

## MENACE AND REASSURANCE IN HAROLD PINTER'S *THE ROOM*: A DECONSTRUCTIVE READING

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini dibuat berdasarkan masalah *absurd* yang banyak terjadi dalam penulisan drama yang pada akhirnya menawarkan kepada pembaca sebuah keambiguitasan yang bertujuan untuk menggali aspek yang paling penting dari sebuah ambiguitas ancaman yang bisa dilihat didalam drama komedi ancaman oleh Harold Pinter yang berjudul *The Room*. Harold Pinter sendiri adalah seorang pembuat drama *absurd* yang terkenal dan berasal dari Inggris. Dari drama *absurd* yang dibuat Pinter akan selalu menawarkan atau menghadirkan sebuah keambiguitasan. Drama pertama yang diciptakan oleh Harold Pinter adalah *The Room*, dimana dalam drama ini Pinter ingin menyampaikan sesuatu yang membingungkan tentang sebuah ancaman dari gangguan melalui penciptaan narasi yang dibuat oleh Rose yang merasa aman dan nyaman berada didalam dan merasa ada sebuah ancaman atau gangguan ketika ada tamu yang mencoba datang ke ruangnya. Bagaimanapun juga, Rose selalu mencoba untuk menerima sekaligus membantah perasaan gangguan yang dirasakan Rose ketika menerima tamu dari luar. Namun, perasaan gangguan akan ancaman itu semakin menjadi ambigu karena itu dapat menjadi *menace and reassurance*. Ambiguitas dalam *The Room* menjadi hal penting untuk menciptakan karakter yang kuat dalam drama ini. Sementara itu, dalam drama *The Room*, Pinter juga mencoba merubah alur cerita seperti hal lucu yang kemudian berubah menjadi kekerasan fisik yang tragis, psikologi, dan potensi ketakutan dan terror yang pada akhirnya menghasilkan *menace* dalam drama Pinter, *The Room*. Digunakan teori *deconstructive reading* untuk menganalisa permasalahan dalam drama ini. Batasan yang mengikat *menace* akan dipecah menjadi makna yang tersebar lebih luas tentang ambiguitas, bahwa ambiguitas bisa bermakna jamak. Oleh karena itu, untuk menganalisa bahasan ini kita perlu menggali keambiguitasan tentang menace melalui drama karya Harold Pinter, *The Room*.

**Kata Kunci:** *Absurd, menace and reassurance, deconstructive reading.*

### Abstract

This research basically problematizes the way absurd drama offers ambiguity, it aims to dig the most important aspect of the ambiguity of menace can be occupied in one of Harold Pinter's comedy of menace, entitled *The Room*. Pinter is famous as an English absurdist drama, while in his drama, the ambiguity can be taken. His first play, *The Room*, delivers something confusing in the way the menace is brought through a narration about how Rose feels secured inside and feels that the visitors are the menace. However, Rose tries to both accept and refuse, and then the menace she means grow ambiguous, it can be menace and reassurance. Ambiguity is only particular thing of *The Room*'s characteristic, while Pinter also has changings in his play such as comical thing that turns to physical, psychological and potential tragic violence at the end with generating fear and terror, especially to specify the menace in Pinter's *The Room*. To solve these blended components, through deconstructive reading, the boundary that binds menace is near to be broken down into scattered meaning ambiguously. Hence, to see these all out, this paper can be effort to dig the ambiguous menace up, mainly through Pinter's *The Room*.

**Keywords:** *Absurd, menace and reassurance, deconstructive reading.*

### INTRODUCTION

The problem of analysis in literature is to make a certainty in order to throw away ambiguity. However, when the work is a work of absurdist, it means that the ambiguity is

the major theme, it therefore becomes something problematic to see. Today is postmodern era, and absurdist cannot be denied to see as the effect of this turn. Absurd, terminologically, is a philosophy based on the belief that the universe is irrational and meaningless and

that the search for order brings the individual into conflict with the universe. The idea of the absurd is a common theme in many existentialist works, particularly in Camus. Absurdity is the notion of contrast between two things. As Camus explains it in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "The absurd is born out of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world." This view, which is shared by Sartre, is that humanity must live in a world that is and will forever be hostile or indifferent towards them. The universe will never truly care for humanity the way we seem to want it to. The atheist view of this statement is that people create stories, or gods, which in their minds transcend reality to fill this void and attempt to satisfy their need. The philosophy that encompasses the absurd is referred to as absurdism. While absurdism may be considered a branch of existentialism, it is a specific idea that is not necessary to an existentialist view. Based on those facts, it can be assumed that between absurdist and existentialist is connected, and it bears in postmodern era.

Generally speaking, deficiency of clarification is what typifies Pinter's work and the interruption of the outside forces upon a stable environment becomes a primary point can be taken, as if (an) individual has a space *privately* and the space is threatened by the outside forces. Therefore, Pinter's world seems to have an ideal world for *each* individual rather than ideal world refers to common people's ideal world and seems to create figures that live in isolation of a menacing world, revolt against a hostile abstract world. Instead, they look for shelter, which is physically defined, as a room, for example, or in the negotiation for a psychologically safe place. They are always in pursuit of the "fulfillment of their emotional needs" (Olivera, 1999: 54).

This characteristic that evokes in Pinter's early works and the very first is *The Room*. This play is first published by Eyre Methuen in 1960, first presented at the Hampstead Theatre Club on 21 January, 1960. This debut play narrates a story of Rose (a magpie woman) along with her husband Bert (a silencer man) who rents a room as a means of being far away from the madding crowd (outside world). Rose talks so many things, without rest, without interruption, she talks so many things even Bert seems does not pay attention to her. The talking can be followed step by step, she dislikes the outside condition and it assumes that the outside world, including the visitor, will disturb her reassurance because they are the menace for Rose.

The play passes with rising intensity how this sense of safety is bothered by the visitors, from the Landlord, Mr. Kidd who tries to make a conversation, greeting, and ask many questions. Continuously, after Mr. Kid is off, a young Couple comes after. They are Mr. & Mrs. Sands

who ask about someone they do not know and they get the information about the one they look for from someone they do not know from the basement, and Rose "has" to guess who the one they look for. Mr. Kidd comes again and informs that Rose should meet someone in the basement even Rose does not know who he or she is. Mr. Kidd insists but Rose does not want to. The last come is a blind Negro who completely breaks Rose's secured feeling by asking Rose to come home because he tells that Rose's father wants Rose to be back home. Somehow, the story starts to end while Rose tries to murder the Negro. It indicates that Rose's reassurance has been broken by those visitors and Rose does not have any patience anymore and thus she tries to murder the blind Negro. That is only an assumed review based on the play, however, there must be something else cannot be singularized.

Hereby, "Pinter's plays begin comically but turn into physical, psychological or potential violence-sometimes, in varying sequences, to all three." (Dukore, 1998: 87). Pinter tries to blend those up, and even a tragedy, therefore, combining comedy and tragedy can be said as tragicomedy while it is the mode of most absurdist (Esslin, 1961: 323—4, Styran, 1983: 125.), and whereas this absurdist drives ambiguity then it is important to conceive that ambiguity generates fear and terror (Prentice, 2000: 40).

Moreover, the confused conversations deliberately are used to strengthen how absurd Pinter's works and to display that the theme of complexity is united with the lack of language to form meaningful human connections (Lewis, 1966: 260). Hence, *Absurdism* is "the inevitable devaluation of ideals, purity, and purpose" (Esslin, 1961: 24) while absurdist drama asks its viewer to "draw his own conclusions, make his own errors" and although Theatre of the Absurd may be seen as nonsense, they have something to say and can be understood (Esslin, 1961: 21—2). Somehow, this even becomes to Pinter's characteristic while the Menace (especially in his early works, *Comedy of Menace*), becomes one of the exceptional conditions that is marked to Pinter's early works. Menace, it is the foremost term that can be situated into an inference in Pinter's *The Room*, and however, the condition of the "menace" itself is not as absolute as menace universally, it is always changing and changing thoroughly in the text and turns into *an* ambiguous meaning, then menace in Pinter's *The Room* accordingly is a potential deconstructive meaning.

Looking upon those facts of the play as a literary work, simultaneously it evokes simplicity of knowledge of literature as a textual work which delivers something ambiguous; something cannot be taken in a definite position along its interpretation. This strengthens the

background of selecting this play as a decision in the research.

## METHOD

Deconstruction is an alternative way to understand how text works, especially to dig up what the structural text hides in. This means that deconstruction, although it is textual and objective, tries to distribute something absent or something which is not presented from what text articulates structurally or to bare other meanings behind the text.

Wellek and Warren describe that there are two approaches in investigating literary work; they are intrinsic and extrinsic approach. Intrinsic approach means as a collection of textual reading such as rhythm, meter, metaphor, symbol, and everything relates to the text itself without leaping the boundary of the intrinsic part of the literary part. Different from intrinsic approach, extrinsic approach scopes biography, psychology, society, ideas, and the other arts (Wellek & Warren, 1949: 63—137). Thus, it is flawless to see that this research is going to include in intrinsic approach caused by the objective analysis. Similar but not quite, Abrams in detail categories approaches defines that there are four approaches can be seen in analyzing literary work. It is expressive, objective, mimesis, and pragmatic approach (Abrams, 1976: 8—29). The objective can be seen as the best way to involve this research in the category because this deconstruction will always move and move without stop or end along the chain of the signifiers in the text.

In collecting data, this research focuses on reading and documentation. The following steps in collecting the data are appear as reading the novel, inventorying data, then classification the data. To make this research becomes understandable presentation, before deconstructing it, something that has to be considered is reading the text structurally to understand the meaning of menace rightly. This is to show how the structure constructs the meaning of the text. Automatically, it will also open the binary opposition in the text. This binary opposition is produced to make the important point between two opposite thing in the text toward the meaning which is considered as the right and the wrong.

Continuously, the binary opposition will be deconstructed to trace and understand the ambiguity of the meaning. Deconstruction can be appeared to break it up and let it be in trace or the ambiguous meanings of menace. While in the process of deconstruction, according to Norris, it can be three major steps cannot be denied in the process of deconstructing, they are reading structurally to grasp the structure of the text, then simultaneously categorizing the binary opposition, after

that deconstructive reading to deconstruct and it makes result of plural meaning.

## DECONSTRUCTION: BEYOND (CON)TEXT

The crucial thing that can be considered to be pointed is that Derrida releases text from its context, and it therefore everything seems to be ambiguous and possibly opposite each other. To start with, it should be talking about language at the very beginning because Derrida starts with criticizing toward Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics. Language, as what structuralism believes in, is system of sign that express idea (Saussure, 1959: 16; Compare to Chandler, 2007: 5, Levi-Strauss, 1963: 48, Hawkes, 2003: 16) and then sign is a compound of signifier and signified (Barthes, 1986: 39). Therefore, what thing that can be caught up is that language is a system, and then language is a structure. Language is the most important element to release human from idea world to the real or fact world or reality, therefore, human is only represented by language, and language is structure, human must be structure. That is what structuralism believes in and used to stick this philosophy in ordering the world.

Talking about structure is not too complicated because structure is absolutely defined, ordered, organized, and understood obviously. Structure is an abstract model of organization where the elements and compositions of the rules relate wholly and the varieties are not too important (Sturrock, 2003: 6), in simpler word, the relation between those components (signs) is the important part of making significances (meaning) of everything and everything has significance if it is structured (Hawkes, 2003: 7). The relation means that there is nothing in a thing, the thing will be having meaning if the thing has relation or connection to other things. It likes the cat can be understood as a cat when it is compared to crocodile or chicken. Therefore, cat is cat because cat is not crocodile, crocodile is crocodile because it is not cat, and so on.

The way to present the truth like that, through the strict relation between signifier and signified, for Derrida, is called as *Metaphysic of Presence* (Norris, 2002: 28, Derrida, 1981: viii). Metaphysic is not something related to the mythical things or something like ghost, but it is actually the tradition of western or people at the old time to understand something philosophically. This understanding, for Derrida, is actually is influenced by the belief that the truth of something actually exists. For Derrida, the relation between signifier and signified in the system of signs is not strict and stable, it is unstable because there is no gap between signifier and signified. Derrida sees text, including literary text, is not as signs, but *traces*. Trace is the absolutely other, it is neither presence nor absence, neither intelligible nor sensible.



In sign, there is separation between signifier and signified, while in trace, the signifier and signified are melted and blurred, not in one but rather separated along the way the traces will interlude it. If a signifier refers to the signified, trace refers to other traces unlimitedly. Therefore, it should be understood that for Derrida, a text is not a structural unity completely as what Structuralism believes in.

Absences are actually something which is not considered to exist. It has been explained before that the presence only focuses to a point or center, while the other or something outside of the center is considered as the absences. Thus, the absences are actually something other, something which is waiting to be presented and it is why this absence shows how deconstruction is delaying because to trace the absences must delay something. However, the center is always in the outside of the structure therefore the text becomes opened.

To solve how to defer and to differ, Derrida thinks up the word of *différance*, which is embodied from two French words mean “to differ” and “to defer”. The notion of *différance* functions to “designate the impossible origin of *difference* in differing and of differing in *difference*...” (Culler, 1983: 62). *Différance* connects both with “the process of differing and to the process of deferring, as the definition of one signified necessarily and endlessly refers to other signified, and to the whole system of signified that constitutes language” (Green & Lebihan, 1996: 216).

Thus, in *différance*, there are two important parts; to differ and to defer. Differing refers to give something that is never given before, waking the impossible possibility, raising the absences. Deferring refers to give other meaning that is traced after temporarily. At the final, traces become the result of those absences which are made out. Derrida gives name trace to the structure of sign; therefore “meaning” contains sense of trace(s) or others that will always come up (Sarup, 1993: 33). Hence, meaning always presents with the different meanings, and these presences do not erase the previous meanings, but Derrida prefers to call it as *sous roture* (under erasure). *Sous Roture* is actually cross sign. When a word or statement is crossed by cross sign, it means that the word or the statement is erased, by the word or the statement can still be seen. The erasure is actually erasing but not making it absent or gone (Derrida, 1997: xv—xi), erasing with showing something else around it.

For Derrida, every text is opened and there is no impossibility to breaks a meaning into plural meanings. This is caused by no relation between signifier and signified, or in simpler term, Derrida throws away all contexts from texts and it therefore, texts are ambiguous and it potentially hides the absences which are waiting for being traced. As what Derrida states that “il n’y a pas

*d’hors-texte*” (there is nothing outside of the text) (Derrida, 1997: 158). There is nothing outside of the text means that only text can make meaning comes up, without text, the truth cannot be out, such as human has truth in mind, and the only way to make it out is through language, whether it is sound or writing. Besides that, there is nothing.

## MENACE AND REASSURANCE

The menace in this context is actually the problem that Rose faces up. There is no special condition to explain and define about the menace here because the menace is just like something which is disturbing and threatening. Based on some references such as Cambridge or Oxford, the definition of menace can be a person or thing that is likely to cause harm; a threat or danger, something that threatens to cause evil, harm, injury, and etc. It can be a person whose actions, attitudes, or ideas are considered dangerous or harmful. Thus, the problem is not in the definition as what point will be discussed, but rather to point the question of using menace as the major part of this discussion.

The use of menace here is influenced by what type of Pinter’s works. Harold Pinter is known and famous with an absurdist playwright and his early plays are comedy of menace. The phrase “comedy of menace” as a unrelated description inspires both positive and negative feelings. Comedy is used during a dangerous situation to make audiences to have value about a particular character or communication. The words, which are used, are the focus of often powerful stories that create conflicting emotions from its audience. The title “Comedy of Menace” immediately brings contradictions to mind, because comedy is generally something that makes people laugh, and the word “menace” means something threatening. Therefore, this phrase combines laughing at a dangerous situation.

Continuously, *The Room* is the first play and contains the combination between the threatening and laughing things. One specific example from *The Room* is a character talking too much inside her room and things which she talks are about outside that is in a menacing situation. However, the outside is just snow, cold condition, and she worries about something which is not sure. Then, the menace is rising out as if it is out there similar to what she talks about. This condition is mixed by the split conversation. The split conversation makes something not connected and becomes absurd conversation. It make the play becomes the comedy. The combination makes the characteristic in Pinter’s *The Room*. This is why, Reassurance becomes something which is opposite with the Menace. Then, the two key

words become the important part to be discussed along this research.

### THE MENACE THROUGH STRUCTURAL TEXT READING

Structurally, it can be taken obviously when the story starts with Rose, a woman of sixty, in a room. She is doing activities as a wife commonly, overprotecting and spoiling her husband who is younger ten years than her, Bert Hudd. Bert keeps silence although his wife tweets too much. However, this part has unlocked and stimulated a structure of the text at the beginning that Rose is motherhood and she feels safe inside the room. To make it clear, it should be made in detail. The play opens with Rose's monologue with her husband Bert, who remains silent throughout the first scene (plot), while serving him a breakfast, although the scene seems to happen around evening. Rose monologues repeatedly about the cold weather conditions outside and she compares it to the cosy and warm room where she stays in. She also talks about the dark and damp basement. She makes a sense of nervousness while she talks and acts, always moving from one place to another place in the room, even while sitting, she sits in a rocking chair and rocks. Her language is jam-packed with so many rapid-shifted subject changes and she asks her husband questions and she answers it by herself before her husband answer it.

The plot is passed by, Mr. Kidd, an old landlord, enters after a few knocks and a permission to enter. He asks Bert many questions. The questions are replied by Rose while Bert still keeps silent. The dialog between Rose and Mr. Kidd involves of many subjects that changes very rapidly, each one of them talks about something different and it looks they are avoiding the subjects and are not paying attention to each other, producing an irrational (absurd) dialog. At the end, Bert, who is introduced as a truck driver, goes off to drive off in his van soon after Mr. Kidd is off.

Afterward, Rose's attempt to throw away the menace is interrupted by a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Sands. Rose constantly invites the couple in. They tell that they are looking for a flat (room) and therefore they look for the landlord, Mr. Kidd. However, they do not know clearly who the landlords they look for, they even are informed by someone in the basement to go to a room number seven. It is the room which has been rented by Rose. The conversation goes absurd with the debate between Mr. Sands and Mrs. Sands.

They are finally off, but Mr. Kidd comes back by telling that someone in the basement looks for Rose. Mr. Kidd asks Rose to meet him although Rose says that she does not know him. Afterwards, Mr. Kidd goes out and the one in the basement enters in. He is a blind Negro,

named Riley, who has supposedly been expecting Rose in the basement according to the Sands and Mr. Kidd. He turns into a cause of the concern for Rose, shortly reaches the upstairs to her room, and insists Rose to read a mysterious message which is addressed to her from her father. The play ends in a climax violently when Bert returns delivers a long sexually-suggestive monologue about his experience (bumping someone's car) driving his van, then he realizes that there is a Negro and he strikes Riley until he appears lifeless, conceivably murdering him. Afterward, immediately, Rose cries "Can't see. I can't see. I can't see" while her fingers clutch Riley's eyes.

Based on those structural reading, there some points can be looked up, it is about the Room, Rose, and the way Rose expresses about the peaceful thing inside her and it opposes to the menace she refers to. To start with, it can be from the Room where Rose rents it from Mr. Kidd. Room here becomes a space which is able to distribute a security to her feeling, and she even warns Bert that in the outside "It's very cold out, I can tell you. It's murder." (Pinter, 1960: 91). It drives to a simple assumption that Rose feels safe because outside of her room, the condition is so cold and it even can slay her or his husband. Here, the menace can be formulated, it is the outside world. It can be analogized when a one feels happy inside rather than outside, and always delivers something unpleasant about the outside, it means that he or she must feel safe and the outside is the menace for her/his feeling. Rose has been showing this up, she thinks that the outside is cold, the outside can murder her husband, therefore, Rose must have a thought and feeling that the menace is outside. Moreover, it strengthens the characteristic of Rose, about sixty, while her husband ten years younger and it shows how care Rose toward her husband, and especially to escape her husband toward the menace she feels from her perspective.

The menace continuously attacks Rose when she monologues about someone outside the window and it remarks that living outside means that the one lives in other place, while the other places are outside of her room. Her room is the coziest one, the most happiness place, and for Rose, the one who lives in a room which is different from her, is weakly endangered by menace. The one who lives outside her room, for Rose, are actually the one is in menace. They live in a condition where no reassurance can they attain. It gives assumption that Rose actually believes something ideal in her mind, and it strengthens an answer that her Room is the safe place where the menace cannot enter. However, the ones which Rose means, is the visitors, the un-invited visitors. The visitors in the story are Mr. Kidd, Mr. & Mrs. Sands, and Riley. One by one, all of them enters in and erodes the reassurance of Rose,

and it gives the strength that there is menace in the perspective of Rose as has been always explained before.

The menace substantially is kept in Rose's ideal mind. With thinking about something else, especially about the outside and the ones who live outside there, means that there is something ideal for Rose and it is kept inside in Rose mind as her perspective. It can be different from the other because it is only happened in Rose's case. Supportably, Rose has something esoterically inside her mind, something like feeling which is drawn into an idea of menace in her mind virtually. Consequently, when the menace turns into physical menace, she certainly feels it, the menace. This is actually the way the plots work, walk, and race to end and this early plot primarily is conveyed to the following plot where Mr. Kidd comes over.

Feeling safe with no menace inside her room is essentially the main point that should be regarded. Her room is like a haven, Eden garden, if it can be analogized, which saves Rose's feeling peacefully. Thereof, her Room should not be arrived by all things outside her room. It means that, literally, she does not provide any entrance for whomever to come inside her room with no exception who they are.

### **BINARY OPPOSITION**

By conceiving Pinter's *The Room* structurally, Rose plays the most important role in the story with no spacing or rest in facing all visitors and the menace referred to Rose's perspective. Alongside, it is the best way to classify all important things to sort this story structured and the foremost idea can be engaged up.

Introducing the menace from the outside and reassurance from inside. This can be read from the way Rose talks with no rest. Rose talks many things, and the things Rose talks are always refer to something like menace for her. Start from the outside and the people, while she says that her Room is the best place to live in and to gain her happiness in her own feeling. Then, when Mr. Kidd's coming this is an introducing Rose's menace by asking many things although he is actually the Landlord. Mr. Kidd does not mean to interrupt Rose, but his coming actually signs the menace firstly. Moreover, Mr. Kidd also talks about his sister and it really drags Rose there and therefore, the coming of Mr. Kidd can be seen as the menace or Rose. The Sands' coming shows that they are looking for someone, telling about someone in the basement, and asking about someone they do not know, and Rose has to be able to guess. Mr. & Mrs. Sand actually a candidate neighbor who wants to rent a room, however, by asking something Rose does not know, can be seen as the menace for Rose. Moreover, the Sands also talk about someone Rose does not understand, the one in the basement. Then, Mr. Kidd's is coming informing

about someone looks for Rose. Here, Mr. Kidd asserts the information about someone who looks for Rose, while Rose says that she does not know about the one who looks for her. It means that Rose feels that Mr. Kidd gains the strength of the menace which strikes Rose's feeling of the peaceful place in her Room. Rose's feeling and freedom of being alone without the visitors becomes something threaten at this moment, and this is the moment where Riley will comes up and becomes the real menace for Rose. Finally, Riley's coming. He erodes the comfort-zone by recalling the past of Rose. Riley has brought a message for Rose, but Rose rejects. It means that Rose has something to be hidden inside herself, and she does not want to expose it out. However, Riley seems to insist her to open the hidden thing, therefore, Rose feels threaten and it can be said that Riley is actually the last menace for Rose that cannot be tolerated. Therefore, Rose tries to murder Riley by clutching his eyes.

Continuously, it will appear the binary opposition that the menace is actual form that is faced by Rose. Rose can be opposed to the visitors. The visitors are Mr. Kidd, the Sands, and Riley. Rose is the major characters and she meets the visitors as the opposed by the context of the reassurance of him. Mr. Kidd is actually the Landlord, he is an old man who has the apartment where Rose rents a room. The Room which is rented by Rose turns into a special space for her because it seems that the Room becomes the peaceful place for her. Mr. Kidd comes over just to make a simple conversation, and inform something. Thus, when Rose feels peace, and Mr. Kidd comes, it means that Mr. Kidd is the opponent of Rose. The Sands' coming gains the burden for Rose because their coming also as the visitors. As what has been explained before that the visitors are opposed to Rose. Therefore, even the Sands say that they do not want to disturb Rose, but they are actually disturbing Rose. That is the way different perspective can give different point although with this difficulty, it does not mean that the menace cannot be solved because of the perspective. However, it should be pointed to Rose as the main character, without Rose the narration will be ruining into something un-meaningful. That is why, the Rose and the visitors also include in an encounter of the opposite side. The last coming is Riley. Riley is considered as the last visitor who is success to make Rose angry, without him, Rose probably will end in a peaceful heart and feeling. Riley is a nigger, but it does not the point that should be debated, because, with no care whether Riley is nigger or white, the point is that Riley comes and insists Rose. It means that Rose is disturbed and Riley as the visitor is the menace who disturbs the peaceful feeling of Rose. It strengthens the assumption of the opposition between Rose and the visitor, while the both draw the reassurance and menace. However, before



talking about the major point here, it will be good to see the place where those conflicts happen. It is Room and the outside.

Room is the place where Rose expresses herself. She expresses herself to be in peaceful place and she does not want anyone to disturb her. Room becomes something sacred and sacral in Rose's mind and feeling. Without keeping it inside herself, it means that there is an ideal thing in her point to be focused on. What Rose always complains is the outside realm. The outside is cold, it can murder everyone, also Bert. The question may arrive in a state that Rose hates the outside because she is happy inside, in her Room. Thus, to make this clear to take up, the Room is the opposite side of the Outside, the Outside is the opposed side of the Room. Rose as the pole perspective can be seen as the one who claims to see that Room and the outside world is the opposite each other. After seeing that the Room and the outside is the opposition part in this context, then it can be concluded that the structure reading gives it a way to seek the meaning why Rose hates the outside, why the Room is the opposite side of the outside, and why Rose is the opposite side of the visitors. Those all actually the basic element of the way to think up structurally just to understand the way the story begins and ends. Moreover, with this binary opposition, the meaning can be taken very clearly to read.

At the final juncture, the reassurance has to be confronted to the menace. As the explanation before, the menace becomes the major topic in the drama. The menace becomes something important which is always brought by Rose to talk up. The menace even becomes the main theme Rose always speaks up. Thus, it is not surprisingly and astonished to understand of how Rose always talks about it. Rose explains that she does not like outside, while the outside consists of people, those people finally becomes her visitors. It is the way the menace comes over and over again as if it breaks Rose happiness and peace. The menace continuously turns up and becomes something cannot be tolerable. It disturbs and it corrodes Rose's feeling. Therefore, the menace can be understood.

### **THE AMBIGUOUS MEANINGS OF MENACE THROUGH DECONSTRUCTIVE READING**

The structural reading toward the text has been bearing something strict and for the result there are binary oppositions born as the consequence. It ought to be put as the basic element to deconstruct whereas deconstruction cannot be worked with ignorance of the structure.

In the binary oppositions, there have been revealed the major points up which Rose is opposite to the visitors, the room is opposite to the outside world, and the reassurance is opposite to the menace. It is how the structure forms the

meaning at the end that menace comes from the outside and it changes through the visitors for Rose. Oppositely, if Rose does not feel threaten by the visitors and if the outside world is better than her room, thus the structured meaning is near to be distorted. To start deconstructing with, it can be seen from Rose, especially about her perspective.

Before doing deconstruction, it will be easier to read the flaw of the structural reading that becomes a potential threat for its structure and its stable meaning. Just try to re-read it and inserted by the questionable of the stable meaning. The play opens with Rose's monologue with her husband Bert, who remains silent throughout the first scene (plot), while serving him a breakfast, although the scene seems to occurs around evening. At this moment, Rose is portrayed as sixty years old and elder ten years than Bert. However, how Rose can become so busy is questionable while she is older and "should" be calm and quite. This first flaw has opened something different from the structural reading.

Rose continuously has monologues regularly about the cold weather conditions outside and she compares it to the cosy and warm room where she stays in. She also talks about the dark and damp basement. She makes a sense of nervousness while she talks and acts, always moving from one place to another place in the room, even while sitting, she sits in a rocking chair and rocks. Her language is changing with so many moving subject or topics that change and she asks her husband questions and she answers it by herself before her husband. Similar to the moment before, Rose talks many things without full stop and even before Bert replies. However, it cannot be made sure that Bert even does not want to reply because the problem is not in the speech of Rose but in something else, the absolutely other of the speech, just like Rose's psychological aspects, Rose's problem with past, or something else, and it is what the text deliver the trace of the text.

The plot moves up, Mr. Kidd, an old landlord, enters after the knocks and the permission to enter the room and it starts the disturbance for Rose's feeling. He asks Bert many questions and the questions are replied by Rose herself while Bert still keeps silent with no attention to her. The dialog between Rose and Mr. Kidd touches of many subjects that modify very fast, each one of them talks about something different and it looks they are avoiding subjects and are not paying attention to each other, producing an irrational (absurd) dialog. At the end, Bert, who is introduced as a truck driver, goes off to drive off in his "van" soon after Mr. Kidd is off. The way Mr. Kidd comes is something surprising for Rose, therefore, for structural reading Mr. Kidd is actually the menace for Rose because he disturbs what peaceful place for Rose.

However, it is more surprisingly to see that Rose even chats with Mr. Kidd. She is flowing into the sea memory of Mr. Kidd about his sister, about his old table at Rose's room, and another subject. These are the questionable part, and it gives the spot with so many holes should be fill as the questionable answer. But, it will be interesting if there is no answer, it is only the way the ambiguous meaning deliver itself without certain meaning in a stuck position.

Afterward, Rose's attempt to throw away the menace is disturbed by a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Sands. Rose continually requests the couple in. They tell that they are looking for a flat (room) and therefore they look for the landlord, Mr. Kidd. However, they do not know clearly who the landlords they look for, they even are informed by someone in the basement to go to a room number seven. It is the room which has been rented by Rose. The conversation goes absurd with the debate between Mr. Sands and Mrs. Sands. The Sands actually, in structural reading, is seen and considered strictly as the menace for Rose. However, it should be postponed because there is something strange to be trusted in taken for granted. The strange things are the Sands informs about someone who looks for Rose, while Rose implicitly feels that the outside is the menace. Then, from the Sands perspective; they must not want to disturb Rose. With this stand point, the ambiguous thing happens and this how the plots waves ambiguously.

They are finally going off, but Mr. Kidd comes back by telling that someone in the basement looks for Rose. Mr. Kidd asks Rose to meet him although Rose says that she does not know him. Afterwards, Mr. Kidd goes out and the one in the basement enters in. He is a blind Negro, named Riley, who has purportedly been expecting Rose in the basement according to the Sands and Mr. Kidd. He converts into a cause of the concern for Rose, abruptly reaches the upstairs to her room, and insists Rose to read a mysterious message which is addressed from her "father". Riley becomes the climax in Rose's condition especially about the way keeps her reassurance. However, Riley is the sender of the message for Rose, and Rose is called as "Sal," then the point is that Riley is a helper for Rose while he is knowing something else for Rose. Rose rejects it and she thinks that Riley is the deadly threat for her; therefore, she tries to murder Riley. With looking at this stand point, it should be confuse to understand because the each perspective has its own belief and the belief brings the truth for them. Thus, the menace becomes interestingly to be debated, Rose is the menace or the visitors are the menace.

Looking about the menace and the reassurance is something else, not only about breaking and making the new system or structure in reading, but it is closer to see

that there is always trace near the meaning, thus the meaning will have no end to make conclusion. That is the way deconstruction gives the truth although there is no truth in one condition.

The play ends in a climax violently when Bert returns delivers a long sexually-suggestive monologue about his experience (bumping someone's car) driving his van, then he realizes that there is a Negro and he strikes Riley until he appears lifeless, conceivably murdering him. Afterward, immediately, Rose cries "Can't see. I can't see. I can't see" while her fingers clutch Riley's eyes. The last stand point should be doubted is the way Rose tries to murder Riley. When it is said that Rose is menaced by Riley, and Riley cannot be tolerated, it means that Riley is the menace, quite right. However, when it is looked oppositely, Riley sends Rose a message, and Rose does not want to, and she even tries to murder him. It means that, for Riley, Rose is the menace for him, he is burdened to bring the message, and Rose does not want to accept it. The way Rose does not accept it has opened the possibility meaning that the place of the menace is both the two. It is depended on the way the structure sees, whether it is started from Rose's perspective, or Riley's perspective. Thus, this problematic or the unstable meaning of the text becomes the prey for deconstruction reading to make possibility in making meaning through the text while the text always tries to conceal it in. To make it detail, it will be started from the very beginning, it is Rose as the first point should be taken.

Rose, a woman about sixty, has a husband about fifty. This text is not merely standing alone with regardless all conditions of Rose, both psychologically and sociologically, in the text. As an elder wife, she can be suspected as the matured one or the motherless with all attributes which are good. These attributes or characteristics blend to one condition that she should be a calm one. On the contrary, she is not so calm; she is even a mad wife afraid and paranoid of all things, especially to the outside world. Sometimes she cares and sometimes she is annoyed and irked, "If you want to go out you might as well have something inside you. Because you'll feel it when you get out." (Pinter, 1960: 90). It is such a care of her toward Bert, but what about Bert's perspective when he is listening to all speech that Rose gives to him. By silence action, it can be textually inferred that Bert prefers to keeps silence in facing a woman like Rose. Thus, the problem is not in the outside world, but inside Rose. Rose is too much speaking, she is disturbing, and she is noisy. To sum it up, the location of menace is both in Rose and the outside world. To carry this onto the further problematic case, it will be met to the visitors.

Mr. Kidd, the landlord, an old man, who visits Rose's room in order to ask Rose's comfort condition in the room



Rose rents, is suspected to be the first menace. To generate diversionary move, Rose seems to accept him (whether she feels comfort or not with Mr. Kidd's coming) rather than to exile him. When Mr. Kidd is considered to be the first menace for Rose, it should be delayed because some aspects such as when Rose asks, "Sit Down, Mr. Kidd." (Pinter, 1960: 96) and repeated, "Why don't you sit down, Mr. Kidd?" (Pinter, 1960: 96) can turn the previous assumption that Mr. Kidd is the menace for Rose. Rose asks Mr. Kidd to stay longer in her room, by means; she does not want Mr. Kidd to go off soon. Then and there, it cannot be said strictly that Mr. Kidd is a menace. Indeed, previously, it is displayed that Rose says, "I don't believe he had a sister, ever." (Pinter, 1960: 100). However, it should not be taken willy-nilly as a menace because he advises to Bert, "Well then, I'll pop off. Have a good run, Mr. Hudd. Mind how you go. It'll be dark soon too. But not for a good while yet. Arivederci." (Pinter, 1960: 10). Mr. Kidd offers suggest, he does not mean to disturb, and when he does not have anything to disturb, thus he cannot be said as the menace.

The second coming is from a young couple, Mr. & Mrs. Sands. In this part, the absurd points are shown definitely and the ingenious move also ensues at this plot. The Sands are looking for the landlord, they are told by someone in the basement (they do not know who he is) to go to the room number seven. It is Rose's room and the confusing conversation grows up with blending to the conversation about the landlord. Rose, with them, previously is said to be menaced. When it should be said that the Sands are the menace, while Rose ask them to join in or come in, it means that the truth about menace in the Sands cannot be hold wholly because as long as the text shows it, it will relate to other traces, and the other traces are the possibilities that the Sands are not merely the menace. The proof says that Rose let them in to her room, to get warm and to have a chat. Besides that, the debate between Mr. Sands and Mrs. Sands, such as about the reaction of Mr. Sands who does not want to sit and about the star, (Pinter, 1960: 102—103) become a highlight, especially to emphasize how the menace is blurred because they do not menace someone, but they debate for themselves in other side. Thus, the menace can be seen only from a side while the other side, the menace cannot be se said as a menace. Furthermore, Rose does not have any fearless to join (whether she is insisted up or not) in the conversation deeper, such as when the Sands talk about the basement (You say you saw a man downstairs, in the basement?) (Pinter, 1960: 106) and the floor above (You said you were going up (before)) (Pinter, 1960: 107). The Sands can be said as the menace (for Rose) when it is obviously identified that there is a

fact about Rose, why Rose feels afraid about basement and the floor above her room.

The doubt finally should be ended in the ambiguous story, as the notion of absurdist before which generates fear and terror for Rose especially, that display that the theme of complexity, is coupled with the lack of language to form meaningful human connections. Rose feels so inquisitive about what the Sands talk, and it does not mean that her feeling is facing the menace; the ambiguous matter drives two assumptions, the menace and camouflaged menace (a faked menace).

The third coming, or the third suspected menace, is the second coming of Mr. Kidd. At this time, Mr. Kidd is not visiting to have a conversation, but rather than to clarify to Rose that there is someone looks for her. At the very beginning, this second coming, is considered to be the menace of Rose with regarding that Mr. Kidd insists Rose to meet someone she does not know. However, it should be deferred, again, as deconstruction's ways, to see that there is something thrown away or put into an absent meaning of the text. There must be source, or reason, of why Mr. Kidd is so enthusiastic to insist Rose to meet the one who looks for Rose. If it can be found and revealed, then the construction about Mr. Kidd (the second coming of him) who is a menace for Rose is going to be broken and scatter without body.

The entirety lastly should be taken back to each perspective because there is nothing outside of the text while the text distributes something ambiguous, it means that there is no an assured truth but plural truths with all potential possibilities. Each character has each perspective, and the perspective has no border to be called as either the menace or the reassurance. Rose may ponder and feel that she just wishes to stay in her room and feels comfort; however, she exists in an apartment that makes her to connect with the other, at least to Mr. Kidd, the landlord. Mr. Kidd also has the same. As a landlord, everything relates to the tenants should be solved, thus, when he distinguishes that there is someone has problem with another tenant, he seems to have an onus and obligation to undo. In other word, with neglecting Mr. Kidd, Rose is the menace for Mr. Kidd. With this way, the menace appears with all ambiguous parts.

The last coming is Riley, the blind Negro. He comes to Rose's room in order to see Rose and deliver her a message from Rose's father. Riley says that Rose's father wants Rose to be home. The surprised one is that Riley calls Rose with a part of a name, Sal. Rose denies it and tries to make Riley keeps silence. After that, Bert comes, as what has been told before, Bert realizes that there is a Negro and strikes him, and then Rose clutches Riley's eyes.

Riley is told as the one who is so annoying especially when he drags Rose's and Bert's name to the landlord. Rose feels that she and her husband do not have any problem with the landlord, but Riley has been dragging their name as if they have problem. However, it has to be turned upside down when Riley has waited for Rose because he has brought a message from Rose's father. Riley is a blind, he has waited, he has been alienated to the basement, he does not want anything but meeting Rose. In this text, Riley is a faith, he has an honesty to deliver the message, but for Rose, Riley is a menace and even she tries to murder Riley.

By thinking that Riley has been touching Rose's emotion, it drives her anger to Riley and it is how the menace rises up. With thinking oppositely, Riley comes with no aim to menace Rose but bringing a message from her father that her father wants Rose to be home. This should be envisaged to be reassurance for Rose. Rose tries to murder him, thus the problem is not on Riley, but in Rose. Additionally, Riley calls Rose with Sal, and it is denied by Rose and Rose even pleads Riley by saying, "Don't call me that." (Pinter, 1960: 114). There must be problem with that name and the context should intercept and accommodate it. Again, if there is no context, and this text even does not deliver that, thus the meaning of the menace is opened and plural. Rose and Riley can be both (either) menace and (or) reassurance and even neither menace nor reassurance.

Finally, it can be concluded in a simpler points that the construction of structural reading toward the text results something strictly and singular meaning, while deconstructive reading toward the text results something oppositely and plural meaning. Rose as the major character finally should be leaned on the object which will be analyzed, because of her the meaning of menace can be turned upside down. The menace which is envisaged to be from the visitors, with deconstructive reading, moves to the both, Rose and the visitors.

Continuously, the room and the outside world which are oppositely can be blended into one because the problem of menace is not merely on the visitors who are from outside but also on Rose who represents the room. At the last point, the menace and the reassurance, finally blend into scattered condition which the both cannot be stood in singular perspective meaning. The reassurance actually depends on the way the menace is built up, and the menace also depends on the way the reassurance is built up.

Rose at the first is actually believed as the one who is disturbed by the condition of the outside, also from the visitors. Therefore, the outside and the visitors are determined as the menace. However, when it is turned upside down, through the perspective, Rose actually can

be both the menaced and the menace for the other. Rose is not only the problem should be problematized, because Rose is actually the signifier to see how the thing inside it makes the problem to be watched. However, as long as Rose is the signifier, there is always trace near to her, the trace which is absent and present, the trace which is absolutely other around Rose. Thus, the meaning is so ambiguous, whether Rose is the problem or not.

In the analysis before, it is shown that Rose is the one who actually has the problem, she always talks about many things without stop and even her husband does not want to reply. It assumes one condition of one conclusion that Rose is the menace, for Bert or even for the visitor. However, it should be and always be delayed because there is always another meaning that waits for being revealed. Rose can be said as the menace, but the visitors always can be the menace. The two assumptions are walking together, without separated and therefore, it is so ambiguous. To see it, there is nothing important to read about the meaning, because it is not always meaning that gives the truth. As Derrida says that there is nothing outside of the text can be meant as the truth is actually out there so it is not important to trace the truth through meaning, because the text has its truth out there. Rose has exposed that the truth of the menace is actually out there, when there is no hanger of the truth which is out there, all possibility of the truth of the menace can be so unstable. Everything can be made as the truth of the menace and everything cannot. That is the way deconstruction works with releasing context from text, and it therefore ambiguous is the best word to fix with it.

Continuously, the room where Rose expresses herself of being lived in the best place that guarantees her the reassurance, actually the problematic place. Room both makes Rose feels safe and makes Rose gets the menace. It can be imagined, if Rose does not live at the Room, Rose perhaps does not get any menace. Thus, if it has to be said that the Room is the safe or the reassurance, so the Room also takes the responsible of the visitors who come to interrupt Rose's feeling and makes the menace for Rose.

Room is actually portrayed as the place where Rose rents it from Mr. Kidd. However, it means that Mr. Kidd has right to come over just to make the renter feels good or what so-called. But, Rose even thinks that Mr. Kidd is the menace. Thus, the problematic is not only in Rose but the Room she rents. The Room is not always giving the reassurance, it is also giving the menace. Moreover, when it is compared to the outside world, the outside of the Room Rose rents, the Room becomes something like jail for Rose. The Jail even becomes the best place. Thus, the Room is actually having dual or double meanings which are coming together. The jail can be assumed as the worst but it is the best for Rose. The perspective to see that the

outside world is full of menace, is actually constructed by Rose, while the outside people may say that Rose is imprisoned by what she constructs. Just like Bert, he keeps silent although Rose talks so many things, until he leaves out to drive in the outside. By looking at this ambiguity, the Room cannot be made certain as either the menace or reassurance, the outside world also cannot be made certain as either menace or reassurance. Thus, to see it, it will always meet the wall of ambiguity, and along the ambiguity, it will always result the trace. Text is only offering trace, the trace is everywhere along the reading.

This absurd style actually opens the powerful attack and the attack is the entrance of any possibility to encounter and make its meaning. Deconstruction here uses that way because deconstruction always utilizes any possibility of the text. The text always attempts to enclose its meaning, but it will be always in vain and ending in a fail because text is plural, text has no point, and text has no context. Talking without context can be imagined as the absurd thing, uncertain, and chaotic talk, but it is the essence of the absurd.

The menace that Rose faces is actually something that turns becomes the characteristic in this play, the menace is coming up and going out. Rose seems to worries about anything that gets closer to her, and this feeling becomes the valuing that the menace is actually attacking Rose. Then, the meaning of the menace can be found based on those views. However, the menace is actually about how it is valued or defined by those characteristics. The thing which is not said here is that the condition which is dreamed by Rose. This condition is actually the reassurance.

The reassurance here comes automatically when the meaning of menace is defined, just like the white is white because it is not black. The meaning of the white comes and the meaning of black also comes automatically. Then, the meaning of the menace is coming, at the same time the meaning of reassurance comes. It is what general term says as binary opposition. In the part of the theory, especially structuralism, it can be found that the meaning can be found when it is having relation among the others. The meaning is actually in the relation, not in the thing itself. Thus, it has to say very clearly that the meaning of Rose will be gone if it has no relation to the other feelings, just like sad, happy, excited, and other feelings. The opposition of the menace feeling is reassurance. This is a condition where no harm and threat come. It is peaceful condition, it is the best condition that Rose wants.

On the contrary, the condition that Rose wants does not exists, it is not available because the visitors always come bit by bit. It ruins the imagination feeling of the reassurance condition. This feeling is ruined by those visitors, started from Mr. Kidd, the Sands family, and

Riley. By knowing that the visitors are the menace, the question must be the reason of Rose to accept them. Rose must accept Mr. Kidd because Mr. Kidd is the Landlord. Rose must accept the Sands because it is moral behavior to greet new neighbors. The Rose must accept Riley because Riley knows her. Those all reasons are actually not strong enough to be answered.

Therefore, it has to be said that Rose is actually having the menace and reassurance because those visitors are from the outside of her room and Rose accepts them as if they do not have threat for her. Everything she says about the menace in the outside and the people out there, cannot be made sure as the menace, it can be also said as the reassurance which is not realized by Rose. The unconsciousness of Rose cannot handle what Rose feels about them.

## CONCLUSION

Valuing menace in a perspective can be a blunder if the text analyzed is a kind of absurd or postmodern work, as in Harold Pinter's *The Room*. In a perspective, especially in structural reading, Rose seems to have a secured room with regardless the outside and she even feels that the visitors are menace for her reassurance. However, with deconstructive reading, the text exposes differently.

Rose, as a major character who brings the perspective about menace, finally should be opposed to the visitors. For her, the visitors are the menace and she also can be said as the menace for the visitors. By looking at this, it means that the menace is too fluid to be concluded into one side. Continuously, the a space which is symbolically envisaged to be the nicest and the most peaceful place for Rose, immediately turns into a room which is chaotic, and the room becomes the place where all visitors center it as an important point, here, the idea or the concept of room which is opposed to the outside world, turn into a problematic state.

In one side, it is a peaceful room but in other side it is also violent (moreover, when Rose clutches Riley's eyes). At the last juncture, an idea between the reassurance and the menace generates to be difficult to be pointed because the two are crossing, blending, and amalgamating each other along the text narrates. With those facts, the meaning of the menace is brought into a chaotic and even absurd state.

To simplify these all, the structural reading has been creating a meaning of menace in Pinter's Room. Rose feels safe in her room and the outside world is the menace. The visitors from the outside enter in and flourish the menace for Rose and it is ended by the destroyed reassurance of Rose in clutching Riley's eyes. However, with deconstructive reading, Rose is actually



does not feel that the outside world is the menace, and even, the menace is in her Room or Rose herself. Continuously, the visitors cannot be accumulated in one condition that they are the menace for Rose and Rose is also the menace for them, especially for Mr. Kidd. Finally, the problem between the reassurance and the menace in this text fluctuates along the reading of the text because the text is opened, and the meaning can be oppositely produced. At the result, meaning of the menace is crucially ambiguous.

The point is that, the menace that Rose has is actually something ambiguous. This is caused by the condition of the menace she feels is actually something not consistent, then, it must be said that the menaced that Rose feels is actually can be both menace and reassurance. This condition can be found by the deconstructive reading in Pinter's *The Room*. As what has been purposed to, that this research is trying to show that the ambiguous can be the meaning that is offered. By deconstructive reading, the meaning is always moving without stopping because the meaning is always in trace. The meaning of menace is always moving and mixing with reassurance because the limitation or the gap between the menace and the reassurance is gone. The menace which is always claimed as the main factor to define the condition of Rose, finally has to be ruined because the menace and the reassurance does not have a tight limitation. Therefore, the ambiguous meaning of the menace and the reassurance become the most important thing that must be talked here.

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