

Contemporary Literature

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Mod-01 Lec-04 Lecture-04

Under the category of the theater of the absurd, we have already touched upon the movement, the theory of the absurd and also the genre is broadly called the comedy of menace. Nothing has touched upon this as well when I was introducing Pinter to you. Comedy of menace, the term was first used by a playwright called David Campton. David Campton for his collection of short plays called the Lunatic View and it was published in the same year as the Dumb Waiter, 1957. So, comedy of menace, what is the theory of the comedy of menace? Where the characters just assume that they are threatened by some obscure force, they are not able to put their fingers on that, but they feel, they just assume it is the some kind of a fear is in the air, they do not know what it exactly is. The fear could be real or imagined.

Most of the time it turns out that the fear was indeed real. Therefore, comedy and we get plenty of comedy, especially dark comedy, not the farcical comedy, but dark comedy. For example, you just saw you know the kind of a scuffle they had Gus and Ben over a simple figure of speech like light the kettle or light the gas. Comedy arises from dialogue.

However, it is not pure comedy, it is a comedy with some kind of an unseen threat and that is what is explained as a comedy of menace. So, we will go on to page 144. Gus exits, Gus exits, Ben looks after him, he then takes his revolver from under the pillow and checks it for ammunition. Gus reenters also when we talk about characters, yesterday we were talking about the black and white, the binaries, two people who are the polar opposite of each other. Remember one with a revolver, the poster of the dumb waiter, what was it all about? One guy with a revolver in his hand, the other with a hot cup of coffee, Gus and Ben.

So, two people who are on the opposite tracks, Gus and Ben. But here this is a common, I mean this I have been noticing that Ben repeatedly checks his revolver, whereas do you ever find Ben doing that? How many times do you find Ben checking

his revolver for ammunition, but you know sorry Ben doing that, but Gus does not. So, we find repeatedly Ben checking his revolver, holding his revolver, not Gus. That also tells you a lot about the characters, one with a revolver, one with a cup of coffee. What does Ben repeatedly tell Gus to do? Go get what happened to the tea? Go get the tea.

Remember? So, the gas has gone out, Ben well what about it? Gus there is a meter, so the gas runs by meter, you pay and you get your gas. I have not got any money nor have I, you will have to wait. What for? For Wilson. So, again we are getting into the same waiting for Godot territory, we are waiting for Wilson here, we are waiting for Godot there. Who is this mysterious character who never comes on the scene, but who seems to dominate the stage all the time? He might not come, he might just send a message, he does not always come.

Well, you will have to do without it, would not you? Blimey, you will have a cup of tea afterwards, what is the matter with you? So, what has been their usual ritual to have a cup of tea before? And for Gus, these traditions, these rituals are extremely important, remember that. Therefore, his constant insistence on having a cup of tea may be before every job and whatever job it might be, we are not very clearly told what that job is exactly, but before every job they have a cup of tea. So, he brings his matches, but match box is flattened that tells you a lot about Gus's character. He has cigarettes, but that cigarette packet is also flattened which he hides in his shoes, he ties his shoelaces with great difficulty. All the time Ben watches him lying on the bed while pretending or actually reading the newspaper intently observing Gus.

So, that tells you a lot about the characters, Ben is always in control, Gus goofs up. Ben holds a revolver up to the light and polishes it. So, he is quite fond of his revolver. I like to have one, I am sorry, you had better get ready anyway. Well, I do not know that is a bit much you know for my money.

He picks up a packet of tea from the bed and throws it into the bag. I hope he has got a shilling anyway if he comes. He is entitled to have after all it is his place, he could have seen there was enough gas for a cup of tea. Ben, what do you mean it is his place? Well, is not it? He is probably only rented it, it does not have to be his place. So, nothing is certain here.

What kind of a place is it? So, basement we were yesterday talking about. What kind of a setting is it? Two beds with some kind of a serving hatch in between remember. So, look at this and this is a cover jacket, cover of a book *The Dumb Waiter* and look at the two figures. Can you see, can you comment on these two figures on the entire cover design of the book? What do they look like? They are all, both of them are identically

dressed, the trousers, the shirts, the braces and all. In between there is some kind of a serving hatch or The Dumb Waiter.

Two beds, would you like to comment what kind of a set up is this? Yes Raisa. Very dull, I mean you know there is no color or anything like that. It is sparse. Yeah, it is very sparse. It is very sparse.

Looks like a prison actually. What else? Those grids, would you like to comment on that? Oppressive. Oppressive, right. Oppressive setting, sparse, oppressive, very dull and the way the men are dressed alike, monotonous. Nothing much to do here.

So, think when we talk about the theater of the absurd, what does it talk about? It talks about monotony, it talks about conformity, it questions the everyday conformity of human condition, the kind of situation that human beings are forced to live in. And I think that cover design speaks or suggest the idea of absurdity of everyday human condition quite clearly because it almost feels as if they are in some kind of a prison or may be an asylum and that is what the absurdist suggest. That is what their argument is all about. Is not human condition also one kind of an imprisonment? Is not there too much of monotony in all our lives? I know it is his place. So, that entire situation, the entire air of uncertainty, I bet the whole house is, he is not even laying on any gas either, now either, gas sits on his bed, it is his place all right.

Look at all the other places. You go to this address, there is a key there, there is a tea pot, there is never a soul inside. See, this is the kind of work they have. You go, you are just told over the phone, you have to be, you have to reach at certain point or certain place at this particular time and you go there. There is a key there, there is a tea pot, there is never a soul inside.

Nobody ever hears a thing. Have you ever thought of that? We never get any complaints, do we? Too much noise or anything like that, may be that is a part of their job. They make lot of noise, but there are no complaints whatsoever. You never see a soul, do you, except the bloke who comes. Who is that bloke? We are not told.

You ever notice that? I wonder if the walls are sound proof. He touches the wall above his bed, cannot tell. All you do is wait. Half the time, he does not even bother to put in an appearance, Wilson. Why should he? He is a busy man.

I find him hard to talk to Wilson. You know that, Ben? So, all these questions about their condition is, these questions bother only Gus. Therefore, he is, perhaps he is the threat that has to be eliminated. He is the man who is causing too much trouble by

questioning too much. Ben, on the other hand, who is very good at taking orders, who is extremely adapt at maintaining things, you know, he does not have any difficulties, he does not have any troubles, he does not have any questions, right.

All he suppose to do is to just wait around, wait for someone, do some kind of job and he is good at it. He is doing without questioning, whereas Gus is showing his impatience. We will go to page 146 and Gus, top fifth line, I think. That girl, Ben grabs the paper which he reads, rising, looking down at Ben. How many times have you read that paper? Ben slams the paper down and rises.

Also notice that, number of times Ben slams the paper. So, he is getting angry, whereas Gus is increasingly getting impatient. What do you mean? I was just wondering how many times you are, what are you doing, criticizing me? No, I was just, you will get a swipe around your ear hole if you do not watch your step. I am going to hit you now very hard.

So, now look at the language. The only kind of communication, once when they had a violent argument, near violent argument over light the kettle or light the gas incident. Now, he just asks him, why are you reading the paper? What do you actually find in that paper? It does not look so interesting to me and that is enough for Ben to get started. So, I am going to hit you very hard if you do not watch us. Now, look here Ben.

I am not looking anywhere. How many times have I a bloody liberty? I did not mean that. You just get on with it, mate. Get on with it. That is all.

Ben gets back on the bed. I was just thinking about that girl. That is all and now, they are, he is just recollecting, reminiscing about something. Gus sits on his bed. She was not much to look at. So, maybe there was a job done on some girl.

I know, but still it was a mess though, was not it? What a mess, honest. I cannot remember a mess like that. They do not seem to hold together like men, women, a loser texture like. Did not she spread her? She did not half spread, but I have been meaning to ask you.

Ben sits up and clenches his eyes. Who clears up after we have gone? I am curious about that. Who does the clearing up? Maybe they do not clear up. Maybe they just leave them. What do you think? What jobs have we done? Blimey, I cannot count them. What? If they never clear anything up after we have gone.

Ben pityingly, you mutt, do you think we are the only branch of this organization? Have

a bit of common. They get departments for everything. What cleaners and all? You burp, burp is like a thick head. No, it was that girl that made me start to think. Now, any comments on this one? We did a job.

It is difficult perhaps to kill a woman than to kill a man because they are made of different textures. We did and now he is questioning. Well, what happened? Who was that girl? We have been doing a number of such similar jobs, but now he has started questioning the nature of his job. Who are we? Who are we doing this job for? Who is this Wilson? Is there may be a larger organization, a bigger organization, something about which we do not know anything? Who are these people? We work for and who does the cleaning up once the deed is done? What kind of deed is being suggested here? Contract killers.

Contract killers. So, they are contract killers. That is what? That is the verbal clue that Pinter is trying to give us. So, they are contract, they are hit men, hired assassins, professional killers call whatever you want to. This is their profession. They come here, they come to a certain place, they wait for somebody to walk in, they do the job, they leave.

After that, they get paid for that. They do not know what happens to the body after that. Who calls them? Who kills them? Who gives the contract? That is all that matters. But after that, what happens to the body? Who does the cleaning up? They do not know anything and Ben says why do we care? We are here to do a job. Well, but perhaps you know Pinter is trying to tell us that they are hired assassins, they are hit men, but may be they are not.

May be this is an allegory for something else. That is what I want you to be careful about. Perhaps what Pinter is telling us is that you know we are part of an organization that kills people, but that is what he tells us. That is about he is going to tell us. That is all, but then perhaps this is the clue that Pinter wants us to take up for further reflection. What is that organization that makes human beings kill one another? Perhaps we are all part of such kind of a system.

Perhaps we are all a part of such kind of an organization. Get it? There is a loud clatter and racket in the bulge of wall between the beds. So, there was that picture a moment back here. So, the bulge of wall between the beds of something descending.

They grab the revolvers, jump up and face the wall. The noise comes to a stop, silence. They look at each other. Ben gestures sharply towards the wall. Gus approaches the wall slowly.

He banks it with his revolver. It is hollow. Ben moves to the head of his bed. His revolver clogged. Gus puts his revolver on his bed and pats along the bottom of the center panel.

He finds a rim. He lifts the panel. Disclosed is a serving hatch, a dumb waiter. A white box is held by police. Gus peers into the box. He brings out a piece of paper. So, suddenly there is a noise and now they realize that there is a dumb waiter in the hollow of the wall.

They pull the rim out and they discover a dumb waiter and inside there is a piece of paper in the dumb waiter, a dumb waiter which we were just yesterday looking at what is it all about, what purpose does it serve. It is used in small in restaurants to carry food and plates and other kinds of orders from one floor to another and here there is a paper inside. What is it? You have a look at it. Read it. Two braised steak and chips, two sago puddings, two teas without sugar.

Let me see that two teas without sugar. What do you think of that? Well, the box goes up. Ben levels his revolver. Give us a chance. They are in a hurry, aren't they? Ben re-reads the note.

Gus looks over his shoulder. That is a bit funny, isn't it? Now, the funny part, the comedy part starts. It is set in full motion. No, it is not funny.

It probably used to be a cafe here. That is all upstairs. These places change hands very quickly. A cafe, yes. What do you mean this was the kitchen down here? Yes, they change hands overnight. These places go into liquidation. The people who run it, you know, they do not find it a going concern.

They move out. You mean the people who ran this place did not find it a going concern and moved out? Sure. Well, who has got it now? Silence. What do you mean who has got it now? Who has got it now? If they moved out, who moved in? Well, that all depends.

The box descends with a clatter and bang. Ben levels his revolver. Gus goes to the box and brings out a piece of paper.

Gus reading. Soup of the day. Liver and onions. Jam tart. A pause. Gus looks at Ben. Ben takes the note and reads it. He walks slowly to the hatch.

Gus follows. Ben looks into the hatch, but not up it. Gus puts his hand on Ben's shoulder. Ben throws it off. Gus puts his finger to his mouth. He leans on the hatch and swiftly looks up it.

Ben flings him away in alarm. Ben looks at the note. Gus throws his revolver on the bed and speaks with decision. Now, what do you think is going on here? They are just getting some kind of mysterious notes from some mysterious person above and what do these notes ask for? Food and all kinds of items of food. You know they want tea and they want sugar and they want liver and onion.

They want soup. They want sago. Whereas, we know that these people have been waiting for a cup of tea all day long. Now, what do you think? Would you like to comment on this? A lift comes from you know suddenly without any warning. They are not even aware of the fact that there is some kind of a dumb waiter inside the room and it comes and they start obeying.

They respond to it. If not obeying, then they respond to it. They are quite flummoxed by it. What is happening? Ben, we had better send something up. We had better send something up.

Yes, maybe you are right. They are both relieved at the decision. Ben purposefully. Quick, what have you got in that bag? Gus not much. You remember Gus was carrying a small bag with him, but he did not have a box of matches.

Gus goes to the hatch and shouts up it. Wait a minute, Ben. Do not do that. Gus examines the contents of the bag and brings them out one by one. Biscuits, a bar of chocolate, half a pint of milk. That is all he has. So, what is being asked? Soup of the day, liver and onion. I mean these kinds of food and then just compare it with ordinary chocolates, a pint of milk, some tea bags and biscuits.

That is all. Packet of tea. See, Gus is very fond of having tea. So, a packet of tea. Good.

We cannot send the tea. That is all the tea we have got. Well, there is no gas. Anyway, you do not have gas. What are you going to do with the tea, tea bag? So, can you? Maybe they can send us down a bob. What else is there? One atlas cake.

One atlas cake. Yes, you never told me you had an atlas cake. Atlas cake is like a chocolate cake with lot of black current in between, biscuit with cake inside. Why only one? Did not you bring one for me? I did not think you would be keen. Well, you

cannot send up one atlas cake anyway.

Why not? Touch one of those plates. So, there are plates there. Remember, Gus goes towards the door left and stops. Do you mean I can keep the atlas cake then? Keep it. Well, they do not know we have got it.

Do they? That is not the point. Cannot I keep it? No, you cannot. Get the plate. Gus exits left. Ben looks in the bag. He brings out a packet of crisps.

Gus enters Gus with a plate. Accusingly holding up the crisps. Where did these come from? What? Where did these crisps come from? Where did you find them? Ben hitting him on the shoulder. You are playing a dirty game, my lad. I only eat those with beer.

Well, where were you going to get the beer? I was saving them till I did. I will remember this. Put everything on the plate. So, you see suddenly there is some kind of an order for some kind of food from upstairs and Ben is all fawning over the order. Who is that person upstairs? Is it Wilson? Somebody pushed a pair you know an envelope full of matches.

Remember match sticks and from under the door. Do you remember that scene? Yeah. There is someone. There is an unseen presence around them. There is somebody there lurking. So, it is a very you know menacing suspenseful kind of a situation that we are dealing with, but at the same time it also gets a bit of comical because look at the way Ben is now responding to the orders.

Look at the way he has been treating Gus all along with contempt, with disdain. He has no concern for Gus's questions. He does not respond to even important questions you know seemingly important questions raised by Gus, but the moment there is an unseen heavenly almost heavenly presence and he starts you know covering before that. So, whatever you have, whatever we have, it does not matter whether we eat or not.

One Eccles cake just send it. One bag of crisp just send it. We do not want to annoy the power above. Who could be that power? Yeah anyone. So, you better get ready. Hey Ben, what is going on here? What do you mean? How can this be a cafe? It used to be a cafe.

Remember this is what Ben has been telling Gus all along. This was a cafe. There was a time. Therefore, the presence of a dumb waiter here. There was a time when the cafe was running well, was doing well and therefore, this dumb waiter perhaps it was a

kitchen. The basement was a kitchen where from where they would food up.

It used to be a cafe. Have you seen the guest stove? What about it? It is only got three rings. You know it is a very conventional kind of a guest stove which you would find in any ordinary household guest stove with three rings in a large cafe in a restaurant. You cannot move with a guest stove with three rings because you have to work around the clock. So, how can you? So, well you could not cook much on three rings not for a busy place like this. That is why the service is slow.

Now, see what kind of a situation are they in now? There are lots of questions for which there is no answer. So, where are they? The very question what place is this? You tell me. You want me to believe that this used to be a restaurant or a cafe and we are a part of an erstwhile kitchen in a restaurant, but I do not believe you because the guest stove I mean the evidence is right before us. The guest stove has only three rings. It cannot possibly be a part of a kitchen in a restaurant.

So, where are we? So, now these larger questions are being raised. Where are we? So, this is all part of theater of the absurd. Larger questions are raised from seemingly inane situations. Someone yesterday made an observation that nothing is happening. What kind of a all this conversation does not really lead to much? What is it? Nonsense, but perhaps that is what the theater of the absurd practitioners want to tell us that nothing really happens.

We are really not very sure. We generally live in a state of uncertainty which surrounds us everywhere. We cannot be, we can never be very sure where we are. Yes, but what happens when we are not here? What do they do then? All these menus coming down and nothing going up. It might have been going on like this for years. Ben just brushes his jacket and brushes the question of what happens when we go? Ben puts on his jacket.

They cannot do much business. The box descends. They turn about, sorry, Gus goes to the hatch and brings out a note. I would like now Aditi and Krishna to come forward, read this exchange, page 152. I will remove this, page 152.

Aditi read for Ben, Krishna read for Gus. What was that? Macaroni Pastas Theo, Ormita Macaroonada, Greek dishes.

That is right. Oh, sorry. No, that is right. That is pretty high class. Quickly. Before it goes up. Gus puts the plate in the box. So, now, the names of the dishes start getting more and more exotic, more and more high class as the, as Gus says that is pretty high class. What is a macaroni pastasio ormita macaroonada? What is it? So, some kind of,

and now, you know, Ben is also not very sure. It is some kind of a Greek dish. Are you sure? That is pretty high class because see these people, they definitely do not come from that straight of society.

One red label, one fruit and nut, Cadburys, one bottle of milk, one bottle of milk, half a pint, express dairy. Now, see because he is so impressed, so intrigued by this large, you know, this complicated sounding name, Ormita Macarounada So, now, he says that, see I do not know what is it and may be the person above, he is too much of a sophisticated. So, how to impress him? Now, he is, he wants to impress the guy above. So, he says, now, we are sending something to you and what are we sending? So, he would not say, we are sending you biscuits now.

So, what do biscuits become? Macavity and price, Macavity and price, they are a biscuit brand. So, we are not sending you any biscuit. You see, we are sending you a branded biscuit, a pack of biscuit. One lion's red label, one smith's crisp, so not just ordinary bag of crisp.

So, see names matter. So, what game is being played now? They are trying to match up to each other. They are trying to match up to each other. So, language also becomes, you know, a tool that suggests class. So, if you are trying to intimidate me through large sounding, complicated sounding names like Orneeta, Macaroneeta, then I am also, you know, do not think of me as any less. I am going to impress you with my knowledge of branded food. I too have expressed, so it is not just a pint of milk, it is expressed dairy milk, it is not just chocolate, but Cadbury's dairy milk.

So, you know, language is now tied to class. So, that is what people like Pinta try to drive our attention to. That language is always because if this high sounding names, they belong to a certain class of people, lower class people would not know what these things are, but they have also their way of getting back at the so called higher people. So, we are, so now it becomes a kind of a game and this game of, you know, sending food up and down, the notes up and down, it becomes a kind of a very intriguing, quite dangerous sort of game.

Yes, the box goes up. Just did it. You should not shout like that. Why not? It is not done. Ben goes to his bed. Well, that should be all right anyway for the time being. You think so, huh? Get dressed, will you? It will be any minute now.

This is some place, no tea and no biscuits. Nothing makes you lazy mate. You are getting lazy. You know that? You do not want to get slack on your job. Who me? Slack mate, slack. Who me? Slack? Have you checked your gun? You have not even checked

your gun.

It looks disgraceful anyway. Why do not you ever polish it? Gus rubs his revolver on the sheet. Ben takes out a pocket mirror and straighten his tie. I wonder where the cook is.

They must have had a few to cope with that. Maybe they had a few more gas tubs. There is another kitchen along the passage. Of course, there is. Do you know what it takes to make an ormita macaroonada? No, what? An ormita, buck your ideas up, will you? Take a few cooks, huh? Gus puts his revolver in its holster. The sooner we are out of this place, the better.

Why does not he get in touch? I feel like I have been here for years. He takes his revolver out of its holster to check the ammunition. We have never let him down though, have we? We have never let him down. I was thinking only the other day, Ben. We are reliable, aren't we? He puts his revolver back in its holster.

Still, I will be glad when it is over tonight. He brushes his jacket. I hope the blokes not going to get excited tonight or anything.

I am feeling a bit off. I have got a splitting headache. Silence. Next, the box descends. Ben jumps up. Gus collects the no one. One bamboo shoots water chestnuts and chicken.

One shark's ew and one bean sprouts. Bean sprouts? So, now he is asking for Chinese food. Yes, blimey. I would not know where to begin. He looks back at the box.

The packet of tea is inside it. He picks it up. They have sent back the tea. What did they do that for? Maybe it is in tea time.

The box goes up. Silence. Look here. We better tell them. Tell them what? That we cannot do it. We have not got it. All right then. Then, let us see a pencil. We will write a note. Gus turning for a pencil suddenly discovers the speaking tube which hangs on the right wall of the hatch facing his bed.

Now, say things are getting more and more suspenseful. Earlier, they did not discover the presence of the dumb waiter which is there in the wall. And now, they also discover that there is some kind of a speaking tube through which you can speak and your voice can be heard which is there.

So, they need not shout up and down anymore. What is this? What? This. This. It is a speaking tube. How long has that been there? Just the job. We should have used it before instead of shouting up there.

Funny, I never noticed it before. Well, come on. What do you do? See that? That is a whistle. What? This? Yes. Gus does so.

That is it. What do we do now? Blow into it. Blow? It fizzles up there if you blow. Then they know you want to speak.

Blow now. Gus blows silence. I cannot hear a thing. Now, you speak. Speak into it. Gus looks at Ben then looks into the tube. The larder is bare. Give me that. He grabs the tube and puts it to his mouth.

Good evening. I am sorry to bother you, but we just thought we better let you know that we have not got anything left. We sent up all we had.

There is no more food down here. He brings the tube slowly to his ear. What? To mouth. What? To ear, he listens to mouth.

No, all we had we sent up. To ear, he listens to mouth. I am very sorry to hear that. To ear, he listens to Gus. The Eccles cake was stale.

He listens to Gus. The chocolate was melted. He listens to Gus. The milk was sour.

What about the crisps? The crisps were moldy. He glares at Gus. Tube to mouth. Well, we are very sorry about that.

Tube to ear. What? To mouth. What? To ear. Yes, yes. To mouth. Yes, certainly, certainly right away. To ear, the voice has seized.

He hangs up the tube. Did you hear that? What? Sorry. You know what he said? Light the kettle. No, put on the kettle. No, light the gas. But light the kettle. How can we light the kettle? What do you mean? There is no gas. Now, what do we do? What did he want us to light the kettle for? For tea.

He wanted a cup of tea. He wanted a cup of tea. What about me? I have been wanting a cup of tea all night. What do we do now? What are we supposed to drink? Ben sits on his bed staring. Thank you, thank you. Any comments? So, language, now look at the way and it is you know language acts as a tool to reflect power relations. When he

addresses Gus, Ben is all you know intimidating, violent, crude, but when he addresses the power above, the unseen power above, he is all you know the language, the word that he uses is deferential, extremely deferential, reverential, acquisiting.

So, he is extremely you know literally groveling before the person, before the unseen force and the presence of this speaking tube. Communication is supposed to be a two way affair where you know a no holds bar kind of a situation, but here we do not know the speech. The dialogue is extremely fragmented. So, the fragmentary, the you know the unstable nature of language is being talked about here because all he has to what where to his mouth, to his ear. So, that is what kind of a communication are we talking about. So, playwrights like Pinter, they actually question the relevance of technology, the relevance of communication, the relevance of technology aided communication which is supposed to bring people closer, but does it? Not really because it does not really make you perhaps more social, perhaps you know because see the boundary is the power relations are always there with or without the aid of the of these devices.

And number of silences that we have seen. So, just theater of silence you should know. This is device, this idea of theater of silence which is very common in both Beckett, Samuel Beckett and popularized by Harold Pinter. The idea was giving by Jean-Jacques Bernard, a French playwright where the idea is the same what Pinter believes in. The dialogue is not sufficient. I think when we were discussing Pinter in the beginning of the class, that is what we talked about that sometimes silences communicate much better than dialogues.

That happens much better when there is a situation, when there is silence. So, the very meaning of then language words is devaluated. The meaning, the existence of language is questioned when silence can communicate better than why you need, what is the purpose of language at all because language then is nothing but just a means of domineering, dominating, taking control. So, we will come to now Pinter's theory of language. Page 152 will give a very good example of monotonous repetitive nature of language which is nothing, which does not really mean anything, but language is just a kind of a ritual that people follow.

Page 158, Gus sighs and sits next to men on the bed. The instructions are stated and repeated automatically. How through language? When we get the call, you go over and stand behind the door. Gus, stand behind the door.

If there is a knock on the door, you do not answer it. If there is a knock on the door, I don't answer it, but there would not be a knock on the door. So, I would not answer it. When the bloke comes in, shut the door behind him, shut the door behind him without

divulging your presence without divulging my presence, he will see me and come towards me.

He will see you and come towards you. He will not see you. He will not see me, but he will see me, he will see you. He will not know you are there.

He will not know you are there. He will not know you are there. He will not know I am there. I take out my gun. You take out your gun.

He stops in his tracks. He stops in his tracks. If he turns around, if he turns around, you are there. I am here. Ben frowns and presses his forehead.

You have missed out. You have missed something out. I know what. I have not taken my gun out according to you. So, now, this is a clue. This is a very important clue. Generally, when they go for this job, both of them take out their guns, but this time, Ben because of some kind of a Freudian slip, he has overlooked that. He has forgotten to mention this particular instruction. Otherwise, their instructions were the same every time, but this time, Ben forgot to mention that during this particular time, Gus also has to take out his gun.

Why do that? We will soon see. Page 160, page 160, pause. What do we do if it is a girl? We do the same. Exactly the same. Exactly. Pause. We do not do anything different. We do exactly the same. Look at the repetition. Look at the monotonous nature of language. It does not really communicate, but hides so many things and that is what Pinter talks about that there is lack of communication between people in spite of words.

So, the fact that the language is unreliable, unstable, indeterminate. Excuse me. Page 160, he exits through the door on the left. Ben remains sitting on the bed still. The lavatory chain is pulled off once left, but the lavatory does not flush.

Silence. Gus reenters and stops inside the door deep in thought. He looks at Ben, then walks slowly across to his own bed. He is troubled. He stands thinking. He turns and looks at Ben. He moves a few paces towards him. Why did he send us matches if we knew there was no gas? Silence.

Ben stares in front of him. See, these are the questions that are being raised, but there is no question here. So, what is happening? See this is a game that is being played. You know some kind of a dangerous psychological mind game that the powers above play on those who are way below. You know they are in the food chain. So, this is some kind of

a game that is being played because the person who is above and who was sending them matches and asking placing orders for exotic food, he knew it perfectly well that they do not have gas. How are they going to cook? How are they going to light the cattle or light the gas if they do not have the gas in the to begin with? So, they know that they are you know something is happening here. Why did he do that? Who sent us those matches? What are you talking about? Who is it upstairs? What is one thing to do with another? Who is it though? What is one thing to do with another? So, repetition because language now is just not sufficient to explain the situation and this is Pintas comment on the human condition.

Language is not sufficient to explain what is happening, what happens to us. I asked you a question enough. I asked you before who moved in? I asked you who you said the people who had it before moved out who moved in shut up. I told you did not I shut up. I told you before who owned this place did not I? I told you Ben hits him viciously on the shoulder.

I told you who ran this place did not I? Ben hits him viciously on the shoulder. Repetition same thing same act being repeated again and again. Well, what is he playing all these games for? That is what I want to know. What is he doing it for? We are playing games. What is he doing it for? We are being through our test. Have not we got right through our test years ago. Did not we took them together? Do not you remember? Did not we approved ourselves before now? Have not we have always done our job? What is he doing all this for? What is the idea? What is he playing these games for? So, this is one scene from the dumb waiter.

Ben reading the newspaper, Gus all perplexed, all anxious and this is the scene the speaking tube. Ben speaking in the speaking tube, Gus nervously looking over. Ben you have Ben reading the newspaper and Gus questioning, but not getting sufficient answer. So, see the idea the very theory of having language games is quite common particularly philosophers like George Steiner.

They have spoken about the efficacy of silence. Wittgenstein in his book called Philosophical Investigations, he talks about the concept of language games. That is what we find here. We will just using language to play some kind of games. You know all these food names are nothing, but some sort of games when the outcome is very clear what they want to do with Gus. And other people in the same bracket who talk about the indeterminacy of language people like Beckett, Ionesco, Edward Albee and Tom Stoppers.

So, the very idea is that absurdism or the language you know the idea that language is

completely devaluated. This is a way to express the inanities of daily life. These things are just not sufficient to express the monotony of everyday life. That is what the theater of the absurd is all about.

So, I will just take you to page 163 lot of silence now here. Silence the box goes up, they turn quickly, their eyes meet. Ben turns to his paper, slowly Gus goes back to his bed and sits silence.

The hatch falls back into place, they turn quickly, their eyes meet. Ben turns back to his paper, silence. Ben throws his paper down. He picks up the paper and looks at it. So, it starts the way we begin. Have you heard such a thing? So, on its true get away, it is down here in black and white. Is that a fact? Can you imagine it? It is unbelievable. It is enough to make you want to puke, is not it? Incredible, but what? Now, there is no news also.

The pretensions, the pretenses are all over. They are not even, Ben is not even pretending to read anything, but they are just going through the same rituals over and again. Page 164, Gus stands up.

He goes towards the door on the left. Where are you going? I am going to have a glass of water. He exits. Ben brushes dust off his clothes and shoes.

The whistle in the speak speaking tube blows. Ben, yes, to hear he listens to mouth straight away, right. To hear he listens to mouth. Sure, we are ready.

To hear he listens to mouth. Understood? Repeat. Ben comes to the left and will be coming in straight away. The normal method to be employed. Understood? Sure, we are ready. Ready. He hangs the tube up.

Gus, he takes out a comb and combs his hair. So, now, he is getting ready for the job. Adjust his jacket. So, to diminish the bulge of the revolver, the lavatory flushes off left. Ben goes quickly to the door left. Gus and now, Gus, the door right opens sharply.

Ben turns his revolver leveled at the door. He is supposed to kill the man who enters through the door, right. Gus stumbles in. He is stripped of his jacket, waistcoat, tie, holster and revolver. So, he has nothing on. He stops body stooping. His arms at his sides, he raises his head and looks at Ben.

A long silence. They stare at each other curtain. What do you understand? Now, how does it end? Is he supposed to kill Gus because perhaps Gus is asking too many

uncomfortable questions. He is also developing a moral conscience perhaps over the killing of that girl.

He has been disturbed for quite a while. Perhaps he is not keeping fit as before. He at the beginning, we have been told that he is having trouble in tying his shoelaces. His instincts are not as sharp as before. So, he has to be eliminated, right, but perhaps you know this could also be an allegory of the larger human condition. We are all responsible to the powers above who expect us to remain unquestioning, who expect us to conform, right, to just listen and take orders and the moment you start questioning, you are in for trouble.

Perhaps that is the idea here. So, it is often mentioned that L.B. and Pinter, they were the first playwrights of the postmodernism. What is postmodernism? We will do postmodernist theater also, but in a nutshell, postmodernism avoids a definite closure, right. It is open to multiple interpretations.

I would say that this particular play falls in that category. Whether he really kills Gus or not, we are not really very sure. Who is Wilson? Does he turn up? Does he show up at all? We are not very certain. So, the play is ambiguous. It is open to multiple interpretations. Thank you. .