

The two codes certainly could be taken as a class allegory, with the localized authenticity of ethnic cuisine set against the brand names of mass-produced junk food. This Imaginary order, in Lacan's terminology, inaugurates an experience of the other simultaneously marked by aggression and desire/identification -- "a kind of situational experience of otherness as pure relationship, as struggle, violence, and antagonism, in which the child can occupy either term indifferently, or indeed, as in transitivity, both at once" (Jameson 1982, 356). Tellingly, as the play opens, Ben is immersed in a newspaper -- an axis of separation but also desire -- and Gus rather desperately (and childishly) wants to disrupt Ben's "adult" (i.e., privatized and individualistic) immersion. The newspaper thus marks the emergence of the Lacanian Symbolic order: the order of language and Law, society and reality, authority, deferral, and punishment. The Symbolic is the regime of the Other (as distinct from the dyadic other), a regime initiated by the Father -- a figure more important as a symbol or representation than as an actual person. Within this situation of alienation and deferral, the Imaginary register retains considerable power for the subject, wishing away as it does the estrangements of the Symbolic and returning the dilemma of the other to more manageable, dyadic terms. One function of ideology is to soften or personalize the social order, to convey to the subject an imaginary (false) sense of a relation between like-minded entities, in which one's anxieties and grievances are assuaged by a society that appears as "a 'subject' which 'addresses' me personally" (Eagleton 1983, 172). In the larger context of the play, however, both codes display dismaying mimetic innocence, a confident "pointing" toward known frames of reference. We begin to perceive the outlines of a referential code that runs intermittently through much of Pinter. In contrast to the use of referential detail in naturalism/realism, however, the specificity here feels gratuitous and unearned. The transcribed details of naturalism/realism presuppose a sense of organic totality, an interconnected, metonymic world with binding, meaningful relations between characters and their environments, in which one might perceive something fundamental of a person's identity from a pocket-watch or piece of furniture. Of course, totality and interconnection are ideological effects rather than facts of nature, and Pinter's use of the referential code lays bare some of the political implications of the realist enterprise. It is a commonplace that bourgeois realism is a "closed" style, one that works to naturalize a particular hegemonic version of reality. Realism entails symbolic violence against reality; it guarantees the authenticity of the elements it holds out as exemplary by coercing peripheral reality into meaningless background silence, or at most the low obedient murmur of "we are the real." In Pinter's work, the referent returns as a categorical problem, which appears in symbolic recalcitrance and unknowability. These symbolisms are reminders of the non-identity of sign and world, of the gap between ideological systems and the realities they encode and conceal. Utopia, then, is less a wish for a better reality than a wish for any stable reality at all. From writers like Barthes, Jameson, and Dyer, we know that the typical function of ideology in popular culture is not to silence social contradictions, but rather to speak about them, albeit in ways that naturalize existing realities, redirect radical energies, and otherwise benefit the social order. From the standpoint of the social order, however, this process may entail "playing with fire," in Dyer's phrase (279). History, one might say, is always elsewhere, and, if we look for its signs in *The Dumb Waiter*, we might begin by thinking of the unfulfilled desire implicit in Ben's remark about the newspaper, "It's down here in black and white" (114).

Black-and-whiteness is an Imaginary, ideological overlay on the vanishing Real; it symbolizes a desire that the newspaper make good its promise of unifying reality, of providing a stable frame of reference that could somehow meaningfully correlate the old man run over by the lorry and the cat killed outside the toolshed. Yet actual History is intimated only indirectly, through ciphers and lacunae, and in this light, the play points us toward the opaque incongruousness of the dumb waiter itself. Given its anachronistic overtones, and its comparative meaninglessness in the social world of 1960s, I think the dumb waiter marks a limit of historical desire, that is, desire to narrate the status of one's work and activity in relation to a larger community and in relation to historical time. The dumb waiter, however, is something like historicism minus the human activity that gives substance to history: it is history as pure abstraction, as reification. It marks a historical desire that can realize itself only in terms of a relic of bygone class structure; yet here historical imagination can no longer "fill" the structure with human content, but can only envisage history as pure apparatus, as emblem or signifier. Fittingly, the "actual" Authority/Father never appears in the play, but the sense of a social world governed by Law progressively permeates and infects the Gus/Ben dyad, beginning with their disagreements over the newspaper, which functions as a token and instrument of the social order. Here we should recall that the Lacanian model is tripartite -- Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. For Lacan, the Real seems to mean an arena outside signification, an order of pure immediacy known perhaps only in infancy, but an order that in some way continues to determine and orient experience, even though it can only be apprehended in mediated forms. For the subject, the Real persists as a promise or unreachable horizon, an end or destination outside language and desire, in which the compulsory deferrals of the Symbolic might finally be made good. With characteristic bravado, Jameson concludes that the Lacanian Real "is simply History itself" (1982, 384), which suggests a convergence between the textual model outlined above and the psychoanalytic model outlined here. Through a variety of institutions, practices, and representations, the subject is endlessly invited to take his or her place, as if at a cozy dinner party where one is always "expected" (see Althusser 163). Utopia, then, is a register of this sort of ideological operation, in which one's alienation is compensated by an imaginary, generally regressive return to situations of comparative fullness and plenitude. In these terms, I would say that the fundamental utopian drive in *The Dumb Waiter* resides in the relationship between Gus and Ben. Across moments of comradeship, impatience, resentment, and aggression, Gus and Ben display the immediacy of "pure relationship," in which the borders of self and other are fluid and permeable. Realism partly enacts such formal coercion through a particular way of using details. I'd never have guessed (121).