

Contemporary Literature

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So, we are doing John Guare's six degrees of separation, we have already we are coming to the end of the play, we are on page 102. And we stopped where Paul now he feels cornered by the social forces, the forces of the law etcetera, because he has been duping certain people and there has been a major tragedy because of his irresponsible acts. Now, the police is on the trail and he this is his one final attempt to connect with Ouisa Kittredge and they talk over the phone. Now, as goes the detective appears, Flan I have got that kid on the line, if you know if you remember where we stopped last time Flan is also on the other line, he and he is not as sympathetic as Ouisa as far as Paul is concerned. Detective find out where he is the detective goes Flan mouse to Weezer find out where he is because it is like miming the words, they want the conversation to last that long, so that they can trace the call back to Paul. Who is there? Look why do not you come here, where are you? I come there and you will have the cops waiting, you have to trust us, why? Because we like you.

Flan mouths where is he? Who is there? It is I am not here Flan, it is Flan are you in tonight? I could come and make a feast for you, we are going out now, but you could be here when we come back. Why you nuts? Tell a crook we are going out, the house is empty now, it is very clear that Ouisa is not mindful of these things, she does not really believe that Paul is such a big threat, but Flan does. So, Flan says do not even tell him that we are going out tonight because he may come and rob the house, where are you going? To Sotheby's, so this is a common reference you know they are going to the Sotheby's. Flan grabs the phone, the key is under the mat, now Flan is getting extremely agitated because of Paul's presence in their lives and he says you just come over, we may not be around, but the key is waiting for you come and do or you know rob our house, you are welcome to do so.

They said out of extreme frustration and agitation, it is not really an invitation. Hi, can I come to Sotheby's? Flan hands the phone back to Weezer, now he cannot handle it anymore. Ouisa hi, I said hi to Flan, Paul says hi, Flan hi, Sotheby's that is wonderful, I

will come. You cannot, why? I was helpful last time, how was he helpful? Do you remember the first, the very first? The Cezanne deal, so he helped fix the Cezanne deal between Flan, Kittredge and Geoffrey and he said that you see I was helpful and that at that point you were quite happy with me, so why not now? I could be as helpful even today. Thank him, he was very helpful.

Ouisa hands Flan the phone, Paul you were helpful getting me this contract. He admits I accept that you were helpful, really I was thinking maybe that is what I should do is what you do in art, but making money out of art and meeting people and not working in an office. Now, what does it tell you about Paul? Suddenly, the conversation jumps to something else all together. See, right now he is worried about what is happening, what is going to happen to him because there is a case on him. He is charged of abetting a young man into committing suicide, but now suddenly he is afraid for his life, but now suddenly he is talking career.

I was thinking maybe that is what I should do, what you do in art, but making money out of art and meeting people and not working in an office. Does it tell you something about Paul's character? Look at the absolute absence of elaborate stage directions. How many stage directions do you find in Six Degrees? See how Guare differs from other playwrights in this manner, in this way. There are I mean stage directions have been limited to bare minimum. Am I right? Why do you think? I mean we are not told anything about anyone.

Is it true? We do not know what Ouisa looks like. We do not know the physical description. We just know at the beginning of the play, you have some mandatory direction and that too I think he wanted to establish the fact that they deal in art and there is a Kandinsky and then the Kandinsky also exists because it suggests something. So, the Kandinsky is revolving the painting is where he has painted on either side of the canvas in two different styles. One side is geometric and somber, the other side is wild and vivid.

The painting stops its revolve and opts for the geometric side. A couple runs on stage in night dress very agitated. I am looking at the very first page. Flanders Kittredge is 44, Louisa Kittredge is 43. They are very attractive.

They speak to us. Apart from this, you have that reference to when Elizabeth and Ricky and Paul are in the Central Park. You can wear that attempt at bearing these two. We do not have any detailed stage directions. You do not learn much about the motivation of the characters.

Do you? Why people behave the way they do? Why is Paul? Now, again let me try, let me take you back to on that earlier track. So, why is Paul saying all these two, the Kittredges? The burning desire to be somebody, knowing fully well that there is just an impossibility. He will never be what he wants to be. He will never become. The only way he knows that he can somehow have a passing, you know, accessibility to these people is by assuming another identity.

So, if he wants to enter the house of these rich people, he has to be the son of very extremely wealthy people. If he wants to communicate with the poor whites like Elizabeth and Rick, then he has to come down to their level, but at the same time telling them that look I am after all not your level. I may be poor, but you know I come from a lineage. So, that is the desire to be something special which most people have, which most of us do not have, but somehow we are unwilling to confront it. Somehow, we are not this blatant about it as Paul is.

So, Paul you remember again the Kandinsky. Paul, perhaps Guare is trying to tell us that most of us represent the geometric side of the Kandinsky, all ordered and in patterns, you know and how well we are, how well we conform to the norms and we are willing to and we are able to most of us, but then there is a wild side, a vivid side which everyone may have, but they are afraid to explore it, whereas Paul is not. So, although he is in, you know, he is staring in the face of imminent imprisonment, but he is still not scared. Perhaps he is, but there is a hope and he wants to, you know, just explore the possibility till the to the hilt. So, he is trying to convince.

Now, he is getting desperate, but he is not coming across as desperate. He is still trying to be his old charming cheerful self and let me come and help you. That is the idea. Why do not you help me, bail me out of this trouble and perhaps I can help you fix another deal. I did help you in getting that very important contract.

That is the idea. So, in art, but now making money out of art and meeting people and also he meeting people, see this is another aspect of Paul's personality. He is a people's person. He is not an introverted kind of person. He likes to make a connection with everyone, whether it is the poor or the rich. He wants to make a connection, however clumsy he is, however inept he may be, but he does make an attempt.

So, that is perhaps that is what he is trying to tell us that I want to meet people and not just work in a very straight jacketed kind of a surrounding or in an office. You only see the glam side of it. There is a whole grotty side, grotty glam versus grotty. So, you see the glamorous aspect of art dealing, but there is also something, you know you have to do a lot of wheeling dealing kind of thing. So, it is not all that easy.

You may see the parties, the tuxedos, the black tie, tie ins and all those things, but it is not as glamorous. There is a dark undercurrent in the art field as in every other business. I could learn the grotty. You have to have art history to begin with. So, it is not just like you can jump and you should be able to talk about, you should have the language, you have to have economics.

You need to know all these things in to be able to work in a field which is so fiercely competitive and fast I could do it. Do your kids want to and he leaves this dialogue just open ended because see in Paul, there is always that deep buried desire to be like the kids of these people. So, he says see just make me your siruk. The implication is that I can take the place of your kids because do they want to be in your shoes? Do they want to help you out with these things? No, it is not really a profession you hand down from generation to generation. So, it is not you know Kittredge's INC kind of a business, but it is people have to be trained.

People have to have the aptitude for this kind of business. I just cannot train my kids in to you. You cannot brainwash what the hell am I talking career counseling to you. Now, he is coming down back to the practicalities. You embarrass me in my building.

You remember why did he? How did he embarrass him? Claiming to be his illegitimate son and he said that you remember the doorman spit at spitting at flan. You stole money. There is a warrant out for your arrest. Ouisa cannot bear it anymore and she raised the phone away.

Do not hang up. Paul, are you there? Paul to flan. You made him hang up. I am here. You are? Who are you? What is your real name? If you let me stay with you, I will tell you. That night was the happiest night I ever had.

Ouisa to flan. It was the happiest night he ever had. Flan, please I am not a bull shitter, but never bull shitter. I am not, but at the same time he says I can see through you. I know what you are trying to get. Flan goes, Ouisa why? Paul, you let me use all the parts of myself that night.

Perhaps he was so, he felt so whole, so complete. That was one single moment of his life when he was extremely happy. Ouisa, it was magical that Selinger stuff, the kind of talk you gave us on J.

D. Selinger's catcher in the rye. That was beautiful. Paul, graduation speech at Groton two years ago. He gave his graduation speech at Groton and he memorized it. So, he is

that good.

You know he is a fast learner. He knows that. So, he actually memorized because see from the beginning we were quite impressed with Paul's speech, Paul's exploration of the theme of catcher in the rye and he says now he accepts. See, it was somebody's graduation. He was awarded a doctorate and that person gave the speech and I just memorized it, mimicked it.

You are cooking other people's recipes. Nothing is mine. I am not an original. He does not even have an identity. Did you see Donald Bartholomew's obituary? I am going to ask you who is Donald Bartholomew? He said collage was the art form of the 20th century. Who is Donald Bartholomew? Rakeshaya, yes you know it.

What is the modern version of Snow White? Modern version of Snow White. Are you aware of that? There is a spin on the traditional story of Snow White and the seven dwarfs and what is the spin Rakeshaya? Some of the characters are caricatures of political figures and the other is sexual dimension. It is one of the key postmodernist texts of contemporary literature, Donald Barthelme's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and you know the traditional story, the fairy tale of course, but the spin is that Snow White willingly and chooses to live in with seven dwarfs, seven men who happened to be dwarfs. So, it is like you know an extremely free lifestyle that Snow White is leading. At the same time, waiting for that so called prince charming and that prince charming could be anyone and then she rattles off a list of all the you know existing real life princes.

You know you have prince Naruhito from Japan and then you have prince Charles and you have prince that and this and she recalls who could be, I am just waiting for my prince charming to come and take me away because that is the way fairy tales are supposed to end right. She says I am waiting, I mean it could be anyone, who could it be and then she, there is a list you know she is quite savvy. She knows that there are you know there are a number of eligible princes floating around in the world. All that she has to do is wait and she does that. So, that is the Bartholomew's version of Snow White.

So, what is he saying? He said collage was the art form of the 20th century. Now when we were talking about this concept called, you remember I asked you to read all the references. There are numerous references, literary, cultural, political, social, several dimensions to this play. Nothing comes very overtly.

It is not a didactic play for heaven sake. He does not talk about this is good or that is bad right. He does not establish binaries. You remember binaries when we were talking

about Pinter. We said everything is was very clear cut black and white.

Who are those two guys? Gus and Ben. The difference is in the characters was quite very you know quite clearly established. Black and white crockery everything is right you know in right in front of us. It is a play about binaries. Do you think this play is about binaries? So then. See there is a recurrent theme of sites in this game because in this Kandinsky's painting about chaos and order and then Dr.

Fine he keeps insisting there are two sites where they story and then right now Paul just said there is a grotty side to art. I mean perhaps not dichotomies as such, but he makes it clear that there is definitely more than what you see. I mean what is on the surface is not it is just the tip of the iceberg. So, not as in it is perhaps the dichotomies are not as clear as it is in Pinter, but it is definitely there are as he says there are two sites ready. But what I was trying to say is that characters here are not in black and white.

So, of course, there are binaries. He does talk about the two sites. That is something we have been talking from the beginning two sites, two sites of the chaos and control, chaos and control and the ideas Kandinsky is you know form the crocks of the play that there are certain you know aspects which cannot be controlled. But then if Ouisa herself, I remember telling saying this in class, if Ouisa has one aspect of her personality which is extremely well ordered and structured, she also gives in to the wild side of her personality. So, there is a mix inside. So, it is not like Ouisa and Kittredge's are rich, therefore bad.

It is no longer that kind of binary. So, there is a binary inside one person. It is not like this and that. They assign them. It is no longer that. So, be sensitive to that aspect that perhaps binaries do exist, but the same binaries may exist in the same person also.

The two conflict, a personality may be conflicted as you see very clearly in Ouisa's personality. She is always conflicted between the wild side of herself and the more controlled and the more ordered side of her character personality. Now coming back to this, he said collage was the art form of the 20th century. Now the play is replete with inter textual references.

We have lots of, you know what references are those. We will also do some greater study of what is inter textuality and how it is applicable to this play, but my question is if I ask you to explain a line like he said collage was the art form of the 20th century, what do you understand? What is collage? You know. Yes, first tell me that simple basic definition. What is a collage? Putting together several images. You know they are different images, but they all exist to form a whole.

So, different features that is what it is being talked about. Even personalities have different features and aspects and they all those aspects combine to form a whole. Even the plays itself is structured in such a way. It takes a lot. It alludes to plenty of other material and then it forms a complete whole. You remember the sentence, what does he say? That was the only copy of my PhD thesis.

What does he say before that? It is stolen, right. All my work gone. I never bothered to get it photocopied. In this age of mechanical reproduction, you remember that? Does it ring a bell? In this age of mechanical production, I lost my only copy of the thesis. I did not bother to get it because I am anti reproduction, but then is he so? His whole personality is a collage. He has taken it from so many different sources and tried to forge his own independent unique personality and that is what perhaps you know that the idea that is the whole postmodernist thought that personalities are not like good and bad.

Now, you get it Rehan. It is not like this and that. It is a mix of several aspects. The very sentence in this age of mechanical reproduction, where is it borrowed from? Walter Benjamin's famous essay, you know the age of the age of mechanical reproduction, where everything can be reproduced, art can be reproduced. That was Walter Benjamin's position. You know we have all these reproductions of Mona Lisa and famous artist.

One can have a Mona Lisa hanging on the wall of their house. You do not need to possess the original because we live in an age of mechanical reproduction. That is what personality itself is a combination of several different features, whether it is good or bad. They do not say whether this is a good thing happening or a bad thing happening because there is no, again we are talking binary, good or bad. There is no such thing.

Has it made the world of art more democratized? Yes, that is the idea. So, it is not as if he is against. It is not as if, you know, so purity of form does not exist anymore. If you say that no, only the original works for me and nothing else, it does not work because the work of art is so precious, so beautiful.

It should reach out to the lowest common denominator. That is the idea. Exactly, but now look, you know that sudden explosion of knowledge, that is what internet is a great democratic force. Why? Because it has made knowledge available in the remotest part of the world. Some kind, you know, certain things which were not told or which are not accessible to, you know, people, certain kind of people. Now, it is there all over. But then, there are also other conflicting theory that there are attempts made to control what goes on internet also and that is the Marxist would say that is not a very healthy sign because all this kind of controlling what is happening.

So, he said collage was the art form of the 20th century. Everything is somebody else's. Now, this is the key to the play. Everything is somebody else's. So, therefore, you know, even Kittredge's now, Ouisa questions herself, whatever they possess is somebody else's, right.

They possess an original Kandinsky which is not there actually. It remains with us for a few hours and then it will be shipped off to a Japanese. Everything belongs to someone else.

Not your children, not your life. Yes, you got me there. That is mine. It is no one else's. You do not sound happy. Say so much you do not know.

You are so smart and so stupid. Never say I am stupid. Have some flexibility. You are stupid not to recognize what you could be. What could I be? So much with you behind me. Perhaps you like that night. I thought since that you spent all your time laughing at us.

That you had brought that awful hustling thing back to show us your contempt. I was so happy. I wanted to add sex to it.

Do not you do that? Ouisa, no. I will tell you my name. Ouisa, please. It is Paul Poitier hyphen Kittredge. It is a hyphenated name.

Ouisa, Paul, you need help. Go to the police. Turn yourself in. You will be over it all the sooner. You can start.

You see everything is a collage. Everybody is a collage. I am a collage too. I am a mix of all of you. Maybe Sydney Poitier would have been his favorite actor. Who knows? So, he wants to take something from him, some influence from him and maybe he liked the Kittredge so much.

So, he wants to be a part Kittredge as well. I am not actually Paul. I am a mix of so many. Start what? Your life. Will you help me? Ouisa pauses and makes a decision. I will help you, but you have to go to the police and go to jail.

Will you send me books and polaroids of you and cassettes and letters? Yes. Now, he is again coming back. So, he is accepting it. If you say so, I will turn myself in. I will go to the jail. He is ready to face the possibility of being in jail and when in jail, you know like any other concerned family member, would you send me, do all these things which

only a family, which only family is do for each other.

So, will you send me books and polaroids and cassettes and letters? Yes. Will you visit me? I will visit you and when you do, you will wear your best clothes and knock him dead. I will knock him dead, but you have got to be careful in prison.

You have to use condoms. I would not have sex in prison. I only have sex when I am happy. Go to the police. Will you take me? I will give you the name of the detective to see. I will be treated with care if you take me to the police. If they do not know you are special, they kill you.

So, this is perhaps another reference to you know the class difference anywhere, everywhere. It is not just America. If you do not know, you do not have the right kind of contacts, then even you are not safe even in a prison.

I may get killed. I do not think they will kill you. Mrs. Louisa Kittredge, I am black. I will deliver you to them with kindness and affection. So, now she is coming around. She sees his point and she says, then I will accompany you and I will be kind and affectionate. When I am all these things, they would not treat you badly.

I will plead guilty and go to prison and serve a few months. A few months stops. Then I will come out and work for you and learn. We will work that out. I want to know now. Yeah, you will work for us.

Learn all the trade, not just the grotty part, top to bottom and live with you. No, your kids are away. You should have your own place.

You will help me find a place. We will help you find a place. I have no furniture. We will help you out. I made a list of things I liked in the museum. Philadelphia Chippendal, what is that Philadelphia Chippendal? It is a kind of furniture, you know a chair. He is a burst out laughing. Believe it or not, we have two Philadelphia Chippendal chairs.

I would rather have one nice piece than a room full of junk. Quality always you will have all that Philadelphia Chippendal. Now see how the conversation is floating extremely freely. They are talking about being black in America and in the next breath, it goes on to Philadelphia Chippendal.

All I have to do is to go to the police. Make it all history. Put it behind you. Tonight, it cannot be tonight.

I will take you tomorrow. We have an auction tonight at Sadby's. Bring me. I cannot. It is black tie. You know, so it is like a very formal, very elitist kind of a gathering. You know, you cannot be taken there. I have black tie from a time I went to rainbow room.

You remember the infamous rainbow room with Rick. Have you ever been to the rainbow room? Yes. What time do you have to be there? 8 o'clock. It is 5.30 now. You could come get me now and take me to the police tonight and then go to Sadby's.

We are going to have to, we are going to drinks before at the pier. Japanese, Germans. You are just like my father. Now, we do not know who is Paul's father. Which father? Sydney. Paul, he is not your father and Flanders is not your father.

Flan comes in dressed. Oh fuck, we have drinks with the Japanese at 6.15. Get off that fucking phone. Is it that kid? Get him out of our life.

Get off that phone or I will rip it out of the wall. Ouisa looks at Flan. Ouisa to Paul. Paul, I made a mistake. It is not the Germans. We will come right now and get you. Where are you? Tell me.

They will treat you with dignity. Paul, I am in the lobby of the Waverly movie theater on 6th Avenue and 3rd Street. Ouisa, we will be there in half an hour.

I will give you 15 minutes grace time. We will be there, Paul. We love you. Ouisa, I love you. Ouisa, hey bring a pink shirt. Ouisa, we will have a wonderful life. She hangs up.

Paul goes into the dark. We can skip the shimozing, pick the boy up, take him to the police and be at Sotheby's before 8. The detective appears. Flan, he is at the Waverly theater, 6th Avenue and 3rd Street, the lobby.

We promise we would bring him to you. He is special. Remember that he is special.

Honor our promise. The detective nods and goes. Ouisa to us. We go. Traffic on the FDR. FDR is a street.

Flan to us. We get there. I run into the theater. No one. A young black man, black. Have you seen him? Flan to us. The girl in the box office said the police were there, had arrested a young man, dragged him kicking, screaming into a squat car.

He was a kid waiting for his family. We could never get through or find out. Ouisa to us. We want family. Flan to us. That detective was transferred. Ouisa to us and we did not know Paul's name.

We called the president. Another president had made the arrest. Why were there other charges? We could not find out. We want family. We did not know Paul's name.

We call the district attorney's office. We want family. We did not know Paul's name. I call the criminal courts. I was not family. I did not know Paul's name.

Why this kind of a refrain? Yes, Aditi. You are on the verge of saying something. I am not sure. Maybe she feels guilty. They did their best. Do not you think so? She tried, but she could not help him and she had promised him. Yeah, she had promised. She had given him some hope that he can get on with his life, put everything behind him.

There is some possibility of a good future for him and all these things are possible for Paul only if Ouisa Kittredge is at his side. Somehow she gave him some kind of Ouisa. Ouisa, see her actual name is Louisa, but throughout the place, she is referred to as Ouisa.

Ouisa in Greek language also means a kind of a spirit. She symbolized something for him. So, I called the criminal courts. I was not family. I did not know Paul's name. They just knew him as someone Paul, but they all knew that this is not his actual name. I did not know how could I find out because he was just taken away before they could reach.

Why does it mean so much to you? He wanted to be us. Now, this is the theme of the play perhaps. A young black man, a young gay black man, a homeless black man, he is trying to forge a bond with these people perhaps because he wanted to be them. Everything we are in the world, this paltry thing, our life he wanted.

See, for Ouisa, they are nothing much. That is how she did this. Our life, what is it worth? Nothing much, but he wanted to be us. For him, perhaps we meant something. We symbolized something for Paul although we may not be extremely appreciative of what we are.

He stabbed himself to get in here. Remember that wound always. So, he stabs himself whenever he wants to make a connection with these rich people. So, he was going to those lands. He envied us. We are not enough to be envied.

Who are we to be envied such plan? Like the paper said, we have hearts. Who said New Yorkers do not have hearts? That was the headline. Remember having a heart is not the point.

You are hardly taken in. We believed him for a few hours. He did more for us in a few hours than our children ever did. Look at this. There is such a deep chasm between parents and children and that person at least pretended to love us.

Our children do not bother with even that. He wanted to be a child. Do not let that go. He set out in that park and said that man is my father. He is in trouble and we do not know how to help him.

Help him? He could have killed me and you. So, Flan is still cynical about him. You are attracted to him. Cut me out of that pathology. You are on your own visa attracted by youth and his talent and the embarrassing prospect of being in the movie version of Cats. So, you liked all that. Did you put that in your time space? When we turn him into an anecdote to dine out on or dine in on, but it was an experience. I will not turn him into an anecdote.

How do we fit what happened to us into life without turning it into an anecdote with no teeth and a punch line? You will mouth over and over for years to come. Tell the story about the imposter who came into our lives. That reminds me of the time this boy and we become these human juke boxes spilling out these anecdotes, but it was an experience.

How do we keep the experience? Life is much more than a series or a string of anecdotes. Life is an experience. Do not turn Paul into an anecdote. We may down in several years down the line, we may go and talk about Paul as if that was just an incident, a minor incident, but it was not. It was an experience that taught us a lot.

Treat him with that respect. That is why I love paintings. The problems he brought up are the problems painters are still dealing with. Colour, structure, those are problems. There is colour in my life, but I am not aware of any structure.

So, again we are talking about chaos control. Colour could be wild and there is no structure in my life, no control. Flann to us. Cezanne would leave black spaces in his canvases if he could not account for the brush stroke. I have a reason for the colour. Then I am a collage of unaccounted for brush strokes.

I am all random god. Flann, how much of your life can you account for? Flann, are you drunk? The Cezanne sale went through. We are rich. Geoffrey is rich. Tonight, there is

a Matisse we will get and next month, there is a Bernard and after that, she considers him. These are the times I would take a knife and dig out your heart.

Answer me, how much of your flann? Life can I account for? All. I am a gambler. Ouisa, we are a terrible match. Ouisa to us. Time passes. Ouisa, I read today that a young man committed suicide in Rikers Island. Tied a shirt around his neck and hanged himself.

Was it the pink shirt? This burst of colour. The pink shirt, was it Paul? Who are you? We never found out who you are. Flann, I am sure it is not him.

He will be back. We have not heard the last of him. The imagination, he will find a way. So, he is not that. He is a tough nut to crack. Flann to us. We have to go. An auction. I will get the elevator. Flann goes.

Ouisa to us, but if it was the pink shirt, pink, a burst of pink, the Sistine Chapel, they have cleaned it and it is all these colours. Darling, Ouisa starts to go.

She looks up. Paul is there wearing the pink shirt. Paul, the Kandinsky, it is painted on two sides. He glows for a moment and is gone. She considers. She smiles. The Kandinsky begins its slow revolve. Can you comment on the end? Krishna, let us have you. You have been silent throughout. Ma'am, the end is such, it is like leaves us with like a lot of questions throughout the play as you know you follow what is happening up to a certain extent.

But things are just like they just open ended. Yeah, it is very open ended and leaves us with like so many questions. Who is Paul? All things that have been mentioned in the entire question of identity is left open. Who are people anyway? They just tell us that you know you just get to see certain aspects or certain features or characteristics, but is that enough to know anyone? Not really. So, what are identities? What goes into making of an identity? Paul was a person who at least made these people happy for some time.

They could not say the same about others, even their own children. The children are always bickering about so many things. So, this entire question about, do you think Paul is also used as a symbol of something? The wild side of human nature perhaps. That is perhaps also necessary once in every once in a while to be in touch with something which is less structured.

So, that is life and not just control, but then what happens to Paul? We never know. We

would not know and Ouisa never knows. The Kandinsky is painted on two sides.

How does it end? It revolves. We really do not know. Chaos control, but we do not know. It could be either way. You know you can somebody died. They keep on reading these bits and pieces of news every day. A young man committed suicide. A young man beaten to death in prison, but was it Paul? They would never know. The authorities would not release that information because they are not family and they did not even know his real name.

So, how can they be so sure? Can we be so sure about anything? So, those are the questions and then you know he glows for a moment and is gone. Of course, you know it is not really Paul, but her imagination now. She now thinks of him and then she considers she smiles. So, this is you know a recurring theme in all Guare's plays where amidst all this chaos, amidst tragedies, amidst disconnect, people are able to form some kind of a connection, some kind of joy even in the middle of a great tragedy.

That is the beauty of Guare's plays. We have been talking a lot about absurdist elements. Do you find that this play has anything of absurdism also? So, we have Rana, Abhay who were going to make a presentation on absurdism. Let us hear to what they have to say and then perhaps you will be able to find some connection between the play and the philosophy of absurdism.

Please, we have to give them a mic. You can come one at a time because we have only one mic. Rana. Rana. Rana. Good morning everyone. I will be talking about the Martin Esslin essay on the theater of the absurd. He starts off by saying that all these absurdist notions and absurdist plays are not really that innovative on the surface as it appears to people like us. To the lay person, it might appear extremely iconoclastic and innovative, but in reality when we probe deeper and analyze the whole the nature of evolution of this type of theater, we realize that this is actually a sort of revisitation revival of the old and ancient traditions given a new spin by these forward thinking and innovative authors. So since the audience comes with a preconceived notion of the way theater and drama should be, the narrative and the naturalistic aspects are what they expect to see in theater. But what the theater of the absurd does is take all these notions and throw them out of the window and try and you know take all these old and established sequences and give them a sort of new spin.

The age old traditions, Esslin points out that the modern theater of the absurd harks back to are number one pure theater, number two clowning and mad scenes, number three verbal nonsense and finally the literature of dream and fantasy. Now first of all the aspect of pure theater. Now pure theater is supposed to be a form of theater in which

language is not merely an expression of meaning, but more than anything else it is something that probes into the deepest recesses of human consciousness and tries to bring those elements out and in the process creating an alternate and sometime supernatural world. We see this in for instance the music hall sequence in *Waiting for Godot* and in for instance the ballets and mime plays of Beckett and Anasco.

There is also a tendency to go back to the non-verbal forms of theater. Now Esslin talks about the very ancient mime tradition of Rome where these plays they were not really plays they were performed by these solo artists or at times you know a motley crew of characters who would improvise on the spot and create their own situations. And so Herman Reich is this historian and partial rediscover of this mime tradition. He traces the evolution of the theater of the absurd from the mime tradition of Rome to the *Commedia dell'art* of the Italian tradition and finally to Shakespeare's clowns and to the modern work of the modern playwrights that we have. Now the Italian tradition of the *Commedia dell'art* had like the mime now all these improvised and really spontaneous gags and they were you know the typical characters about like for instance the glutton, the senile old man, the braggart etcetera. Throughout this line of you know mimes and the *Commedia dell'art* the most important thing that happened in the twentieth century which contributed to you know the evolution of the theater of the absurd is the silent film comedy genre.

This was you know the stars of this were obviously the keystone copse Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. Now these people brought to us a silent world in which we would see these bumbling characters who were you know caught in this web of mechanization and this sort of illustrates the alienation of human kind in this increasingly mechanical and modern world. Freud in one of his essays titled *Delight in the Nonsense* says that the reason why people enjoy this kind of you know madness and nonsense so much is because they are able to you know break free from the straitjacket of logic that would not happen in real life. And in this vein one the playwright that I discussed for my earlier presentation August Trindberg he was the one who first brought the dream world into the dramatic arena. His three masterpieces in this type of theater the dream play *Two Damascus* and the *Ghost Sonata* are the foremost examples of the theater of the absurd. In these plays there is this you know paradigm shift from the objective reality that we experience on a very superficial level to the expression of the deepest inner meaning of human kind and human consciousness.

So this is this marks the watershed the shift between the from the traditional to the very modern. Another author who was not a dramatist but had a profound impact on this genre was Franz Kafka. Now his stories were about you know again loners and alienation and how people struggle to find meaning in their normal everyday life. He

was greatly attracted by theater but however he never wrote a proper play. All we have from his writing as far as theater is concerned is the first scene of this unfinished play and this scene is called the guardian of the crypt. Now in that there is this young prince who you know talks to this old guard of a grave and this old guard narrates to him how he the the spirits from the nether region nether lands are constantly trying to break break into our normal life.

So like I said he himself did not contribute that much to writing plays. There was this whole series of adaptations of his literary works like for instance this duo of Andre Jeed and Jean Louis Barraux they adapted the trial which was one of Kafka's stories. This opened at the Theatra do Marini on the 10th of October 1947. Now this play was the first play that completely represented the theater of the absurd as we know it today in its mid 20th century form. We can say that it preceded the works of you know masters like Anasco, Adamov and Beckett.

One bewildered critic after watching a performance of the trial said that this is not so much a play as it is a sort of collage and prestige of images, phantoms and hallucinations. He said this is cinema, ballet and pantomime all at once. That is my part. Thank you.