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A Broken Compass: Modern Leadership in the plays of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter

This article is premised on the proposition that Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter who are epitomes of modern drama show, in a conspicuous manner, the erosion of contemporary leadership in their plays. Stated differently, Beckett and Pinter — champions of modern drama, depict, in a glaring style, the collapse of modern leadership in their works. Modern leadership, like a broken or ruined compass, fails to show the right direction or to fulfill its mission in the world of Beckett and Pinter which, by extension, is our present day world. Martin Esslin is, of course, right when he insists in *The Theatre of the Absurd* that absurd plays (such as those of Beckett and Pinter) "can be seen as the reflection of what seems to be the attitude most genuinely representative of our own time" (Esslin 4). Therefore, leaders in the plays of Beckett and Pinter are representatives of our contemporary rulers. Aristotle speaks of a true leader in these terms: "Like a sailor, whose duty is to lead the ship to a safe harbour, the *civilis vir* [leader] must lead the republic to the destination and the good for which it has been instituted, namely the liberty and good life of its citizens"(Aristotle 1959: 165). But in sharp contrast with Aristotle's *civilis vir,* both secular and religious leaders in the plays of Beckett and Pinter, especially in *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *The Caretaker*, neglect, deceive, corrupt, exploit, hate and terrorize the people they are supposed to serve, love and protect. As we move to the nexus of this paper, it would be important to take a bird's-eye view of the circumstances under which these plays were written.

Written in the second half of the twentieth century, the foregoing plays present a grim picture of life after the horrors of the First and the Second World Wars. Although these plays are hewed to the acute devastation and unbearable traumas caused by the Great Depression as well as the Great Wars and their militant legacy, they have a universal flavor that covers the entire second half of the twentieth century and stretches to the twenty-first century. But over and

above this devastation and traumas, the plays of our playwrights depict the emptiness of man's existence, the waste of intellectualism, the spiritual and moral disintegration of the world and its weary people. In fact, set in sterile background and claustrophobia, the plays of Beckett and Pinter picture modern man drifting through despair, lamentations and brutality in a world void of genuine or committed leadership.

In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Godot, a metaphor for shrewd, deceitful and unjust leaders of our contemporary world, wallows in wealth and inaccessibility as he neglects Vladimir and Estragon who represent the present day citizenry. He is said to have a nice home, correspondents and bank account and therefore stands for an embodiment of hope to the poverty-ridden Vladimir and Estragon. Although Godot did not "promise anything,"[1] these tramps have no recourse other than to rely on what is the decision that will determine the state of their battered lives. Vladimir and Estragon perceive Godot as an indispensable leader that will lead them to a meaningful and prosperous life. This passion for a sense of a purpose-driven life explains their anxiety to hear what Godot will say:

> **Vladimir**: Let's wait and see what he says.
> **Estragon**: Who?
> **Vladimir**: Godot.
> **Estragon**: Good idea.
> **Vladimir**: Let's wait until we know exactly how we stand.
> **Estragon**: On the other hand it may be better to strike the iron before it freezes.
> **Vladimir**: I'm curious to hear what he has to offer. Then we'll take it or leave it. (12)

The absurdity here is that Vladimir and Estragon imagine that they have some bargaining power; some prerogatives and options. What is true, however, is that they are destitute and abandoned, as elsewhere. The irony is that their dependency on what Godot has

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[1] Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1954) 13. All further references to and citations shall be taken from this edition and cited in parenthesis.

to offer is bound to fail since "he couldn't promise anything" (13). Although Godot promised nothing, he will be welcomed with boundless humility if he ever shows up. Vladimir talks of their hands and knees and this suggests that they will prostrate themselves when Godot comes. Vladimir, to the astonishment of Estragon, says how much they have lost:

> **Estragon**: As bad as that?
> **Vladimir**: Your worship wishes to assert his prerogatives?
> **Estragon**: We've no rights any more?
> **Vladimir**: You'd make me laugh if it wasn't prohibited.
> **Estragon**: We've lost our rights?
> **Vladimir**: (Distinctly) We got rid of them. (13)

Estragon's worry conveyed by such expressions as "as bad as that?", "We've no rights any more?" and "We've lost our rights?" reveal their lack of free will as well as their irrelevance in the social system. Vladimir laughs because Estragon still wants to assert his rights or prerogatives. Again, the loss of rights and privileges are echoed by the fact that Estragon and Vladimir trek whereas Godot is alleged to move majestically and comfortably on the back of his horse (13). This disparity between Beckett's tramps and Godot demonstrates the dichotomy between the ruled and the rulers of our contemporary world.

Besides the fact that Vladimir and Estragon are of all rights in the hands of leaders and their anxiety at the unlikely prospect that their problems will be redressed by their leader (Godot), these characters are further frustrated by both their physical suffering and the arbitrary absences of Godot. He postpones his appointment twice without any explicit reason. The boy who announces the postponement of Godot's meeting with the tramps does not give any reason why his master does not respect his appointment. All he knows is that "Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow" (33). Of course, this was said yesterday as well. "Yet they [Vladimir and Estragon] do not surrender completely to despair; they continue throughout the play to wait for Godot, despite every manner of frustrating and disheartening experience" (Mueller and Jacobsen 85).

As shrewd leaders of our world, Godot kindles hope in the tramps but consistently stays away. His absence does not mean that he lacks knowledge of what the tramps need, rather, it could be attributed to his complete indifference to their suffering. He is a wealthy person, and that is what matters to him, not the misery of Estragon and Vladimir. After waiting for a long time Estragon laments, "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (27). To Richard Gilman, "Didi [Estragon] and Gogo [Vladimir] live in an atmosphere in which time barely moves forward and in which all values are flattened out under the arc of Godot's possibility, the value whose absence empties all judgements" (Gilman 248-49).

Modern leaders often create the impression that they are indispensable in initiating and advancing the public welfare. As does Godot, they shy away in times of need, and their obligations to the people they rule are exchanged for their own privileges. Godot, like many contemporary leaders, seems to assume that his arrival and provision of solutions to the problems of Estragon and Vladimir are only acts of charity and not of obligation or right. He will come only when he likes, and his gift (if at all there will be any) will be known by him and his family only. He does not take into consideration the agony Estragon and Vladimir undergo as they wait endlessly in physical and psychological pain. The following dialogue shows Estragon's frustration that, despite Godot's unreliability, he cannot be dropped because he will punish them:

> **Estragon**: Where shall we go?
> **Vladimir**: Not far.
> **Estragon**: Oh yes, let's go far away from here.
> **Vladimir**: We can't.
> **Estragon**: Why not?
> **Vladimir**: We have to come back tomorrow.
> **Estragon**: What for?
> **Vladimir**: To wait for Godot.
> **Estragon**: Ah! (silence) He didn't come?
> **Vladimir**: No.
> **Estragon**: And now it's too late.
> **Vladimir**: Yes, now it's night.
> **Estragon**: And if we dropped him? (pause)
> If we dropped him?

Vladimir: He'd punish us. (59)

The tramps are compelled to wait for Godot. They wait for him out of fear that he will punish them and not out of civility. Like many modern leaders, Godot expects those he rules not to reject his leadership, or he will sanction them if they dare do so. No doubt, Vladimir who has been very patient tells Estragon, "We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. (Pause) Unless Godot comes" (60). They prefer to hang themselves rather than face Godot's indifference. This draws our attention to Adolf Hitler's reign of terror in Germany and the alleged cruelty of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

The immediate cause of World War Two was German's invasion of Poland in that year resulting from Hitler's ruthless vehemence to, "...annihilate my enemies" (Kellerman 51). This action led to widespread criticism among his own people who were apathetic to war. His wrath and threat to kill those who did not want war was successful because his citizens, like Vladimir and Estragon, feared repression. Similarly, Saddam Hussein, as seen in videos and testified by his own citizens, is accused of having gassed and chopped off the hands and tongues of his subjects who questioned or disobeyed his policies. He, like other dictators around the world has, for decades, instilled fear in his people. Instead of leading his citizens to happiness, freedom and security, Hussein is alleged to have led his people to agony, tyranny and death. These atrocities present modern leaders as dangers to their own citizens who, ironically, rely on them for protection and prosperity. It is on the basis of tyranny and its attendant consequences that Vladimir and Estragon resolve to take refuge in death rather than to wrestle with Godot who disguises himself in omniscience, omnipotence and brutality (for example, he beats one of his boys) .

Stanley Milgrim in *Political Leaders* presents political leaders as serious threats to their own people, people who allow themselves to be slaughtered by the decision of a single person:

> It has been reliably established that from 1933 to 1945 millions of innocent people were systematically slaughtered on command. Gas chambers were built, death camps were guarded, daily quotas of corpses were produced with the same efficiency as the manufacture

> alliances. These inhuman policies may have originated in the mind of a single person, but they could not have been carried out on a massive scale if a very large number of people did not obey orders. (51)

This quotation presents the dilemma of obedience and the fact that once elected to the position of authority, modern leaders tend to hurt their own citizens.

Gogo and Didi, like the oppressed of our world, live without human dignity. They, out of fear, cannot rebel, and are constrained to submit themselves to the whims and caprices of Godot. As prisoners without crime in a land of acute aridity, they are caused to flip-flop between pessimism and optimism as Godot recurrently breaks his assurances that he will come tomorrow. But to Eric Bentley,

> Today, only politicians profess optimism, and even they prove their case only by smiling before television cameras. People who consider themselves enlightened are now pessimists — Samuel Beckett is their counter-prophet and antihero — for it is no longer reasonable to think that humanity will solve its most pressing problems. Even if we don't go to war, we are changing the world, but for the worse... (Bentley 111)

Therefore, like modern leaders, Godot seems only to be toying with Vladimir and Estragon that he will come to redress their problems.

While Godot never presents himself, there is however, a rather explicit counterpart in the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky. These two can be seen to represent the relationship between a tyrannical modern leader and his docile subject. Pozzo incarnates arbitrary authority: he is at the helm of his society that consists of slaves and his wealth is justified by the land he owns adjacent to the dusty road where Gogo and Didi wait for Mr. Godot. Moreover, the heavy load Lucky carries suggests his enormous affluence and corresponds to the disproportionate wealth contemporary leaders accumulate when assigned to a post of leadership. In spite of Lucky's old age, he carries the huge possession of his autocratic boss — Pozzo who, perhaps to secure his wealth, holds the rope tightly around

Lucky's neck as he wanders with him. One can easily infer that the ruled work while the rulers reap the profits.

It is also interesting that Lucky carries along Pozzo's stool. This stool suggests a kind of political seat, from which Pozzo "holds court," and which is, of course, a symbol of sovereign privilege and power. It is, if perceived from ancient traditions, a symbol of potentate or dignified authority. Given the privileges and power that seem to characterize the stool, or say throne, Pozzo, as if to manifest authority wherever he goes and to prevent his stool from any power grabber, is compelled to wander with it. But the fact that the stool — symbol of leadership — is carried aimlessly around implies that modern leadership has lost its value in the hands of wanton leaders. This attitude further suggests that these rulers trivialize leadership and even stretch their tyranny beyond their area of jurisdiction. Wandering with this symbol of authority also implies that modern leadership lacks a clear sense of direction and like a shattered compass, cannot lead the masses to the right destination or goal.

In addition, the pretentious and ceremonious nature of modern leaders is embodied in Pozzo. Before addressing Vladimir and Estragon, Pozzo first of all puts on his coat:

> Pozzo finishes buttoning his coat, stoops, inspects himself, straightens up....Yes, gentlemen. [Vladimir and Estragon] I cannot go for long without the society of my like...Pozzo begins to put on his coat, stops. Coat! Lucky puts down bag, basket, and stool, advances, helps Pozzo on with his coat, goes back to his place and takes up bag, basket, and stool.... (16)

Pozzo's foppishness seems to be a vain attempt to cover up his emptiness. As a leader, he strives to create a physically imposing personality that cannot be properly expressed by words and actions alone. After putting his coat, Pozzo, like contemporary leaders, gives a very strong, fatuous and vacant speech that bores Vladimir and Estragon: "Who hasn't listened. Ah yes! The night. (*He raises his head*). But be a little more attentive, for pity's sake, otherwise we'll never get anywhere" (25). Like present day leaders, especially of the third world countries, Pozzo decides to pay Vladimir and Estragon for listening to him by providing a little comic "entertainment"

through Lucky. The following dialogue that follows Pozzo's long and tiring speech reveals the hollowness of so many of our modern leaders whose primary interest is to create an image for themselves:

> **Pozzo**: How did you find me? (Vladimir and Estragon look at him blankly).Good?
> Fair? Middling? Poor? Positively bad?
> **Vladimir**: (First to understand). Oh very good, very very good.
> **Pozzo**: (To Estragon). And you, sir?
> **Estragon**: Oh tray bong, tray tray bong.
> **Pozzo**: (Fervently). Bless you, gentlemen, bless you! (Pause). I have need of encouragement! (Pause). I weakened a little towards the end, you didn't notice?
> **Vladimir**: Oh perhaps just a teeny weeny little bit.
> **Estragon**: I thought it was intentional.
> **Pozzo**: You see my memory is defective. *Silence.*
> **Estragon**: In the meantime nothing happens.
> **Pozzo**: You find it tedious?
> **Estragon**: Somewhat.
> **Pozzo**: (To Vladimir). And you, sir?
> **Vladimir**: I've been better entertained. *Silence.*
> *Pozzo struggles inwardly*
> **Pozzo**: Gentlemen, you have been… civil to me.
> **Estragon**: Not at all?
> **Vladimir**: What an idea!
> **Pozzo**: Yes, yes, you have been correct. So that I ask myself is there anything I can do for my turn for these honest fellows who are having such a dull, dull time?
> **Estragon**: Even ten francs will be a help.
> **Vladimir**: We are not beggars!
> **Pozzo**: Is there anything I can do, that is what I ask myself, to cheer them up? I have given them bones, I have talk to them about this and that, I have explained the twilight admittedly. But, is it enough, that's what tortures me, is it enough?
> **Estragon**: Even five.
> **Vladimir**: (To Estragon indignantly). That is enough!
> **Estragon**: I couldn't accept less.
> **Pozzo**: Is it enough? No doubt. But I am liberal. It's my nature. This evening… What do you prefer? Shall we have him [Lucky] dance, or sing, or recite, or think, or… (25-26)

As pompous and ambitious leaders, Pozzo wants to be graded on his speech and rhetoric performance. He blames the dullness of his speech on his defective memory, but is very delighted to be told in deference that his speech was, overall, very good.

The above dialogue also reveals political indifference and condescension. Pozzo wonders whether the bones he gave the tramps could be an adequate reward for the attention they have given him. For the first time in the play, Vladimir and Lucky are asked to choose the form of entertainment they want. Estragon prefers money but Vladimir, in spite of his suffering, still brags by saying "we are not beggars." Pozzo uses entertainment to canvass for support. His behavior glaringly shows political corruption. To J. Gardener, corruption includes the appearance of rewards to co-opt the judgment of a person (see Gardiner). Pozzo turns toward corruption as his preferred form of "efficiency."

Talking about corruption, Nicolo Machiavelli holds that it is a major ill in society and when we do this we tend to defeat our own purposes and are really shouting, "Long live our own ruin" (Machiavelli 304). Corruption can be related to many political leaders in our world. In *Political Corruption in Europe and Latin America*, Jose de Souza Martins talks of the most significant cases of corruption in Brazil which led to the impeachment and removal of the political rights of the President of the Republic, Femando Collor de Mello and the accusations and subsequent removal of rights from members of Senate and Congress (de Souza Martins 195).

To Sahr John Kpundeh, in *Politics and Corruption in Africa*, "Controlling corruption is one of the greatest challenges to the establishment and consolidation of democratic systems in Africa..., a breeding ground for corruption" (Kpundeh 47-48). Nevertheless, political corruption is not solely the phenomenon of developing countries. Pozzo stands for politicians of both developed and developing countries. After all, "several countries in Western Europe — among them France, Spain, Belgium and the United Kingdom — have recently experienced an increase in cases of political corruption" (Martins 141). Furthermore, political corruption and catering to special interest groups are prevalent in American politics. Beckett's Estragon seems to be familiar with corruption in his society and

knows that Pozzo needs his support and would want to buy his conscience. He tells Pozzo that the lowest amount of money he will accept is five francs, "I couldn't accept less." This implies that contemporary leaders lead their people to the wrong direction, namely corruption.

Pozzo's effort to co-opt Estragon and Vladimir is done at the detriment of Lucky. Pozzo, without seeking Lucky's consent, orders him to entertain his populace, Vladimir and Estragon, as if Lucky were a court jester. Pozzo neglects Lucky and concentrates on Didi and Gogo who listen to and give him praises despite his poor performance. This once more leads us to the observation that modern leaders in theory represent the populace, but tend to help only those who flatter their own interests.

It is interesting that in spite of Pozzo's tyranny and his desperate desire to be given undeserved support for his vacuous speech, he professes that he is tolerant and generous: "I am liberal. It's my nature.... What do you prefer?" (26). But Pozzo deceives only himself; he is an autocrat. He is neither tolerant nor generous as he claims. He contradicts himself by jerking Lucky with the rope and picking up the whip right in the middle of his speech on purported tolerance and generosity. This hypocrisy draws our attention to Robert Brustein's worry in *The Theatre of Revolt*: "Liberty, equality and fraternity are becoming cant terms as wage slavery replaces serfdom, justice is corrupted by privilege, and neighbors prey upon each other for gain" (Brustein 7). Pozzo, like our present day leaders, preaches virtue and practices vice. He tells Vladimir and Estragon that his liberal nature is only for that evening. Like contemporary leaders who shake hands and hug babies in public or in front of television cameras only when they need the populace's support, Pozzo's liberalism will last only for that evening since he immediately needs the support of the tramps. He will then keep on with his tyrannical rule. This reminds us of Aristotle's declaration:

> What is totally alien to the vocabulary of politics is tyranny, the arbitrary role that contradicts the very essence of politics.... In a true city the relationships between citizens are relationships of friendship and solidarity. When envy and animosity take the place of

> friendship, the city becomes just a crowd of strangers and enemies. (Aristotle 1959:147)

Pozzo exhibits tyranny and encourages enmity among Vladimir, Lucky and Estragon, rather than cultivating the spirit of friendship. That is, instead of uniting his populace (Vladimir and Estragon), he puts them asunder. He violates one of the fundamental roles of leadership by advising Estragon to kick Lucky in the privates. Pozzo's character is akin, perhaps, to the political dictatorship in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Animal Farm relates how animals, in solidarity, seize Manor Farm from its alcoholic and irresponsible farmer, Mr. Jones. After altering its name to "Animal Farm", the animals fortified and established it as a dignified community with only seven basic and just laws: "Anything on four legs or with wings is a friend, anything on two legs is an enemy; animals should not wear clothes; animals should not sleep on the bed; animals should not drink alcohol; no animal should kill the other and all animals are equal."[2] These laws touch on the justice and friendship that should guide the animal kingdom. The last two laws were written in recognition of the fact that every community will forever comprise strong and weak beings. Similarly, Pozzo acknowledges that Vladimir and Estragon are human beings like himself: "You are human beings none the less.... Of the same species as myself....Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image!"(15).

Pozzo, however contradicts himself as he uses his leadership and his privileged position to oppress Vladimir, Estragon and Lucky. In the same way, Napoleon uses his self-proclaimed leadership to exploit the farm and to establish his personal dictatorship. He even goes out of his way to declare that "some animals are more equal than others" (Orwell 123).[7] In fact, Napoleon blatantly defies the democratic tenets binding the Animal Kingdom. While Pozzo shifts

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[2] George Orwell, *Animal Farm*. These laws were established in a bid to make the animal kingdom an ideal society of peace and love but soon after, Napoleon and Snow-Ball fought each other for leadership of the farm until the former ousted his rival after labelling him a traitor. Napoleon then modified the laws to suit his own whims and caprices, leaving the animals in a sadder state than they were during the reign of their rejected leader, Mr. Jones.

equality to superiority and domination, Napoleon trades virtue for cruelty before the watchful eyes of an angry and intimated multitude of animals. The intense feeling caused by mistrusted leaders in these post-war books represents the shaky and dictatorial leadership in the world from this period onward. After all, "if the world was indeed senseless, then it followed that art itself should mirror that senselessness" (Greenwald *et al.* 215).

The deepest sense of political betrayal is also seen when Pozzo takes Lucky who is "so kind... so helpful... and entertaining... [a] good angel" (23), to the market for sale. Similarly, Napoleon sells Boxer, his most obedient and hard-working subject, to a butcher. The idea of suffering resulting from inhuman or heartless leadership is also depicted in Beckett's *Endgame* in which Hamm, who seems an emblem of modern leadership, inflicts untold misery on his people.

Associating Beckett's Hamm with modern leadership does not seem far-fetched. In fact, Mirriam Gilbert, Carl Klaus and Bradford Field associate him with old kingship in *Modern and Contemporary Drama*. To these critics,

> Hamm's name seems to be a shortened form of Hamlet; he sees himself as a deposed king, like Lear and Richard II; he parodies Richard III's final words when he calls out 'my kingdom for nightman', and he directly quotes Prospero, 'our revels now are ended', and then throws away his gaff, much as Prospero breaks his magic wand at the end of *The Tempest*. (Gilbert, Klaus and Field 454)

Although this quote, in consonance with this article, associates Hamm with leadership, Hamm's attitude seems to be more consistent with modern leadership than with old kingship.

The blind Hamm in the wheelchair whose disabilities symbolize the infirmity of his leadership, tyrannizes his servant, Clov, and his parents, Nagg and Nell. He refuses Clov a bicycle and food and also starves his parents. Although he dominates Clov, he relies on him for movement in the wheelchair. His determination to cling to power even when he expects death at any time is seen when he tenaciously clings to his wheelchair. After all, modern leaders hardly

ever desire to give up their authority. They do not rule in accordance with the aspirations of the ruled, but would prefer to be tyrants for life. They lose everything else, but not their authority. No wonder Hamm's shelter lacks property but he does not complain since his throne, the wheelchair, seems to embody all that he needs as possession. Tellingly, Beckett places Hamm's wheelchair at the center of the stage, and in this position, Hamm is portrayed as the leader of his battered and confined world.

It is from this focal point that Beckett's handicapped leader vociferously dictates his orders to Clov, who, like Lucky, angrily serves his master by checking the earth and sky, supplying painkillers and moving the wheelchair to appropriate spots in the room. The orders of Pozzo and Hamm and the grumbling obedience of Lucky and Clov both show how contemporary leaders abuse their subjects, and how the governed sheepishly, say, dispiritedly obey their leaders. The tyranny of Hamm brings to mind Aristotle's political theory: "Kings govern in the common interest while tyrants govern in their own interest, kings rule over willing subjects but tyrants over unwilling subjects and kings pursue honor whereas tyrants pursue pleasure" (Aristotle 1977: 67-68).

To Aristotle and Plato, happiness is the bedrock of politics, but the tyrant remains oblivious to that objective. "There is one end of man's action, happiness: there is one science of that end, politics" (Aristotle and Plato 240).This happiness is meant to be collective. That is, both the ruled and the ruler require happiness. Hamm yearns for joy as he tells Clov "me-(he yawns)-to play." [3] Ironically, he promises to make Clov "hungry all the time" (5).

With a toque on his head which looks like a hollow crown (Doll 75), Hamm withholds food in his shelter so as to starve his people. He tells Clov "I'll give you just enough to keep you from dying" (5). This attitude symbolizes the reluctance of modern leaders to respond to the ailing life of the people they lead. Contemporary leaders are not expected to serve the populace with their personal wealth but they are required to efficaciously direct the use of public

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[3] Beckett, *Endgame* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1958) 2. Other references to and citations from *Endgame* shall be taken from this edition and cited parenthetically.

wealth under their leadership. In *Endgame*, Hamm is handicapped, but ironically, the food he refuses Clov (the only mobile person of his world) could only be produced by Clov. Aristotle's king is evidently nowhere to be found here. On the contrary, the legitimacy of public office is violated and modern leaders despotically wheel their subjects into suffering. It was for this reason that Harold Pinter said politicians "cause a great deal of suffering to millions of people" (see Bensky). Like Beckett, he presents characters that waste under irresponsible leadership.

The suffering of Pinter's characters (such as Davies) is partly consequent on decadent leadership. Although no direct reference is made to the government, the reference to the police suggests the presence of an oppressive judiciary. Mick threatens to rush to the police station to accuse Davies of trespassing, loitering with intent, daylight robbery, filching, "thieving" and stinking his house out. These accusations, may, perhaps, be true, but charging Davies is futile in a social system that, everywhere in Pinter's play, demonstrates itself to be unresponsive and inaccessible.

Arguing that the absence of direct reference to politicians does not make Pinter's plays devoid of politics, Kenneth Tyan says the characters of Pinter must have attended a political meeting and must have voted (quoted in Esslin). Elected leaders take care of themselves without considering the plight of the people who voted them into office. Davies is a public charge because leaders neglect their responsibilities over their subjects. Society would not succeed without policy makers and once such leadership is irresponsible, there would always be chaos.

The world of Pinter is a jungle largely because of institutional unresponsiveness. Davies tells Aston, "Huh...I haven't had a good sit down... I haven't had a proper sit down...well, I couldn't tell you..." [4] In order words, Davies has not had peace. The negligence of modern leaders makes the weak and the old vulnerable. Davies, perhaps Pinter's "everyman," is attacked at every turn; he is helpless in a society without committed leaders. This may explain

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[4] Pinter, Harold, *Complete Works: Two. The Caretaker* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960. Further references and quotations shall be taken from this edition and cited in brackets.

why Benedict Nightingale says in *An Introduction to 50 Modern British Plays* that:

> The world in which Harold Pinter's characters have their edgy, embittered being is, on the whole, a hostile, menacing, even rapacious one; and so was the world in which the sensibilities of the playwright-to-be were formed. (Nightingale 341)

Ironically, the breakdown of religious leadership is more evident in Pinter's *The Caretaker* than the decadent secular authority. Pinter presents a monastery of cruel Monks who, in violation of their professional ethics, lead people from charity and compassion to cruelty and threats of violence. Davies says a Monk threatened to kick him out of the monastic gate when he went to beg for shoes. A Monk is viewed as God's ambassador on earth and monastic ordinance normally prohibits violence and encourages charity, especially to the poor like Davies. But Pinter's Monk fails to work in accordance with the sacred and enduring divine laws. No doubt, Davies says: "Them bastards in the monastery let me down again" (22). This embarrassing attitude and failed leadership of the Monk correlate with the sexual scandals and the coronation of the first ever gay Bishop that are currently shaking the foundations of the Catholic and Anglican church leaderships in the U.S.A.[5] Like Davies, many Christians in the U.S.A. as well as elsewhere are confounded by the hypocrisy and misguidance of present day religious leaders.

In addition, Mike breaks the statue of Buddha in *The Caretaker*. This, of course, symbolizes the breakdown of modern leadership. Historically speaking, Buddha refers to a leader, Siddhartha Gautama, who lived before Christ, and had many followers and was

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[5] The Boston Diocese acknowledged that its religious leaders have committed sex crimes in the church and has agreed to pay several million U.S. dollars as reparation to victims. In "Resolutions Approved by Confraternity of Catholic Clergy," published by Confraternity of Catholic Clergy in July, 2002, the Catholic leaders condemned these practices and called for "reparation for current maladies, crimes, cover-ups and injustices within the church done by some members of the clergy to some members of the clergy." In the same vein, the House of Bishops voted in August, 2003 to confirm Reverend Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire Diocese, making him the first openly gay bishop in the history of the Episcopal Church.

regarded as a guardian of his people. As a founder of Buddhism, he was an embodiment of his people's aspirations and love. The destruction of Buddha is a replica of the collapse of leadership in the modern world. In a flash, the shattering of the statue of Buddha resembles the destruction of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Iraq as well as the pulling down of the mock statue of President George W. Bush by demonstrators in London in 2003. While the foregoing leaders are incompatible, the destruction of their statues, whether real or not, depicts the discontent of those who feel disappointed with their leadership.

Suffice to say in conclusion that what I have forcefully tried to prove in this article is that the plays of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter have a deeply ingrained disintegration of leadership. This decadent leadership is characterized by negligence, deception, corruption, exploitation, animosity and violence that are worked into the fabric of the plays in question. The breakdown of leadership, as demonstrated in this essay, is inextricably linked to the erosion of governance or leadership in our contemporary world. Like a broken compass that misleads, both secular and religious leaders fail the characters in *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *The Caretaker*. Yes, Yeats is right to infer in his famous poem, "The Second Coming" that things have fallen apart and the center, certainly, cannot hold.[6] And so, modern leadership, as reflected in these plays, is in collapse.

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[6] Here is the full first stanza from which references to W. B. Yeats' "The Second Coming" have been taken:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

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