one moment when he warmly vocally reached out to her. It would also belie the friendliness he exhibits toward Stanley which will be examined shortly. Therefore, it appears more valid to construe his response as one in which he teases Meg with his awareness, which sends her scurrying guiltily to the kitchen.

As regards the relationship of Stanley and Meg, the Oedipus complex has been offered by many critics as an explanation for Stanley's behavior. However, close examination of the script shows him acting in ways contrary to such a behavioral complex. An Oedipus complex involves the desire of a man to have sexual relations with his mother or mother-figure. But Stanley never demonstrates any such desire for Meg. Indeed he is often repulsed by her touch. We hear shouts of protest from Stanley when Meg laughingly wakes him up. He recoils from her hand in disgust when she sensually strokes his arm. He pushes her away when she tickles him. These reactions and others are in Pinter's stage directions. Every sensual and sexual overture by Meg receives an emphatic rejection by Stanley. It then becomes clear we are dealing with an Oedipus complex in reverse, what might be called a Jocaste complex, the desire of a woman to have sexual relations with her son or son-figure (The term Jocaste Complex is simply a convenient term to describe the Oedipus complex in reverse. The

5 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 23.
6 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 24.
term is my creation, and one which I employed during the rehearsal process so that the cast would understand how I saw the relationship between Meg and Stanley.

How then does Stanley feel about Meg? Aside from his adverse feelings toward her sexual overtures, he, like Petey, finds Meg rather amusing. He, even more than Petey, teases her, telling her the cornflakes are horrible and the milk sour, and threatening facetiously to move to a hotel when Meg refuses to give him the second course to breakfast. Stanley's warm and friendly teasing of Meg is further exemplified by the following exchange:

MEG: Was it nice?
STANLEY: What?
MEG: The fried bread.
STANLEY: Succulent.
MEG: (Backs off.) You shouldn't say that word.
STANLEY: What word?
MEG: That word you said.
STANLEY: What, succulent—?
MEG: Don't say it!
STANLEY: What's the matter with it?
MEG: You shouldn't say that word to a married woman.
STANLEY: Is that a fact?
MEG: Yes.
STANLEY: Well, I never knew that.
MEG: Well, it's true.
STANLEY: Who told you that.
MEG: Never you mind.
STANLEY: Well, if I can't say it to a married woman who can I say it to?
MEG: You're bad. 7

Stanley's use of the word "succulent" is a deliberate ploy to get Meg riled. When she objects to his utterance of it, he tries to get her to say it herself by asking to which word she objects.

7 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 27.
And he continues to neatly twist her about, asking her who told her it was a word not to be said to a married woman, and to whom he could say it, questions for which Meg, of course, has no answer, which only adds to Stanley's amusement.

That leaves the relationship between Stanley and Petey. Petey could resent Stanley, what with Meg's overtures no secret. But the script belies this possibility. If Petey finds Meg's method of waking Stanley amusing, then he must be secure that Stanley does not do anything to encourage her. Also there must be a reason why Petey allows Stanley to stay.

In fact, there are three. First, Meg is like a new woman when Stanley is around, much more alive and vibrant. Despite the reason for that, Petey likes her this way. Second, very simply, Petey likes Stanley. They are, in a way, co-conspirators in the little games they play with Meg. We notice that when Stanley comes downstairs, Petey is the first to greet him, and that Stanley directs his conversation to Petey while eating his cornflakes, ignoring Meg, knowing that being ignored will disturb her until she cuts in. Then there is this exchange:

STANLEY: All right, I'll go on to the second course.
MEG: He hasn't finished the first course and he wants to go on to the second course!
STANLEY: I feel like something cooked.
MEG: Well, I'm not going to give it to you.
PETEY: Give it to him.
MEG: I'm not going to.

(Pause.)

STANLEY: No breakfast. (Pause.) All night long I've been dreaming about this breakfast.
MEG: I thought you said you didn't sleep.
STANLEY: Day-dreaming. All night long. And now she won’t give me any. Not even a crust a bread on the table. (Pause.) Well, I can see I’ll have to go down to one of those smart hotels on the front.

MEG: (Rising quickly.) You won’t get a better breakfast there than here.

The tactic worked for Stanley, as Meg immediately removes his cornflakes into the kitchen and sets out a plate of fried bread for him on the kitchen hatch. And Petey was on Stanley’s side in this game, backing him up and being a sympathetic listener to Stanley’s oratory. So, as Stanley’s reward, Petey gets for him the second course from the hatch. He also conspires with Stanley in the next little game:

STANLEY: What’s this?
PETEY: Fried bread.
MEG: (Entering.) Well, I bet you don’t know what it is.
STANLEY: Oh, yes I do.
MEG: What?
STANLEY: Fried bread.
MEG: He knew.
STANLEY: What a wonderful surprise.

The third reason why Petey allows Stanley to lodge there does not reveal itself until much later in the play, after more is learned about Stanley, the house, and the two gentlemen visitors. But the script has given enough information to indicate that the household maintains a reasonably harmonious relationship, one that

8 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 25.
9 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 25-26.
seems to center on Stanley as the catalyst who enriches the lives of the others.

It is this catalysis that must be recognized as the key factor in the make-up of the household. Stanley provides just enough spark to the lives of Meg and Petey to enable them to overlook the emptiness which dominates their own relationship. Stanley is all that fills up that emptiness. Unless this need for Stanley is clear, the audience might assume that Stanley serves no purpose at all to the household, and therefore may conclude his absence would be a better alternative for all concerned.

THE FRIGHTENED LODGER

The household harmony, continuing on its own inertia, becomes disrupted when Meg casually mentions that she is expecting two visitors soon. Stanley's reaction to this news, although subtle, is unmistakable. He is alarmed and feeling trapped and tense, and now there is an urgency about him as he is compelled to learn more:

STANLEY: What are you talking about?
MEG: Two gentlemen asked Petey if they could come and stay for a couple of nights. I'm expecting them.
STANLEY: I don't believe it.
MEG: It's true.
STANLEY: (Moving to her.) You're saying it on purpose.
MEG: Petey told me this morning.
STANLEY: (Grinding his cigarette.) When was this? When did he see them?
MEG: Last night..
STANLEY: Who are they?
MEG: I don't know.
STANLEY: Didn't he tell you their names?
MEG: No.
STANLEY: (Facing the room.) Here? They wanted to come here?
MEG: Yes they did.
STANLEY: Why?
MEG: This house is on the list.
STANLEY: But who are they?
MEG: You'll see when they come.
STANLEY: (Decisively.) They won't come.
MEG: Why not?
STANLEY: (Quickly.) I tell you they won't come. Why didn't they come last night, if they were coming?^0

Pinter orchestrates the scene so that we see the pressure slowly building in Stanley, with stage directions like "moving to her", "grinding his cigarette" and "pacing the room" carefully inserted to let any director know to hold off on Stanley's pushing the panic button. Stanley will not reveal to Meg that the idea of visitors to this so-called boarding house frightens him, but by the end of the above exchange, the pressure has built to a fever pitch, and Stanley will have to let off steam somewhere. So he vents his rage on Meg over the first thing handy:

STANLEY: Where's my tea?
MEG: I took it away. You didn't want it.
STANLEY: What do you mean, you took it away.
MEG: I took it away.
STANLEY: What did you take it away for?
MEG: You didn't want it.
STANLEY: Who said I didn't want it?
MEG: You did!
STANLEY: Who gave you the right to take away my tea?
MEG: You wouldn't drink it.^11

Stanley is frightened. His personal terror seems to involve the visitors. His nervousness seems to indicate that he is in

10 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 30.
11 Pinter, Complete works, p. 31.
hiding. The fact that he never seems to leave the house, even when beckoned to do so by the wily and alluring Lulu, also supports this. But from what is he hiding? To answer that, Stanley's history must be clarified.

The one thing we know about Stanley is that he was a pianist. Meg's earlier comment about having watched Stanley play the piano confirms this, and later, Meg will tell Goldberg that Stanley used to play piano "in a concert party on the pier." Now, with the possibility of his personal terror being only as far away as the imminent visitation of the two gentlemen, Stanley tells Meg about a piano concert he once gave at Lower Edmonton, a less that well-to-do district of London:

MEG: But you wouldn't have to go away if you got a job, would you? You could play the piano on the pier.
STANLEY: (He looks at her, then speaks airily.) I've--er--I've been offered a job, as a matter of fact.
MEG: What?
STANLEY: Yes, I'm considering a job at the moment.
MEG: You're not.
STANLEY: A good one, too. A night club. In Berlin.
MEG: Berlin.
MEG: How long for?
STANLEY: We don't stay in Berlin. Then we go to Athens.
MEG: How long for?
STANLEY: Yes. Then we pay a flying visit to--er--
what's her name--
MEG: Where?
MEG: Have you played the piano in those places before?
STANLEY: Played the piano? I've played the piano all over the world. All over the country. (Pause.) I once gave a concert. 13

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12 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 41.
13 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 32.
The job Stanley refers to is a fabrication, created because he is considering running away, due to the threat of encroachment, and he wishes to magnify his prospects so Meg will not worry about him. So he claims that his newly-found job involves a "round-the-world tour" with a lucrative salary. But when Meg gets him to talk about his past, he is caught up in the momentum of this fantasy of magnificence and claims to have played the piano all over the world, a fantasy he reduces to the more modest claim of all over the country, until finally his story is reduced to scale. He once gave a concert. Once and only once.

As Stanley continues the account of his successful concert, Pinter gives the stage direction that Stanley is practically telling the story to himself, indicating that his account seems a reality in his own mind, though there is still room to wonder about how historically authentic it is:

STANLEY: (To himself.) 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.14

But after this initial success some force began the process of aborting the development of any further such career:

STANLEY: Then after that, you know what they did? They carved me up. Carved me up. It was all arranged, it was all worked out. My next concert. Somewhere else it was. In winter. I went down there to play. Then, when I got there, the hall was closed, the place was shuttered up, not even a caretaker.15
To Stanley, this was "their" way of telling him they want him to "crawl down on my bended knees."\textsuperscript{16} To the audience, it is the first indication that someone, or more probably some group (an organization), is trying to make him succumb to their demands. It is not yet apparent either what he did that he should be put into such a position of having to surrender, or just what he is being pressured into surrendering. Nor is it yet apparent who "they" are. What is apparent, and must be made apparent in any production of the play, is that he is frightened, and that the advent of the two visitors is the cause for that emotional state.

\textbf{THE TEMPTRESS NEXT DOOR}

The household harmony is disrupted a second time by Lulu, a neighborhood girl, who enters the house bearing a "solid, round parcel"\textsuperscript{17} which she brought for Meg. Immediately upon being left alone with Stanley, she makes a play for him. It seems odd that she would do so, since her criticism of his unwashed and unshaved condition, and her comments on what a shut-in he is, point to the conclusion that she does not find him very attractive. The only explanation is that Lulu is a temptress, one of those young women who sees her own worth only in terms of how many men she can get on her hook. Stanley presents a challenge to her, being the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Pinter, \textit{Complete Works}, pp. 32-33.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Pinter, \textit{Complete Works}, p. 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Pinter, \textit{Complete Works}, p. 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Pinter, \textit{Complete Works}, p. 35.
\end{itemize}
shut-in he is, so she must lure him outside, where he is unprotected:

LULU: Why don't you ever go out?
STANLEY: I was out—this morning—before breakfast—
LULU: I've never seen you out, not once.
STANLEY: Well, perhaps you're never out when I'm out.
LULU: I'm always out.
STANLEY: We've just never met, that's all.
LULU: It's lovely out. And I've got a few sandwiches.
STANLEY: What sort of sandwiches?
LULU: Cheese.
STANLEY: I'm a big eater, you know.
LULU: That's all right. I'm not hungry.18

Were Lulu to succeed in tempting Stanley to leave his refuge, the options of what would follow are all hers, and considering how little she is really attracted to him, those promises she implies with her suggestive remarks and body would probably just remain promises unkept.

But despite Lulu's best efforts, she is unable to lure Stanley out of the house. This shows how strong Stanley's dread of the outside is and how his need for security and refuge takes priority over everything else. In addition, we are given a bit of insight into the hopelessness Stanley feels toward any effort to flee this personal terror he feels closing in:

STANLEY: How would you like to go away with me?
LULU: Where?
STANLEY: Nowhere. Still, we could go.
LULU: But where could we go?

18 Harold Pinter, "The Birthday Party," in Seven Plays of the Modern Theatre, with intro. by Harold Clurman (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 492. (All references from this volume are of the original 1958 script version.)
STANLEY: Nowhere. There’s nowhere to go. So we
could just go. It wouldn’t matter.
LULU: We might as well stay here.
STANLEY: No. It’s no good here.
LULU: Well, where else is there?
STANLEY: Nowhere.¹⁹

To Lulu, Stanley appears to be so far beyond her scope of
cconcerns that she is quickly losing interest in her pursuit. It
is during such a moment, while she is contemplating whether
another enticement would be worth the effort that Stanley
approaches her, in an effort to obtain some information from her:

STANLEY: (Urgently.) Has Meg had many guests staying
in this house, besides me, I mean before me?
LULU: Besides you?
STANLEY: (Impatiently.) Was she very busy, in the
old days?
LULU: Why should she be?
STANLEY: What do you mean? This used to be a
boarding house, didn’t it?
LULU: Did it?
STANLEY: Didn’t it?
LULU: Did it?
STANLEY: Didn’t. . .oh, skip it.²⁰

Here again, Pinter supplies us with a little clue about the
general, overall picture of this play. Lulu is completely unaware
that Meg’s and Petey’s home was ever a boarding house. Yet she
seems to have been in the area for quite a while, if not her whole
life. This doubt as to the real nature of the house, on top of
the fact that we know Stanley is the only lodger they have had

¹⁹ Pinter, Complete Works, p. 36.
²⁰ Pinter, Seven Plays, pp. 492-493.
since he arrived about a year ago, demands that we consider what else the house might be, and what Meg and Petey are doing there as its proprietors.

But Pinter is not in the practice of supplying any answers that can be determined quickly and easily. A great number of clues must be compiled, and a great deal of deductive reasoning be employed to ascertain anything. And at this point, the two gentlemen visitors have yet to enter. Once they do, more clues will appear to help answer these questions, although more questions will appear, begging for answers that will also require the assemblage of clues and the use of deductive reasoning.

One last little contribution to the ongoing development of the play is made by the scene between Stanley and Lulu. Her sexual overtures toward him are far more inviting than Meg's, but pursuing them would threaten Stanley's sense of security. Also, since Lulu has been so critical of the unkempt Stanley, he should recognize her invitations as designed solely to gain control of him, and that once that is accomplished, she would not be inclined to fulfill those promises. Of course, Stanley does not trust her to be "pleased to do so" because he undoubtedly knows how unappealing he seems.

This must create a strong sense of frustration in Stanley, enough that the desire to lash out at Lulu could manifest itself. But he cannot afford to let his rage get the best of him. He has more pressing problems to confront, like the impending visit of the two gentlemen. So he must tuck this rage away. But it will play a large role in what happens later.
By the time Lulu leaves, three more clues to the mystery that is The Birthday Party have revealed themselves in the script. First, Stanley's fear of leaving his refuge (the house) is greater than his fear of the two gentlemen's arrival. Second, there is reason for questioning whether or not the house is really a boarding house. Third, Stanley has a strong sense of rage building inside him, which he must try to contain. All three clues must be at least as apparent in a production of the play.

THE AGENTS OF STANLEY'S TERROR

Immediately after Lulu leaves, Goldberg and McCann, the two visitors, enter the house. Unseen by them, Stanley beats a hasty exit. Considering the terror he felt at the idea of going outside, the only reason he would leave the sanctuary of the house would be if he believed that the terror had come inside. However, it is unlikely he ever ventures very far away, for there is no place to go, and besides he is dressed in pajamas and bathrobe, and he will re-enter the house as soon as Goldberg and McCann go upstairs.

Goldberg and McCann are not the source of Stanley's terror. They are, however, agents of that source. From their opening conversation it is learned that they have come specifically to this house, and for the purpose of doing a job:

McCANN: Is this it?
GOLDBERG: This is it.
McCANN: Are you sure?
GOLDBERG: Sure I'm sure.
McCANN: Hey, Nat. How do we know this is the right house?
GOLDBERG: What makes you think it's the wrong house?
McCANN: I didn't see a number on the gate.
GOLDBERG: I wasn't looking for a number.
McCANN: No?
GOLDBERG: What is it, McCann? You don't trust me like you did in the old days?
McCANN: Sure I trust you, Nat.
GOLDBERG: But why is it that before you do a job you're all over the place, and when you're doing the job you're as cool as a whistle?
McCANN: I don't know, Nat. I'm just all right once I know what I'm doing. When I know what I'm doing, I'm all right.
GOLDBERG: You know what I said when this job came up? I mean naturally they approached me to take care of it. And you know who I asked for?
McCANN: Who?
GOLDBERG: You.
McCANN: That was very good of you, Nat. 21

Considering Stanley's earlier terror, it is easy to see that he is afraid these two men have come for him. Considering how quickly Goldberg maneuvers his later conversation with Meg onto the subject of Stanley, and how he keeps it there, Stanley's fears become confirmed:

GOLDBERG: Of course. And your guest? Is he a man?
MEG: A man?
GOLDBERG: Or a woman?
MEG: No. A man.
GOLDBERG: Been here long?
MEG: He's been here about a year now.
GOLDBERG: Oh, yes? A resident. What's his name?
MEG: Stanley Webber.
GOLDBERG: Oh, yes? Does he work here?
MEG: He used to work. He used to be a pianist. In a concert party on the pier.
GOLDBERG: Oh, yes? On the pier, eh? Does he play a nice piano?
MEG: Oh, lovely. He once gave a concert.
GOLDBERG: Oh? Where? 22

22 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 41-42.
Curiously enough, Goldberg knew the house without knowing the number. He always seems to know more than he lets on. McCann is nervous about being kept in the dark, and when he pressures Goldberg into telling him more about this job they are to perform, Goldberg responds:

GOLDBERG: The main issue is a singular issue and quite distinct from your previous work. Certain elements, however, might well approximate in points of procedure to some of your other activities. All is dependent on the attitude of our subject. At all events, McCann, I can assure you that the assignment will be carried out and the mission accomplished with no excessive aggravation to you or myself. Satisfied? 23

McCann answers in the affirmative, but he hasn't been given any more information than he had before. Either he is too dull-witted to see through Goldberg's double-talk, or he is too intimidated by his superior to press the matter any further. Other clues later in the play indicate that the intimidation is the more important influence on McCann.

Despite the friction that underlies the working relationship of the two gentlemen, there is something ominous about their presence. The way they make themselves at home before Meg arrives, the way Goldberg knows the house without benefit of a number, and especially some of what he says to Meg concerning the birthday they are to give Stanley all indicate their purpose there is more than just rest and relaxation:

23 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 40.
GOLDBERG: Sure. We'll give him a party. Leave it to me.
MEG: Oh, I'm so glad you came today.
GOLDBERG: If we hadn't come today we'd have come tomorrow.
MEG: Oh, this is going to cheer Stanley up. It will. He's been down in the dumps lately.
GOLDBERG: We'll bring him out of himself. 24

The statement about coming tomorrow if not today gives one a feeling of inevitability and inescapability concerning these agents and the organization they represent. And the line about bringing Stanley "out of himself" serves as a prelude for the task they are to perform. Considering how far Stanley has retreated into himself, this proposed process is likely to be a painful and traumatic experience.

Sensations of friction between them, ominousness and inescapability are imperatives for the gentlemen visitors' first scene. Without the friction, the conflict they have later in the play comes from nowhere. Without the other two, the menace and terror, which is vital for the play, has no foundation upon which to build, and will therefore be unachievable.

THE SOURCE OF STANLEY'S TERROR--THEY

The fact that Goldberg and McCann are on a job, and therefore serving merely as agents of some higher authority, presents an important clue to the puzzle of why Stanley is being pursued. Goldberg spoke of the ones who offered him this job by saying,

24 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 42-43.
"Naturally they approached me to take care of it" (See Page 17.). Stanley also referred to a third person plural entity in the account of his concert quoted above. There were such references as "They were all there that night. Every single one of them." and "They came up to me and said they were grateful." And Stanley concluded with, "Then after that, you know what they did. They carved me up . . . the place was shuttered up . . . they locked it up . . . they want me to crawl down on my bended knee."²⁵

Are these two "theys" one and the same organization? Considering the fact that Stanley is convinced of some kind of conspiracy against him, and that Goldberg and McCann immediately come on a job that will eventually call for them to reduce Stanley to a state of being in which they can take him away to Monty—the personification of the organization—the tie-in seems indisputable. By allowing an association to take place between the "they" that Stanley regards as his personal terror, and the "they" that sent Goldberg and McCann after him, Pinter creates a third person entity that becomes much more corporeal, and therefore much more terrifying.

If we take Stanley at his word that his concert was a success (and such a line as "They came up to me and said they were grateful" along with Stanley's remorse that his father did not attend the concert would certainly support that evaluation), then we must conclude that this success led to the effort of this organization to curb his progress, for there are no other events

²⁵ Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 32-33.
that take place between this first successful concert, and the
second, aborted one. Why should such success lead to this effort
or conspiracy? Again Pinter ever so delicately lays down the
clues that will solve this puzzle.

Stanley described his skill at the piano by the statement "I
had a unique touch. Absolutely unique." Notice the term unique.
Not necessarily beautiful or artistic, although we may infer from
the term in this context that it was all those qualities and more.
Notice also that Stanley reinforces the term unique with the
modifier absolutely preceding it. According to Webster's
Collegiate Dictionary, "absolutely" describes something as:

Free from imperfection. Free from mixture, pure. Free
from limit, restriction, or qualification. Determined in it-
self and not by anything outside itself.²⁶

So we have discovered a figure, who, after displaying an
absolutely unique talent at the piano, a talent which was
applauded and admired by those in attendance, fell victim to a
conspiracy to deny him any further outlet for displaying that
talent until, as he inferred from the conspiracy, he should "crawl
down on bended knee." Rather than do that, Stanley became a
fugitive from the powers of this conspiracy, living in seclusion
within the sanctuary of Meg's and Petey's boarding house, where he
has been the only lodger, until now, when two gentlemen visitors
arrive with a job to do, a job that fixes Stanley as its target.

Combining all of these details with the fact that Goldberg and McCann were sent on this job by their superiors led me to my operational assumption of a powerful, almost omnipotent, organization being behind the conspiracy, and the source of the gentlemen's mission.

Why should Stanley's "absolutely unique" talent prompt such a conspiracy? It is that very unique quality that the organization fears. For this is an organization that cannot tolerate individualists, like Stanley, who display talents and qualities that are beyond the banal and mundane standards the organization has outlined. Such talented individualists must be made to conform to the organization's standards.

Proving this involves determining how Pinter has set Stanley apart from the other characters in the play. The others must all display similar qualities that Stanley never does, and he must display characteristics quite distinct from those of anyone else. Then it must be determined that Goldberg's and McCann's task involves removing those unique qualities in preparation for Stanley to be re-formed according to the organization's standards.

When Goldberg is double-talking McCann, he describes their target (Stanley) as "a singular issue and quite distinct from your previous work" (See page 17). Later in Act Two, Stanley tells McCann about having a "private income" and of having started a "little private business." Stanley is the only person in the play ever described in such terms as unique, singular, distinct, private or any other term that suggests anything resembling individuality.
There is another semantic device Pinter uses to distinguish Stanley from the other characters. It is through the use of that most English expression "very nice." The play starts off with Meg and Petey using it to describe nearly every aspect of their existence, from cornflakes to fried bread. Lulu uses it to describe the contents of the parcel she brought round for Meg. Goldberg employs the expression quite often in all three acts and even McCann says it once to describe the party Goldberg is preparing for Stanley, when he and Stanley meet in Act Two. The term is used in such abundance it cannot fail to leave an impression on anyone who reads or sees the play.

Stanley, on the other hand, never uses the word "nice" at all. He usually responds in quite a contrary manner to the type of questions toward which the others would mechanically belch out a "very nice" to each other. But for Stanley, it is a term that causes him to respond with varying degrees of disgust, distress and disfavor. This is another subtle clue to how Pinter sets Stanley apart from the others, and how the others might start looking like products of the same mold.

Goldberg and McCann therefore join Meg, Petey and Lulu as characters of a similar breed, all of whom exert, or try to exert, an influence or relationship upon Stanley. His being different makes him the nucleus around which they all orbit. However instead of the nucleus exerting the greater gravitational pull on its satellites, as is the natural condition found in physics,

27-28 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 50.
Stanley's satellites are pulling at him in various directions, which only increases his difficulty in maintaining his individuality. Of course, Goldberg and McCann do maintain some degree of their own individual qualities, but only within a prescribed conformation. They, as will be examined in greater detail shortly, cannot afford too much individuality, or the consequences that will befall Stanley might come down upon them too.

CONFORMING FOR THE GREATER GOOD

It is this theme of the individual versus those who cannot abide such individuality (tyrants) that is central to the theme of The Birthday Party. It was a theme that flourished among many of the "new breed" of novelists and playwrights in the 1950's. Some, like Ayn Rand, wrote of individualistic heroes, who could conquer the tyrants and utilize their talents for a better world. Others, like John Osborne and Jack Kerouac, wrote of heroes who could maintain their individuality, but only at a cost of caccooning themselves from the rest of the world. Pinter also found the tyrants to be a terrifying force, and, by giving their agents a sense of arrogance, omnipotence and destructiveness, displayed their menace for all to see.

In contrast to Stanley's individuality, the other characters demonstrate a noticeable lack of individual identity. Goldberg has a penchant for calling people by a multiplicity of names, as he cannot keep them straight. He refers to his son as both Manny (short for Emanuel) and Timmy, and he calls McCann Seamus and
Dermot on two separate occasions. This tendency of his seems to
be a legacy; what Goldberg does with people's names now was done
to him previously. His father called him Benny, his mother and
wife called him Simey, while now he goes by the name of Nat. He
subsequently gets extremely angry and violent at McCann when the
Irishman playfully calls him Simey, as it reminds Goldberg of just
how uncertain of his own individual identity he is.

Another layer of the contrast between the individual and
those characters who have conformed is revealed through Goldberg's
reminiscences about his mother and his wife. The stories he tells
are nearly identical, substituting a walk with a girl for a
constitutional in the park, in both stories greeting the children,
both women calling him Simey, and each story finishing with:

GOLDBERG: . . . and there on the table what would I
see? The nicest piece of gefilte fish/rollmop and pickled
cucumber you could wish to find on a plate.29

Goldberg later remarks about Meg, "My mother was the same.
My wife was identical."30 All three women identical! There is
reason to believe Lulu will follow suit.

Lulu set her hook for Goldberg, just as she did for Stanley.
Note that Lulu goes after both men with whom Meg flirts. Neither
woman could ensnare Stanley, but both received the attentions of
Goldberg, though Lulu lures him away from Meg, toward whom his
attentions were directed merely for the purpose of ingratiating

29 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 53 and 69.
30 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 81.
himself to the household. But while Lulu is able to lure Goldberg onto her hook, she finds out too late that he is the human equivalent of Jaws (The entire fishing metaphor developed during the rehearsal process).

In Act Three, Lulu will descend the stairs, victimized and ashamed, complaining about how Goldberg used her, took advantage of her, and taught her "things a girl shouldn't know before she's been married at least three times!" This dramatic reversal results in Lulu's sounding as ludicrous as Meg (Meg's reaction to the word "succulent" for example.), who is just like Goldberg's wife, who was just like his mother.

The more similarities we find between the five characters who orbit around Stanley, and between the characters they talk about, the more striking becomes the individuality that Stanley is struggling to maintain. Because that individuality is special, Stanley remains at the nucleus of the household. He provides the special quality that brightens up the otherwise gray existence of Meg and Petey. He provides Lulu with a special, and so far, insurmountable challenge.

And he remains a target for the agents of an organization that wants him to yield that very individuality, for individuals are far more difficult to control than people who all live, think and behave along prescribed lines. It is for this reason that

31 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 90.
Stanley's individuality, his unique qualities, must be stamped out, and it is for this same reason that Goldberg and McCann are there.

Thus it becomes the director's challenge to establish Stanley as an individual set upon from all directions—with the possible exception of Petey, who has yet to demonstrate any influence on the events of the play—by characters who all have tried and/or will try to fashion him into what they want him to be. The director must also establish some degree of similarity among the five others, so their sameness will serve as a contrast to Stanley's individuality. Yet this sameness and its contrast with Stanley's individuality must not be too stark, or it will seem artificial and the characters will lose the impact of being real people.
ACT TWO

THE UNCERTAIN IRISHMAN

Surprisingly, one of the most individual characters, next to Stanley, is McCann. His memories of his native Ireland are specific, unlike Goldberg's vagaries. The song he sings (See scoresheet at end of text.) during the party scene in Act Two is melodious and full, and his penchant for tearing newspapers into strips grates on the ever-proper Goldberg for being "without a solitary point." 32

If McCann is a character with more individualistic tendencies than the others, he might prove to be a flaw in the structure of the organization for which he works. Such a flaw might provide Stanley with a way out of his perceived peril.

At the beginning of Act Two, Stanley descends the stairs to find McCann at the table, tearing the newspaper into strips. McCann begins immediately to do his part of the job, which is to confront, confine and intimidate Stanley. He is very smooth in his work, with never a harsh word, being almost sickeningly sweet to Stanley, yet within that manner always contradicting him and always imposing his physical presence upon him:

32 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 85.
McCANN: Were you going out?
STANLEY: Yes.
McCANN: On your birthday?
STANLEY: Yes. Why not?
McCANN: But they're holding a party here for you tonight.
STANLEY: Oh, really? That's unfortunate.
McCANN: Ah, no. It's very nice.
STANLEY: I'm sorry. I'm not in the mood for a party tonight.
McCANN: Oh, is that so? I'm sorry.
STANLEY: Yes, I'm going out to celebrate quietly, on my own.
McCANN: That's a shame.

(They stand.)

STANLEY: Well, if you'd move out of my way--
McCANN: But everything's laid on. The guests are expected.
STANLEY: Guests? What guests?
McCANN: Myself for one. I had the honour of an invitation.

(McCann begins to whistle "The Mountains of Morne." )

The stage direction that McCann is beginning to whistle "The Mountains of Morne" at this point is a direction that Pinter included in the original script version of the play, the version that played when the play premiered in London in 1958. The script version now published by Samuel French, Inc., and the version used when the play first played in New York in 1967, deletes this whistling direction, along with several other conversations throughout the play. Apparently, a decision was made sometime between 1958 and 1967 that the play was too long, and it went

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33 Pinter, Seven Plays, pp. 503-504.
through an editing process. I assume Pinter was fully involved in this process.

Some of the deletions I like, for the play suffers nothing by their removal. But some of them deny audiences and readers some very important information and qualities. The aforementioned conversation between Stanley and Lulu about whether there had been any lodgers at Meg’s and Petey’s before Stanley is one such deletion, as is the passage where Goldberg refers to his son by a confused variety of names. The first deletion takes away that element of doubt concerning whether this house was ever a real boarding house, while the second denies us preparation for the further confusion Goldberg has with names, an element of his confused identity.

The elimination of McCann’s whistling also denies audiences and readers an important element to his character, because in the original version something very strange happens:

(Stanley joins McCann in whistling "The Mountains of Morne." During the next five lines the whistling is continuous, one whistling while the other speaks, and both whistling together.)

This joining in by Stanley serves as a first hint that Stanley shares with McCann a love for Ireland. Not only does this common bond become apparent to the audiences and readers, but Stanley realizes it as well. Not long afterward Stanley begins to make an appeal to McCann, describing himself as a harmless

34 Pinter, Seven Plays, p. 504.
recluse, while at the same time trying to engage McCann in friendly chit-chat and offering him a cigarette. He is trying to make friends with McCann, perhaps because he knows Goldberg is the leader (There is no doubt he recognized Goldberg's name when Meg told him it in Act One.), and perhaps because he detects a little less certainty in McCann about the rightness of the job than Stanley expects Goldberg to have. And it is that mutual love for Ireland, first revealed by their mutual whistling of that Irish melody, that would first give Stanley the clue that McCann might be open to such an approach.

Stanley, in addition to McCann's sentimentality toward Ireland, finds another exposed nerve in him:

STANLEY: Why did you choose this house?
McCANN: You know, sir, you're a bit depressed for a man on his birthday.
STANLEY: This isn't my birthday.
McCANN: No?
STANLEY: No. It's not till next month.
McCANN: Not according to the lady.
STANLEY: Her? She's crazy. Round the bend.
McCANN: That's a terrible thing to say.
STANLEY: Haven't you found that out yet? There's a lot you don't know. I think someone's leading you up the garden path.
McCANN: Who would do that?
STANLEY: (Leaning across the table.) That woman is mad!
McCANN: That's slander.
STANLEY: And you don't know what you're doing.
McCANN: Your cigarette is near that paper.\(^{35}\)

When Stanley tried to pin McCann down on why he and Goldberg were at this specific house, McCann dodged the question. He did

\(^{35}\) Pinter, Complete Works, p. 51.
so quite skillfully, taking the offensive by noting Stanley's anxiety and calling it depression, but he still, in fact, dodged the question. Subsequently Stanley begins to suspect that McCann has not been fully informed as to why they have come for him, or about any other details of the job. Pinter has already revealed through McCann's conversation with Goldberg in Act One, during which he failed to obtain any such additional information, that he has been kept in the dark, and there is every reason to believe he does not like this condition, else why would he be so ill at ease when they enter the house, and why would he try to learn more? Therefore, there is room for a visible reaction from McCann that Stanley has struck a nerve each time Stanley mentions how little McCann knows, even though McCann quickly recovers and counters each time.

Stanley tries to press this momentary advantage, but he is too anxious and too late at the same time. They both hear the voices of Goldberg and Petey from outside, which serve to unnerve Stanley and remind McCann of his task. When the distraught Stanley then grabs McCann's arm to try to secure his attention, he incurs a violent response instead, which necessitates a little recovery time.

But Stanley, still hurting, does not delay, and once again he tries to invoke McCann's sympathy and aid, this time by combining in his appeal both of McCann's vulnerabilities: his sentimentality toward Ireland and his ignorance of his and Goldberg's assignment:
STANLEY: Has he [Goldberg] told you anything? Do you know what you’re here for? Tell me. You needn’t be frightened of me. Or hasn’t he told you?
McCANN: Told me what?
STANLEY: (Reasonably.) Look. You look an honest man. You’re being made a fool of, that’s all. You understand?
Where do you come from?
McCANN: Where do you think?
STANLEY: I know Ireland very well. I’ve many friends there. I love that country and I admire and trust its people. I trust them. They respect the truth and they have a sense of humour. I think their policemen are wonderful. I’ve been there. I’ve never seen such sunsets. What about coming out to have a drink with me? There’s a pub down the road serves draught Guiness. Very difficult to get in these parts—

Unfortunately for Stanley, it is at this point that Goldberg and Petey enter, which puts a stop to his effort to reach McCann. Would he have succeeded in reaching that part of McCann that still yearns for friendship and Carrikmacross had Goldberg and Petey not interrupted? We cannot know. But a connection of some sort had to be made. There are just too many needs within McCann that remain unsatisfied by his association with Goldberg for him to be completely unmoved by Stanley’s appeal.

Goldberg, upon settling into the room, begins retelling a sentimental reminiscence of his younger days. His description begins to remind McCann of his own hometown, but when the Irishman offers a comparison, Goldberg’s curt reply serves to increase the friction already present between them:

GOLDBERG: I can see it like it was yesterday. The sun falling behind the dog stadium. Ah!
McCANN: Like behind the town hall?

36 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 52.
Goldberg soon after sends McCann out to get the liquor bottles, getting rid of him so he can be alone with Stanley. McCann cannot appreciate this, as it would only make him feel that he is being left out of something again. So where Stanley, in the hope of securing McCann's friendship and subsequently his aid, directed his appeals to the Irishman's vulnerable areas (his love for the Ireland he has left and his frustration at being kept in the dark), Goldberg jeopardizes his bond with McCann by pouring salt on both wounds.

With McCann now uncertain as to where his loyalty should lie, thanks to the connection Stanley has begun to create and the friction between Goldberg and himself which has just been newly irritated, the hope may still exist for the audience that Stanley can escape. If his enemies are divided, they will be weaker than when united. Stanley got through his confrontation with the Irishman alone, and in the process has perhaps put a strain on McCann's ability to perform his function. Without McCann's function, Goldberg might be less effective in performing his.

But for the hope that Stanley can escape to exist for the audience, the connection formed between Stanley and McCann must be evident. Without that connection, there can be no division of loyalty within McCann, and without that division of loyalty, there

37 Pinter, *Complete Works*, p. 53.
can be no way out for Stanley, for the two agents, united in their effort, will easily overpower Stanley in any struggle they initiate, especially since it is probable they will initiate it on their own terms.

THE PETEY CONNECTION

Petey's unheard conversation outside with Goldberg, and the exit he makes shortly after this conversation, allegedly for his chess night, conveniently leaving Stanley alone with Goldberg and McCann, indicates that the relationship between Goldberg and Petey cannot be taken for granted as just lodger and proprietor. There are hints and clues that suggest there is more to Petey than meets the eye. To discern Petey's true role in this play, those clues must be assembled, and conclusions drawn from them.

In Act One it was Petey who brought up the subject of the two gentlemen visitors to Meg:

PETEY: Oh, Meg, two men came up to me on the beach last night.
MEG: Two men?
PETEY: Yes. They wanted to know if we could put them up for a couple of nights.
MEG: Put them up? Here. 38

Meg seems to be surprised that anyone would want to be put up at their home, as though the notion of their running a boarding house has slipped her mind. The dialogue continues:

38 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 22.
MEG: Had they heard about us, Petey?
PETEY: They must have done.
MEG: Yes, they must have done. They must have heard this was a very good boarding house. It is. This house is on the list.
PETEY: It is.
MEG: I know it is.
PETEY: They might show up today. Can you do it?
MEG: Oh, I've got that lovely room they can have.
PETEY: You've got a room ready?
MEG: I've got the room with the armchair all ready for visitors.
PETEY: You're sure.39

Petey seems surprised that Meg actually does have a room ready. Would he not expect a boarding house with only one boarder to have more than enough vacancies for two gentlemen? Also, Meg intends to put both men in one room, which suggests that, if there are other available rooms, Meg is not used to renting out as many rooms as possible for the sake of maximum profit.

Helping to suggest that there is more than one vacant room in the house is that Petey asks Meg if she has a room ready. If there were only one remaining room, he would have asked if the room was ready. And Meg's reply that she had "the room with the armchair all ready for visitors" indicates she needs to differentiate the ready vacant room (with the armchair) from all others. Whatever the case, there is a great sense of unpreparedness, and even uneasiness, toward receiving visitors in the household.

Petey's double checking with Meg about whether she has a room available before giving an answer to Goldberg and McCann might

39 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 22-23.
suggest a slight reluctance to admit them. And when Meg says she has a room ready, he asks if she is sure, perhaps hoping she is mistaken.

All of this, when put together, adds up to an incongruous image of Meg and Petey as the proprietors of a normal boarding house, especially when the fact that Lulu showed no knowledge of the house being a boarding house is included. If the house is not a normal boarding house, and Meg and Petey not normal proprietors, how then do they fit into the scheme of things?

A strong indication of the answer comes when, in Act Two, Petey exits the house for the evening, leaving Stanley alone with Goldberg and McCann:

PETEY: Well, I'll have to be off.
GOLDBERG: Off?
PETEY: It's my chess night.
GOLDBERG: You're not staying for the party?
PETEY: (Crosses to STANLEY.) No, I'm sorry, Stan. I didn't know about it till just now. And we've got a game on. I'll try to get back early.
GOLDBERG: Beat him quick and come back Mr. Boles.
PETEY: Do my best. See you later, Stan.40

Petey's abandonment of Stanley serves Goldberg's purpose all too well to be a coincidence. The excuse of a pre-arranged chess night could be a convenient way for Pinter to write him out of the upcoming birthday party scene, but Petey was just outside with Goldberg, and, according to the stage directions, a considerable amount of muted conversation and laughter was heard from them.

40 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 54.
Pinter rarely relies on coincidence. An idea more consistent with the scheme of things is that Petey abandons Stanley under Goldberg's instructions, which would indicate that Goldberg, McCann and the organization are no strangers to Petey. Petey is involved with them.

As far-fetched as this may seem, when one considers the concept of an all-powerful, all-encompassing organization, with the goal of dictating how everyone will live their lives, the terror of such an organization becomes even greater when the power to create such an outpost, presumably one of many, is accepted. Much like the terrifying, incomprehensible system encountered by Joseph K. in Franz Kafka's *The Trial*—critics (e.g. Esslin and Hollis) have commonly found evidence of Kafka's influence on Pinter—the organization of which Goldberg and McCann are agents becomes more terrifying when it seems to be everywhere, and when its influence has reached even the people one might be most sure are trustworthy and innocent.

If this is true, it could explain how the organization found Stanley. Meg is too out of touch with anything outside her kitchen and rooms to be involved in the organization, but Petey is much more perceptive, as he will display in the upcoming confrontation with Goldberg in Act Three. Therefore we can conclude that the organization has set him up, with Meg, in this house, to be a place where a Stanley might someday seek sanctuary, thinking himself well-hidden, only to have been reported by Petey (as he would have been instructed to do, and before Stanley would have begun to endear himself to the household). This could also
explain how Goldberg knew that he and McCann had arrived at the right house, without looking for a number. A veteran of many such manhunts, he can recognize such a house easily, without benefit of a street address. This could also explain Lulu's ignorance of the house being a boarding house.

It may seem odd that almost a year has passed since Stanley arrived without anyone coming for him, until one looks at what has happened in that year. Stanley has gone from a concert pianist with a "unique touch" to a piano player on the pier—the suggestion being that he would play honky-tonk or amusement park music, something common—and finally to someone who no longer plays the piano at all, who is weak, listless, malnourished both nutritionally and intellectually, and much less capable of putting up a good fight against Goldberg and McCann now than he would have been if they had come for him when he first arrived.

But in that time, Petey has grown to like Stanley and to appreciate how his presence gives Meg so much vitality. He has housed him for a year, knowing that the organization would come for him, but he is too afraid of the organization to turn Stanley out. So Petey reluctantly obeys Goldberg, admits the agents into his house—once Meg said she had a room ready his last possible option was gone for denying them entrance—and leaves, clearing the way for Goldberg and McCann to conduct their business. Petey may or may not know what is in store for Stanley. He hopes it will not be too serious, for he does hope to see Stanley later.
All of this may be beyond a director's ability to clarify for an audience. These conclusions are reached only when such questions as, "Why doesn't anyone (Meg, Petey, Lulu) behave as though the house is a boarding house?", "Why does Petey abandon Stanley?", "How did the organization locate Stanley?" and "Why does Petey seem reluctant to admit Goldberg and McCann?" beg answers. The director's imperative is to be sure that if these questions come to the audience's mind, the answers are contained within the production.

THE COMBAT BEGINS

When Petey leaves for the evening, McCann exits with him, leaving Stanley alone with Goldberg. The two principle adversaries face each other now for the first time:

GOLDBERG: A warm night.
STANLEY: Don't mess me about.
GOLDBERG: I beg your pardon.
STANLEY: I'm afraid there's been a mistake. We're booked out. Your room is taken. Mrs. Boles forgot to tell you. You'll have to find somewhere else.
GOLDBERG: Are you the manager here?
STANLEY: That's right.
GOLDBERG: Is it a good game?
STANLEY: I run the house. I'm afraid you and your friend will have to find other accommodations.
GOLDBERG: Oh, I forgot, I must congratulate you on your birthday. Congratulations. 41

Stanley's responses reflect panic. His friend Petey has deserted him. He was thwarted in his effort to establish a

41 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 54.
connection with McCann, and now he is face to face with an opponent of whom he is deathly afraid, which became evident when Stanley went from belligerent interrogator to dumbfounded mute upon Meg mentioning Goldberg's name. So now he is swinging wildly, like an overmatched boxer hoping to land a lucky punch on his opponent by coming at him with a wild flurry. He claims to be the manager of the house and that Goldberg and McCann must leave, because there is no vacancy. Goldberg coolly fends off these weak lies, until by the time McCann returns, Stanley is like a frantic child screaming, "Get out."\(^{42}\)

Stanley still has some more resources within him, however, as he collects himself and connects a few verbal punches on Goldberg:

\[\text{STANLEY: Let me—just make this clear. You don't bother me. To me, you're nothing but a dirty joke. But I have a responsibility towards the people in this house. They've been down here too long. They've lost their sense of smell. I haven't. And nobody's going to take advantage of them while I'm here.}\] \(^{43}\)

Though Stanley does get off this verbal offensive, it is not enough to faze a cool professional like Goldberg. Stanley does show, however, that he is not just going to roll over and play dead. And when Goldberg launches his next offensive, Stanley can withstand it:

\[\text{GOLDBERG: Mr. Webber, sit down.}\]
\[\text{STANLEY: It's no good starting any kind of trouble.}\]
\[\text{GOLDBERG: Sit down.}\]

\(^{42}\) Pinter, Complete Works, p. 55.
\(^{43}\) Pinter, Complete Works, p. 55.
STANLEY: Why should I?
GOLDBERG: If you want to know the truth, Webber, you're beginning to get on my breasts.
STANLEY: Really? Well, that's—
GOLDBERG: Sit down.
STANLEY: No.44

During these last two verbal exchanges, McCann is present, having returned with the liquor bottles, and is taking it all in. He has not had the nerve to talk to Goldberg the way Stanley has, nor to oppose his commands, despite considerable friction between them. So McCann's having a sense of admiration for Stanley might not be far-fetched. Once one can accept McCann's admiration for Stanley, and add to it the connection that Stanley was coming close to making with him earlier, along with Goldberg's twice since making McCann feel small ("There's no comparison" and "Collect the bottles"45), one may conclude that some degree of reluctance will exist in McCann when Goldberg orders him to get Stanley to sit down:

GOLDBERG: McCann.
McCANN: Nat?
GOLDBERG: Ask him to sit down.
McCANN: Yes, Nat. (McCANN moves to STANLEY.) Do you mind sitting down?
STANLEY: Yes, I do mind.
McCANN: Yes now, but—it'd be better if you did.
STANLEY: Why don't you sit down?
McCANN: No, not me—you.
STANLEY: No thanks.

(Pause.)

44 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 55-56.
45 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 53 and 54.
McCANN: (He crosses to GOLDBERG.) Nat.
GOLDBERG: What?
McCANN: He won't sit down.
GOLDBERG: Well, ask him.
McCANN: I've asked him.
GOLDBERG: Ask him again.
McCANN: (To STANLEY.) Sit down.
STANLEY: Why?
McCANN: You'd be more comfortable.
STANLEY: So would you.

(Pause.)

McCANN: All right. If you will I will.

(They move to the table.)

STANLEY: You first.

(McCANN slowly sits at the table.)

McCANN: Well?
STANLEY: Right. Now you've both had a rest you can get out!
McCANN: (Rising.) That's a dirty trick. I'll kick the shite out of him.
GOLDBERG: No! I have stood up.46

McCann's ability to intimidate by his mere physical presence isn't working, partially due to Stanley's resolve and partially because that sense of admiration McCann is feeling for Stanley keeps him from committing himself fully to the task at hand. Stanley not only takes McCann to a standstill in their little skirmish, but he gets the Irishman to flinch first--McCann's

46 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 56-57.
returning to Goldberg to tell him he (Stanley) will not sit down—and he even embarrasses McCann in front of his boss when he tricks the Irishman into sitting down while he remains standing.

Though Stanley may have won this round, it was a costly victory. He is no match for McCann physically, so the only reason he could stand up to him was that McCann was starting to waver in his dedication to his job and his loyalty to Goldberg. Both qualities were tenuous to begin with, and with the connection that had started to form between McCann and Stanley, and the admiration McCann was starting to feel toward his designated target, McCann's ability to intimidate was becoming compromised. However, by tricking McCann, and embarrassing him in front of Goldberg, Stanley enraged McCann, destroying that very tenuous connection and returning the Irishman to the position of a full-fledged adversary.

With the threat of physical retaliation restored, Goldberg stops McCann's charge, but uses the threat to get Stanley seated. Once Stanley has lost this battle of wills, and has been placed in that less imposing physical posture, they can exploit their superior vertical positions, along with their numerical advantage, in the ensuing verbal combat, with a total brainwashing the goal.

Goldberg's and McCann's verbal ammunition takes in a wide range of human activity. They bludgeon Stanley into submission and silence him by the sheer number and variety of their accusations, delivered in a blend of cliches and surrealistic non-sequiturs. McCann's questions and accusations involve
religious heresy and revolutionary disloyalty. Goldberg comes at Stanley from the realms of sexual impropriety, and philosophical asseveration:

GOLDBERG: Why do you treat that young lady [Lulu] like a leper? She's not the leper, Webber!
McCANN: Why did you leave the organization?
GOLDBERG: What would your old mum say, Webber?
McCANN: Why did you betray us?
GOLDBERG: You hurt me, Webber. You're playing a dirty game.
McCANN: That's a Black and Tan fact.
GOLDBERG: What have you done with your wife?
McCANN: He's killed his wife!
GOLDBERG: Why did you kill your wife?
STANLEY: What wife?
McCANN: How did he kill her?
GOLDBERG: How did you kill her?
McCANN: You throttled her.
GOLDBERG: With arsenic.
McCANN: There's your man!
GOLDBERG: Why did you never get married?
McCANN: She was waiting at the porch.
GOLDBERG: You skedaddled from the wedding.
McCANN: He left her in the lurch.
GOLDBERG: You left her in the pudding club.
McCANN: She was waiting at the church.
GOLDBERG: Webber! Why did you change your name?
STANLEY: I forgot the other one.
GOLDBERG: What's your name now?
STANLEY: Joe Soap.
GOLDBERG: You stink of sin.
McCANN: I can smell it.
GOLDBERG: Do you recognise an external force?
STANLEY: What?
GOLDBERG: Do you recognise an external force?
McCANN: That's the question!
GOLDBERG: Do you recognise an external force, responsible for you, suffering for you?
McCANN: You're a traitor to the cloth.
GOLDBERG: What do you use for pyjamas?
STANLEY: Nothing.
GOLDBERG: You verminate the sheet of your birth.
McCANN: What about the Albigensenist heresy?
GOLDBERG: Who watered the wicket in Melbourne?
McCANN: What about the blessed Oliver Plunkett?47

47 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 57-61.
Goldberg's accusations of Stanley's sexual, social and philosophical impropriety are easy enough to discern as he brings up the claims that Stanley is unfairly avoiding Lulu, has killed his wife—a wife that Goldberg, in almost the very same breath accuses Stanley of abandoning at their wedding—and recognizes no external force responsible for his existence. McCann's challenges require explanation. The Black and Tan were "a special police force composed of army veterans which was created in 1919 to reinforce the Royal Irish Constabulary in its battle with the revolutionary Irish Republican Army." The Albigensenist heresy refers to a "Catharistic sect in southern France between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries" while Oliver Plunkett was the "last English Catholic martyr to die (in the seventeenth century)."

During one of the verbal exchanges on philosophy Goldberg reveals something vital about how he and the organization he represents think:

GOLDBERG: Is the number 846 possible or necessary?
STANLEY: Neither.
GOLDBERG: Wrong! Is the number 846 possible or necessary?
STANLEY: Both.
GOLDBERG: Wrong! It's necessary but not possible.
STANLEY: Both.
GOLDBERG: Wrong! Why do you think the number 846 is necessarily possible?
STANLEY: Must be.

48-50 Gale, p. 57.
GOLDBERG: Wrong! It's only necessarily necessary! We admit possibility only after we grant necessity. It is possible because necessary but by no means necessary through possibility. The possibility can only be assumed after the proof of necessity.

McCANN: Right!51

Goldberg cannot accept anything that is possible unless it is first necessary. Something that exists solely for its own sake, simply because it can, is incomprehensible to him, and unacceptable to his superiors. That is why they feared Stanley. An artistic form, whose existence serves no purpose other than to develop itself, is outside the comprehension of an organization that can thrive only by controlling and channeling the elements it embodies into a common intelligence. The artist, like Stanley, would not be any threat to the organization as long as he is either unappreciated or conventional, fitting the organization's design of what is necessary. But as soon as the artist develops an unconventional style, a "unique touch" if you will, and that style begins to be appreciated and applauded by individuals and small groups, the organization might fear that the people would realize the possibility of a greater wisdom than its own. Thus the organization must suppress the individual and subsequently change him into a form that serves a predesigned, harmonious purpose within its structure.

And that is the purpose for which Goldberg and McCann have come to the boarding house. Stanley, a once up-and-coming pianist

51 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 60.
of a non-conforming nature, must now be stripped of his independent personality, so that he can then be reshaped into the kind of being whom the organization can fit into the structure of its machinery. That is the pattern of an organization which admits possibility only after it grants necessity.

By the end of Goldberg's and McCann's inquisition, Stanley seems to have been totally stripped of that within him that made him a Stanley:

McCANN: Who are you, Webber?
GOLDBERG: What makes you think you exist?
McCANN: You're dead.
GOLDBERG: You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odour! 52

Now what awaits is the putting back together of Stanley as a more "necessary" being. In effect, Goldberg and McCann intend to put him through a rebirth process, in their own, or the organization's, image. And what better way to celebrate such an event than with a birthday party? But this final process will not be as easy as they think.

The director's challenge during this combat scene is twofold. First, he must reestablish the connection between Stanley and McCann, so that when Goldberg calls upon McCann to intimidate Stanley, McCann's divided loyalty prevents him from being equal to the task. Then the director must put together a terrifying scene

52 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 62.
of verbal bombardment, so that by the time Stanley screams, the audience will be just short of reaching that same point.

RAGE OF THE PRIMITIVE BEING

Goldberg and McCann have miscalculated slightly. Stanley has been spiritually and intellectually castrated, but the primitive, animalistic being within him remains undamaged. And this is a being that for a year has had to be contained by the spiritual and intellectual restraints his situation required. Though he has hated Meg's sexual overtures, he has never physically lashed out at her, but instead he has let his civilized intelligent self control the situation and limit his retaliation to sardonic retorts and threats of impending visitors coming, not to stay, but to remove something with their wheelbarrows:

STANLEY: Meg. Do you know what?
MEG: What?
STANLEY: Have you heard the latest?
MEG: No.
STANLEY: I'll bet you have.
MEG: I haven't.
STANLEY: Shall I tell you?
MEG: What latest?
STANLEY: You haven't heard it?
MEG: No.
STANLEY: They're coming today.
MEG: Who?
STANLEY: They're coming in a van.
MEG: Who?
STANLEY: And do you know what they've got in the van?
MEG: What?
STANLEY: They've got a wheelbarrow in that van.
MEG: They haven't.
STANLEY: (Rises.) Oh yes they have.
MEG: You're a liar. (Backs away.)
STANLEY: (Advancing upon her.) A big wheelbarrow. And when the van stops they wheel it out, and they wheel it up the garden path, and then they knock
at the front door.
MEG: They don't.
STANLEY: They're looking for someone.
MEG: They're not.
STANLEY: They're looking for someone. A certain person.
MEG: (Hoarsely.) No, they're not!
STANLEY: Shall I tell you who they're looking for?
MEG: No!
STANLEY: You don't want me to tell you?
MEG: You're a liar!53

Stanley has had to apply restraints on himself toward Lulu as well. Although the script does not directly indicate this, it is only natural that he has desired her, despite recognizing her for what she is. Yet he has neither accepted her invitations on her terms, nor has he lashed out at her for implying promises she would be disinclined to fulfill.

These intellectual and spiritual controls have been restraining the final quality of Stanley's character, the primitive, violent savage that is in all human beings. Some control this third self better than do others, but it is there in all, and now that Goldberg and McCann have succeeded in stripping Stanley of his more civilized selves, the primitive Stanley is unrestrained.

Just once, this more savage self revealed itself to us. Stanley comes very close to losing control in his effort to ascertain from Meg the names of the two visitors, and when Meg finally tells him, he is dumbfounded:

53 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 33-34.
STANLEY: Who are they?
MEG: They're very nice, Stanley.
STANLEY: I said, who are they?
MEG: I've told you, the two gentlemen.
STANLEY: What do they want here?
MEG: They want to stay.
STANLEY: How long for?
MEG: They didn't say.
STANLEY: But why here? Why not somewhere else?
MEG: This house is on the list.
STANLEY: What are they called? What are their names?
MEG: Oh, Stanley, I can't remember.
STANLEY: They told you, didn't they? Or didn't they tell you?
MEG: Yes, they--
STANLEY: Then what are they? Come on. Try to remember.
MEG: Why, Stan? Do you know them?
STANLEY: How do I know if I know them until I know their names?
MEG: Well... he told me, I remember.
STANLEY: Well?
MEG: (She thinks.) Gold--something.
STANLEY: Goldsomething?
MEG: Yes. Gold...
STANLEY: Yes?
MEG: Goldberg.
STANLEY: Goldberg?
MEG: That's right. That was one of them. (STANLEY slowly sits at the table.) Do you know them? (STANLEY does not answer.) Stan, they won't wake you up, I promise. I'll tell them they must be quiet. (STANLEY sits still.) They won't be here long, Stan. I'll still bring you up your early morning tea. (STANLEY sits still.) You mustn't be sad today. It's your birthday. 54

At this point Meg gives Stanley his birthday present, a boy's drum, which was the contents of the round parcel brought round by Lulu. The first act has been one of considerable trepidation and distress for Stanley, what with dodging the sexual overtures of Meg, resisting Lulu's self-centered invitations, and his fear of the impending visit by the two strangers. Now for a final insult,
Meg presents Stanley with a toy drum, her effort to offer a substitute for the piano the house is lacking.

To a pianist who once took great pride in his talent, such a present would, indeed, be an insult, even though it was given with good intentions. It would serve as an indication of just how far the artist has deteriorated, in both his talent and his life. With Stanley's state of mind already deteriorating due to the pressures and fears he has been experiencing, it would not be unusual for the controls of the intellect and human spirit to have deteriorated as well, leaving the primitive self unrestrained to act upon whatever impulses stimulate it. In Stanley's case, the insult of the drum, coupled with another sexual advance by Meg ("Aren't you going to give me a kiss?"55) could result in a primitive rage. That is what Pinter permits us to see, albeit in a less demonstrative form than in Act Two, when Stanley begins to play the drum for Meg:

(She watches him, uncertainly. He hangs the drum around his neck, taps it gently with the sticks, then marches round the table, beating it regularly. MEG, pleased, watches him. Still beating it regularly, he begins to go round the table a second time. Halfway round the beat becomes erratic, uncontrolled. MEG expresses dismay. He arrives at her chair, banging the drum, his face and the drumbeat now savage and possessed.56

Even here, a large portion of the restraints of Stanley's civilized self remains, preventing his primitive self from getting

55 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 46.
56 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 46.
really out-of-control. But, in Act Two, Goldberg and McCann have
done severe damage to that civilized part of Stanley, and the
primitive rage within him will have fewer, if any, restraints upon
it.

This primitive rage must be what the director should try to
bring to the audience's consciousness. A completely new Stanley
must emerge from the interrogation, a Stanley who is dangerous,
not fearful, and possessed of a potential to lash out at anything
that might trigger that rage.

The first thing that rage focuses on is Goldberg, who is so
close and so hated by Stanley. Thus, in his rage, Stanley lashes
out at Goldberg, catching him completely by surprise, and hurting
him. McCann, still the physically superior of the two, intercedes, and with chair in hand advances on Stanley. Stanley
has grabbed a chair or stool also, but uses it for cover instead
of a weapon. Even the primitive Stanley will cower from a
physically superior foe.

Goldberg and McCann could not have expected such a violent
reaction from Stanley. Perhaps they did not realize just how much
his rage had been building up inside him for that year he has
lived there. In any case, they still have this primitive self
within him to eliminate, much as they have eliminated his
civilized self, before they can establish full control over him.

Goldberg and McCann are about to launch a full-fledged,
enraged offensive of their own upon Stanley, who has now been
cowed, but Meg's drumbeat stops the action entirely, as she
descends the stairs, ready for the party. Stanley seems pacified,
his rage spent. At least he is still. Goldberg and McCann recover, replacing all the chairs and sitting Stanley down in one, but they are not sure what to make of the Stanley they have before them now. When Meg approaches Stanley, asking him if he would play a tune for them on the drum, his response is a desperate plea, not directed at her request, but at his own plight:

STANLEY: Could I have my glasses?  

These are the last intelligible words uttered by Stanley throughout the remainder of the play. This request amounts to a plea by Stanley to Meg for her to somehow restore some of that which Goldberg and McCann have stripped him. But Meg, in her simplicity and confusion, cannot comprehend the nature of that request and Goldberg and McCann, now satisfied that that one moment of primitive rage has been spent, return his glasses. In so doing, they have distracted Meg from Stanley's state of being, and his hope for salvation is gone:

GOLDBERG: Ah, yes. (He holds his hand out to McCANN. McCANN passes him his glasses.) Here they are. (He holds them out for STANLEY, who reaches for them.) Here they are. (STANLEY takes them.) Now. What have we got here? Enough to scuttle a liner. We've got four bottles of Scotch and one bottle of Irish.

MEG: Oh, Mr. Goldberg, what should I drink?

GOLDBERG: Glasses, glasses first. Open the Scotch, McCann.

MEG: (Crosses to the kitchen.) Here's my very best glasses in here.  

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57 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 63.
58 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 63.
Rather than assisting Stanley in restoring his spirit and intellect (represented by his glasses) of which Goldberg and McCann have stripped him, Meg helps the two gentlemen prepare for the party by fetching the glasses they need. Without realizing it, Meg has become part of their effort to reform Stanley.

AT THE PARTY

Up to the point of the start of the party, there is still room for the director to consider the two gentlemen to be admirable for their attempts to prepare Stanley for his rebirth into the structure of the organization. Their true natures have not clearly surfaced, a fact which also serves to hide the true nature of the organization itself. But a great deal more about them will be disclosed at the party.

Goldberg and McCann intended the party to be a celebration of the rebirth process Stanley will soon undergo, but the party develops more into a festivity for the guests than for the "birthday boy." Twice during the party, when Meg was making her speech about her feelings toward Stanley and when all were offering their congratulations to him, McCann was shining his torch (flashlight) right into Stanley's face. This act, done under the instructions of Goldberg, twists what would normally be a moment of rejoicing for Stanley into a moment of severe discomfort. Such a cruel act should erase any illusion of benevolence they might have cast before.

59 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 64.
The director must erase any illusion of benelovence that might have been cast before by effectively focusing the audience's attention on the cruel and callous behavior of the gentlemen, especially Goldberg, during the birthday party.

So far Goldberg has been rather charming to Meg, and his long-winded speeches have suggested a very jovial, sentimental nature. His stories about his mother, his Uncle Barney, and now his toast to Stanley all, on the surface, reflect an almost sickeningly sweet sentimentality for things past.

But when Lulu enters, Goldberg practically dumps Meg in favor of the seductive wench, showing how callous he can be, as he never again speaks directly to Meg during the party, but instead, progressively plays up to Lulu. Lulu, of course, invites his advances, getting better results from Goldberg than she did with Stanley. The seduction becomes mutual, but Goldberg slowly gains control, inviting Lulu to sit on his lap, tickling her, and openly fondling her during the game of blind man's buff.

Goldberg's sentimentality reveals itself to be as flawed as his charm. Back in Act One, while talking about his Uncle Barney, Goldberg mentioned his uncle's house "just outside of Basingstoke." And Stanley, while telling McCann, in Act Two, about the life he led supposedly in Maidenhead, slipped in his anxiety and revealed he really lived in Basingstoke too:

STANLEY: (Hissing.) I've explained to you, damn you, that all those years I lived in Basingstoke I never stepped outside the door.
Stanley also mentioned a Fuller's Tea Shop and a Boot's Library, thinking McCann might identify with these banal commercial franchises. But, once again it is Goldberg who mentions, during his toast, an appreciation of the Fuller's and Boot's enterprises, giving us more clues to support the thesis of how inescapable the influence of the organization is.

What this also reveals is that Goldberg's sentimentality is directed toward the common, mundane and sterile franchises of British life. His reverence for Fuller's and Boot's is the equivalent of an American with a reverence for McDonald's or B. Dalton Booksellers: national franchises that essentially cater to the lowest common denominator.

McCann, meanwhile, is the one who has shown himself to be admiringly romantic. He finds a bond of mutual loneliness with Meg, although their memories and sentimental accounts are completely independent of each other. It is interesting that, despite the fact that they are carrying on separate conversations, McCann and Meg are connecting more completely than Meg ever did with Petey:

Meg: My father was going to take me to Ireland once. But then he went away by himself. I don't know if he went to Ireland. He didn't take me.
McCann: Why didn't he take you to Ireland?

(Pause.)
McCANN: I know a place. Roscrea. Mother Nolan's.
MEG: There was a night-light in my room, when I was a little girl.
McCANN: One time I stayed there all night with the boys. Singing and drinking all night.
MEG: And my Nanny used to sit up with me, and sing songs to me.
McCANN: And a plate of fry in the morning. Now where am I?
MEG: My little room was pink. I had a pink carpet and pink curtains, and I had musical boxes all over the room. And they played me to sleep. And my father was a very big doctor. That's why I never had any complaints. I was cared for, and I had little sisters and brothers in other rooms, all different colours.
McCANN: Tullamore, where are you?
MEG: (To McCANN.) Give us a drop more.62

Through these reminiscences McCann reveals to how much less of a degree he is under the influence of mundane sentimentality than is Goldberg. Rather than even acknowledging Fuller's and Boot's—he did not do so when Stanley mentioned them earlier—his tastes run more toward Mother Nolan's, presumably a small, privately owned pub, in Roscrea, "a small mountain village in south-central Ireland (County Tipperary)"63 an establishment more the equivalent of a family-style restaurant with a homey, personal atmosphere, where friends can gather and sing and drink and have a grand old time, than the plastic and neon franchises of Goldberg's favor.

This also shows us more about how unhappy McCann is. Sometime ago, it seems he had a life that, though it might have lacked the potential for advancement that would eventually lead

62 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 69-70.
63 Gale, p. 58.
him to someday be a man with a position, like Goldberg, seemed to fill him with a richer, more satisfying feeling.

There is also McCann's song, what could be entitled The Ode to Paddy Reilly (See scoresheet at end of text.), to consider. Though no written score accompanies the script, nor could one be found by this writer, the rhythm of the lyrics, as well as their sentimentality, suggest a song that is melodious and full, and very, very Irish.

All of this suggests that McCann's brooding dissatisfaction with his relationship with Goldberg stems from the replacement of the colorful, tender and vibrant life-style he once knew, with the sterile, unfeeling and almost savage life-style in which he finds himself now. One might wonder if McCann might once have lived a life somewhat like Stanley's, in that both have pasts that were inharmonious with the design of the organization.

The director, therefore, has to create enough of a contrast between the callous, overbearing Goldberg and the romantic, considerate McCann to eliminate any doubt that Pinter wants the destiny toward which the two visitors finally guide Stanley to be considered undesirable. Goldberg is definitely a product of the organization, and McCann is becoming one, though he still maintains some last link with his former background. By presenting Goldberg as so unadmirable, and showing that McCann is in the middle of becoming what Goldberg is and being what he (McCann) once was, the director can ensure that no one will want to see Stanley become that way. Despite the fact that Stanley
might have seemed less than perfect at the play's beginning, the alternative that the organization wants for him must seem much worse.

UNBRIDLED RAGE AT THE PARTY

Meanwhile, during all this, Stanley remains alone and silent. However, he is in a position to observe all that is going on, thanks to Goldberg's returning him his glasses. What he observes will stir up his earlier rage again. Meg's attachment to McCann resembles her Jocaste complex toward him; after all, both Stanley and McCann are approximately the same age. And Lulu's overtures toward Goldberg again remind Stanley of her efforts to seduce him, and subsequently remind him of how much he would have liked to take her on, but did not dare. In addition, a primitive passion that temptresses (or, as today's vernacular would call them, cockteasers) like Lulu often stir up, is the impulse of rape, and since Stanley has been reduced to the primitive, this rape impulse must be seething in him.

So Stanley must be feeling a seething rage like the one he felt and responded to when he attacked Goldberg. From his point of view he is surrounded by all those who have hurt him, shamed him and robbed him of that which made him the individual he was. However, this rage is not directly articulated in the dialogue, so it is up to the director to illustrate it theatrically.

Now comes the game of blind man's buff. Goldberg and McCann have satisfied themselves that Stanley is no longer a threat, as he has been sitting quietly where they put him ever since Meg came
down the stairs. They have not noticed his rage returning, nor did they expect it to return, so they feel so safe that they can enjoy themselves.

But Stanley is not the only one who is building up a rage. McCann's reminiscences of his lost homeland are serving to develop in him an unstable frame of mind, and his brooding would naturally be expected to have some resultant anger building up inside of him. He is upset by his loneliness, by the loss of his former life-style, and by the repeated put-downs he gets from Goldberg—another one occurring when Goldberg ignores his suggestion that they play hide-and-seek and instead acts upon Lulu's choice of blind man's buff. He might also be resentful of how Goldberg is treating Lulu, though this has probably happened before.

But McCann is going to take his rage out, very subtly, on Stanley. During the game of blind man's buff, he removes Stanley's glasses—Stanley's last remnant of his civilized self—and breaks them. Then he sets the drum under Stanley's foot as he [Stanley] searches, blindfolded, for anyone. Unbeknownst to McCann however, Stanley is not the helpless victim he expects, and all of this, on top of all that Stanley has observed at the party, triggers Stanley's rage at last:

(STANLEY rises. He begins to move towards MEG, dragging the drum on his foot. He reaches her and stops. His hands move towards her and they reach her throat. He begins to strangle her.)

64 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 73-74.
As Goldberg and McCann, now alerted that Stanley is dangerous again, pull him off Meg, the lights black out, a result, we learn later, of the electric meter having expired its allotment of power and shutting itself off until it receives another shilling. Stanley, who was blinded anyway without his glasses, now has the advantage in the darkness, as he is filled with one purpose; to lash out at those who have hurt him.

This time he finds Lulu, and the rape impulse takes over. She, very frightened when in a situation she does not control, screams and faints upon perceiving him moving towards her, and Stanley, still under the cloak of total darkness, carries her to the table where she is laid out spread-eagled.

But it is then that McCann recovers his dropped torch, and now, rearmed with a working light, Goldberg and he discover Stanley bent over Lulu at the table. The advantage is theirs again, and now with no doubt in their minds that Stanley has gotten completely out of control, they converge upon him, as he retreats as far as he can. The second act ends right there, and the audience is left to wonder what Goldberg and McCann have done to Stanley.

If the audience is to maintain that sense of wonder as to what has happened to Stanley, the director must succeed in sharply defining the potential for terror that is inherent in this scene. First must be Stanley's rage, a rage that will seem to totally encompass him once he finds a target for it. It must be a rage that the audience will feel is the result of all the injustices inflicted upon him by the others. Finally, there must be the
constant reminder that Goldberg and McCann are in a state of mind to inflict cruelty and humiliation upon Stanley while he remains submissive, and even crueler punishment and damage upon him if he attempts to strike back. It must be clear that their own rage and callousness gives them the potential for retaliation so total that Stanley's very being is in grave danger.
ACT THREE

A NEW FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

The third act begins much like the first, with Petey returning home from work for his breakfast. As we discover later, Petey already knows something of the events that transpired the night before, but if he hadn't known, his opening conversation with Meg would have supplied him with enough reason to suspect something:

MEG: Is that you, Stan? (Pause.) Stanny?
PETEY: Yes?
MEG: Is that you?
PETEY: It's me.
MEG: (Appearing at the hatch.) Oh, it's you.
I've run out of cornflakes.
PETEY: Well, what else have you got?
MEG: Nothing.
PETEY: Nothing?
MEG: There's some tea in the pot, though. I'm going out shopping in a minute. Get you something nice. I've got a splitting headache.65

The routine that Petey has known for so long is significantly askew this morning. First off, where Meg usually calls out for him when he returns, this time she calls for Stanley, for now she has an abnormal concern for him. There is also no breakfast to be had. This surprises Petey. There is always breakfast. He may

65 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 77.
also be surprised when he realizes Meg is suffering from a hangover.

If Petey did not know any of the details of what transpired the night before, he would certainly have reason to suspect something was amiss by the irregularities in the morning's routine. But Petey does know what happened the night before. He tells Goldberg later about how he knows:

PETEY: What a night. Came in the front door and all the lights were out. Put a shilling in the slot, came in here and the party was over.
GOLDBERG: You put a shilling in the slot?
PETEY: Yes.
GOLDBERG: (With a short laugh.) I could have sworn it was a fuse.
PETEY: There was dead silence. Couldn't hear a thing. So I went upstairs and your friend—Dermot—met me on the landing. And he told me.
GOLDBERG: (Sharply.) Who?
PETEY: Your friend—Dermot.
GOLDBERG: (Heavily.) Dermot. Yes.66

So, with Petey aware that Stanley has been broken—Petey is very aware of the purpose of Goldberg's and McCann's visit—and broken beyond the norm for such an operation, he has a decision to make as to what he is going to do about it. Influencing his decision is the effect all this is having on Meg:

MEG: Oh, look. The drum's broken. Why is it broken?
PETEY: I don't know.

(She hits it with her hand.)

66 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 82.
MEG: It still makes a noise.
PETEY: You can always get another one.
MEG: (Sadly.) It was probably broken in the party.
I don't remember it being broken, though, in the party.
What a shame.
PETEY: You can always get another one, Meg. 67

Petey, through the concern Meg shows for Stanley's drum, is made all too painfully aware of how upset Meg would be to discover how broken Stanley is. But, though he tries to protect her from such a revelation, he finds that not being able to see Stanley also saddens her:

MEG: I'm going to call him.
PETEY: (Quickly.) No, don't do that, Meg. Let him sleep.
MEG: But you say he stays in bed too much.
PETEY: Let him sleep . . . this morning. Leave him.
MEG: I've been up once, with his cup of tea. But Mr. McCann opened the door. He said they were talking. He said he'd made him one. He must have been up early. I don't know what they were talking about. I was surprised. Because Stanley's usually fast asleep when I wake him. But he wasn't this morning. I heard him talking. (Pause.) . . . I didn't give him his tea. He'd already had one. I came down again and went on with my work. Then, after a bit, they came down to breakfast. Stanley must have gone to sleep again. 68

Petey can't win for losing. Whether Meg sees Stanley or not, she will be distraught. She is in such a state that even things that do not involve Stanley, at least to Petey's knowledge, are making her act in ways he has never seen her act before:

67 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 77-78.
68 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 78-79.
MEG: Did you see what's outside this morning?
PETEY: What?
MEG: That big car.
PETEY: Yes.
MEG: It wasn't there yesterday. Did you . . . did you have a look inside it?
PETEY: I had a peep.
MEG: (Whispering.) Is there anything in it?
PETEY: In it?
MEG: Yes.
PETEY: What do you mean, in it?
MEG: Inside it.
PETEY: What sort of thing?
MEG: Well . . . I mean . . . is there . . . is there a wheelbarrow in it?
PETEY: A wheelbarrow?
MEG: Yes.
PETEY: I didn't see one.
MEG: You didn't. Are you sure?
PETEY: What would Mr. Goldberg want with a wheelbarrow?
MEG: Mr. Goldberg?
PETEY: It's his car.
MEG: (Relieved.) His car? Oh, I didn't know it was his car.
PETEY: Of course it's his car.
MEG: Oh, I feel better.
PETEY: What are you on about? 69

As if Meg's frantic state of mind is not enough to disturb Petey, there is also the disdainful, perhaps even threatening, way Goldberg treats her when he comes downstairs:

MEG: Mr. Goldberg.
GOLDBERG: Yes?
MEG: I didn't know that was your car outside.
GOLDBERG: You like it?
MEG: Are you going to go for a ride?
GOLDBERG: (To PETEY.) A smart car, eh?
PETEY: Nice shine on it, all right.
GOLDBERG: What is old is good, take my tip. There's room there. Room in the front, and room in the back. (He strokes the teapot.) The pot's hot. More tea, Mr. Boles?
PETEY: No, thanks.
MEG: Are you going to go for a ride?

69 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 79.
GOLDBERG: (Ruminatively.) And the boot. A beautiful boot. There's just room . . . for the right amount.70

The disdainful treatment of Meg by Goldberg is clear in how he talks to Petey about how nice his car is while Meg asks him if he is going for a ride. The threat is communicated by what is not said. Meg's concern is not so much whether or not Goldberg is going for a ride, but whether or not he is taking Stanley away with him. When she persists in this inquiry, Goldberg turns the focus on his car's boot (trunk) and how large it is . . . large enough even for a body, perhaps Stanley's, perhaps Meg's.

Since all of these aspects are not communicated directly by the dialogue, it becomes the director's responsibility to clarify them. Petey's concern for Meg's state of mind, her concern for Stanley, and the disdainful and threatening manner by which Goldberg treats Meg all must be accomplished by how the lines are said, how they are received and the actions of the characters involved while they are being said.

Petey catches Goldberg's unspoken meaning and makes his decision. While Goldberg begins to expound on the departed Meg's charms, comparing her to his mother and his wife, Petey directs the conversation to Stanley's condition:

PETEY: How is he this morning?
GOLDBERG: Who?
PETEY: Stanley. Is he any better?
GOLDBERG: (A little uncertainly.) Oh . . . a little better, I think, a little better. Of course. I'm not

70 Pinter, Seven Plays, p. 532.
really qualified to say, Mr. Boles. I mean, I haven't got
the . . . qualifications. The best thing would be if someone
with the proper . . . mnn . . . qualifications . . . was to
have a look at him. Someone with a few letters after his
name. It makes all the difference.\textsuperscript{71}

Goldberg is a little surprised at Petey's inquiry, and his
answers are lacking in certainty. Even more surprising to
Goldberg is the tenacity with which Petey refuses to allow him to
close the subject on Stanley:

\begin{quote}
GOLDBERG: Anyway, Dermot's with him at the moment.
He's . . . keeping him company.
PETEY: Dermot?
GOLDBERG: Yes.
PETEY: It's a terrible thing.
GOLDBERG: (Sighs.) Yes. The birthday celebration
was too much for him.
PETEY: What came over him?
GOLDBERG: (Sharply.) What came over him? Breakdown,
PETEY: But what brought it on so suddenly?
GOLDBERG: Well, Mr. Boles, it can happen in all sorts
of ways. A friend of mine was telling me about it only the
other day. We'd both been concerned with another case—not
entirely similar, of course, but . . . quite alike, quite
alike. (He pauses.) Anyway, he was telling me, you see,
this friend of mine, that sometimes it happens gradual--day
by day it grows and grows and grows . . . day by day. And
then other times it happens all at once. Poof! Like that!
The nerves break. There's no guarantee how it's going to
happen, but with certain people . . . it's a foregone
conclusion.
PETEY: Really?
GOLDBERG: Yes. This friend of mine--he was telling
me about it--only the other day. (He stands uneasily for
a moment, then brings out a cigarette case and takes a cigar-
ette.) Have an Abdullah.
PETEY: No, no, I don't take them.
GOLDBERG: Once in a while I treat myself to a
cigarette. An Abdullah, perhaps, or a . . .\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{71} Pinter, \textit{Complete Works}, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{72} Pinter, \textit{Complete Works}, pp. 81-82.
Goldberg, upon realizing that Petey is trying to keep the pressure on him by not letting him off the hook about Stanley's condition, tried a clever flanking maneuver to put Petey on the defensive. He began talking of "another case—not entirely similar, of course, but . . . quite alike, quite alike." The possibility exists that Goldberg is talking about Petey. This is just one indication that Petey has been through what Stanley is going through. Another possibility is that Goldberg is warning Petey that he could become another case if he persists.

Whichever meaning he communicated, once that was accomplished, Goldberg smoothly aimed his next shot, maneuvering Petey off guard by telling him of how a breakdown can occur gradually, "day by day it grows and grows and grows . . . day by day." with an almost hypnotic rhythm in his speech, and then, "Poof! Like that! The nerves break.", he fired off a howitzer of punctuated exclamations, short bursts of statements and directed implied threats.

But Petey, in his resolve, is stronger than Goldberg expected, and stands firm under this siege, making Goldberg more uncertain than ever. Goldberg, grasping at straws for the moment, changes tactics by offering Petey a cigarette. But Petey is not having any, and now with Goldberg off balance, Petey takes the offensive.

Petey tells Goldberg what he found when he returned home the night before and what he learned from McCann [quotation 66]. Petey is sharp in his own wordsmanship, relating how calmly and easily he determined the need for a shilling in the meter to
reestablish power, compared with Goldberg's panic when the lights went out. Petey also refers to McCann as Dermot, the way Goldberg did a little earlier. Goldberg reacts confusedly, not recognizing the name, until Petey specifies, "Your friend—Dermot." Goldberg will later call McCann by the name of Seamus. Whichever, if either, is his real name, what is clear here is that, perhaps due to the strain of the night's events, perhaps due to age as well—after all, Goldberg is in his fifties, perhaps his late fifties—Goldberg's faculties and his grip on the situation are at less than optimum efficiency. This is very upsetting to a man who earlier boasted, "Every single one of my senses is at its peak. Not bad going, eh? For a man past fifty."  

Petey keeps on the attack, inquiring about the possibilities of Stanley recovering:

   PETEY: They get over it sometimes though, don't they? I mean, they can recover from it, can't they?
   GOLDBERG: Recover? Yes, sometimes they recover, in one way or another.
   PETEY: I mean, he might have recovered by now, mightn't he?
   GOLDBERG: It's conceivable. Conceivable.
   PETEY: Well, if he's no better by lunchtime I'll go and get hold of a doctor.
   GOLDBERG: It's all taken care of, Mr. Boles. Don't worry yourself.
   PETEY: What do you mean?  

Goldberg's response to the suggestion of getting a doctor could be a frantic, get-off-my-back type of response, considering

73 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 54.
74 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 82-83.
all the pressure Petey is applying. Petey would seem to be getting the upper hand, but it is at this point that McCann comes downstairs, and Petey, sensing McCann is in a disturbed frame of mind, decides to take the teapot and cups into the kitchen where he can watch them surreptitiously through the hatch.

McCann’s frame of mind is definitely disturbed. He has been up all night with Stanley, trying to restore some of what they took from him the night before. As we will learn later, there is little left of Stanley but a zombie-like shell, babbling incoherently, divested of all human spirit, even the primitive spirit that filled him with rage in Act Two. And it must be remembered that a connection had started to form between Stanley and McCann. Even though McCann, by the end of Act Two, had turned against Stanley, that connection is still playing upon him, making him regret what they did to him. Despite Goldberg’s assurance in Act One, the accomplishment of this mission did cause them excessive aggravation.

Thus the friction between McCann and Goldberg is bound to increase, and it is this friction, just starting to burn that Petey observes from his vantage point:

GOLDBERG: Well? (McCANN does not answer.) McCann. I asked you "well."
McCANN: (Without turning.) Well what?
GOLDBERG: What’s what? (McCANN does not answer.)

What is what?
McCANN: (Turning to look at GOLDBERG, grimly.) I’m not going up there again.
GOLDBERG: Why not?
McCANN: I’m not going up there again.
GOLDBERG: What’s going on now?
McCANN: He’s quiet now. He stopped all that . . .
talking a while ago.
GOLDBERG: When will he be ready?
McCANN: (Sullenly.) You can go up yourself next time.
GOLDBERG: What's the matter with you?
McCANN: (Quietly.) I gave him . . .
GOLDBERG: What?
McCANN: I gave him his glasses.
GOLDBERG: Wasn't he glad to get them back?
McCANN: The frames are bust.
GOLDBERG: How did that happen?
McCANN: He tried to fit the eyeholes into his eyes.
I left him doing it.75

McCann gave Stanley back his glasses, they being that last remnant Stanley had of his human self. But, with the frames broken, and Stanley so far gone he can only make a pitiful attempt to jam them one by one into his eye sockets, such a gesture is useless, and only accentuates the totality of how destroyed Stanley is.

It is at this point that Petey reminds them both of his presence. But as he presses Goldberg about what he will do for Stanley, Goldberg counters him:

PETEY: (Moving to GOLDBERG.) What about a doctor? GOLDBERG: It's all taken care of.
PETEY: (Moves to the table.) I think he needs one.
GOLDBERG: I agree with you. It's all taken care of. We'll give him a bit of time to settle down, and then I'll take him to Monty.
PETEY: You're going to take him to a doctor? GOLDBERG: (Staring at him.) Sure, Monty.76

By pressing Goldberg for an answer, Petey miscalculated, for Goldberg does have someone to whom he will take Stanley. That

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75 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 83-84.
76 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 84.
someone is Monty, and the mention of his name halts Petey's attack, enabling Goldberg to recover his footing:

GOLDBERG: So Mrs. Boles has gone out to get us something nice for lunch?
PETEY: That's right.
GOLDBERG: Unfortunately we may be gone by then.
PETEY: Will you?
GOLDBERG: By then we may be gone.77

The impact of Monty's name upon Petey clearly takes him off the offensive, but what significance the name has to him is uncertain. If he recognized the name, why ask Goldberg about a doctor again? If he does not know the name, why does its mention stop his attack?

One explanation is that Petey does not know Monty in particular, but that he knows what Monty is, having been through the Monty process, conducted by another Monty with another name. That is why Goldberg needs to repeat the name. The first mention made Petey uncertain. The reiteration, reinforced by Goldberg's stare, left no doubt in Petey's mind that Monty is the one who reprograms the Stanley's into more desirable, more social, and more "necessary" members of the organization.

For it is when we realize that Petey: 1) is now a small, hardly necessary, but occasionally useful functionary of the organization; 2) possesses skills in the art of verbal combat that are enough to force Goldberg to call on all his resources to overcome him; and 3) recognizes the fate in store for Stanley,

77 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 84.
that we realize Petey has been more than the little, ineffectual deck-chair attendant we first perceived him to be.

If he knows about Monty, then it stands to reason he has been through the process himself, one way or another. Thus, in some way, Petey must have been like Stanley, and consequently, he must have been like what Stanley will become.

And if Petey could take on Goldberg at his own game, and cause him so much difficulty, then it stands to reason Petey must have been like Goldberg at one time too.

It is this very combination of comparisons that holds the key to just who all these people are. Petey does not quite have all of Goldberg's ability to wage verbal warfare, as he is considerably more advanced in years. Even gaining the upper hand as he does, Petey cannot maintain his advantage, and by the play's end, is broken by Goldberg. But even though he is a man with a position, Goldberg shows signs of starting to lose his skills as well. His miscalculations the night before will cause him to deliver to Monty a Stanley broken far beyond the usual delivery standards, and to break him at all required extraordinary efforts. He is having difficulty commanding the loyalty of McCann. He is also losing his grip on identities, referring to his son as Timmy one moment and Manny the next, and calling McCann Dermot and Seamus at different points. This downward slide from a once superb mastery of the skills of verbal combat could lead towards Goldberg becoming a man who has lost his position, who will then be retired, and relocated where he can occasionally be useful, for it is only the necessary who are possible, just like Petey.
To be certain of this hypothesis, we need more evidence of how Goldberg is losing his command of his faculties. Such additional evidence is clear in how fatigued his skirmish with Petey makes him, and how out of control he gets at McCann:

(McCANN crosses to the table, sits, picks up the paper and begins to tear it into strips.)

GOLDBERG: Is everything ready?
McCANN: Sure.

(GOLDBERG walks heavily, brooding, to the table. He sits, noticing what McCANN is doing.)

GOLDBERG: Stop doing that!
McCANN: What?
GOLDBERG: Why do you do that all the time? It's childish, it's pointless. It's without a solitary point.
McCANN: What's the matter with you today?
GOLDBERG: Questions, questions. Stop asking me so many questions. What do you think I am?
McCANN: (He studies him. He then folds the paper, leaving the strips inside.) Well? (Pause. GOLDBERG leans back in the chair, his eyes closed.) Well?
GOLDBERG: (With fatigue.) Well what?
McCANN: Do we wait or do we go and get him?
GOLDBERG: (Slowly.) You want to go and get him?
McCANN: I want to get it over.
GOLDBERG: That's understandable.
McCANN: So do we wait or do we---?
GOLDBERG: (Interrupting.) I don't know why, but I feel knocked out. I feel a bit... It's uncommon for me.
McCANN: Is that so?
GOLDBERG: It's unusual.
McCANN: (Rising swiftly and going behind GOLDBERG'S chair. Hissing.) Let's finish and go. Let's finish and go. Get the thing done. Let's finish the bloody thing. Let's get the thing done and go! (Pause.) Will I go up? (Pause.) Nat! (GOLDBERG sits humped. McCANN slips to his side.) Simey!
GOLDBERG: (Opening his eyes, regarding McCANN.) What--did--you--call--me?
McCANN: Who?
GOLDBERG: (Murderously.) Don't call me that! (He seizes McCANN by the throat and throws him to the floor.) NEVER CALL ME THAT!
Goldberg is clearly now in a very unstable mental and emotional state. And it is from this state that the formerly imperturbable Goldberg launches into a frenetic tirade on his philosophy of life:

GOLDBERG: All my life I've said the same. Play up, play up, and play the game. Honour thy father and thy mother. All along the line. 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 why? 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.)

Although he will make a recovery to a reasonably stable condition by play's end, here is a strong indication that Goldberg is on the way down, that he will not be able to maintain his position for much longer. And at, or very near the bottom of that slide, is the state of being that Petey inhabits. That is where Goldberg is heading. And if Goldberg is on his way to becoming a Petey, then it stands to reason that Petey was once a man with a position, like Goldberg.

All this becomes the responsibility of the director to clarify. It must be made visually and theatrically clear that Goldberg and Petey are of the same design. The only difference

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78 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 85-86.
79 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 87-88.
between them is time. As Goldberg is now, so once was Petey. As
Petey is now, so shall Goldberg become.

GOLDBERG'S RECOVERY

It must be a terrible thing for a man to discover that he has
no comprehension of the world around him, as Goldberg does at the
end of the previous monologue, especially when he has built up a
position in it by toeing the line so completely. But for the
first time Goldberg is starting to lose that grip he has held so
tightly on everything so sacred to him: his health, his skills,
his determination and, as this deterioration continues, his
position.

Another thing that Goldberg is losing his grip on is McCann's
loyalty. In the last five minutes he has physically attacked the
Irishman, and then allowed McCann to witness his
self-deterioration. Add this to the already tenuous relationship
they have had and there is very little reason for McCann to remain
in Goldberg's service.

But it is now, when he is at his most vulnerable, that
Goldberg relates to McCann about that time in his life when he too
was a Stanley:

GOLDBERG: (Intensely, with growing certainty.) My
father said to me, Benny, Benny, he said, come here. He was
dying. I knelt down. By him day and night. Who else was
there? Forgive, Benny, he said, and let live. Yes, Dad.
Go home to your wife. I will, Dad. Keep an eye open for
low-lives, for schnorrers and for layabouts. He didn't
mention names. I lost my life in the service of others, he
said, I'm not ashamed. Do your duty and keep your observa-
tions. Always bid good morning to the neighbours. Never,
ever forget your family, for they are the rock, the consti-
tution and the core! If you're ever in any difficulties Uncle Barney will see you in the clear. I knelt down. (He kneels facing McCANN.) I swore on the good book. And I knew the word I had to remember—Respect! Because McCann—(Gently.) Seamus—who came before your father? His father. And who came before him? Before him? . . . (Vacant—triumphant.) Who came before your father's father but your father's father's mother! Your great-gran-granny. (Silence. He slowly rises.) And that's why I've reached my position, McCann. Because I've always been as fit as a fiddle. My motto. Works hard and play hard. Not a day's illness.80

Goldberg had his rebellious moment in life when he left his wife, and through his wife's equivalence with his mother, we may infer he strained relations with her too. But his father's deathbed requests ("Do your duty and keep your observations, etc.") pulled him back into the fold. And from that point on, Goldberg now recalls, he has lived a lifestyle based on a single word: respect. This respect drew him into an apprenticeship with his Uncle Barney, until Goldberg has become exactly like his former master, and until he grew to be a man with a position, and thus one who commands respect instead of one who must give it.

It is this recollection of what he has based his life on that enables Goldberg to rejuvenate his faculties, at least for the time being. All the little platitudes of which he spoke earlier (Learn by heart. Don't go too near the water, etc.) were meaningless without the premise that by demonstrating true respect to one's elders and superiors, one will earn respect from those below him.

80 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 88.
And it is this promise of respect that brings McCann into line. McCann now understands that his apprenticeship with Goldberg requires him to show absolute respect and obedience to his master, and that, if his superiors are satisfied with him, someday he will be allowed to become a man with a position.

Thus McCann is now willing to submit to the act of obeisance Goldberg demands of him:

GOLDBERG: All the same, give me a blow. (Pause.) Blow in my mouth. (McCANN stands, puts his hands on his knees, bends and blows in GOLDBERG'S mouth.) One for the road.

(McCANN blows again in his mouth.)

McCann's willingness to go along with this is partly due to the fact that he recognizes Goldberg cannot avoid the eventual downhill slide to which he has seen him already succumbing. And as Goldberg's downhill slide continues, the respect he commands will decrease. He will be replaced by someone younger, stronger, at the peak of his senses. In all probability, someone like McCann.

And Goldberg will slide into an existence like Petey's for a while, and eventually he will become the forgotten man on his deathbed, just like his father. Notice the similarities between Goldberg and his father that Pinter has given us. Both men's lives have been guided by the same guidelines, and both have lost contact with their children. Goldberg says that he was the only

81 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 89.
one who came to his father's side at the end, and we learned earlier in Act One that Goldberg's only surviving son has broken off contact with his father:

McCANN: I didn't know you had any sons
GOLDBERG: But of course. I've been a family man.
McCANN: How many did you have?
GOLDBERG: I lost my last two—in an accident. But the first, the first grew up to be a fine boy.
McCANN: What's he doing now?
GOLDBERG: I often wonder that myself. 82

Perhaps Goldberg's son will come to him in his final moments, to be given his father's final words of guidance and wisdom. From the cyclical patterns that Pinter has established in the play, it is almost a certainty that this will happen. And the cycle will continue, just as it did with Goldberg, and with his father, and his father before him, all along the line.

But for the time being, Goldberg is back on top. He has recovered his confidence, his energy and his faculties, as well as McCann's respect and loyalty. He can now complete his assignment with the sure and certain knowledge he commands respect. After all, he paid his dues. He showed respect to all those he was supposed to, especially his Uncle Barney. He has, by the organization's design, earned the respect of all those below him.

82 Pinter, Seven Plays, p. 494.
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

It is with this programming firmly reestablished in Goldberg's mind, and with the promise of such a destiny set out before McCann, who is, in effect, Goldberg's apprentice, that the two gentlemen visitors can regain their composure and resume their mission. In the course of finishing up, they share a little moment of amusement over Lulu when she comes downstairs, having stayed overnight under less than ideal circumstances:

McCANN: (To GOLDBERG:) I'll give you five minutes. (He exits.)
GOLDBERG: Come over here.
LULU: No, thank you.
GOLDBERG: What's the matter? You got the needle to Uncle Natey?
LULU: I'm going.
GOLDBERG: Have a game of pontoon first, for old time's sake.
LULU: I've had enough games.
GOLDBERG: A girl like you, at your age, at your time of health, and you don't take to games?
LULU: You're very smart.
GOLDBERG: Anyway, who says you don't take to them.
LULU: (With growing anger.) You used me for a night. a passing fancy.
GOLDBERG: Who used who?
LULU: You made use of me by cunning when my defences were down.
GOLDBERG: Who took them down?
LULU: That's what you did. You quenched your ugly thirst. You took advantage of me when I was overwrought. I wouldn't do those things again, not even for a Sultan!
GOLDBERG: One night doesn't make a harem.
LULU: You taught me things a girl shouldn't know before she's been married at least three times!
GOLDBERG: Now you're a jump ahead! What are you complaining about?

(Enter McCANN.)

LULU: You didn't appreciate me for myself. You took all those liberties only to satisfy your appetite.
GOLDBERG: You wanted me to do it, Lulula, so I did it.
McCANN: That's fair enough. (Advancing.) You had a
long sleep, Miss.
LULU: (Backing.) Me?
McCANN: Your sort, you spend too much time in bed.
LULU: What do you mean?
McCANN: (Following.) Have you got anything to confess?
LULU: What?
McCANN: (Savagely.) Confess!
LULU: (Circling behind table.) Confess what?
McCANN: Down on your knees and confess.
LULU: What does he mean?
GOLDBERG: Confess. What can you lose?
LULU: What, to him?
GOLDBERG: He's only been unfrocked six months.
McCANN: Kneel down, woman, and tell me the latest.
LULU: (Retreating to the U. C. door.) I've seen everything that's happened. I know what's going on. I've a pretty shrewd idea.
McCANN: (Advancing.) I've seen you hanging about the Rock of Cashel, profaning the soil with your goings-on. Out of my sight!
LULU: I'm going. (She exits.)

That is the kind of teamwork that, when they cooperate, can make them easy victors in any battle of words. Lulu is no match for them, and now that they—especially Goldberg—have exploited her all they care to, she is sent off in a terrified retreat.

Now McCann, fully on Goldberg's side, brings Stanley downstairs. The stage directions call for Stanley to be "dressed in striped trousers, black jacket, and white collar. He carries a bowler hat in one hand and his broken glasses in the other. He is clean shaven." This description would also be that of "an impeccable dresser," which was how Goldberg described his Uncle Barney, with whom he served an apprenticeship. Thus we can conclude that Goldberg and McCann are preparing Stanley to "follow

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83 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 89-91.
84 Pinter, Seven Plays, p. 543.
85 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 37.
the line" as each of them has done in his turn. To make this even clearer, in the 1964 Royal Shakespeare Company's production of the play, which Pinter directed himself, Stanley wore a "dark, well-tailored suit . . . identical to the suits of Goldberg and McCann."\textsuperscript{86}

This 1964 costuming decision of Pinter's is a further indication of the sameness demanded by the organization. Stanley, in his rebirth, is being molded into a form identical with those of his guides. Where he was once an individual, he is now on his way to being exactly what Goldberg and McCann are. They are preparing him for a future perfectly suited to the design of the organization.

And what is Stanley's future? Assuming that Monty can put him back together, Goldberg and McCann paint a rosy, well-ordered and highly successful future for Stanley, once he is ready to follow the line as they do:

- **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.
- **McCANN:** Help you acknowledge fast days.
- **GOLDBERG:** Bake you cakes.
- **McCANN:** Help you kneel on kneeling days.
- **GOLDBERG:** Give you a free pass.
- **McCANN:** Take you for constitutionals.

GOLDBERG: Give you hot tips.
McCANN: We'll provide the skipping rope.
GOLDBERG: The vest and pants.
McCANN: The ointment.
GOLDBERG: The hot poultice.
McCANN: The fingerstall.
GOLDBERG: The abdomen belt.
McCANN: The ear plugs.
GOLDBERG: The baby powder.
McCANN: The back scratcher.
GOLDBERG: The spare tyre.
McCANN: The stomach pump.
GOLDBERG: The oxygen tent.
McCANN: The prayer wheel.
GOLDBERG: The plaster of Paris.
McCANN: The crash helmet.
GOLDBERG: The crutches.
McCANN: A day and night service.
GOLDBERG: All on the house.
McCANN: That's it.

(They change places.)

GOLDBERG: We'll make a man of you.
McCANN: And a woman.
GOLDBERG: You'll be re-oriented.
McCANN: You be rich.
GOLDBERG: You'll be adjusted.
McCANN: You'll be our pride and joy.
GOLDBERG: You'll be a mensch.
McCANN: You'll be a success.
GOLDBERG: You'll be integrated.
McCANN: You'll give orders.
GOLDBERG: You'll make decisions.
McCANN: You'll be a magnate.
GOLDBERG: A statesman.
McCANN: You'll own yachts.
GOLDBERG: Animals.
McCANN: Animals.
GOLDBERG: (He looks at McCANN.) I said animals.
(He turns back to STANLEY.) You'll be able to make or break, Stan. By my life. 87

87 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 92-94.
Stanley will be able to "make or break", just as Goldberg does now, and as McCann will when he becomes a man with a position. If we are to trust McCann's vivid recollections of and longing for his now deserted Ireland, we must conclude that McCann was not unlike Stanley sometime ago. It is Stanley's destiny to become a McCann, and each of them, in his turn, will become a Goldberg. They will both be able to make or break, as Goldberg does now, by his life.

But once again it must be emphasized that Goldberg will become a Petey. He has recovered his equilibrium now, but it is inevitable that his waning skills, faculties and energies will reduce him beyond a level where he can function as an agent of the organization. Soon, all he will be able to do is occupy some out-of-the-way residence and inform the organization if some individualistic fugitive arrives, seeking a haven from the pressures of those who would have him follow the line.

It is ultimately this cyclical relation between the four men that the director must project as the source of the play's terror. Stanley will become like McCann, who will become like Goldberg, who will become like Petey. There is no escape, no hope and no alternative. Add to this the fact that the more ingrained into the organization one becomes, the more cruelly and callously one treats others, and the prospects become even more terrifying, especially to an audience that would still like to consider themselves free and independent.
But that is the future, and Goldberg will not acknowledge it. Right now there is Stanley to contend with, and from whom he wishes an "opinion of the prospect" that they have laid out for him.

Unfortunately Stanley, in his dehumanized state, cannot articulate an answer. Instead of speaking, all he can do is emit sounds from his throat:

(STANLEY concentrates, his mouth opens, he attempts to speak, fails and emits sounds from his throat.)

STANLEY: Uh-gug . . . uh-gug . . . eehhh-gag . . .
(On the breath.) Cahh . . . caahh . . .

(They watch him. He draws a long breath which shudders down his body. He concentrates.)

GOLDBERG: Well, Stanley boy, what do you say, eh?

(They watch. He concentrates. His head lowers, his chin draws into his chest, he crouches.)

STANLEY: Uh-gughh . . . uh-gughhh . . .
McCANN: What's your opinion, sir?
STANLEY: Caahhh . . . caahhh . . .
McCANN: Mr. Webber! What's your opinion?
GOLDBERG: What do you say, Stan? What do you think of the prospect?
McCANN: What's your opinion of the prospect?

(STANLEY'S body shudders, relaxes, his head drops, he becomes still again, stopped. PETEY enters from door.)

GOLDBERG: Still the same old Stan. Come with us.
Come on, boy.
McCANN: Come along with us.
Goldberg's response, "Still the same old Stan." indicates that, although Stanley was unable to speak coherently, his response was clearly negative and resistant to the prospect. Perhaps by shaking his head, trying to appeal to McCann one last, desperate time, or through terror in his eyes, Stanley communicates that he does not wish to embark on this new life with them. But he is helpless to resist at this point. They will take him to Monty.

However Petey has returned, and has seen exactly what has become of Stanley. Though he used to be what they all are now, Petey makes one last attempt to intercede on Stanley's behalf:

PETEY: Where are you taking him?

(They turn. Silence.)

GOLDBERG: We're taking him to Monty.
PETEY: He can stay here.
GOLDBERG: Don't be silly.
PETEY: We can look after him here.
GOLDBERG: Why do you want to look after him?
PETEY: He's my guest.
GOLDBERG: He needs special treatment.
PETEY: We'll find someone.
GOLDBERG: No. Monty's the best there is. Bring him, McCann.

(GOLDBERG puts the bowler hat on STANLEY'S head. They all three move towards the door U. C.)

PETEY: Leave him alone.

(They stop. GOLDBERG studies him.)

88 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 94.
89 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 94-95.
GOLDBERG: (Insidiously.) Why don't you come with us, Mr. Boles?
McCANN: Yes, why don't you come with us?
GOLDBERG: Come with us to Monty. There's plenty of room in the car. ⁹⁰

That does it. Petey is finished. He can do nothing for Stanley with Goldberg and McCann as strong and united as they are now, especially with the threat of Monty, which he recognizes all too well (See page 66.). In addition, the ease with which Goldberg dispatches him can, in effect, break the spirit of the audience who, for one brief instant, when Petey so determinedly told Goldberg and McCann to leave Stanley alone, might have believed that Petey could really save Stanley.

But it is not to be. All Petey can muster now is a pitiful last plea to Stanley:

PETEY: (Broken.) Stan, don't let them tell you what to do! ⁹¹

But Stanley is gone, and all Petey is left with is the five-pound note Goldberg leaves him, and his newspaper, out of which falls the strips of pages McCann had torn and left behind.

And there is also Meg, who returns just then. She has seen that the car is gone, and is afraid, though she is more afraid to ask directly, that they have taken Stanley away:

⁹⁰ Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 95–96.
⁹¹ Pinter, Complete Works, p. 96.
MEG: Where's Stan? (Pause.) Is Stan down yet, Petey?
PETEY: No... he's...
MEG: Is he still in bed?
PETEY: Yes, he's... still asleep.
MEG: Still? He'll be late for his breakfast.
PETEY: Let him... sleep. 92

Petey hasn't the heart to tell her the truth, but his telling Meg to let him sleep is clear enough to confirm Meg's fears. Without Stanley in the house, all that is left is the guilt they feel for letting him be taken away and the loneliness they will feel without him there. This they can try to conceal only with fantasies of how nice everything was:

MEG: Wasn't it a lovely party last night?
PETEY: I wasn't there.
MEG: Weren't you?
PETEY: I came in afterwards.
MEG: Oh. (Pause.) It was a lovely party. I haven't laughed so much for years. We had dancing and singing. And games. You should have been there.
PETEY: It was good, eh?

(Pause.)

MEG: I was the belle of the ball.
PETEY: Were you?
MEG: Oh, yes. They all said I was.
PETEY: I bet you were, too.
MEG: Oh, it's true. I was. (Pause.) I know I was. 93

There will be no more balls for Meg or Petey. Only a return to the banality and sameness they knew before. They are approaching the end of their patterned lives. But now, they will

92 Pinter, Complete Works, pp. 96-97.
93 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 97.
not even have Stanley with them. He has been taken away to start the beginning of the pattern of life which the organization has shaped for everyone, and the special quality his uniqueness gave to their lives has been taken away with him forever, leaving them with nothing but emptiness. It is not very nice.
WORKING PROCESS

As a director, I am convinced that only through a moment by moment exploration and development process can a play come to life. The script analysis that is Part One of this text shows what I believe produced the words and actions that Pinter gave his characters. I shall show in this section how I sought to clarify those meanings, intentions and desires camouflaged in the script, and how I sought to put Pinter's human drama on stage for an evening of stimulating theatre. I shall describe how the moments of the play came to life in the production process, or in some cases, how I would now try to achieve the moments that I think were not quite achieved before, if I could do it again.
ACT ONE

As the lights came up on stage to begin the play, I had music coming out of an old kitchen-type radio that was on the sideboard of the dining area. The music was to be of a MUSAK variety: the easy-listening, syrupy-sweet music that one often hears in department stores and dental offices. This is the kind of music Meg (played by Jane Paul) would have on while she is doing her housework, and it helped to establish the banal atmosphere in which she lives. During Petey's (David Baker) entrance, I had him lower the volume, thus providing a change in that atmosphere enough for Meg, to call out, "Is that you, Petey?" Later on, I had Stanley (Russ Holm) shut the radio off completely.

I now realize that an even better alternative would have been to have Petey turn the radio off completely when he came in, and Meg turn it back on sometime during their scene together. Then Stanley could turn it off when he came downstairs, just as before.

This would have begun to establish a feeling that Petey does not embrace the world of banality as fully as does Meg, and that there is a fellowship between Stanley and him. That would serve as one more measure of preparation for the aid Petey tries to lend Stanley in Act Three.

94 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 19.
Pinter's plays depend on the visual. Very often, it is not what the characters say that counts, but what they leave unsaid, which can only be communicated to the audience through visual means. For example, Petey's line, "You like a song, eh, Meg?" (See Page 3.) would be passed over as just idle chit-chat if he were just to continue reading his paper. Should he turn from his paper though, and reach out to her, touching her gently on the arm, the moment would become one during which he is reaching out in an effort to communicate something more, though he is unable to express it, and she is unable to comprehend his effort.

Not only is this visual quality necessary to increase an audience's understanding of the play, but I found it a vital tool to help the actors understand the moments they were to play. Some directors will explain the moments verbally, asking for certain emotions at certain times, and telling the actors what must be conveyed. I found that my actors could grasp an understanding more quickly if I could give them very definite physical actions to occupy them.

For example, I wanted it clear that Petey and Stanley were partners in the teasing games they play with Meg. To start this off, when Meg served Stanley his cornflakes and told him to eat them up, "like a good boy," I had Stanley simply start eating, silently. During this time, Meg would be watching him very closely, fascinated by this normally banal activity. Petey would cast an occasional side-long glance to Meg from his vantage point seated on the other side of Stanley.
Stanley meanwhile, would be aware of Meg's staring, and with each spoonful would be getting more and more annoyed. Finally, after about three spoonfuls, he would very deliberately turn toward Petey, and consequently away from Meg, to discuss, of all things, the weather.

During this exchange, Meg would not receive even a cursory glance from either of them. Feeling left out, she finally bursts in to ask Stanley how the cornflakes are. He replies they are "horrible" and, pushing his plate away, requests the second course.

Stanley's annoyance and Meg's feeling left out are natural results of the activity of Meg's staring at Stanley and of Stanley and Petey deliberately ignoring her. As long as the actors remain open to what is happening around them, they should have no difficulty attaining the appropriate reactions to these stimuli. And they should be able to attain these reactions naturally, without thinking that that is what they are supposed to do. I believe firmly that an actor must go through this process, rather than trying mentally to conceive of how they are expected to respond. The mental approach too often results in artificial, caricaturish performances. Instead, the process I am describing usually results in more natural and warmly human performances.

The action of Stanley pushing his plate away is included in Pinter's stage directions. To this I added the activity of Meg pushing the plate back toward him, and on and on, until Petey

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95 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 24.
96 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 24.
interjects, telling Meg to give Stanley his second course. Accompanying this command was the activity of Petey pushing Stanley's plate toward Meg. This visually clarifies Petey's participation in the game, and helped David Baker comprehend his role in the household relationships.

To further clarify this, I had Stanley deliver his sorrowful ode to the breakfast of which he had dreamt directly to Petey, who would listen in support. There would be occasional side-long glances to Meg, who was sitting alone at her area of the dining table, facing directly downstage, arms folded, turned from them at least ninety degrees in a huff. Upon finally getting her to anxiously remove the cornflakes and get Stanley's second course in the kitchen, through the threat of Stanley's taking his business elsewhere, I had Stanley and Petey exchange congratulatory nods, a la Laurel and Hardy, and Petey, in a to-the-winner-belong-the-spoils gesture, got the second course himself from the hatch where Meg left it, while Stanley remained seated.

Not only do these activities visually clarify the moments for the audience, they also occupy the actors. Without purposeful activity, an actor can find himself in a physical vacuum, where he will become self-conscious. The age-old actor's problem of "I don't know what to do with my hands," is often symptomatic of a lack of specific activity provided by the director.

This is not to say that the director must provide every little detailed activity for his actors. How much he needs to provide usually depends on the caliber of the actors with which he
is working. At one end of the scale are the inexperienced amateurs, such as high school, beginning college and community theatre actors. They need the most activity provided because they will not, as a rule, be able to come up with very much on their own. At the other end of the scale are the professionals, who may actually resent being given every little detailed activity, and for good reason. The professionals should have the capability of taking what the dramatic situation has to offer, and converting it into realistic and purposeful activity. In so doing, they can bring a reality and excitement to the moment.

Of course, even the professionals need some assistance from the director in this area. I was fortunate in having as close to a professional caliber cast as the University of Montana could provide. With these actors and actresses I found that my suggestions and instructions would provide them with the fuel they needed to explore and expand upon my ideas, taking them beyond my original conclusions. This was an exciting process to watch.

In the course of rehearsals the actors would "stall out" (a term of convenience I use to denote the loss of momentum in the actor's creative processes) many times, having taken an idea as far as they could. This is where I would step in again. Having watched them take my ideas and run with them, I could then provide a new suggestion or activity from which they could move on from the point of their stall-out. This process continued right up to the opening curtain.
One example of how a rudimentary direction helped the actor establish a moment-by-moment connection was during Stanley's recount of the piano concert he once gave in Lower Edmonton. At the beginning, as he is telling Meg of the "unique touch" (See Page 11.) he had, and of all the accolades he received, I had Russ Holm on his feet, leaning back on the dining table, his hands on the table's edge, his legs crossed at the ankles, and he was looking out over the audience, hardly even acknowledging Meg's presence (upstage of him). This positioning enabled Russ to connect naturally with the feelings of triumph, confidence, and self-assurance needed for the first part of that speech.

Then, as Stanley went on to relate the circumstances of his second concert, the one that never came to be, I had Russ sit on the footstool and hold closed his bathrobe. This immediately triggered the needed transition from his self-assurance to a feeling of deep fear and insecurity, especially as the stool caused him to sit in a hunched over position.

And finally, as he remarked, "All right, Jack. I can take a tip. . ." I had him rise and cross in Meg's direction, but not focused on her. These lines suggest a decisive determination to fight back, or take some action in any case. Coming to his feet and crossing helped visually reinforce that, and the activity of not focusing on Meg, until he directly referred to her immediately
afterward, communicated that this decision was completely within himself. This was communicated to the actor and, hopefully, to the audience as well.

There are times, of course, when a more verbal approach is needed to help an actor realize what the character is about. One example of this materialized as we began work on the Act One scene between Stanley and Lulu (Rene Haynes). It was easy enough to stage the scene so that both audience and actors could connect with Lulu's flirtations with Stanley, but Rene was puzzled as to the reason for this flirtation, since her lines suggested that Lulu is not genuinely attracted to him.

I answered Rene's question about this with my notion of Lulu as a girl who sees her worth only in terms of being able to attract and ensnare every man she confronts (See Pages 12-13.). This gave Rene a focus she did not have before. Fortunately, we worked together to enable her to transcend the mental image of Lulu as a mere siren by finding opportunities for Rene to "point at herself with her body" (another rehearsal term of mine to denote Lulu's use of her body to draw Stanley's attention toward her.). If Stanley's focus was on the package she brought, she would take an alluring pose between it and him. When she opened the windows, she would take another pose, as she did when Stanley invited her to sit down at the dining table where he was seated. Lulu used this moment to sit on the table, strategically positioned where he could not gracefully ignore her.

97 'Pinter, Complete Works, p. 33.'
Again though, despite the fact that Rene's question required an answer on the intellectual level, it was through a carefully developed program of physical activity that she was able to personify the moment-by-moment connection of her character.

Throughout the first act there is a tension in the character of Stanley that must be focused. The first opportunity for this tension to manifest itself is during Meg's advances toward him. Since I determined that Stanley has no Oedipal desires for Meg, but rather that she has a Jocastian desire for him (See Page 4.), I felt that Stanley had to treat her approaches with disdain, but a disdain tempered by the consideration that the security he feels exists at the boarding house must not be placed in jeopardy.

To accomplish this required Stanley to retreat from Meg without ever forcefully retaliating. This inability to strike back must also have shown to have a draining effect on him. The cigarettes he smoked, the fatigue in his line, "Oh, God, I'm tired," 98 all helped show this drain taking place, as his energy level had fallen fast from where it was when Petey was still around. Even his wit had started to drain, as with each approach by Meg, he had lost a little more of his teasing ability.

It was at this point, with a dragged out Stanley sitting at the dining table, that Meg first mentioned the two gentlemen visitors. Now we had to make it apparent that the tension in Stanley was increasing, and that it was due to the impending visit of these two gentlemen.

98 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 28.
The first means of accomplishing that was through the pause Pinter wrote into the script between Meg's first mention of the visitors and Stanley's inquiry into the script. The pause is there to punctuate the fact that the possibility of visitors to the boarding house is very disturbing to Stanley. During this pause, Pinter wrote in that Stanley slowly raises his head and speaks without turning. This action is also useful in punctuating the change of mood in Stanley from fatigue to disturbed tension.

To further distinguish the change in Stanley, we found a change of pace in the dialogue to be most useful. Stanley's joking manner with Meg became instantly altered to one far more deliberate. Russ took his time with his lines, allowing each word time to drive its way through the moment.

But then, as Stanley continued to press Meg for details about the visitors, we increased the pace, and his intensity, hoping to make it clear that it was very important to Stanley that he find out all he could about the two gentlemen. We did not let this intensity drop until Stanley and Meg were toe-to-toe in a fierce shouting match over the tea she had removed earlier.

Further on in Act One, immediately after Lulu leaves, Goldberg (Charlie Oates) and McCann (James Peter Deschenes) entered. Stanley was in the kitchen, where, once he heard them enter, he could surreptitiously watch them through the hatch. By Stanley's deliberate efforts to keep the two gentlemen from knowing he is there, we could once again illustrate the tension inherent in his situation. Even without giving the audience all the background information and exposition they would have from
most other playwrights, we could at least make it clear that Stanley is afraid of something, something that he believes may involve these two men.

Later on, when Stanley was questioning Meg about the identity of the two gentlemen, his need to know had increased the tension within him, and Meg's lack of attention to his questions ultimately made him lose control for just a moment. On the line, "I said, who are they?" (See Page 51.) I had Stanley tightly grab Meg's wrist and increase the intensity in his voice to help punctuate his need to have his questions answered.

Meg's wrist did not stay gripped for long. Her momentary alarm, and the hurt look in her eyes, as hers and Stanley's met, were all it took to get Stanley to release her wrist slowly. Her response, "I've told you, the two gentlemen," (See Page 51.) required a tone of hurt feelings that Stanley would have grabbed her like that, more than anger or belligerence. Her hurt tone brought Stanley's down to one of apology or regret for the next few lines, but the tension within him was still there, and manifested itself again when he specifically asked the names of the two gentlemen. Stanley's probing and prodding of Meg to get her to remember Goldberg's name built in intensity until she finally blurted it out. At this point the bottom just dropped right out of Stanley. We had to make it apparent that Goldberg was a name he knew, a name which carried the meaning of hopeless dread along with it. To accomplish this, we had Stanley sit,
mesmerized, onto the footstool, where his posture could naturally sag just as his hopes had. Here he would stay until he started to play the drum Meg brought him.

For the drum playing scene, I erred badly in design. With all of Stanley's hopes gone, and the intellectual restraints drained from him, all that he had left was his primitive rage. This rage should have focused on the person most immediate to him, the person who had betrayed him by allowing his enemies into his sanctuary, and who had just humiliated him by substituting a toy drum for the concert piano he used to play. But instead of letting Stanley's rage focus on Meg, and having him coming toward her with the drum, almost attacking her with its pounding, I had him turn away from her and out toward the audience, in an aimless, nowhere-to-turn manner. I know now that he should have finished the scene standing over Meg, with her having sat on the armchair's right (diagonally upstage) armrest, where she could have fallen back onto the chair, or leaned back over it as he menacingly approached her for a more tension filled tableau with which to blackout the end of Act One.
ACT TWO

If tension is the presiding feeling of Act One, then terror dominates Act Two. In an effort to establish that feeling right away, I had McCann begin the tearing of the newspaper sheets in the blackness that enveloped the theatre after the houselights were taken out. It was my hope that the sound of the newspaper slowly tearing in the blackness would have a terrifying effect on the audience, as we allowed the lights to start coming up only toward the end of the third strip.

As I sat in the audience during each performance, I could feel that the effect was working somewhat, but not as well as I had hoped. People were wondering what the sound was, and some were reacting with feelings of tension, but not quite the terror I sought. I believe now that if I had somehow amplified the sound in the blackness, fading it down as the lights came up, that it might have worked better. Still, I am convinced it was a better way to begin the act than just starting the newspaper tearing as the lights came up.

From that point on, we established through staging a chess game between Stanley and his adversaries. Beginning with McCann, there was a constant maneuvering for position between the two, with McCann getting the dominant position more often than not.
Some examples are the way McCann blocked Stanley’s way at the kitchen door ("I don’t think we’ve met."99), and the way he would not give Stanley clearance to pass toward the front door. When we had Stanley try to go through the dining area to the center steps, there was McCann again, at the top of those steps, blocking his way, and now with a substantial height advantage. And when Stanley sat at the dining table, McCann, rather than sitting on a chair at the same level, sat on the table, right over Stanley, again looming over him, implying a threat to Stanley, although nothing he had said had been a direct threat.

There is one other major element to Act Two beside terror. It is the hope that Stanley glimpses when he begins to establish a connection with McCann, by means of their mutual love for McCann’s Irish homeland. As I stated in my script analysis, I would like to have included the scene where McCann and Stanley are both whistling The Mountains of Morne, which was deleted from the original 1958 script. This might have helped solidify the mutual ground on which they both stood.

One aspect Stanley did use to establish a connection was the friction he detected between McCann and Goldberg. This was difficult to clarify on stage, as there are only a few moments in the script in which Stanley can take advantage of the situation. Every time, however, he brought up the fact that McCann was not being told everything by Goldberg, we used a pause to give McCann

99 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 47.
a moment of hesitation, allowing Stanley's suggestion time to provoke some thought, and to suggest to the audience that Stanley had hit a sore spot.

Finally, when Stanley made his final effort to solidify the connection, we gave him the dominant position, by seating McCann on the armchair's right armrest. This enabled Stanley to approach him standing, at a higher visual level and slightly behind him, so that his comments on Ireland, and his suggestion of them going out to a nearby pub would have more impact on the now silent McCann. I was hoping that for just a moment, especially as their eyes met, the possibility that McCann might indeed go with him would seem a strong one to the audience.

But that moment was shattered when Goldberg entered with Petey, and the terror resumed. One way to heighten that terror was to visually clarify that Petey's upcoming departure was prompted by Goldberg. To do this, I had Goldberg make a very deliberate turn and stare toward Petey, who, after recognizing this as his cue, informed everyone that he had to leave. With each comment made by Goldberg that ostensibly indicated surprise at Petey's departure ("You're not staying for the party?"), or an urging for Petey to return soon ("Beat him quick and come back, Mr. Boles."), Petey gave a pause, during which we hoped to show his inner desire to reply contrary to the script worked out by Goldberg and him.

100-101 Pinter, Complete Works, p. 54.
Now comes the interrogation, or inquisition. Hovering over Stanley, Goldberg and McCann batter his senses with a rapid fire set of questions and accusations. The pace and intensity of the interrogation started at a medium level, but soon it built to a point where Stanley resembled someone caught with no cover in a crossfire of machine guns. Stanley tried valiantly to counter their barrage, but he could not keep up. To make their task easier, Goldberg had McCann remove Stanley's glasses. As Stanley tried to pursue them, I had McCann kick the footstool into his path, tripping him up. Now completely disoriented, with only the footstool with which to cling, Stanley was far more vulnerable, and the two inquisitors had increased their dominant position even more.

Before too long, Stanley had broken under the inquisition. With his scream were released all the restraints upon his primitive rage that his now destroyed intellect and civility once applied. Yet, after the scream, he was still, slumped over himself on the footstool, which led Goldberg, McCann and the audience to momentarily conclude that everything within him was broken: that there was nothing left with any fight.

It is at this point that I would stage things differently, had I to do the play over. Stanley's fight with Goldberg and McCann needed to be more of a battle royal than just his grabbing Goldberg by the throat, getting pulled off by McCann, and then cowering into a heap as McCann and Goldberg closed in on him. In retrospect, there should have been some indication that Stanley might be physically harder to handle now than he ever was.
But the most serious flaw in my staging was in having Stanley remain in a nearly catatonic state throughout the birthday party scene. His catatonia resulted in his dropping out of nearly all involvement with the scene, and the terror dissolved. Somehow we should have created a feeling of Stanley as a caged animal, much like a lion or ape in a zoo, who, though momentarily benign, would become very dangerous if he could break free. This would have kept Stanley involved with the party scene, and prepared the audience for when he does, in fact, become dangerous.

If we had been able to establish that quality in Stanley, then we could have staged all the interplay between the other party guests as a taunting of him. For instance, Goldberg's seduction of Lulu could have been staged purposely so that Stanley could watch, with Goldberg occasionally catching Stanley's stare and making a purposeful gesture of lauding his superiority.

Stanley should also have had a view of Meg and McCann. They were not doing anything deliberately to taunt Stanley, but their connection with each other, and their ignoring of Stanley could have been additional factors to retrigger his rage.

But the tension and terror of the second act should have manifested itself fully during the blind man's buff game. The key here was to have Lulu, during each round, take a position in Stanley's view, which consequently would attract Goldberg to the same position, so that his fondling of her would be in full view of Stanley. During the first round of the game, Stanley should have just watched Goldberg and Lulu, his anger and rage seething by this point. During the second round, when McCann was blind,
and while Goldberg and Lulu were coming fully together in explicit sexual contact, Stanley should have started to make a slow deliberate move toward them, presumably to lash out at his tormenters, venting his rage. Before he could do so, though, McCann would intercept him, and the game would go on.

When McCann removed his own blindfold Stanley should still have been maintaining a menacing glare at Goldberg and Lulu, one that McCann would notice, but that his boss would not. McCann, realizing that Stanley may still be very dangerous, would break Stanley's glasses after blindfolding him, hoping to reduce Stanley's ability to fight.

It was the feeling that Stanley was becoming more and more dangerous that I failed to produce. Since the stage directions become much more specific here, I needed to direct my actors into different attitudes. Russ Holm needed to portray Stanley's seething rage instead of confused helplessness, and Jim Deschenes needed his McCann to be much more wary of that growing rage. Finally, when Stanley was blindfolded, we needed for him to react instinctively to sounds, such as those that should have been made by Lulu and Goldberg in their passion, or by Meg, when she let out an exclamation concerning Stanley's stumbling over the drum. This would have prepared the audience for Stanley's advantage in the upcoming blackness. I cannot fault my actors for this failure in the production. I misdirected these moments.

One way to have emphasized Stanley's advantage would have been for him to establish a position atop the center steps. Then, when McCann was searching the darkened room with his torch, after
first directing it in Goldberg's face, he could momentarily have found Stanley in his light—just his face in a position of superior height. Stanley's reaction could have been one of an animal lashing out, startling McCann and knocking the torch from his hands.

Now, back in the darkness, Stanley would move toward the frightened Lulu, while the others search for McCann's torch. In the darkness I wanted just one small, narrow beam of cool light (The only light available produced an amber beam.), resembling moonlight shining through a small, porthole window located on the fourth wall, with some shadows in the light to give the appearance of a wagon-wheel framework in the glass. Into this light, which would be just to one side of where Lulu was standing, I would have Stanley move, so that his face, comprising his primitive rage and bearing the distortion of the wagon-wheel shadows, could be seen. This would have created the panic in Lulu that caused her to scream and faint. Stanley would then carry her off into the darkness.

Returning to the actual production staging, McCann found his torch on the floor downstage center. As he shone it around the first thing he found was Lulu's face, hanging upside down over the downstage edge of the dining table on which she was lying, unconscious and spread-eagled. With Rene Haynes' long red hair, this created quite a striking first impression. As the light moved up, they found Stanley standing over her. Now that Goldberg and McCann had recovered the light, their superiority was restored, and as they slowly closed in on him, Stanley retreated
upstage to the sideboard, giggling in a terrified manner. As the two gentlemen were right on top of him, the torch was turned off, and two seconds later, Stanley let out a scream in the blackness, as the second act concluded.

When Russ Holm asked me what type of scream I wanted—none is called for in Pinter's stage directions—I told him to scream as though someone was crushing his testicles. The audience, after hearing that scream, was left to wonder all during the intermission and third act just what had been done to Stanley. Thus we extended the feeling of terror far better than if we had just ended Act Two with the blackout.
ACT THREE

If tension is the dominant feeling of Act One, and terror that of Act Two, then hope must be the most important feeling in Act Three. Though the audience may not know exactly what has happened to Stanley, they can have little doubt that he is in a desperate situation. But while I wanted them to feel his situation was desperate, I did not want them to feel that it was without hope. If there was no hope of salvation for Stanley in Act Three, then there would be no dramatic tension, and the audience would no longer be interested.

The key figure in Act Three is Petey. Thus far he has managed to stay out of the way at the most tense moments, giving Goldberg and McCann free reign over the house. But in Act Three, due to his guilt for deserting Stanley, and the curt and rather threatening way he observes Goldberg treating Meg, Petey decides to see if he can help Stanley. Through Petey, the audience gains hope.

That decision began when Meg was questioning Goldberg about his car. We had Goldberg direct his answers away from Meg, to show he did not want to deal with her implied concern that when McCann and he would go for a ride, they would be taking Stanley with them. Finally, when talking about the car's boot (trunk),
Goldberg slowly directed his focus right at Meg as he said, "for the right amount," (See Page 68.) using his penetrating glare to imply directly that Meg could end up in the boot if she did not shut up and go away, which she did.

Throughout the play, a great deal more has been implied by the six characters rather than said. This is especially true in Act Three as Petey begins verbally to probe and prod Goldberg. The problem we had to overcome in this scene was how to clarify the wider implications between the spoken lines. We did that through action and reaction.

For example, Goldberg's threatening glare at Meg as he talked about his car's boot was an action. Having Meg retreat during her following lines established a reaction. Perhaps the audience would not understand the exact implication behind Goldberg's menacing glare, but they would be able to catch the fact that he was intimidating her.

This was the principle for much of the play and especially for the third act. For nearly every question Petey asked Goldberg about Stanley's condition, we had to create an action that implied a statement underneath the question. For every response Goldberg gave to those questions, we had to create a reaction that would imply an appropriate underlying response to Petey's underlying statement.

The most commonly used action/reaction pattern was for Petey to be looking directly at Goldberg, and for Goldberg to be unable or unwilling to return his stare. This was especially effective because of its contrast with Act Two, when Goldberg looked right
at Petey when he was ostensibly suggesting that Petey return quickly from his alleged chess match. Back then Petey momentarily met Goldberg's eyes and then turned away after comprehending the meaning behind it. In the third act, we reversed this pattern. Petey took the offensive, with his stare implying that Goldberg had to reckon with him about Stanley's well-being. And Goldberg began to wither somewhat under Petey's siege.

As their confrontation began, Goldberg attempted to employ the strategy of assuming a visually superior position from which to fire his verbal howitzer. It might have worked, as we had Petey all set up for him, seated in the stage left dining chair, while Goldberg circled from behind to a fully erect position downstage left of Petey. But "Poof!" (See Page 69.) was a poor excuse for a verbal howitzer, indicating how much the strain of the night before has taken its toll on Goldberg. When Petey withstood it, we had him begin to assume the visually superior positions, standing atop the steps while Goldberg was just downstage of them; or standing over the easy chair when Goldberg was sitting in it. Above all, we had Petey easily winning the staring contest between the two, and continue to do so until Goldberg mentioned Monty.

That is where the reversal took place. Petey's reaction to Monty had to be a definite retreat in sharp contrast to the strategic advances he was making with his probing questions and inciteful statements ("Came in the front door and all the lights were out. Put a shilling in the slot. . . ." [See Page 65]). But it was not a complete retreat. Before he left, we had Petey take
the high ground, framed by the front door, facing Goldberg directly (3/4 front to the audience), to tell him that he was only going as far as his garden, and that he would be back. Goldberg was in a much weaker position, at the foot of the steps and 3/4 back to the audience. This staging helped establish both Petey's potential for resuming the confrontation, and Goldberg's reduced capacity for it.

This duel with Petey took a lot out of Goldberg. Totally exhausted, he sat on the stage right dining chair. McCann, now on stage with him, took the stage left dining chair, and began to tear Petey's newspaper into strips again. Goldberg tried to keep from letting McCann's activity get to him, but after about four strips were torn, we made his reaction an explosive one, slamming his hand down hard on the table as he ordered McCann to stop, and then going on in a tirade about the childishness and pointlessness of McCann's habit.

We maintained this explosive, almost volcanic quality in Goldberg all the through his tirade until his incomplete conclusion, "Because I believe that the world. . . ." (See Page 75.) It was here, for the first time in the play, that Charlie Oates slowly turned his Goldberg into an old man. He remained so until, on his knees before McCann, who was straddling the footstool to Goldberg's right, he remembered the word "Respect." (See Page 79.) From that point on, Charlie's Goldberg began to grow before the audience's very eyes. Though they may not have
been able to follow the verbal significance of Goldberg's monologue, the moments when he was anxious, belligerent, manic, defeated and restored were clear.

The following scene with Lulu required staging that would reflect the results of her degrading experience the night before. Where she used to brazenly flaunt herself and her body in front of men, we now had her timidly and ashamedly holding her jacket closed about her throat, a visual indication of the change in her demeanor.

She was also unable to mount much of an attack on Goldberg. Though she tried to take the offensive toward him, his every response twisted and turned her attack back in her direction. When Goldberg rose from the armchair, advancing on her, she could not hold her ground, and retreated, at his pace, toward the stage right steps by the dining table.

That's where we had McCann, to launch an attack on her from a second front. His "Confess!" (See Page 83.) took on the quality of the most zealous evangelist, and the fire and brimstone-like oratory with which he followed that was far more than she could withstand. He chased her to the front doorway, and after she had run off, he turned to Goldberg, who was sitting and watching on the dining table, and they exchanged pleased-as-punch smiles for a job well done, indicating they are a team again, working together like a well-oiled machine.

Now all that remained was for them to bring Stanley down and prepare him for the future they had planned for him. When he was brought downstairs, the audience could see that Stanley was a
lifeless reflection of the two gentlemen, wearing a three-piece business suit like theirs, only in black as compared to Goldberg's stone gray and McCann's earth-tone brown. His once unruly hair was slickly parted and combed to the sides, with an overabundance of hair oil to keep it that way. And his face bore the pitiful, lost countenance of a shattered man. Even those members of the audience who had felt that Stanley was wasting away as a recluse in Act One would prefer the old Stanley to the one Goldberg and McCann had fashioned.

We had Goldberg and McCann seat Stanley in the armchair, and from over and behind him, leaning on the backrest, they would describe his future in a wooing, gentle tone, much as one would for a child. They made it sound like a rosy, idyllic future, which would include every benefit that men with positions, like Goldberg, desire.

But when they asked him for his opinion of this prospect, Stanley could not articulate an answer. His reply was a strained, desperate jumble of meaningless sounds. Though the sounds are meaningless as language, we should have had Stanley convey the message that he still did not desire to go with them, by looking terrifiedly at Goldberg, and pleadingly to McCann, hoping beyond hope for some salvation by the Irishman. When none was forthcoming, Stanley, exhausted by this last effort, would sink defeated into the chair. Unfortunately, I failed to see the opportunity to convey Stanley's last, desperate attempt at resistance until the play was in production.
During Stanley's final effort to speak, Petey had entered and observed it all. From atop the steps, he attempted to intercede. We gave him a slight height advantage over Goldberg, who was at the bottom of the steps, but it was not enough to even slightly irritate Goldberg, who walked right past him to the foyer as McCann gathered up Stanley. Then, in his boldest frontal assault, Petey intercepted McCann, coming down one step to tell him in no uncertain terms to leave Stanley alone.

For just one instant, everything was still. I was hoping to convey to the audience just the slightest glimmer of hope that Petey would somehow be able to rescue Stanley. That glimmer was soon extinguished as first Goldberg, from behind and to Petey's right, and then McCann, from in front and to Petey's left, closed in on him with the offer, or threat, to take him with them to Monty. As the two gentlemen closed in around Petey, placing their arms around his shoulders as they surrounded him, the audience knew, even before he ultimately yielded, that he had no chance at all of withstanding their combined will. Stanley's last hope was gone.

At this point I had Petey walk down the last remaining step and sit down at the dining table. Only when he was seated did Goldberg and McCann gather up Stanley and their bags and go, with Goldberg leaving Petey a five pound note on the table first. It was only upon hearing the car starting from outside that Petey tried to call out from the front door to Stanley not to let them tell him what to do. His effort was futile, as the car was heard driving away before he finished, taking Stanley away forever.
Petey returned to his chair at the dining table, resignedly pocketed the money, and began to read his paper. But McCann's torn strips of pages were in that paper, and they fell out at Petey's feet. Even after they were gone, Petey's sanctuary was still contaminated with the two gentlemen's presence, and he trembled as he looked at the torn strips of all their lives at his feet.

For the final scene with Petey and Meg, I asked Jane Paul to imply with her questions about Stanley's whereabouts a concern about whether he was still at home or if he had been taken away. This fear that Stanley was gone had to be one that was too terrible a possibility to verbalize, as though saying it might make it so, but not saying it might somehow keep Stanley there with them. By the same token, Petey could not bring himself to tell her the truth, telling her instead that Stanley was still asleep. Her reaction to this was one of cautious joy, taking his answer to mean that Stanley was still there. But Petey told her to let him sleep, knowing that if she went to his room, the truth would be undeniable, and he did not want her to have to face that any sooner than necessary. Of course, Meg realized that Petey's telling her to let Stanley sleep was his way of sparing her the truth, that Stanley was gone, never to return.

There was one last reminder of Stanley remaining in the house. The toy drum that Meg gave him, now broken and useless just like Stanley, was sitting on the sideboard behind the dining table. Before talking about the previous night's party, Meg crossed to the sideboard, gathered up the drum, and held it much
like she would a child. It was with this final tableau: Petey sitting in the stage left dining chair, holding the closed newspaper with the torn strips at his feet and looking at Meg; and with Meg standing upstage center of the table, holding the drum and looking out toward the front door, out of which Stanley had left their home forever, that we ended the play.
CONCLUSION

In watching the eight performances of The Birthday Party, I was very pleased with the results. The play has the potential to be boring, because of the mundane dialogue that is so much a part of it, and because of the confusion that can result from the lack of exposition. However, the concrete activity and staging helped clarify what was happening between the characters, even if why remained less clear. Combined with the very fine performances of the entire cast, the play held the interest of each night's audience.

One aspect that came as a pleasant surprise was how well the humor of the play emerged. By having the cast take their time to allow the moments time to clarify, we enabled the humor that is in the script to be appreciated.

Perhaps the key operating principle to Pinter is time. Unlike other plays that require a quick pace with immediate pick-up of cues, Pinter's rhythms are less rushed, and the moments develop better when the characters have time to act and react according to the subtext of the dialogue. And it is the subtext that contains most of the humor.

Finally, Pinter's plays also need time in the reading stage. I have never gained as full an appreciation of a Pinter play from the first reading as I have by coming back to it after a while of
concentrating on other things. This is a principle that applies to most, if not all, playwrights, but more so with Pinter. With each reading can come a greater understanding of the play, and since there is so little direct information in his plays, those subsequent readings become extremely important, because the first reading will result in an inadequate understanding of the play for anyone expecting to direct it.

Finally, I believe that the lack of time taken with the original 1958 London production may have been partly responsible for its poor reception. Director Peter Wood could not have had more than five months between the completion of the script (November, 1957) and the play's opening (April, 1958). I do not think that is enough time to develop a sufficient functional interpretation. Without such an interpretation, the company has no foundation on which to build the production.

Even if the time Mr. Wood had was enough for him to develop a functional interpretation, time has been needed for the critics and the theatre-going public to become knowledgeable in the ways of Pinterian drama. Since 1958, scholars have written books and articles on Pinter and his plays, directors have put on stage productions that have learned from and improved upon their predecessors, and a greater understanding of Pinter's intentions has developed. Fortunately, unlike so many artists who never live to see their creations receive the accolades that destiny ultimately intends for them (Mozart, Van Gogh, Modigliani), it has not required quite so much time for Pinter's plays to receive their just appreciation. Pinter, unlike Stanley, has managed to
maintain his "unique touch" without the Goldbergs and McCanns reshaping him. Perhaps, because of people like Pinter, the organization has become less able to quash the individuals.
Oh the Garden of Eden has vanished they say but I know the lie of it still,

Just turn to the left at the foot of Ben Clay and stop when half way to Coote Hill.

It's there you will find it I know sure enough and it's whispering over to me: Come back, Paddy Reilly, to Bally James Duff, Come home, Paddy Reilly, to me!
Bibliography


