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***Harold Pinter, Edward Albee and
LeRoi Jones:
Their Ideas of the Absurd***

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Dedication

- *To my father and mother*
- *To my brothers and sisters*
- *To my grandmother and aunt*
- *To my friends and colleagues.*

Abstract

This present research paper has explored the Theatre of the Absurd in two communities as represented by three dramatists, Harold Pinter from England and Edward Albee and LeRoi Jones from the United States of America. What is sought is the analysis of the absurdist aspects of their plays and their worlds. My dissertation fell into four-chapters. In the first chapter, I have singled out the principal aspects of the philosophy of the Absurd and the Theatre of the Absurd. The emphasis was put on the aspects that are applicable on the plays under study: Pinter's *The Caretaker*, Albee's *The Zoo Story* and Jones's *Dutchman*. In the second chapter, I have focused in particular on the study of the main themes, characters, as well as language in Pinter's *The Caretaker*. His message, which consists in showing the absurdity of his characters' existence, is transmitted through different techniques. I have followed the same method in the third chapter, where I have studied Albee's *The Zoo Story*. Albee's aim is to convince people that our indifference and alienation results in the fact that our behaviour is analogous to that of animals inside a zoo. The last chapter of this simple work is devoted to the analysis of Jones's *Dutchman*. The latter exposes the absurd behaviour and revolt of a black American in front of his oppressor. His confrontation to his condition results in his death. Consequently, the main character represents any oppressed man on earth, and so his death is a sacrifice meant to motivate his fellowmen. The four chapters are followed by a general conclusion that summarizes the universal or international aspects of the philosophy and the Theatre of the Absurd explored in the three plays. I concluded by saying that although Pinter, Albee, and Baraka represent two or three different communities, their works show similar situations of real characters who behave in an absurd way. Finally, I closed by saying that the three dramatists share universal themes and characters in their drama, and that these characters are just samples that can exist in any society in the world.

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The title of this dissertation is *Harold Pinter, Edward Albee and LeRoi Jones: Their Ideas of the Absurd*. The concept of the “Absurd” was first used by Albert Camus in his collection of philosophical essays *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Then, it became an important notion used by Martin Esslin in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd*, where it is used with reference to the theatre of the post World War era. Most of the playwrights who wrote in this period are called Absurdist and their drama as the Theatre of the Absurd, among others: Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter. Before exploring this drama, it is necessary to say how it came into existence.

Modern drama came to embody the major theories of man, which had existed since the nineteenth century. This was due to the different philosophical and literary movements and currents that influenced it. The subject matter of this theatre is as diverse as its languages and settings because it is written in different countries in the world. This diversity in ideas and settings has given more freedom to modern dramatists to choose new subjects and new dramatic forms. As Alvin B. Kernan writes it so well: “the result (of experimentation in drama) has been a bewildering number of styles: realism, naturalism, poetic drama, symbolism, expressionism, the Epic Theatre, the Theatre of the Absurd, and surrealism, to name only the most prominent among them.” (Kernan, 1967: 16)

The Theatre of the Absurd was subject to many influences. The existential philosophy of the twentieth century has been influential to the Theatre of the Absurd, namely Martin Heidegger and Albert Camus. Their philosophy which communicates the futility of man’s existence, finds expression in the plays of Eugene Ionesco (*The Bald Primadonna*, 1948 and *The Chairs*, 1951)), Jean Paul Sartre (*Nausea*, 1938 and *Being and Nothingness*, 1943) and even Albert Camus (*The Outsider*, 1942 and *Caligula*, 1941). In his remarkable collection of philosophical essays *The Myth of Sisyphus*, the latter explains why life has lost all meaning. Camus depicts a world in which man’s existential questions get no answers. This philosophy prepares the path to the Theatre of the Absurd through which different human situations are exposed. As a result, we can define an Absurd play as any dramatic work that shows the absurdity of human existence, and which was written

especially after the World War II era. Briefly, the Theatre of the Absurd is generally referred to the collection of works which were written in the 1950s, the 1960s and even in the 1970s.

The Theatre of the Absurd gives real evidence of the meaninglessness of existence from people's real lives. It exposes the absurdity of human existence which came as a consequence of World War II. It is clear that the Theatre of the Absurd portrays man's world, man's hopes and fears, and his relation to the external world. What is observed is that this drama tries to answer the following questions: What does the individual feel when he confronts the human condition? What is his fundamental spiritual state in front of the world? What does he feel being what he is? Martin Esslin suggests that the answer is a unique poetic image, total but complex and contradictory. In other words, absurd dramatists focus their attention on their texts to expose problematic situations, instead of giving direct solutions to them.

What is noticed is that the Theatre of the Absurd has many prominent representatives, mainly in Europe and America. Ionesco, Adamov (*Professor Taranne*, 1951), Genet (*The Balcony*, 1956), Albee (*The Zoo Story*, 1958) and Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*, 1952) are some of those who dealt with realistic settings and natural speech in their plays. They view man's life as being shaped by his social and physical environments. Western European playwrights wrote the first absurd plays in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and then other dramatists of this kind of theatre appeared in Eastern Europe and expressed the absurdity of everyday life. The Theatre of the Absurd of the West i.e. in Europe and America may be an expression of frustration and anger over the fact that people are leading uninspired, second-rate and stereotyped existences. This anger is mixed with despair. The rise of the Theatre of the Absurd in East Europe came as a response to the mediocrity of life.

Furthermore, the Theatre of the Absurd is deeply influenced by Christian humanism, Freudian psychology, and Marxian economic analysis of life based on the fetishisation of money and possessions. What is worth mentioning is that the Theatre of the Absurd had its roots in the avant-garde experiments in art of the 1920s and 1930s. Besides, the Second World War gave special attention to the precariousness of human life, its meaninglessness and arbitrariness. In other

words, the mid-twentieth century had lost its meaning and had ceased to make sense. Man sees himself faced with a universe that is frightening, illogical or simply absurd.

In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, many writers, especially playwrights, expressed absurd visions of the world in their writings. These absurd visions were expressed in irrational, illogical and haphazard ways of rendering reality. At the level of form, they led to the transformation of the traditional norms of theatre. Because of the consequences of the World War II, most dramatists of the period dealt with the themes of insecurity, uncertainty and fear. The survival of religious themes and those that are derived from Surrealism and Existentialism are also noticed.

Review of the Literature

Over the recent years, the interpretation of the Theatre of the Absurd has been the focus of many critics. The works of Edward Albee, Harold Pinter and LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) are a case in point. These playwrights belong to minorities, either racial or religious. For instance, Harold Pinter is an English dramatist from Jewish stock and LeRoi Jones is a black American. Critics believe that every author represents his own community or nation. In addition, they put emphasis on the fact that these dramatists are critics of their own societies, both the British and the American ones. Being from different communities, their subject matter differs with the difference of the group and culture from which the playwright is issued. As a result, they represent its problems and conditions.

Harold Pinter is a Nobel Prize Laureate (2005) who spoke out his political opinions against tyranny on every occasion. One of his critics, Lois Gordon, in his preface to the second edition of his book *Pinter at 70: A Casebook* has pointed out that most of Pinter's plays have political dimensions, and that Pinter has dealt with serious subjects like war and death, mainly in *Birthday Party* (1957), *Moonlight* (1993), and *Ashes to Ashes* (1996) (Gordon, L. 2001: xii-xiii). However, Pinter is labelled a "political" rather than a "social" dramatist, or the author of "political drama" rather than "political theatre". He is even called a "bourgeois dramatist". (Ibid. xxxviii). Gordon argues that *Ashes to Ashes* is one of his plays that reveals the horror of warfare, genocide, the

cruelties of war, the reality of mass murder, as well as the barbarity of the Second World War. (Ibid. xvi)

In addition to political subjects, Gordon asserts that Pinter is also interested in social matters of his own society. The theme of a patriarchal society is recurrent in Pinter's works. In fact, *Moonlight* and *Ashes to Ashes* are better examples of Pinter's plays where he sheds light on family connections within the patriarchal system and portrays women as victims of this system. (Ibid. xxi). It has to be observed that the critic stresses the point that Pinter has dealt with the past in relation with the present, mainly in *Monologue* (1972), *No Man's Land* (1974) and *Celebration* (1999). The latter has been considered as a satire of contemporary manners, notably the sleaziness and self-indulgence of the *nouveau-riche*. (Ibid, xiii)

Another major critic, who has dealt with Pinter's works, is G. M. Stephen. He asserts that Pinter is autobiographical in most of his plays. In fact, loneliness, menace, and personal identity in Pinter's drama are projections from his own life, as it is the case with Davies in *The Caretaker* (1959). The critic argues that: "Pinter himself was evacuated and had to leave home in the war, and the sense of rootlessness, loneliness, and isolation can be seen in a character such as Davies may have its origin in Pinter's own experience as an evacuee." (Stephen G. M., 1981: 10). According to Stephen, Pinter treats the issue of racial prejudice and criticism of the British worker, illustrated in Davies in *The Caretaker*. Davies is lazy and acquisitive; he demands his rights with insistence. He blames the blacks for being noisy and dirty to conceal his own deficiencies, and his inferiority for the other classes creates in him the illusion of being superior at least to the blacks.

Edward Albee's drama is as controversial as Pinter's. However, Bruce J. Mann points out that his plays are at once autobiographical and archetypal which deal with the personal life of the playwright. In fact, his drama engages in social issues such as the American families and their problems. *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1959) and *The Zoo Story* (1958) are two representative plays by Albee. They deal with such problems in typically American settings. According to Mann, what is remarkable in Albee's drama is that he gives a reliable image on the unresolved tensions in the middle-class America in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. (Mann B.J., 2003: 2)

According to Lisa M. Siefker Bailey, the representation of violence in *The Zoo Story* reflects the ethos of the 1950s in America. She asserts that, “Albee is writing social criticism in the Cold War era, a time in America’s history when Ozzie and Harriet made the domestic ideal look easy amid the threat of nuclear war. This split has become a hallmark of the 1950s” (Bailey, 2003: 32). “The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet” were family-based situation comedies in the American television, which deal with the nuclear family of the post war years. To sustain her idea, Bailey relies on Richard Slotkin’s exploration of *American Myth in Regeneration Through Violence* (1973), to identify patterns of violence in American literature and culture, to find out that Albee’s play is part of this American tradition.

The works of Edward Albee have also been criticized by Lee Baxandall. He asserts that Albee’s characters are interrelated and cohesive from play to play. They represent a family unit experiencing the failures, hopes, dilemmas, and values of the American society. (Baxandall, 1967: 19). Albee’s plays, the critic adds, show an interplay of autobiography and the history of his own country. (Ibid. 20). Albee’s generally most thoroughly realized play *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) is symbolical. Its characters, George and Martha, are representatives of the new generation. According to the critic, the two characters can be connected to the first American family of the United States of America; they allude to Martha and George Washington. In addition, Baxandall quotes Albee admitting in his preface to *The American Dream* (1960) that *The Zoo Story* is: “an examination of the American scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation and vacuity; it is a stand against the fiction that everything in this slipping land of ours is peachy-keen.” (Ibid. 19)

Furthermore, Baxandall argues that Albee has dealt with uncomfortable subjects such as social conformism and women’s equality, represented respectively by Peter in *The Zoo Story* and Mommy in *The American Dream*. Mommy represents an emergent force in society, struggling for women’s improvement at social and economic levels. She gains increasing professional position, property and control in the home and community. (Ibid. 22). The critic points out that Albee has a

political meaning behind Mommy who stands for America which gained the status of a world power during the Second World War. (Ibid. 23)

The third playwright who is part of my interest is LeRoi Jones who is re-named later Amiri Baraka. The author has also been subject to much criticism. One of the most prominent figures is Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi who has dealt with Baraka's works, mainly *Dutchman* (1964). Ogunyemi noticed some autobiographical elements in his drama, which is characterised by protest and iconoclasm. According to this critic, Baraka thrusts at the racial status quo and the hypocrisy of the racial ideology of the 1960s. (Ogunyemi, n. d.: 25). He also protests against the second citizenship of the black Americans. The critic asserts that Baraka makes serious criticism of his own society by considering as outsiders those who are different from the blacks. The theme of the outsider is recurrent in Baraka's drama. Ogunyemi stresses the fact that the black educated man is doubly an outsider. She argues that the black educated man is the typical American outsider. For her, he is doubly an outsider: to his own race because of his aspirations and to the whites for the reason that his identity is different. (Ibid. 29)

The aim behind Baraka's play is black cultural emancipation. Being a separatist, Baraka's emancipation means the building of a black identity, distinguishable from that of mainstream Americans. The critic assumes that Baraka treats the 1960s racial issue and the revolt of black Americans during that decade.

Another representative critic who has dealt with Baraka's writings is Marcellete Williams. The latter speaks of Baraka's awareness of his blackness, which pushed him to shift his ideas from the posture of aesthete in his earlier plays and poetry to that of thinker in the nationalist phase to which *Dutchman* belongs. Williams points out that in his life as well as in his writings, LeRoi Jones has re-shaped his identity when he has changed his name from LeRoi Jones to Imamu Amiri Baraka in the 1960s. In the 1970s, the title "Imamu" was omitted from his name, which indicates a shift from Black Nationalism to international socialism. (Williams, n. d.). The critic believes that this shift in thought has been reflected in his writings, especially in his poetry. Besides, Williams argues that Jones's works especially *Dutchman* has a didactic function. (Ibid.)

Problematic

It becomes obvious that though the three playwrights have received attention separately, they have never been dealt with in a comparative study. It is my intention in the following research to analyze the representative plays by these playwrights (*The Caretaker* by Pinter, *The Zoo Story* by Albee and *Dutchman* by LeRoi Jones with reference to the theme of the Absurd across racial and national boundaries. My hypothesis in this work is that the three playwrights have dealt with international and universal issues. One of my arguments is that the recurrent themes treated by Pinter, Albee and Jones such as isolation, fear, lack of communication, identity and insecurity can touch every human being, no matter what his race or nationality is. For example, Pinter in his writings speaks of disasters caused by the World War II. Indeed, this war touched the whole European continent and the world at large not only the English society. If we take death in their drama, personal relationships, man's values, and man's sexual desire, we notice that they are universal issues.

In England, Pinter emerged as a leading figure after the death of Samuel Beckett. He was highly moved by the horrors of the World War II. As a result, he kept denouncing its destructive effects in his plays. The fear of war and the uncertainties of life are present even in Pinter's later work. Even silence suggests danger and threat in his plays. Coming from a Jewish stock, Pinter is obsessed with the theme of exile and homelessness. Most of his characters are depicted as being without bearings, strangers to themselves and other characters.

In America, Albee gave a new content and form to the American theatre. He portrayed the American existential tensions on stage and swept away standard conventions. His writings emerged from the alienation felt by many Americans in the American culture of the 1950s and 1960s, two decades marked by violence. He is seen as a prophet figure who is reversing their moral decline and wants to improve their sense of value. He depicts the absurd side of the American society through characters who are generally representative opposite sides of life. In addition, his characters may be seen as embodiments of universal ideas because they can exist in any society in the world. Furthermore, Albee focuses on language which is no longer an effective means of communication.

Just like Pinter, Albee was an exile in the sense that he never knew his biological parents. He was a foundling adopted in infancy by a wealthy theatrical family.

Always in America, LeRoi Jones did not escape the sense of exile, an exile to racial discrimination. LeRoi Jones put on the stage characters who are at once part and apart from American society. Just like Albee and Pinter, Jones is in quest of his identity, a quest heightened by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

It follows from the above discussion that the three playwrights share in common a condition of exile. Apart from the influences that might be observed among the three playwrights, the condition of exile from which they wrote their plays allowed them to look at human life from a non-conventional perspective underlining the absurdity and strangeness of what we generally consider as the familiar side of our daily living. In their hands, provocation, strangeness, bohemianism, the breakdown of communication are features common to all people no matter their racial origins or their social status.

Methodological Outlines

My work will be divided into four chapters. The first chapter concerns the theory of the absurd, which comprises two parts: the aspects of the philosophy of the absurd as it is explained by Albert Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and the aspects of the Theatre of the Absurd which are well exposed by Martin Esslin in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd*. The following chapters will be devoted to the analysis of the plays, notably Pinter's *The Caretaker*, Albee's *The Zoo Story* and LeRoi Jones's *Dutchman* by exploring the main aspects of the philosophy and the Theatre of the Absurd. In fact in the second chapter, I intend to explain to what extent Pinter's characters are representatives of ideas instead of psychological persons. The absurdity of their actions and behaviour duplicate any absurd man's actions and situations. It is important to mention that the question of personal identity, which is one of the great issues that touch the world at large mainly in the twentieth century, is raised in this play.

In the third chapter, I am going to prove that Albee's play has international or universal themes and characters. I will also try to demonstrate that the latter are representatives of the absurd

man; Jerry's suicide, his and Peter's animalistic behaviour as a symbol of a human zoo. In addition, the unreliability of language and its failure as a means of communication will be one of my concerns.

In the fourth chapter, the focus will be put on the middle-class black man instead of the black and white confrontation in LeRoi Jones's *Dutchman*. Through Clay, Jones as an opponent of the middle-class has portrayed the black middle-class man, and the result of his revolt led to his destruction by the end of the play. Furthermore, Clay's struggle in vain to defend his identity suggests his absurdity. How can Clay be considered as an absurd character? The answer will be discovered while analysing the play.

Finally, my dissertation will be closed by a general conclusion which will summarize the main shared aspects and their universality in the three playwrights' plays.

Chapter I: The Philosophy of the Absurd and The Theatre of the Absurd and Their Aspects

It seems that the theory of the Absurd could fit best my problematic. So, I relied on two complementary theories which treat both the philosophy of the Absurd and the Theatre of the Absurd. The two theories are respectively Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955) and Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961). In the course of his book, Camus treats the philosophy of the Absurd by exposing the absurdity of human existence, whereas Esslin analyzes the formal aspects of the Theatre of the Absurd. The latter derived the word 'Absurd' from Camus's essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" to put it as a label to a group of playwrights' works mostly written in the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s. Before exploring the different aspects of the philosophy and the Theatre of the Absurd in the two books, it is necessary to define 'the Absurd' and 'the Theatre of the Absurd'.

Esslin defines the absurd as a condition of being "out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical" (Esslin, 1978: 23), but in every day use, it may mean 'ridiculous'. Esslin seems satisfied by another definition given by the Romanian playwright Eugene Ionesco, in his essay on Kafka; Ionesco says the: "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose. ... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless" (Ibid.). Esslin argues that the Theatre of the Absurd expresses the sense of the senselessness of human condition and it abandons the rational devices of discursive thought. Yet, the complete definition of the Theatre of the Absurd is possibly the one given by the American playwright Edward Albee. The latter defines it as follows:

The Theatre of Absurd is an absorption-in-art of certain existentialist and post-existentialist philosophical concepts having to do, in the main, with man's attempts to make sense to himself out of his senseless position in a world which makes no sense-which makes no sense because the moral, the religious, political, and social structures man has erected to 'illusion' himself have collapsed." (Albee, 1967: 172)

Camus believes that the Absurd came into existence out of the absence of any answer to man's questions in a godless universe, and out of the silence of nature opposed to man's distress. The answers that all religions offer are rejected. If God doesn't exist, the world and life have no

sense. This pessimism and this revolt are well expressed by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1927) and Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1943). The absurd is not like the other philosophies; it is neither a system nor an intellectual construction, but it is a feeling. Indeed, feeling the absurd is not only to accept it but to refuse it at the same time because it implies indignation, refusal and revolt.

While Tolstoy accuses society to be guilty of man's alienation and despair, it is also responsible for man's suicide; Camus is convinced that man's suicide is individual: "Society has but little connection with such beginnings. The worm is in man's heart. That is where it must be sought." (Camus, 1955: 12). If we go deeper into Camus's philosophy, we can divide his work into three important stages of which one is devoted to the absurd. This stage was marked by: the novel *The Outsider* (1942), the book of philosophical essays *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), and the two plays *Caligula* (1941) and *Misunderstanding* (1944). The four works deal with the theme of the Absurd, and Camus summarizes it as follows: "It happens that the stage-sets collapse. Rising, tram, four hours in the office or factory, meal, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, according to the same rhythm-this path is easily followed most of the time." (Ibid. 19). This notion is present even in other works of the other stages.

1- The Absurd According to Camus:

Although the feeling of the absurd was shown since Blaise Pascal, the absurd as a philosophical idea became formalised only in the twentieth century with Albert Camus. Lebesque, one of his critics, has summarized Camus's conception of the absurd as follows:

C'est l'épaisseur et l'étrangeté du monde, c'est le péché sans Dieu. Il ne peut y avoir d'absurde hors d'un esprit humain. Ainsi l'absurde finit comme toute chose, avec la mort. Mais il ne peut non plus y avoir d'absurde hors de ce monde. Et c'est ce critérium élémentaire que je juge que la notion d'absurde est essentielle et qu'elle peut figurer la première de mes vérités" (Lebesque, 1967: 60).

There exist some moments in life when everything becomes strange for man, and he himself feels strange in the world. This feeling of strangeness of the world and of man at the same time can be revealed through the indifference which constitutes an important aspect of the absurd. It is not renunciation, but a profound confession. For the absurd is neither in the world, nor in the human being, but it exists in their common presence and their confrontation. The feeling of the absurd is

provoked by awareness of man's spirit and everything starts with awareness since, according to Camus, it is at the origin of everything.

A- The Aspects of the Philosophy of the Absurd:

As we have already said, the aspects of Camus's philosophy of the absurd are well explained in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The latter expresses Camus's opposed views about the rationalism of classical philosophy. Through his book, he seeks universal truths or a hierarchy of values. In his essay 'Absurd Creation', he believes that the individual is always involved in a choice. He is also concerned with the significance of death, its inevitability and its finality. (Op. Cit. p. 106) For him, the absurd is the revolt against tomorrow; as a result it is related to the present moment. While suicide is a final act committed by any ordinary man, revolt is an ongoing struggle with the absurd and brings with it man's redemption.

Albert Camus suggests two solutions to the absurd. He asserts that when man becomes aware of his absurd condition, marked by disgust and weariness. This condition, which is generally compared to a state of nausea, offers two solutions to man: either he escapes reality by suicide, or he endeavours to live even if he knows that life is futile. According to Camus, the absurd man tries the second solution which calls for the confrontation with the present world, ignoring both the past and the future, but struggling to death.

However, living is keeping the absurd alive. Confrontation of the absurd is characterized by: a total lack of hope (which is not the same as despair), a permanent rejection of life (which is not the same as renunciation), and a conscious dissatisfaction (which is not the same as juvenile anxiety). The absence of hope leads the absurd man to live his present time freed from any illusions of the future. He can now "live out his adventure within the confines of his own lifetime". (Mairowitz & Korkos, 1998: 72). A good example of this kind of the absurd man is well illustrated by Camus in the character of Sisyphus. The latter struggles without rest, yet he is aware that his efforts will lead him to no peace. He, himself, chooses to continue the punishment which has been imposed on him. Camus believes that Sisyphus is the master of his own fate, so who is Sisyphus?

Camus states that Sisyphus is a metaphor for life. According to the Greek myth, Sisyphus is condemned by the gods to roll a rock up to the top of a mountain, only to have the rock roll back down to the bottom every time he reaches the top. Camus identifies Sisyphus as the archetypal absurd hero, who sees life as a struggle without hope. Moreover, Camus argues that Sisyphus characterizes the dilemma of the modern man. He thinks that people must realize that the feeling of the absurd exists and can happen to anyone at any time. For Camus, Sisyphus is aware of the absurdity of his position, and his awareness is precisely the same awareness of the absurd man in his life. Briefly, Camus here is concerned with persons and their world, the relationships between them, and the relationships between persons and their history. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Martin Esslin states that Camus tries to make a diagnosis of the human situation in a world where religious beliefs are waning. (Esslin, 1978: 23)

In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus discusses the value of life and the question of suicide, the absurd man and the absurd creation, and the absurdity of human condition. Camus, without doubt, has been influenced by Nietzsche's existential philosophy. George F. Seidler, in his essay "**The Existential vs. The Absurd: The Aesthetics of Nietzsche and Camus**", stresses this influence:

It is not accidental that Albert Camus, in each of his two major works of philosophical import, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel* (1957), introduces the topic of aesthetics with the aid of a quotation of Friedrich Nietzsche. Both culturally and academically, Camus matured in a world tinged with Nietzschean hues. Commentators concur in this regard: The writings of Nietzsche influenced Camus. Furthermore, Camus himself has publicly acknowledged indebtedness to Nietzsche, referring to the latter as a spiritual ancestor. (Seidler, 1974: 415)

Nietzsche preaches the meaninglessness of man's life, which led Camus to introduce the philosophy of the "Absurd" where the same idea is expressed. For him, people prefer death over life because: "they judge that life is not worth living" (Camus, 1955: 11). Camus thinks that some people find suicide as a solution to the absurd, and that society has nothing to do with individual's actions.

Through the Absurd, Camus aims at showing the lack of coordination between the needs of man's spirit and the lack of logic in the world. Camus defines the Absurd in terms of lack of coordination and relationship between the individual and the world. It is the juxtaposition of man's existence and his reason. Indeed, Camus thinks that the world doesn't oppose reason, but the world

itself is not based on the norms of reason and its criteria. Man cannot commit himself the Absurd with full awareness, without giving in on what he believes. He must reject suicide to opt for confrontation. In *Introducing Camus* (1998), Mairowitz and Korkos have interpreted Camus's philosophy of the Absurd as follows:

Without divinity there can be no presumed code of conduct for human beings, nor any explanation of life's meaning. We are simply thrown into this world and the outcome is death, pure and simple. There is only life before and nothing beyond. And yet, this absence of explanation is not, in itself, the idea of the Absurd ... What is absurd is the confrontation between the sense of the irrational and the overwhelming desire for clarity which resounds in the depths of man." (Mairowitz & Korkos, 1998: 40)

B- The Characteristics of the Absurd Man:

If we consider the behaviour of all Camus's characters, we can extract some characteristics of the absurd man. The first characteristic is insensitivity and unconcern. The absurd man shows no usual feelings. He is without pity, without affection and feelings. He does not react to external or internal excitement. He feels as if he is never worried about them; he speaks and reacts as if all that goes around him is insignificant.

The second characteristic of the absurd man is uncertainty. The absurd man believes in only one truth, which is the nonsense and absurdity of life. For him, everything is uncertain, and he is doubtful all the time, since he refuses to be credulous. For example, Sisyphus believes only in his eternal labour and nothing is more interesting than his work.

The third characteristic of the absurd is contradiction. The absurd man excludes all value judgements or the willingness to maintain a coherent life. In reality, to live is a value judgement. The characters who represent the absurd universe show generally contradictory attitudes. For instance, Sisyphus suffers eternally but he is happy.

Another characteristic which intervenes without warning is coincidence or chance. Everything is played out by chance. In life, coincidence steps in at any moment, by a word, by a gesture, by an unexpected visit which may bring bad luck. It may be a consequence of hesitation which illustrates the uncertainties of the absurd man.

The absurd man is also characterized by anxiety. Here a question must be asked: is the absurd man really anxious? The absurd man's anxiety grows when he meets the strangeness of the world, the absence of all truth, but what he meets is the nonsense of life. Consequently, this confrontation with the irrational world, his relationship with metaphysics put him in a situation full of anxiety, anguish, and questioning.

The last characteristic, which is very interesting in the absurd man, is his challenge and revolt. The absurd man is not a submitted man but a resistant. Even if he is uncertain and desperate, he refuses suicide as a solution to his problems. What is observed in the absurd man is his revolt against his condition and fate. In spite the nonsense of life, struggle is still carried. Camus believes that:

One of the coherent philosophical positions is thus revolt. It is a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity. It is an insistence upon an impossible transparency.... It may be thought that suicide follows revolt-but wrongly. ... In its way, suicide settles the absurd That revolt gives life its value. (Op. Cit. pp. 53-4).

Man's voice is heard wherever man and his liberty are denied. Camus assumes that the problem of 'liberty in oneself' has no meaning because it is bound in a different way to that of God. But instead, he believes that: "The only freedom that I know is that of mind and action. If the absurd annihilates all my chances for eternal liberty, it makes me and exalts on the contrary to my freedom of action" (Camus, 1955: 82)

C- Types of Absurd Men:

Albert Camus in his work distinguishes three types of absurd men: Don Juan (the seducer), the actor, and the conqueror. Don Juan is a women's seducer. He never remains faithful with women for a long time. What matter for him is the desire of changing lovers, to keep that desire alive. He refuses regret as well as hope. For him, hope of another life is vanity. This is why he is never sad. To the divine wrath, he reacts with pride and pleasure: "and I am keeping my promise because I am a knight" (Ibid. 69). He accepts punishment and finds that ordinary and normal because this is his destiny. As such he cannot escape it. He lives his last days inside a convent face to face with God whom he doesn't worship, and whom he regards without eloquence and depth.

The actor is another absurd man. He embodies the contradiction of the absurd. He represents himself and many other characters as well. Camus says: "The actor has three hours to be Iago or Alceste, Phèdre or Gloucester" (Ibid. 74). He works with all his heart to be none and many at the same time; although he is aware of the nonsense of life. He wants to reach and do everything and live all lives and he persists in doing that vainly.

Another absurd man is the conqueror. The latter lives in the present and pursues a life of contemplation. Indeed, when he must choose between action and contemplation, he prefers the former rather than the latter. Making this choice makes him a man, though he knows that action is useless. It is the only action which relates man with earth. His greatness consists in his struggle, protest and sacrifice without hope. Victory is desirable and defeat is rejected. For him, there is only one eternal victory: the one that can never be. Moreover, life is his only end. He believes that luxury consists in his human relations (brotherhood, friendship). He thinks that the greatness of man has no limits, even the eternal ones. He is eternalized and historicized; he chooses history for at least he is certain of it. And being an absurd man, he looks for what is certain even though it is short-lived.

To sum up, the absurd according to Camus, is a feeling that man experiences after being aware of a weary reality. So for him, the solution is not suicide but confrontation of this situation, which consists in a permanent struggle with the world till death. And this happens with his awareness that life is futile. The absurd feeling shows some characteristics like uncertainty, insensitivity, chance, challenge, and revolt. These characteristics are well illustrated in Don Juan's honesty, the actor who shows contradiction through the different characters whom he represents, and the conqueror who is always looking for certainties.

Camus's philosophy of the absurd is widely present in most dramatic works of the mid-twentieth century, mainly in the plays of Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, N.F. Simpson, Edward Albee, Tom Stoppard, and as we shall demonstrate in the plays by Harold Pinter, Edward Albee and Amiri Baraka. Their theatre is called "the Theatre of the Absurd" which becomes a common term after the publication of Martin Esslin's great work *The Theatre of the Absurd* in 1961. According to Esslin, these playwrights shared one belief that man's existence

is meaningless, irrational and purposeless. The meaninglessness of existence is behind the state of uncertainty, anguish and depression that are the hallmarks of The Theatre of the Absurd. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952) is the first play that started this revolution. Theatre audiences were shocked at first not only because of its content but also because of its formal aspects which are detailed below.

II- The Theatre of the Absurd and its Aspects:

The Theatre of the Absurd is the concretisation of the philosophy of the Absurd expressed mainly by Camus. Esslin argues: "While Sartre and Camus express the new content in the old convention, the Theatre of the Absurd goes a step further in trying to achieve a unity between its basic assumptions and the form in which these are expressed." (Esslin, 1978: 24). Indeed, the Absurd drama shows the absurdity of human existence through concrete images and concrete scenes. The style is given too much importance, mainly language which is disintegrated and devaluated. What is noticed in this kind of drama is that what happens on the stage usually contradicts what is said by the characters. Therefore, language becomes unreliable, Esslin reports: "A yawning gulf has opened between language and reality" (Ibid. 409). Absurd drama distrusts language as a means of communication. In other terms, words cease to express the essence of human experience. It is necessary to mention that the relative nature of language, its depreciation and its critique are also dominant tendencies of the contemporary philosophy and theatre. Esslin's explanation to the tradition and the significance of The Theatre of the Absurd will be the focus of the following section.

A- The Literary Tradition of the Absurd:

In his book *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Esslin is concerned with the different traditions that had influenced the Theatre of the Absurd, and then he exposes its aspects. He states that the Theatre of the Absurd is subject to many influences, mainly those of the western traditions, "The Theatre of the Absurd is a return to old, even archaic, traditions." (Ibid. 327). Among the predecessors of modern drama, we can find nonsense poetry. According to German philosophers, this poetry reflects the nonsense of the world which is due to the absence or the death of God. What is noticed

is that the literature of verbal nonsense attacks the obstructions of the human condition. One of the pioneers of this kind of literature is the French poet François Rabelais who creates a world of intelligent giants and dwarves. These abnormal creatures live in a world which is described in a rich language that transcends the real world. Accordingly, Esslin defines the verbal nonsense as: “Verbal nonsense is in the truest sense a metaphysical endeavour, a striving to enlarge and to transcend the limits of the material universe and its logic” (Ibid, 341-2). Among the greatest English nonsense writers, we can mention the logician and mathematician Lewis Carroll in *Alice’s Adventures in the Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) and the naturalist Edward Lear in his works such as *A Book of Nonsense* (1846) and *Nonsense Songs* (1871).

The second influence mentioned by Esslin is the tradition of myth, dream, and nightmare literature that goes back to Greek and Roman times. In addition, he refers to other influences such as the allegorical and symbolic drama like medieval morality plays and the Spanish *auto sacramental*, and the ancient tradition of fools and the mad scenes found in Shakespeare’s plays. Esslin argues that in the plays of Shakespeare, there is a profound sense of futility and absurdity of the human condition. Esslin illustrates his point with reference to *Hamlet* (1603) *Richard II* and *King Lear* (1606). Hamlet’s verse “To be and not to be, that’s the question”, alongside the ravings of King Lear and the bad dreams of Richard II at the point of being executed are the best instances of the absurdity of man’s life. There is a ferocious parody of the conventional poetical language in *Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595). What is taken from Shakespeare is the vulgarity, spontaneity and irrationality of his characters. All these elements are present in the Absurd plays of Ionesco, Beckett and Pinter. What can be found in their plays are the paradoxical reasoning, false syllogism, verbal associations as well as poetical delirium. In the Renaissance period, the world is seen as a stage and life as a dream, this is clearly expressed in Shakespeare’s plays, especially *Macbeth* (1606) where Macbeth laments:

Out, out, brief candle
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (Shakespeare, 1906: 101)

Other playwrights appeared in Baroque allegorical drama; such writers show the world in terms of mythological archetypes, among them: John Webster, Cyril Tourneur, Calderon, and Jacob Biederman.

Another literary tradition that had influenced the Theatre of the Absurd is the works of some of the 18th and 19th centuries' writers, mainly those by Strindberg, Dostoyevsky, Joyce and Kafka. These writers created archetypes, and they discovered the universal and collective significance of their own private obsessions. It has to be pointed out that the mentioned writers sought and anticipated to express the individual's longing for a single myth of general validity. Strindberg's reliance on the irrational started with his dream plays. Through his work, he sought to present on stage the illogic of the subconscious to find out the hidden truth of the dreams, and to give dramatic form to what is shapeless. In his two plays *A Dream Play* (1907) and *The Ghost Sonata* (1908), time, space and action have a new significance. Characters represent ideas, concepts, feelings and suggestions. In his plays, scenes are short and rapidly shifting. The emphasis is put on images in motion rather than psychological depth. What is perceived is the convergence and disappearance of objectivity. Allan Lewis, an American critic, comments on Strindberg's drama, stressing what is brought new to the modern theatre, he says;

These plays have been rarely done and much misunderstood. They belong to today's break with realism in opening new dimensions in theatrical possibility, for Strindberg was the first to explore a new set of symbols, a new language to express the inconceivable, the impossible, the imaginary" (Lewis, 1970: 246)

It is important to mention that the Theatre of the Absurd is also influenced by the 20th century European avant-garde art, especially the French one; for the French avant-garde was of great importance. It reflects the preoccupation of the contemporary philosophy and world order. The aim of the avant-garde was to stop considering art as a mere imitation of appearances. Accordingly, the Surrealists based their artistic theory on the teachings of Freud and his emphasis on the role of the subconscious.

One of the extreme manifestations of the avant-garde was the Dadaist movement. The leaders of the movement wanted to do away with the out of date artistic conventions. Dadaists

wrote plays mostly as nonsense poems in a dialogue form. Their aim is to shock the bourgeois audience. The Dadaists, Surrealists and the French avant-garde were highly influenced by Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) and Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918). The two writers were the direct precursors of the Dadaists in Switzerland, France, and Germany. Jarry's *UBU ROI* (1896) is considered as the first modern example of the Theatre of the Absurd. The play tells the story of the mythical figure who is set in a world of grotesque archetypal images. Ubu Roi is a caricature, a terrifying image of the animal nature of man and his cruelty. Allan Lewis, an American critic, quotes Alfred Jarry in his chapter entitled "Trends of the Decade": "Every man is capable of showing his contempt for the cruelty and stupidity of the universe by making his own life a poem of incoherence and absurdity" (Ibid. 243). Jarry expressed man's psychological states by objectifying them on the stage. As a result, Esslin believes that these dreams become a direct source of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Guillaume Apollinaire wrote *The Breasts of Tiresias* (1916), which he himself calls a 'Surrealist Drama'. The play proceeds through a series of savagely grotesque images. For Esslin, the play has a political message, which consists in repopulation of France decimated by the war and it deals also with women's emancipation. Apollinaire asked firmly that art should be more real than reality and deal with essences rather than appearances. The bohemian world of Jarry and Apollinaire was a mixture of poetry, theatre and painting. Jarry has painted the stage set of *Ubu Roi* himself with the help of Pierre Bonnard, Vuillard, Toulouse-Lautrec and Sérusier.

Dadaism and Expressionism bolted down in the 1930s with the Nazi period in Germany. But in France, the movement persisted without interruption. Dadaism was re-born under another form, that of Surrealism. Where Dada was purely negative, Surrealism believed in positive and salutary great force of the subconscious. Esslin quotes André Breton's definition of Surrealism from his *Surrealist Manifest* (1924). It is a "pure psychic automatism by which it is proposed to express, verbally, in writing, or in any other way, the real functioning of thought." (Esslin, 1978: 378). In fact, surrealist plays were written in the way Breton has advocated. Another definition is proposed

by Yvan Goll who believes that Surrealism is “the strongest negation of realism”. (Goll, 1959: 426-7 cited in Esslin, 1978: 374)

In addition to all these influences, the Theatre of the Absurd is also subject to influence of the after World War II German Expressionism which tried to objectify thought and feeling and project inner realities. Brecht, one of them, wrote plays which are close to Absurd Drama where he makes use of clowning and music hall humour, through which he treats the problem of identity of the self and its fluidity. Brecht was influenced by Dadaism; his plays mark this influence. Besides, his plays are regarded as early examples of the Theatre of the Absurd, their use of humour and their exposition of identity problems and its nature.

In *In the Jungle of the Cities* (1921), Brecht presents the audience with poetic images, and it deals with the problem of communication between human beings. Brecht has also written *Wedding Party* (1923), in which the collapse of furniture, according to Esslin, symbolizes the decay of the family. In the play, objects express the psychological state of his characters, yet we find some comical effects at the same time. Brecht thinks that the irrational Theatre of the Absurd is a politically engaged theatre. Later, it turns to the socially engaged theatre, which is a rational one. (Ibid. 377)

In France, two leading surrealists were Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) and Roger Vitrac (1899-1952). The two founded ‘Alfred Jarry Theatre’ in June 1927. Its programme comprised a play to each: *Upset Stomach, or The Mad Mother*, a one act play to Artaud and *The Mysteries of Love*, in three acts, to Vitrac. The latter wrote also *Victor, or Power to Children* (1924), where he adopted the convention of comedy of burlesque and fantastique. He shows the world from a nine-year-old child point of view, who is great in size and monstrously intelligent. In his work, Vitrac returned to traditional forms of literature, but bearing surrealist experience.

Antonin Artaud acknowledged the subconscious mind as a positive healing force. He totally rejected realism in the theatre keeping a vision of a stage of magical beauty and mythical power. According to him, theatre should pursue the aspects of the internal world and should express what language is incapable of putting in words. He called for a return to the theatre of myth and magic

and a theatre exposing the deepest conflicts within the human mind. Allan Lewis believes that Artaud advocated; “a return to the theatre of myth, poetic images, and audience shock-a return to tribal ritual and communion of the spirit.” (Lewis, 1970: 247) However, Artaud has written very little in dramatic form, he was of great importance as a theoretician of the new anti-literary theatre.

Artaud is known for his revolt of the irrational expressed in his book *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938). His theatre is generally referred to as ‘The Theatre of Cruelty’. His aim is to shock the audience and awake them into awareness of the horror of the human condition. Artaud is convinced that man should be considered in a wordless language of shapes, light, movement, and gesture. Theatre would also produce collective archetypes and so a new mythology. Critics believe that Artaud forms a bridge between the 1920s avant-garde and the Theatre of the Absurd. In fact, he is so influential; the off-off-Broadway revolt main aspect resulted from Artaud’s principles.

The silent cinema, with its dream-like quality and nightmare humour, like the products of Charlie Chaplin’s little man and Buster Keaton’s stone-faced stoic, clearly influenced Beckett and Ionesco. In turn, the talking cinema, like Marx Brothers, W.C. Fields, or Laurel and Hardy are among the traditions that led to the Theatre of the Absurd.

All the previous movements and their leaders have major influence on the Theatre of the Absurd. The latter has been criticized by some writers; it has taken different names, but it is usually called “Anti-Theatre” and “New Theatre”. In fact, Esslin considers it as part of the “anti-literary” movement of our time, which is expressed in abstract painting, as a result, it rejects literary elements in pictures. Many writers used aspects of this kind of theatre, yet Martin Esslin believes that the four defining playwrights of the movement are: Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov and Harold Pinter. Esslin devotes chapters to these playwrights and other major dramatists of the Theatre of the Absurd, including N. F. Simpson, Fernando Arrabal, Jean Tardieu and Edward Albee. Each of them has completely unique preoccupations and techniques that go beyond the term “Absurd”. Before exposing the characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd; the following paragraphs are devoted to the four outstanding Absurdist, their techniques and innovative styles.

Samuel Beckett was born in 1906. He is an Anglo-Irishman who wrote in French because he lived most of his life in France as an exile. Esslin believes that he is the deepest and greatest poet of them all. Indeed, he is considered as the father of the movement. His masterpiece *Waiting for Godot* (1952) deals with two tramps waiting for a Godot or a God who will never come. It is a portrayal of the emptiness of life and its lack of purpose; Allan Lewis interprets the play as follow: “Man is caught in the going and the coming, and the getting nowhere, and though there is only suffering and little hope, man can go on waiting, not with the dignity of the hero, but with the pathetic submission of the tramp” (Ibid.) When Beckett wrote *Waiting for Godot*, he didn’t intend to tell a story with a proposed solution to the audience. It is up to the public to find out what the play is about and the intention of the playwright and his characters’ actions. Beckett focuses on the themes of the uselessness of human action, and the failure of the human beings to communicate. He wrote also *Endgame* (1958), *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1959), and *Happy Day* (1961). They are full of brilliant and profound poetic images and language flows away completely.

Eugene Ionesco was born in 1912 as half-French and half-Rumanian, but he lived most of his life in France. Esslin considers him as the most fertile and original of the dramatists of the Absurd, and one of the most profound. Furthermore, he is the most vocal of the playwrights of the Absurd. In fact, he is always ready to answer back the attacks of the committed left-wing realists. In his plays like: *The Bald Primadonna* (1948), *The Lesson* (1950), *The Chairs* (1951), *The Killer* (1959) and *Exit the King* (1962), Ionesco’s main themes are the presence of death and the critique of language. Ionesco’s first play *Amedée or How to Get Rid of It* (1953) is full of images and alternation between states of depression and euphoria. One of the images which are known in Ionesco’s plays is the leaden oppression and the floating on air. Indeed, Amedée floats away at the end of the play. Ionesco is also renowned for his play *Rhinoceros* (1958), in which he exposes the absurdity of common-sense logic. In this play, Ionesco says: “There are many realities. Choose the one that’s best for you. Escape into the world of imagination.” (Lewis, 1970: 247). Language in this play is reduced to a total lack of communication.

Another defining member of the movement is the French Absurdist Jean Genet, who lived in an exile from society because his mother has abandoned him. He lived in centres for juvenile delinquents, in a world of thieves, male prostitutes, and he spent much of his life in prison. His life of an exile was so shocking to him that he realized that the world ceased to make sense. Genet is a poet who is endowed with the magic power of creating beauty from evil and corruption. His main themes are: the falseness of human pretensions in society, the contrast between reality and appearance, which remains elusive. He wrote *The Maids* (1947), *Deathwatch* (1949), *The Balcony* (1956) and *The Blacks* (1957). In these plays, he depicts an existence which is an endless chain of reflections in mirrors, and each image always proves an illusion. Genet's characters play roles, and their true identities are never revealed.

The fourth great absurdist playwright is the Russian Arthur Adamov. At the beginning of his career, he was a follower of Antonin Artaud. Adamov's writings are always considered as a process of psychological therapy because he was unable to face the reality of the external world. As a result, he projected his anxieties and uneasiness on the stage. He wrote *The Invasion* and *The Parody* in 1950. The latter is concerned with the futility of human attempt, and it stresses the fact that whatever we do, our end is death. In addition, Adamov wrote *Professor Taranne* (1951), which he considers as of a particular importance because of his progression as a playwright. According to Esslin, in the play "the hero is both an active scholar and a fraud, a respectable citizen and an exhibitionist, an optimistic hard-working paragon and self-destructive, slothful pessimist" (Esslin, 1978: 110). It is noteworthy that Adamov identifies himself with Professor Taranne because they experienced the same events, and in transcribing an actual dream.

B- The Significance of the Absurd:

For Esslin, to establish significance to the movement of today, we have to put it in its historical context, as we can establish its importance in the structure of the modern thought. In fact, the Theatre of the Absurd is the concrete product of historical facts because this theatre is the last link of a chain that started with naturalism. Man is always looking for a way with which he can confront the universe which is deprived of its aim and purpose. Esslin believes that the Theatre of

the Absurd is one of the expressions of this search. It is also a religious quest which expresses the loss of man in the universe. Esslin explains the failure of this quest as:

[...] an effort, however timid and tentative, to sing, to laugh, to weep-and to growl-if not in praise of God ... at least in search of a dimension of the Ineffable; an effort to make man aware of the ultimate realities of his condition, to instil in him again the lost sense of cosmic wonder and primeval anguish, to shock him out of an existence that has become trite, mechanical, complacent, and deprived of dignity that comes of awareness. (Ibid. 400)

Through their literary works, dramatists are trying incessantly to break the wall of complacency and automatism in order to make people aware of their own situations, especially once confronted with the reality of their condition. Therefore, the Theatre of the Absurd presents the audience a two-fold absurdity. To have a clear view of the aim of the Theatre of the Absurd, it is necessary to expose its prominent aspects.

The first aspect of the Theatre of the Absurd is social criticism. The Theatre of the Absurd criticizes severely the absurdity of human lives, those who lived with complete unawareness and unconsciousness of an ultimate reality. Esslin shares the same idea with Camus in his explanation of the Absurd; he even extracted the following quotation to explain man's uneasiness in front of his own inhumanity: "This malaise in front of man's own inhumanity, this incalculable letdown when faced with the image of what we are, this 'nausea', as a contemporary writer calls it, also is the Absurd" (Ibid. 401). Absurd dramatists resort to satire and parody to criticize the individual as well as the society. Their main aim is to expose this absurdity and this discomfort so as to allow people face their condition. For Esslin, this aspect is the most accessible and so recognizable message in the Theatre of the Absurd even though it is not the most essential or most significant aspect.

The second aspect of the Theatre of the Absurd is that it exposes the absurdity of human condition in a world in which all religious beliefs are waning. Esslin believes that when life is deprived of all systems of values and its divine purpose so it faces its stark reality. The latter is the main concern of the Theatre of the Absurd; as a result it shows the realities of man's condition, his problems of life and death, isolation and communication. Consequently, the Theatre of the Absurd goes back to the ancient theatre's function, which consists in the confrontation of man with the spheres of myth and religious reality. Its aim is to make its audience aware of man's mysterious

position in the universe. Esslin thinks that while classical theatre was concerned with the ultimate realities which were universally accepted metaphysical systems, the Theatre of the Absurd

[...] expresses the absence of any such generally accepted cosmic system of values. Hence, much more modestly, the Theatre of the Absurd makes no pretence at explaining the ways of God to man. It can merely present, in anxiety or with derision, an individual human being's intuition of the ultimate realities as he experiences them; the fruits of one man's descent into the depths of his personality, his dreams, fantasies, and nightmares. (Ibid. 402)

What can be deduced is that in the Theatre of the absurd, the poet communicates his own sense of being and his individual vision of the world, which is the basic subject-matter of this theatre. It also determines the form of the Theatre of the Absurd, and so it represents a convention of the stage.

The Theatre of the Absurd is not concerned with narration of the characters' adventures or explaining the events of a story but rather presents the characters' basic situation. Esslin comments: "It is a theatre of situation as against a theatre of events in sequence, and therefore it uses a language based on patterns of concrete images rather than argument and discursive speech" (Ibid. 403); Absurd plays neither give any solution, nor communicate moral or social lessons. As a result, action in the Theatre of the Absurd is not meant to tell a story but to communicate a pattern of poetic images, which resembles to a Symbolist or Imagist poem.

However the Theatre of the Absurd emphasizes poetical elements, it abandons psychology, subtlety of characterisation and plot in the conventional sense. It continues the development of Plato's idealistic belief in unchangeable essences, which failed in Locke's and Kant's philosophy. The two philosophers think that reality is based on perception and the inner structure of the human mind. So art became a simple imitation of the external nature, which led later to the exploration of the reality of the mind. In fact, Absurd playwrights' work is the development of this philosophy. Absurd drama suggests an answer to the different questions that may come into mind like: How does this individual feel when he confronts the human situation? What is the basic mood in which he faces the world? What does he feel like being what he is? Esslin thinks that any Absurd play proposes one answer which is "a single, total, but complex and contradictory poetic image-one play- or a succession of such images, complementing each other-the dramatist's oeuvre" (Ibid. 405)

These perceptions are communicated through different elements which are converted into sentences. The poetic image, which is composed of multiple sense association, communicates the reality of our intuition of the world. The totality of perception and intuition of being is communicated through the devaluation and disintegration of language in the Theatre of the Absurd. Like poetry, the Theatre of the Absurd with its ambiguity and association nears the unconceptual language of music by producing concrete imagery of the stage. But, contrarily to poetry, the Theatre of the Absurd gets rid of logic, discursive thought and language. The stage as a multidimensional medium needs the interaction of different elements: visual elements, movement, light and language. The latter is used as one of the components of the Theatre of the Absurd multidimensional poetic imagery; sometimes it is dominant and sometimes submerged. And so language of a scene contradicts the action, and poetic logic replaces discursive logic which opens a new dimension of the stage.

The devaluation of language, which characterizes the Theatre of the Absurd, is also a characteristic of the different trends of the contemporary period among them mathematics and natural sciences. Language is not the means by which we can express reality, but for George Steiner, as quoted by Esslin, reality is to be found outside language, he asserts:

It is a paradox to assert that much of reality now begins *outside* language. ... Large areas of meaningful experience now belong to non-verbal languages such as mathematics, formulae, and logical symbolism. Others belong to 'anti-languages', such as the practice of non-objective art or atonal music. The world of word has shrunk. (Ibid. 407)

Language is mistrusted because it no longer reflects reality but it seems to be in contradiction to reality. Being subjective, language does not contain any objective reality. Wittgenstein criticizes language in his two works about the philosophy of language *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) and *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), where he discusses the limits of language. For him, thought should be freed from the rules of grammar that people consider as the rules of logic. Esslin thinks that Wittgenstein's 'word games' have common points with the Theatre of the Absurd.

People become more sceptical toward the language they use and hear. They should guess the reality from the characters conversation because most of the time language conceals rather than

reveals people's feelings and thoughts. Esslin illustrates this point with the use of superlatives in advertising, which he thinks has succeeded in devaluating language. Esslin believes that: "A yawning gulf has opened between language and reality" (Ibid. 409). He refers to Ionesco's idea which stipulates that to live our culture again and to reach the 'absolute' or 'multiple reality', we should disrespect language. Esslin asserts that the disrespect of language is the direct reason that led to the ineffectiveness of communication between human beings in the Theatre of the Absurd. As a result, language must express the authentic content rather than its concealment. Then, language as a means of communication can be restored only if the clichés that dominate thought are replaced by a living language that will serve it. To fulfil this, we should limit logic and discursive language and use poetic language instead.

Absurd dramatists criticize the individual as well as society. They show "a grotesquely heightened and distorted picture of a world that has gone mad." (Ibid. 410) The audience is going to identify itself with the characters on the stage, but his attitude would be a detached and a critical one. Esslin points out that if we identify ourselves with a character in a play, it means that we accept his point of view. But when we look at a character with a critical eye, it suggests our opposition to his point of view. Esslin states that this identification with the character comes out of the psychological characteristic of human nature, and we cannot identify character's actions if they are not comprehensible; as a result they become comical. (Ibid. 410-1)

In the Theatre of the Absurd, characters' actions and motives are generally incomprehensible. These characters become less human when their nature and action become more mysterious. Esslin comments:

As the incomprehensibility of the motives and often unexplained and mysterious nature of the characters' actions in the Theatre of the Absurd effectively prevent identification, such theatre is a comic theatre in spite of the fact that its subject-matter is sombre, violent, and bitter. That is why the Theatre of the Absurd transcends the category of comedy and tragedy and combines laughter with horror. (Ibid. 411)

While the Brechtian theatre is meant to raise the critical and intellectual attitude of the audience, the Theatre of the Absurd goes deeper to the audience's mind. It liberates hidden fears and repressed aggressions, and it activates psychological forces in every spectator. The audience should make

creative efforts through interpretation and integration. Accordingly, he must acknowledge the absurdity of the world to reach reality. Moreover in the Theatre of the Absurd, the audience is confronted with the madness of the human condition; so he faces his situation consciously in its total despair and liberates himself from his anxieties and fears. In this point, the Theatre of the Absurd is compared to the *humour noir*; as Esslin explains: “This is the nature of all the gallows humour and *humour noir* of world literature, of which the Theatre of the Absurd is the latest example.” (Ibid. 414)

Being a drama of the self, the Theatre of the Absurd is concerned mainly with the psychological reality. The latter is expressed in images that are projection of states of mind, man’s fears, dreams, and nightmares. However the Theatre of the Absurd proceeds with poetic images, it neither poses any intellectual problem nor proposes any clear solution to it. As a result, most of the Absurd plays begin and end in the same point; that is, some plays in the Theatre of the Absurd have a circular structure; whereas others progress with the intensification of the initial situation. Esslin asserts that what happens on the stage is generally irrational, so the audience will wonder about what is happening. Instead of asking the question ‘What is going to happen next?’ he will ask ‘What does the action of the play represent?’ The play, then, is not a flow of events that start from point A and end in point B, but rather it is expressed by a complex pattern of poetic images. At the end of the play, the spectator will try to explore its structure, texture and impact instead of looking for its meaning. (Ibid. 412)

The Theatre of the Absurd places the language of stage images at the centre of its striving to build a new dramatic convention, and it concentrates on the projection of visions of the world that rise up from the depth of the subconscious. What is neglected in the Theatre of the Absurd is the rational parts of the classical theatre: plot and counterplot, imitation of reality, and the clear motivation of character. Esslin suggests that we can assess the quality of a poetic image relying on objective standards such as: “suggestive power, originality of invention, the psychological truth of the images concerned; on their depth and universality, and on the degree of skill with which they are translated into stage terms” (Ibid. 419) Esslin states that to assess the success or failure of an

Absurd play, we need some criteria. First Esslin suggests that it is more difficult to produce the irrational imagery of a play of the Theatre of the Absurd than to construct a rational plot. Second, to succeed in producing an Absurd play, the playwright needs a complete freedom of invention, and what is required in the artist is the ability to create images and situations. Unsuccessful Absurd plays are characterized by transparency of the fragments of reality from which they are constituted. Furthermore, an Absurd play can fail when it no longer shows the negative quality of the lack of logic or verisimilitude. The latter is replaced by the positive quality of a new world that makes imaginative sense in its own right. Briefly, Esslin suggests that an excellent Absurd play must mirror real dreams, obsessions, and valid images dredged up from its author's mind. It should also be an invention which projects the deepest experienced emotion in order to be recognized and truthful. This led Esslin to confirm that "This quality of depth and unity of vision instantly recognizable and beyond trickery" (Ibid. 422)

Since the Theatre of the Absurd proceeds through poetic images, Esslin stresses the importance of this aspect. He thinks that to invent a valid poetic image, the dramatist needs depth of feeling, intensity of emotion, and a genuinely creative vision or inspiration. Therefore, to value an Absurd work, it requires the following aspects: quality, the universal, validity, the depth of vision, as well as the insight of the work itself. In addition to all these criteria, it is essential that an Absurd play may communicate the reality and truth of the vision that the poetic images embody. The Theatre of the Absurd communicates the truth of the human condition as well as a metaphysical truth that touches religion. What is shared between the Theatre of the Absurd and religion is that they possess a body of knowledge, which is transmitted through recurring poetic imagery. After the decline of religion, our civilization knew a deep deficiency. As a result, Esslin believes that the theatre which experiences, through man, poetic and artistic insights, substitutes the church in its function. (Ibid. 424) In other words, when the church preaches proper conduct and condemns man's sins, the Theatre of the Absurd presents its audience man's right and wrong actions, and shows an absurd world deprived of its sense. Moreover, the Theatre of the Absurd expresses uncertainty, despair, and anxiety of man in the world.

To express this universal reality, we need language. But language cannot express the ultimate reality in logical forms, since it is so complex and unifying. As a result, language is dethroned and devaluated. While mystics and the Theatre of the Absurd use poetic images, we find analogies between the latter and mysticism in its methods and imagery. Accordingly, we distinguish two facets of the Theatre of the Absurd:

[...] the mystical experience of the absolute otherness and ineffability of ultimate reality is the religious counterpart to the rational recognition of the limitation of man's senses and intellect, which reduces him to exploring the world slowly by trial and error (Ibid. 428)

Both attitudes contradict systems of thought, religion, or ideology. Esslin is convinced that thinking in poetic images is as valid as the conceptual thought which opens the way to a truly rational attitude.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Theatre of the absurd expresses man's attempt to accept the world as it is and to face his condition. In addition, it aims at freeing him from illusions which cause disappointment and maladjustment; that is, to free him from his mental and emotional problems which lead him to behave in an absurd way. It also permits him to face and accept reality in its senselessness, which consists in his dignity. Modern drama shows how man's life is absurd, through his actions, his behaviour, and his use of language. It is one of my arguments that this absurdity is shown in most of the Absurdist playwrights' drama, mainly in Pinter's, Albee's, and Baraka's plays. To be more explicit, I think it is necessary to select one play to each to illustrate with here in this research. The three plays that I am concerned with are the following: Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* (1960), Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* (1958) and Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964).

Chapter II: The Absurd in Pinter's *The Caretaker*

Some critics, like Kimball King, believe that England had gone through a second literary Renaissance after the Second World War. The after-war era was fertile and writers, especially playwrights, were prolific in their production. Some of these playwrights were known as writers of the Theatre of the Absurd, among these absurdists we cite: Samuel Beckett, John Osborne, and Harold Pinter. . They had brought to the stage the absurdities of the human existence. Pinter was famous for his guiding role in modern drama after the death of Samuel Beckett, who is the father of the movement. He is said to be the disciple of Beckett and he is usually compared to him because they share the same stage techniques.

Pinter had first tried his hand in poetry, later he moved to drama after being advised by a friend. Most of his works have received widespread recognition for their uniqueness. However, so far no research has been carried out into the theme of the absurd in relation to Camus's myth of Sisyphus and Esslin's definition of the Theatre of the Absurd. It is true that critics have mentioned some of the absurdist aspects of *The Caretaker* such as the breakdown of communication, its foreboding atmosphere, the use of gratuitous violence, the small-scale cast and so on. But these formal and thematic aspects of the play are not analysed within a theatrical framework that we have selected for the analysis of the play.

Pinter has made great contributions to the modern British drama; this led many critics, as Lois Gordon, to consider him as "one of the great dramatists of our age" (Gordon, 2001: xi), for the revolutionary aspects of his works. Critics treat Pinter's plays as 'comedies of menace' and "social comedies" since his heroes are obsessed by the fear of their existence and the ambiguous world that surrounds them. Though they have placed within, they have not related it to Camus's philosophy of the Absurd and literary theory elaborated by Esslin about the Theatre of the Absurd. Their assumption is that Camus's philosophy and Esslin's theory of the Absurd do not overlap. At the source of this assumption is the belief that these two aspects of the Absurd, i.e. the philosophy of the absurd and its artistic expression have not much in common.

Camus's plays like *Caligula* (1944) are also partly responsible for the distinction made between the philosophy of the Absurd and the Theatre of the Absurd. They flesh out the theme of the Absurd in such a way that they read as propaganda for the philosophy of the absurd that Camus developed in his philosophical writings. Their difference from the plays belonging to the Theatre of the Absurd has made critics extrapolate from the plays to establish a tight distinction between the philosophy of the Absurd and the Theatre of the Absurd. It is our attention in this chapter to re-establish the link between Camus's philosophy of the Absurd and Pinter's *The Caretaker* with reference to the aspects of this philosophy and those of the Theatre of the Absurd as detailed by Esslin. This comparison is motivated by the fact that Pinter alludes to the myth of Sisyphus in the play itself where the characters live in an apartment with a leaking roof. Each time, it is filled, they go out to empty it. This is a translation of ancient Greek the myth of Sisyphus as rendered by Camus.

I- The Summary of the Play:

The Caretaker is a three-act play and a cast of three characters. It starts when Aston rescues a tramp called Davies from a fight in a café. He invites him to the room of his brother Mick, who works as a caretaker. In the absence of the Mick, Davies takes Mick's bed and spends the night in the room. Davies is not only a homeless person, but he is also without identity, i.e. he has no papers to prove his identity. He decides to go to Sidcup the next day to make his references to solve his identity problem. The next morning, when Aston is out, Davies remains alone exploring the room. Suddenly, Mick comes in, grabs Davies forcing him down to the floor. Mick declares himself the owner of the room. When Aston comes in, bringing a bag with him, the two (Davies and Mick) struggle about it till Davies wins it. When Mick leaves the room, Aston admits that the bag is not Davies's but another's. Aston suggests to Davies the caretaking of the room, but Davies hesitates to accept the job. When Davies comes in after a short period of absence, he is struck by a vacuum cleaner, which is held by Mick in the darkness. Davies feels threatened, so he draws a knife to protect himself. But the latter explains to Davies that he is just doing some cleaning, and that he accepts to afford him the job provided by his brother Aston.

The next morning, Aston wakes Davies up in order to go to Sidcup to make his references. He complains about Davies's snoring. In turn, Davies complains about the open window behind his bed. They start talking in a friendly way; Aston tells Davies about his internment in an asylum and how that was so a horrible experience to him. When Mick comes back, Davies complains to him about his brother Aston, and he asks him to send him out. Mick's preoccupation is to find someone to decorate his room in a modern way; he suggests to Davies to do it. Aston, who ignores the latter's intention, offers Davies a pair of shoes which he accepts grudgingly.

At night, while they are sleeping, Davies is snoring as he did the preceding night. When Aston complains the next morning, Davies is irritated treating Aston as a fool. Getting angry, Aston decides to expel Davies, while Mick insists that Davies stays to decorate the room for him. When Davies insults Aston again in the presence of his brother, Mick agrees to send Davies out of the room. At the end, Davies pleads to regain his place as a caretaker in the room but in vain because the two brothers have understood his bad attitude.

II- The Main Themes in *The Caretaker*

The Caretaker, as the summary suggests, fleshes out the themes that are the hallmarks of the Theatre of the Absurd. Among these themes, we suggest to deal with the following: loneliness and isolation, personal identity, the breakdown of communication between people, nameless menace, violence and cruelty, dreams and illusion; in addition, he deals with such minor themes as obsession and jealousy, mental disturbance, and the animalistic behaviour of human beings, presented mainly through Davies. The play, as we shall try to show, treats with these themes in a unique way.

A- Loneliness, Isolation and Betrayal:

These themes are expressed in the conversation of the two characters Aston and Davies. Aston knows that his brother will leave the room, so he will stay alone that night. So, instead of spending the night alone, he invites Davies, who is perhaps the only man he meets, to sleep in the bed of his brother, Mick. We feel that Aston has not chosen Davies to be his companion, but necessity and chance have brought into contact with each other.

Davies works in a café as a caretaker; he is alone even if he works with other people because he is marginalized and treated as a slave by them. If we look at the structure of the play and the situation of Davies, we notice that he is always lonely. He remains alone at the end of the play when he is sent out of the house by the two brothers. At the beginning of the first act, Davies tells Aston how his wife has left him, and now being an old man no one cares about him, so he is left alone. By the end of the third act, Davies realizes how difficult to live in isolation and he tries to plead to regain his place among the two brothers, but in vain; "Listen ... if I ... got down ... if I was to ... get my papers ... would you ... would you let ... would you ... if I got down ... and got my ..." (p. 78). Like Sisyphus, Davies is living in a strange world, where nothing is certain. He has nowhere to go; he is lost. He is badly treated by every body, the fact that raises in him the feeling of indifference and alienation.

Davies neglects himself; he no longer cares about his appearances. Physically, He is dirty and stinking; as a result, people avoid him and insult him. Mick is always repeating: "You stink", "You're stinking the place out ... You don't belong in a nice place like this" (p. 35). Mick is treating Davies as a stinking animal who should stay away of human beings and mainly out of his own room though it is not ordered and clean. It is clear that Davies is an outcast; he is not accepted by the members of his society. Although he is an old man, young people don't respect him. This is how he interpellates the other characters; "Look here, I said, I'm an old man, I said, where I was brought up we had some idea how to talk to old people with the proper respect, we was brought up with the right ideas ..." (p. 10). Being aware of his loneliness, Davies is comforted once he is brought by Aston to his brother's room. Feeling obliged, he confesses to him: "I'm obliged to you, letting me ... letting me have a bit of rest, like ... for a few minutes" (p.10-11). Davies's momentary happiness reminds me of Sisyphus, who approaches his work with joy although he is conscious of the absurdity of his fate; from the first encounter with Aston, Davies knows that he will not stay for a long time in Aston's room, but he is happy at least in the present moment for the few minutes of companionship and friendship with Aston.

Aston too is lonely, but the reasons of his loneliness are different from those of Davies. He shows generosity and kindness to Davies, which suggests his thirst for having new friends and companions. He is desperate for human contact and relationship, as isolated and lonely as he is. But when Davies's isolation originated from society, Aston's is psychological or perhaps psychiatric. Aston recognizes that it was his fault because he is too trustful: "They were all ... a good bit older than me. But they always used to listen. I thought ... they understand what I said. I mean I used to talk to them. I talked too much. That was my mistake" (p. 54) Aston is aware that the cause of his present situation is his generosity and trustfulness to people. Unfortunately, he is betrayed by them all.

By the end of the play, we discover Davies's betrayal to Aston when he tries to make an alliance with Mick against him. It is not the first time that an alliance is made against him; he had already been betrayed by his mother who signed to make him do an operation on his brain, when he was a child. He tells that bad experience to Davies:

[...] I knew he (the doctor) had to get permission from my mother. So I wrote to her and told her what they were trying to do. But she signed their form, you see, giving them permission. I know that because he showed me her signature when I brought it up ..." (p. 56).

Unlike Aston, Davies retains a self-awareness that keeps him from spelling himself in affection. Just like the absurd man in Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus*, he shows compassion and love to Aston. At the same time, he is malicious and suspicious of everybody even the one who has rescued him from the quarrel at the bar, a quarrel that might have caused his death. Probably his loneliness is due to his negative attitude and bad behaviour; consequently, we can say that being sent out of the house by the two brothers, Davies has got what he deserves: coming back to his isolation. This idea can be shared with G. M. Stephen who comments: "In rejecting him society is doing no more than paying him back in his own coin." (Stephen, 1981: 39)

Sometimes we feel that the play is ironical when the two characters (Davies and Aston) are in need of human contact and companionship, but they can't realize it. The critic Steven H. Gale insists on the importance of the characters' interaction their attempt to make contact, but every one

of them fears the third person. He asserts that the problem of communication and interaction between individuals is

Probably the most important in determining the ultimate meaning of the play, for the actions of the three characters make sense when one realizes that each is trying to establish an attachment with one of the others. Simultaneously, each is trying to protect that relationship from an outside interference, the third member, which threatens to destroy it by forming a new pairing” (Gale, 2001: 126)

This idea is clearly illustrated by Davies’s attempt to join with Mick against Aston. The latter wants to provide the caretaking of the room to Davies without having the opinion of his brother, Mick. The complicity of Mick with Davies is a reversal of the initial situation where Mick has tried to save his companionship with his brother, Aston. By the end of the play, Mick still tries to keep Davies to decorate the room while his brother dismisses the idea. This idea is stressed by the critic G. M. Stephen who argues; “It is almost as if Pinter is saying that humans are destined to be lonely, and the more cry out an end for this, the more its certainty is assured.” (Op. Cit., p. 39).

In short, it can be said that the treatment of the themes of isolation, loneliness and betrayal are fleshed out as a triadic relationship between Aston, Mick and Davies. This triadic relationship, as we have tried to show, is unstable as in the case of a love relation involving three persons. The intrusion of Davies in the life of the two brothers brings about the disturbance in their brotherly love as each of the brothers try to win Davies’s attention. The result of this competition for the attention of the intruder is the laying base of the shallowness of values such as honesty, generosity and brotherness. In their place, we see the emergence of betrayal, selfishness and ungratefulness which throw back the characters into their loneliness and isolation. Unlike Sisyphus, the three characters are not trying to roll a rock up to the summit of a hill, but like him they desperately seek to end their isolation, through means which are not always fair.

B- Communication:

The lack of communication is one of the prominent aspects of the Theatre of the Absurd. It is also a central theme in Pinter’s *The Caretaker*. Communication between the three characters is inadequate; they try to communicate and make human contact but they never come to a mutual understanding. Pinter traces this lack of communication to the decay of language, which is no longer

capable of conveying inner feelings and thinking. Silence assumes a more communicative function than words. In a lecture which he delivered in Bristol in 1962, entitled “Writing for the Theatre”, he points out:

I think we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else’s life is too frightening. To disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility (Pinter, 1976:15)

Pinter’s quote above reminds us of Hamlet’s “words, words. Words”, for Hamlet and indirectly for Shakespeare are inflationary in the sense that they do not always convey our truthful thought. Esslin suggests that we should guess the meaning of the characters’ words by reading between the lines. What is said by the characters generally contradicts reality. (Esslin, 1978: 407). It is the case of Davies in *The Caretaker*. The conversation between Aston and Davies at the beginning of the play resembles rather a monologue than a dialogue; Davies talks too much whereas Aston answers in very short sentences. I think that Aston’s silences or short interventions are due to his longing for human contact or relationship. He is eager to listen to someone’s talk. Later, feeling that Davies has become his friend, he speaks without hesitation and he reveals many experiences about his past, especially his unfortunate presence in a psychiatric hospital.

What the characters are hiding is more important than what they are saying. By the end of the play, Davies tries in vain to convince Aston to keep him in the room, but Aston keeps silent. His being silent means “go out of here and never come back again”. He wants to tell Davies that “no negotiations are needed”. For me, Aston’s refusal to engage himself in a conversation with Davies means that communication is no longer useful, yet Davies keeps insisting. In this sense, Kimball King asserts: “The inability or refusal of a character to speak betrays his or her true feelings and is potentially more dangerous than words” (King, 2001: 248)

Through Davies’s words, we know that Davies is afraid of communication. For instance, when he is asked about his identity he tries to avoid answering the questions. We notice that he talks hesitatingly in broken sentences, hiding the truth instead of showing it;

Aston: Welsh, are you?

Davies: Eh?

Aston: You Welsh?

Pause

Davies: Well, I been around, you know ... what I mean ... I been about ...

Aston: Where were you born then?

Davies: (*darkly*). What do you mean?

Aston: Where were you born?

Davies: I was ... uh ... oh, it's a bit hard, like, to set your mind back ... see what I mean ... going back ... a good way ... lose a bit of track, like ... you know ... (p. 25)

Aston's naivety makes him repeat the question, but Davies tries to trick him by speaking in incomplete sentences. Davies uses this technique in order to have enough time to find out lies to hide his true identity. At the same time, Davies tries to convince Aston that he is not a tramp but a man as normal as any other man. Through his speeches, he seeks to convince people that he is not what he seems to be. For instance in Act I, he tells Aston how he is familiar with the best people in society: "I've eaten my dinner off the best of plates ... I remember the days I was as handy as any of them. They didn't take any liberties with me. ..." (p. 9). Davies is continually warding off the brothers' questions because if they discover his mistakes, he will not be accepted among them. Moreover, in order to show that he has an identity and to hide his rootless and vagabond life, he invents the illusory voyage to Sidcup in order to get his papers. Davies shows a contradictory attitude in dismissing the Black neighbours as being dirty to hide his dirtiness and nastiness.

Language is corrupt; it is full of lies. In addition, words are used to fill the gap or to kill the silence which renders communication ineffective. According to Gordon Lois, Pinter is convinced that this is true:

I've always been aware that my characters tend to use words not to express what they think or feel but to disguise what they think and feel, to mask their actual intentions, so that words are used as a masquerade, a veil, a web, or used as weapons to undermine or to terrorise In the world in which we live, words are as often employed to distort or to deceive or to manipulate as they are to convey actual and direct meaning. So that a substantial body of our language is essentially corrupt. It has become a language of lies. When words are used with a fearless and rigorous respect for their real meaning, the users tend to be rewarded with persecution, torture and death." (Gordon, 2001: xi)

So language is distrusted as a means of communication. Esslin believes that words fail to express the essence of human experience. He stresses the fact that the Theatre of the Absurd is the only means that can raise people's awareness of the possibility of going beyond everyday speech

conventions. In this necessity to purify the language of the tribe, Pinter comes close to the ideas developed by Martin Heidegger and Sartre. The latter says the same as to the deterioration of everyday language in his essay 'Words'. The need to make language more authentic is shared by both the existential/Absurd philosophers and the playwrights belonging to the Theatre of the Absurd.

Davies in *The Caretaker* is evading communication with the two brothers, especially when their questions concern his identity. Communication gives place to what looks like a cross-examination. Speech becomes phatic speech. Instead of sticking to important things, the characters speak about superficial ones.

Language in *The Caretaker* loses most of its function because of its paucity and inflation. An example of this inflationary character of language is Aston's speech, telling Davies about his past and mainly his bad experience in the nutty house. At other times, it is used as a dominant element, as it is the case of Mick's speeches. Mick asks many questions and insists that Davies answer them, but instead Davies changes the subject. Some questions are rehearsed more than one time, such as: "What's your name?" or "You sleep here last night?" or "Sleep well?" (p.30), and "What bed you sleep in?" (p. 31) at their first encounter and later at the end of Act III, Mick addresses Davies in a harsh tone. In fact, Mick uses language as a weapon, not only as a means of communication. In this regard, Austin Quigley points out in *The Pinter's Problem*: "Language becomes a new weapon of competitors or adversaries and words are crafted to claim victory or to wound" (Quigley A., 1975 cited in King K., 2001: 248)

Mick's language seems to be misleading. He weaves a cobweb about his person and tries, like a spider, to catch Davies in it. For example, he speaks of a cousin of his who resembles Davies, but we discover a few things about him. He appears to be suspicious of Davies's words and his doubt is expressed in the following words; "Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies ..., you're just completely unpredictable" (p. 73) As a result, he keeps distant from Davies even when he speaks about superficial matters.

C- Identity Problem:

The question of identity is clearly raised in *The Caretaker*, especially through the protagonist, Davies. The latter suffers a great deal to establish his identity. He is a stranger to both brothers. He is an alienated man. He resembles the mythological figure of the Wandering Jew. Aston feels pity for Davies and he rescues him from a fight outside a café and brings him home. Inside the room, Davies feels momentarily very happy in such a secure place. Like Sisyphus, Davies does not worry about the future; he is happy at least for the present moment. It is worth mentioning that happiness and the Absurd are closely connected. What renders Sisyphus melancholic is when he thinks of the world he left behind him. Like Sisyphus's case, Davies becomes sad whenever he remembers the external world: the café, the street and Sidcup.

Davies is not the sole character in the play to suffer from an identity crisis. Indeed, each character keeps asking questions related to who they are. For example, Mick asks a lot of questions to identify who is Davies. He keeps insisting and repeating the same questions, from his first appearance on stage till the end of the play. Indeed, at the beginning of Act II, Mick asks Davies: "What's your name?" (p. 30) and he repeats once again: "What did you say your name was?" (p. 30) and "What's your name?" By the end of Act III, the same question is rehearsed many times;

Mick: What is your name?

Davies: Don't start that-

Mick: No, what's your real name?

Davies: My real name's Davies.

Mick: What's the name you go under?

Davies: Jenkins!

Mick: You got two names. What about the rest? Eh? Now come on, why did you tell me all this dirt about you being an interior decorator? (p. 73)

Here in this passage, we notice that Mick does not believe all that Davies is saying, being what he is and being a decorator. He seems to be more curious to know about the origins of Davies. At one moment in the play, he asks Davies whether he is "Born and bred in the British Isles?" (p. 33) and whether he was "a foreigner?" (p.33). Mick has asked him many questions he never gets clear and precise answers. This obsession with identity can be related to the fact that it was only during World War II that the Identity Card became a problematic issue. Since the British did not hold personal

identification cards, people became suspicious of one another because of the war and the suspicion of the German infiltration.

In the context of this identity issue, in war and postwar periods, Pinter puts on the stage characters who question each other about their real identity. This identity is defined with reference to past and future but never to the present. Mick thinks that he has discovered his real nature when he treats him so. Davies and the two brothers are defined by their past, that is, their memories helped them establish their present identity, which is often unreliable and distorting. They also try to define themselves with their future dreams and projects, since they have already failed while telling their past experiences: Davies with his voyage to Sidcup, Aston and his shed, and Mick with decorating the house. The three characters feel sad once they look back into their past experiences; this image is analogous to that of Sisyphus who becomes melancholic whenever he remembers the world he left behind.

To hide their identity Pinter's characters speak on any subject that does not necessarily concern them to reach their aim. Pinter confirms this idea in an interview, when he is asked why he thinks that conversations in his plays are so effective, he answers: "I don't know, I think possibly it's because people fall back on anything they can lay their hands on verbally, to keep away from the danger of knowing, and of being known" (Grellet & Vatentin, 1984: 349).

Davies tries to prove his identity. He relies on many invented stories. For example, he claims to own a "bag of belongings", yet he knows it is not his. In the presence of the two brothers, he claims: "That's my bag!" (p. 38), but when Mick leaves the room, Davies confesses: "No, this ain't my bag. My bag, it was another kind of bag altogether, you see ..., they kept my bag, and they given you another one altogether" (p. 41) Aston believes him, while Mick intimidates and taunts him. To use Sartre's words, Davies defines himself in terms of having instead of being. Davies extracts many objects from the bag. Among these figures a smoking-jacket which he admires and wears at once. Then, he takes hold of a mirror to see himself in his new suit, as if it were his new identity. He asks for the opinion of Aston who answers naively: "Look all right". Davies is satisfied, "Well, I won't say no to this, then" (p. 42). The gaze at the mirror and Aston's gaze give a

wrong sense of identity to Davies. This sense of identity is transitory and wrong because it is directed from the outside. It is based on appearance rather than being.

Davies is not only homeless but also a jobless man. At the beginning of the play, he worked with a borrowed insurance card under the name of Jenkins. He pretends to have left his references with a man in Sidcup and he tells the two brothers that he will bring them tomorrow. What is certain is that Davies has no precise identity. He is a stranger, an alien in Camus's sense of the word. The world in which he moves is equally strange and alien. What Pinter gives us in Davies is a character who acts like an animal. Davies, like a wolf or a fox; desperately seeks to circumscribe a vital space for himself.

Davies relies on his past experiences, through reminiscences, in order to prove that he belongs to this world. He tells Aston: "I remember the days I was as handy as any of them. They didn't take any liberties with me" (p. 9). Davies plays a role of an important personality; being an absurd man he tells anything to elucidate his inner state. He not only wants to level himself with those people who treat him as an inferior human being, but he even tries to give himself more rights than others; "... but nobody's got more rights than I have" (p. 10), even if he can not define them in clearly.

He attempts to convince Aston that he is clean though he has lived in the street for years. In fact, he claims cleanness, and he recounts to Aston how he has left his wife because she put a pile of her unwashed underclothing in a vegetable pan. He feels himself a capable and a responsible man when Mick proposes the caretaking of the house; "I am a capable sort of man". Mick asks about Davies's references; but Davies answers him with a certain pride: "I got plenty of references. All I got to do is to go down to Sidcup tomorrow. I got all the references I want down there." (p. 51). Davies is at least aware that in modern societies, a man without papers to prove one's identity will never be accepted. To return to "smelling", in the play it assumes a symbolical role. What the two brothers are afraid of, especially Aston, is that Davies will "smell the room off". In other words, like an animal who delimits his vital space. Davies smells the room to make it his own. In this case, Pinter plays on the symbolic to show the inhuman or inhumanity of man towards man.

Aston's past has been a good lesson for him; he has learnt that he ought not to talk to anyone, especially to foreigners and old ones because they have betrayed him. Aston refers to those who mistreat him as being anonymous since he never mentions their names, "They ... got me there. ... They asked me questions, ... They used to shine a torch over the beds every half hour ... They used to come round with these ... they looked like big pincers, ... They told me to get on the bed ..." (p. 55-56). Aston can't identify his enemies since his mother herself has "signed their form... giving them permission" (p. 56). As result, he constantly feels threatened.

Mick's identity is equally dubious to Davies. Davies considers him a stranger. When he sees him for the first time, he interpellates him as follows: "I don't know you. I don't know who you are" (p. 30). In turn, Mick tries to identify Davies by showing similarities between him and a relative of his; "You remind me of my uncle's brother. ... Your spitting image he was." (p. 31). Mick gives Davies another image when he cries out: "You're really strange ... You're nothing else but a wild animal.... You're a barbarian." (p. 73/74). What is worth mentioning is that the theme of identity is generally related to the theme of the "unfamiliar" or what Freud calls the "uncanny". According to Camus, the world ceases to be familiar the moment we question it. At any moment, it can prove to us that it is threatening to our existence.

D- Other themes:

Some of the important themes that are usually present in Pinter's works are: Violence, menace, the intruder, the room, dreams and illusions. A confined room is generally the best space where most of Pinter's plays are set. These spaces are "huit-clos"; there is no exit out of confinement. His characters find it is a space of security, of peace and therefore of isolation from the external world, as it is the case with *The Room* (1957). But, this security is often threatened by the outside world which intrudes into it. It is the case with *The Caretaker*, where Davies's intrusion is a menace for Mick and Aston, being the owners of the room. As Steven H. Gale writes: "Typically, someone is in a room when an intruder arrives. Since the intruder figure implicitly contains an element of menace, the room's inhabitant must verify whether the intruder is a friend or a foe." (Gale, 2001: 124)

Aston gives him asylum by inviting him into his brother's room. But by making his stay long, he himself becomes a threatening presence to the two brothers. Pinter thinks that characters once threatened look for a confined and a secure space, a sanctuary. In an interview, he argues: "Hunted and anxious, the characters take refuge in a confined world- a room, a basement- where they fear the intrusion of an alien element which would threaten their predictable existence." (Grellet & Valentin, 1984 : 347). By the coming of Mick, Davies becomes anxious. Taking Davies for a burglar, Mick attacks Davies. He forces him down to the floor, while Davies is struggling, whimpering and staring. His menace and violence are unpredictable because he enters the room and moves silently, and he swiftly attacks Davies. Mick is a violent man; his reaction to the stranger's presence suggests the feeling of fear and menace;

MICK holds his arm, puts his other hand to his lips, then puts his hand to DAVIES' lips. DAVIES quietens. MICK lets him go. DAVIES writhes. MICK holds out a warning finger. He then squats down to regard DAVIES. He regards him, then stands looking down to him. DAVIES massages his arms, watching MICK. MICK turns slowly to look at the room. He goes to DAVIES' bed and uncovers it. He turns, goes to the clothes horse and picks up DAVIES' trousers. DAVIES starts to rise. MICK presses him down with his foot and stands over him. Finally he moves his foot. He examines the trousers and throws them back. DAVIES remains on the floor, crouched. MICK slowly goes the chair, sits, and watches DAVIES expressionless." (p. 29)

Esslin stresses the intruder as an important aspect of the Theatre of the Absurd. The intruder breaks the peace and makes the world unfamiliar and absurd. Who is the intruder: Davies or Mick? Both of them look at each other as an outsider. For Mick, Davies is an intruder because the latter enters his room during his absence. Mick is also seen by Davies as an intruder because Mick comes back to his room after the former has re-arranged it and has comfortably settled.

Mick's violence against Davies persists but changes its expression. In the first encounter, Mick attacks Davies physically. This violence gradually assumes a verbal shape. He asks him a series of questions. He repeats these questions several times in an attempt to subdue and dominate Davies. Mick threatens with words so as to dominate the situation. In the same interview, Pinter admits that: "...Violence is really only an expression of the question of dominance and subservience ..." (Ibid. 349). Indeed, the predominant atmosphere in the play is that of menace.

Mick urges Davies to show his true character. He tricks him by offering him the caretaking of the house in order to discover Davies' treacherous nature.

Mick is the owner of the house. It is he who keeps the key. "MICK comes in, puts the key in his pocket" (p. 28). The key symbolizes the possession of the space. Davies breaks into his territory during his absence. Davies, in turn, responds to his fear by threatening the brother's relationship. The latter plans to separate the brothers by manipulating Mick and Aston in order to get one of them. He lies to Mick by telling him that his brother insults him:

Stink! You hear that! Me! I told what he said, didn't I? Stink! You hear that? That's what he said to me!" (p. 70), and while Mick insists on his staying and Aston on his leaving the room, Davies treats Aston as a man without any sense and when Mick is angry, he argues: "I mean, he' (Aston) got no right to order me about. I take orders from you, I mean, you look upon me ... you don't treat me like a lump of dirt ... we can both ... we can both see him for what he is. (p. 70)

Mick understands Davies's meaning,

Mick: I could tell him to go, I suppose.

Davies: That's what I'm saying. (p. 71)

Davies's reaction is interpreted by Pinter as: "Feeling trapped and terrified, people react by threatening the others in their turn, as if invading their territories gave them an illusion of power, of getting a grasp on reality. It is this wish to dominate which underlies the racism of so many of the characters" (Ibid. 347)

Aston is menaced by the malicious Davies, who betrays him and he wants to send him out of the room, while Aston trusts him and recounts him his past bad experiences. Davies's endeavour to trick Mick against Aston is a real menace for the latter, that is, if Mick follows Davies's instructions, Aston will lose his room, his space of security. Instead of being a secure space, the room becomes a place of danger and menace; it means that the menace comes from within. Accordingly, Aston's speeches may be false because he had already had an electroshock once a minor, so his statements are doubted. In addition to the falsehood that may exist in his talking, Aston's menace to Davies consists in his long silences to his propositions and questions.

In conclusion, the characters in *The Caretaker* are strangers. They are strangers in the sense of Camus's definition of the word. In other words, they feel insecure because their world is an

absurd one. Familiarity which usually gives one a sense of security is disturbed. Each of the characters tries to impose his order, but this order is soon questioned and ordinary things assume a threatening stance. It is here that we find the parallel with Sisyphus. People order their world to give a familiar shape to the world, but this familiarity is soon undone giving place to a sense of disorder and threat. Davies's feeling of insecurity appears from the opening of the play when he is invited by Aston to take a sit, for three times, but Davies is continually looking about the room and refuses to sit down. Throughout the three acts, Davies demonstrates his weariness and anxiety as he moves from one subject to another in a rapid way:

Davies: I used to know a bootmaker in Acton. He was a good mate to me.

Pause

You know what that bastard monk said to me?

Pause

How many more Blacks you got around here then? (Act I: p.14)

III- Setting: the Room

The setting in *The Caretaker* is related to some of the themes tackled above. The play is set in a single room. The room is described as being a place full of junk, one window half covered by a sack. It is in disorder; full of valuable as well as valueless objects, spread everywhere. We find paint buckets, a rolled-up carpet, a pile of old newspapers, a lawn-mower, suitcases and a statue of the Buddha atop a gas stove that doesn't work. The ceiling is damaged, so water goes inside, caught in a hanging bucket. The action of the play takes place in winter.

All the cited objects seem to be real but useless. Their value is symbolical. They demonstrate man's attempt to order his world. Furthermore, the room's disorder and disarray mirror the innermost brain of Aston which is in disorganization and confusion. While it constitutes a secure and peaceful place, it also projects the characters' restricted and chaotic lives. With the room, Pinter illustrates the characters' need for warmth and security. It also reflects Aston's need for a safe haven and Davies's want of a sanctuary. In addition, the room may symbolize the disorganized and confused universe and an unfamiliar world, which is at the same time a space for living and for death. Elizabeth Angel Perez writes: "the room is the womb is the tomb" (Angel-Perez, 2000: 131)

The room has a door which symbolizes an indefinite fear; it is the access of menace. It opens on uncertainty and the unknown. The play opens with Mick alone in the room and suddenly, “A door bangs. Muffled voices are heard” (p. 7). He hears strange voices that he can’t recognize, so he decides to leave the room before the strangers could enter. His aim is to prevent the intruder from invading his territory, “He stands, moves silently to the door, goes out, and closes the door quietly” (p.7), because he is afraid of being heard. The room in *The Caretaker* does not necessarily imply security or peace. It is rather surrounded by danger and uncertainty, and the intruder may penetrate at any moment.

The room in *The Caretaker* is at the top of an Edwardian house or rather a suburb where different races and immigrants such as Blacks, Greeks and Poles have settled. Davies finds the ethnic groups as aliens and strangers; “Ten minutes off a tea-break in the middle of the night in that place and couldn’t find a seat, not one. All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them all them aliens had it” (p. 8).

IV- Characterization:

The Caretaker has a very small cast operating in a reduced setting. It deals with a situation of three characters whose actions are generally mysterious. Esslin states that the subtlety of characterization is abandoned in the Theatre of the Absurd. Therefore, we are exposed to a situation of characters who live in constant unrest. These characters are always introduced in the first Act, and usually in the first page. Pinter declares that he always starts his plays by calling his characters A, B and C. In the case of *The Caretaker* they are: the two brothers, Aston and Mick, and the tramp Davies. The characters are near to lifelike, but it is difficult to understand their actions or motivations. Indeed, their actions are funny and frightening at the same time. Pinter dismisses totally those opinions which ascribe a symbolic dimension to his characters. He also rejects the interpretations of some critics who assert that his characters are his mouthpieces. He believes that he is detached from his characters and that every one is an independent human being leading his own life. He is convinced that all that he writes is extracted from a concrete context and characters. In his long speech in Bristol in 1962, he points out:

I've never started a play from any kind of abstract idea or theory and never envisaged my own characters as messengers of death, doom, heaven or the milky way, in other words, as allegorical representations of any particular force, whatever that may mean. When a character cannot be comfortably defined or understood in terms of the familiar, the tendency is perch him on a symbolic self, out of the harm's way (Pinter, 1976: 10-11)

Stephen G. M. reported Pinter's view in another occasion about *The Caretaker*: "I do see this play as merely a particular human situation, concerning three particular people, and not, incidentally, symbols" (Stephen, 1981: 55-6). D. H. Lawrence advises the reader to believe the tale not the artist. Taking hold of this advice, we shall analyze Pinter's characters in relation to the Theatre of the Absurd as developed by Martin Esslin and Camus's philosophy of the Absurd.

A- Davies

Davies is arguably the most important character in the play, for he remains on the stage for most of the play, and he participates in all the conversations. Physically, he is unattractive if not repulsive; he has an unpleasant smell and he wears shabby and dirty clothes. Perhaps it is this disagreeable appearance which keeps people away from him. He is like Sisyphus who keeps rolling a rock to a top of a mountain each time it rolls back down to its original place; Davies' punishment consists in his rejection by his fellowmen. What characterizes his life is routine; Sisyphus is eternally rolling the rock and Davies is always wandering alone in the street, being homeless and jobless.

Davies has an autobiographical dimension because of his realistic behaviour and speech. Sarah Clough reports Michael Billington's commentary on Davies whom Billington believes to be a man Pinter had really met;

Davies was based on a tramp who was brought back to the house on Chiswick High Road when Pinter was in the 1950's. Pinter always claims he didn't get to know this tramp particularly well- he would meet him on the stairs and they'd exchange a few words. When the tramp had been thrown out of the house he bumped into him and I think Pinter gave him a bob or two a few weeks later to help him on his way. But it was a strange mixture of loneliness and aggression that made up his character that Pinter saw as dramatically profitable." (Clough, 2006)

Esslin thinks that Pinter, like Aston, feels pity for Davies because he knows his situation well. This may be the reason which led Pinter to think of another end than the one he proposed at first, which is, keeping Davies alive at the end of the play. He admits:

The original idea ... was ... to end the play with the violent death of the tramp ... It suddenly struck me that it was not necessary. And I think that in this play ... I have developed, that I have no need to use cabaret turns and blackouts and screams in the dark to the extent that I enjoyed using them before. I feel that I can deal, without resorting to that kind of thing, with a human situation ... I do see this play as merely ... a particular human situation, concerning three particular people and not, incidentally...symbols. (Esslin, 1978: 249)

Davies is ill-tempered, quarrelsome, lazy, violent, bitter and selfish. He feels always lonely and he never trusts anyone. For him, the world is a dangerous and an incomprehensible place, or simply a strange one. He feels strange and he reveals this strangeness through his resentment towards the different races: the Blacks, the Greeks, and the Poles. Like any absurd man, Davies feels indifferent towards people around him. He never loses himself in feeling and affection. At the beginning of the play, he is shown thanking Aston for his generosity and rescue, yet he wants to get rid of him at the end of the play. Davies is aware that he should not lose himself in affection. The conventional morality has no hold on him. He behaves just like animals will do. What matters for him is getting a vital space, a shelter to hide from the threatening world. As a social outcast, he reproduces the same attitude that made of him an exile in this world.

Davies doesn't feel secure because of his lower social status. As a misfit, he cannot bear being ordered around, he is sensitive about those who are supposed to be his betters. "Even if I was supposed to take out the bucket, who was this git to come up and give me orders? We got the same standing. He's not my boss. He's nothing superior to me" (p. 9-10). He refuses the orders of his boss in the café, but he accepts those of Mick, "I take orders from you, I do my caretaking for you ..." When he accepts Mick's orders, it is just in order to be admitted in the room. Furthermore, Davies is a man who doesn't accept criticism; he denies that he makes the noise at night, and he blames the Blacks instead, "Maybe it were them Blacks making noises, coming up through the walls" (p. 23), and he refuses the monk's treating him like an animal. Here once more, Davies is showing contradictory feelings.

Davies represents the absurd man because he knows that the world is far from being secure. For example, he is afraid of sleeping near the gas stove because; “It’s right next to my face, how do I know, I could be lying there in bed, it might blow up, it might do harm to me!” (p. 59). He is also terrified when he hears the sound of the Electrolux, “Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah! Get away-y-y-y-y!” (p. 45); as a result, he draws a knife, “I got a knife here. I’m ready. Come on then, who are you?” (p. 45). He’s scared of these objects because everything can turn it dangerous; he is suspicious all the time but the familiarity of the world can hide risks.

His identity is always in doubt; he has two names: Mac Davies and Bernard Jenkins. But we ignore which one is his real name and which is his assumed one. His lack of precise identity explains his marginalisation in society; this fact arises in him an animal instinct for survival. In this sense, Billington asserts in Sarah Clough’s article:

Davies in *The Caretaker* is a man who’s lived on the margins of life and is therefore suspicious and wary of every one around him but lacks a sense of definition and it’s very interesting who that character keeps changing his persona depending on who he’s with. He even has two names- he could be Davies, he could be Jenkins and he doesn’t know who he is until he gets his papers which are down in Sidcup” (Op. Cit.)

Davies is an absurd man and his absurdity is shown in his strange feeling towards what surrounds him. He confronts his present situation even though he knows that confrontation is futile. He is an actor; he plays what he is and what he is not at the same time. He presents himself as well as other persons: a tramp, a respectable man, a good caretaker, an intruder, a squatter, and the British worker. While playing all these roles, Davies is certainly an absurd man as well as a universal man. This idea is admitted by Mick when he affirms in Act II even if it is intended to mock him, it is true to a certain extent: “I mean, you’re a man of the world. Can I ask your advice about something?” (p. 48)

B- Aston

Aston is in his late twenties or early thirties. He wears a shabby pin-striped suit which suggests conformity and respectability. He keeps a statue of Buddha; this means that Aston is seeking a religion or a meaning to life. Contrary to what is said by the critics Aston is a non-conformist and a dissident personality because of his artistic ability and over sensitivity. He is

generous, gentle, calm, good-tempered and slow in thought. He shows generosity when he rescues Davies from a fight in a café. He offers him a bed, a pair of shoes, a cigarette, money and he even replaces his lost bag. What lies behind his generous nature can be his previous electric shock and bad experience in the hospital.

Aston is a passive person who is living in a world full of violence; Davies threatens him with a knife. When he was a minor, he was badly treated in an asylum. Aston resists and he attempts to escape from the hospital. Aston is very sensitive, and the following declaration suggests that: "I went into the pub the other day. Ordered a Guinness. They gave it to me in a thick mug. I sat down but I couldn't drink it. I can't drink Guinness from a thick mug. I only like it out of a thin glass. I had a few sips but I couldn't finish it" (p. 19). This is a sign of sensitiveness and strangeness at the same time.

Aston is also trustful. He leaves Davies alone in his room and he offers him the key of the room before being acquainted with him. There maybe a hidden motive behind Aston's act, wishing Davies to take care of the house. But, Davies rejects the caretaking of the house unkindly because he also has a personal scheme and a selfish attitude.

At the beginning of the play, Aston seldom speaks. Sarah Clough quotes Harold Pinter who affirms in *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* of Michael Billingham, talking to Kenneth Cranham that: "At the beginning of the play, Aston hasn't spoken to anyone for years." (Clough, 2006). He is reluctant to speak to people after the treatment. He often speaks in monosyllables, which suggests his difficulty in formulating and expressing his thoughts. Aston says: "Sit down", "Here you are", "Take a sit". Aston confesses this nuisance to Davies: "The trouble was ... my thoughts ... had become very slow ... I couldn't think at all ... I couldn't ... get ... my thoughts ... together ... uuuhh ... I could ... never quite get it ... together." (p. 57) His speech becomes gradually longer, but his speech about his awful experience in the psychiatric hospital is the longest. The length of the speech suggests the weight of the experience for Aston. It is for Aston as it is for us for the reason that we learn about Aston's past and personality. But being a person who comes out of an electric shock, what he says is open to question, whereas G. M. Stephen thinks the

contrary when he announces: "It is a graphic but quite straightforward description of horrific experiences undergone by a young man." (Stephen, 1981: 53)

Aston declares that he is a good worker and he tries to prove that by keeping himself busy all the time. Throughout the play, he does nothing new. He seems to meddle with a plug, but he couldn't finish with that. He tends to build a shed and renovate the top of the house but he does nothing to fulfil that. Aston's contradictory attitude is identical to that of Camus's actor. Though Aston's past experiences weighed heavily on his present condition, he is always enthused to realise future schemes. This outlook is what arouses Mick's mistrust in his ability. In Act II, he acknowledges to Davies: "He's supposed to be doing a little job for me ... I keep him here to do a little job ... but I don't know ... I'm coming to the conclusion he's a slow worker." (p.49)

C- Mick

Mick is the youngest of the three characters; he is in his late twenties. He is Aston's younger brother. He habitually wears a leather jacket. Leather jackets have been associated with violent and rebellious youth in Western Europe in the twentieth century. He appears and speaks the least in the play. He is menacing and doubtful. He keeps switching moods in his speech. A case in point, in Act II, he shifts from abrupt question and answer to apparent and worrying non-sequiturs.

Mick: ...Did you sleep here last night?

Davies: Yes

Mick: Sleep well?

Davies: Yes!

Mick: Did you have to get up in the night?

Davies: No!

Pause

Mick: What's your name?

Davies: (*shifting, about to rise*). Now look here!

Mick: What?

Davies: Jenkins!

Mick: Jen ... kins ... Sleep here last night? (p. 32-33)

Mick is the most articulate and eloquent of the three characters. His appearance on the stage is less frequent but simultaneously brilliant. His articulation is demonstrated in his witty and fanciful words and expressions. With his ingenuity and fluent speech, he dominates Davies. Indeed, he convinces Davies to be his caretaker. He is swift and motivated. His subject matter swerves from

his past life to his immediate plans. He is a successful businessman. Aston confesses that Mick “is in the building trade. He’s got his own van.” (p. 40).

Mick is in charge of Aston. He is concerned with his mental state. So, he has put him in the house for his rehabilitation. He attacks the intruder for fear of spoiling their brotherly love. Subsequently, he subjects Davies to both mental and physical violence. At the beginning of Act II, he cruelly mocks Davies. He moves from hostility to friendship towards Davies. He aims at dominating and subduing him. He incessantly tries to entrap him into revealing his real character. It can be illustrated from Act II as follow:

Mick: It’s a terrible thing to have to say about your own brother.

Davies: Ay.

Mick: He’s just shy of it. Very shy of it.

Davies: I know that sort. (p. 48)

And it is in Act III that he achieves his purpose,

Mick: ... Now come on, why did you tell me all this dirt about you being an interior decorator?

Davies: I didn’t tell you nothing! Won’t you listen to what I’m saying?

Pause

It was him who told you. It was your brother who must have told you. He’s nutty! He’d tell you anything, out of spite, he’s nutty, he’s half way gone, it was him who told you.

Mick walks slowly to him

Mick: what did you call my brother?

By the end of Act III, Mick ascertains that Davies is an unpredictable and a dangerous man.

Mick walks slowly round Davies’ figure, regarding him, once. He circles him, once. Then, he insults him using very harsh terms:

What a strange man you are. Aren’t you. You’re really strange. Ever since you come into this house there’s been nothing but trouble. Honest. I can take you say at face value. Every word you speak is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies. You’re violent, you’re erratic, you’re just completely unpredictable. You’re nothing else but a wild animal, when you come down to it. You’re a barbarian. (p. 73-74)

Mick’s and Davies’s personalities resemble each other. They have the same manners and both are suspicious about each other. They criticize other people and they forget their own deficiencies. It is the case of Davies in Act I, who attacks coloured people for their dirtiness when he is dirty himself. He accuses them for snoring while he disturbs Aston with the noises he makes at night: “I told him about them Blacks, about the Blacks coming up from next door, and using the

lavatory. I told him, it was all dirty in there, all the banisters were dirty, they were black, all the lavatory was black.” (p. 59). He criticizes his wife for being unclean, and her dirtiness was the reason of their divorce. He is homeless, yet he treats the Greeks and Poles as aliens. Likewise, Mick treats Davies as a strange and a dirty man, an erratic and a violent person, a wild animal and a barbarian; while he shares these aspects with him. In fact, each of the two characters describes the other in his image.

Davies states that Mick is straightforward; yet he is aware that Mick tricks him. Mick’s true portrayal is well expressed when he attacks Davies verbally, “I can take nothing you say at face value. Every word you say is open to any number of different interpretations. Most of what you say is lies. You’re violent, you’re erratic, you’re just completely unpredictable.” (p. 73) Mick gives us an idea about the absurd man in the Camus’s sense of the word. He communicates life’s state of uncertainty. As Camus’s actor, he never questions what went wrong but he acts on assumptions. Davies’s absurdity consists in the fact that he never acted in any sense, remaining caught up in the external control of others, particularly Mick.

D- The Caretaker in *The Caretaker*

The three characters play the role of caretakers, though they are in need of a caretaker. Playing a role suggests their absurdity in view of the fact that they embody the contradiction of the absurd. Aston seems to be in need of someone to take care of him. His need to a caretaker leads Aston ask Davies (a stranger) to do that task for him,

Aston: You could be ... caretaker here, if you liked.

Davies: What?

Aston: You could ... look after the place, if you liked ... you know, the stairs, and the landing, the front steps, keep an eye on it. Polish the bells. (p. 42)

Davies doesn’t formally accept Aston’s offer. His answers in half sentences suggest his hesitation because opening the door suggests danger and threat to his security, “... they ring the bell called Caretaker, they’d have me in, that’s what they’d do, I wouldn’t stand a chance.” (p. 44) After a great deal of conversation, Davies rejects Aston’s offer, possibly for the reason that the latter is mentally and emotionally weak and that he cannot rely on him for protection. For Davies, caretaking is a risky and an uncertain job. He thinks that when he is going to open the door an

intruder may enter and kill him. Similar to Mick, he communicates life's precariousness and the world's insecurity. This feeling of insecurity keeps Davies suspicious all the time.

Davies rejects Aston's proposition to be his caretaker, but he accepts Mick's. It was a significant lesson for Aston who finally decides that Davies is not the right caretaker. By the end of the play, Mick rejects Davies' caretaking as well although Davies tries vainly to regain his position among the two brothers. Mick's rejection is expressed in the following declaration: "It's all most regrettable but it looks as though I'm compelled to pay you off for your caretaking work. Here's a half dollar" (p. 74)

Despite the fact that Aston needs a caretaker, he plays caretaking towards Davies. His rescue to Davies at the beginning of the play from a fight in a café is good evidence. Aston is so generous when he offers Davies many objects: a cigarette, money, a pair of shoes, the key of the room and he replaces his lost bag. In addition, Aston gives him a comfortable bed and provides him security (shelter). In truth, Aston wants to take care of Davies until he gets himself sorted out;

Aston: You can sleep here if you like.

Davies: Here? Oh, I don't know about that.

Pause

How long for?

Aston: Till you ... get yourself fixed up

Davies: (*sitting*). Ay well, that ...

Aston: Get yourself sorted out ... (p. 16)

By the end of Act I, Aston decides to go out, but he stays for a moment at the head of Davies while sleeping. Once Davies wakes up, he finds Aston gazing at him, smiling. We may interpret this image in different ways. It may bear a resemblance to that of a mother gazing at her sleeping child. However, we may interpret this image by the fact that Aston's smile suggests menace since he is insane.

While Aston takes care of Davies, Mick's role is to take care of his brother's physical and mental state. It is a traditional sense of the word because he doesn't take care of the house but his brother himself. Mick appears first in the play; waiting for his brother Aston to come back home. Mick seems protective and ever watching of his brother when he feels angry once Davies criticizes his brother, especially when his brother is treated as "funny" and later "nutty". We notice that

Mick's behaviour and words turn out to be threatening. Davies admits that Mick is supervising Aston; he announces: "... I can tell you, your brother's got an eye on you." (p. 67). Mick's tone changes when he hears his brother insulted.

Davies: ... It was him who told you. It was your brother who must have told you. He's nutty! He'd tell you anything, out of spite, he's nutty, he's half way gone, it was him who told you.

Mick walks slowly to him

Mick: What did you call my brother?

Davies: When?

Mick: He's what?

Davies: I ... now get this straight ...

Mick: Nutty? Who's nutty?

Pause

Did you call by brother nutty? My brother. That's a bit of ... that's a bit of an impertinent thing to say, isn't it? (p.73)

Moreover, Mick takes into consideration Aston's decision about Davies' departure, and he shows his support clearly. Even though, the presence of Davies is a threat for the two brothers' relations, their relationship does not alter. Indeed, by the end of Act III, the narrator presents the two brothers in arrangement to get rid of Davies: "Aston comes in. He closes the door, moves into the room and faces Mick. They look at each other. Both are smiling, faintly" (p. 75). It means that Mick always cares for Aston, and he gets rid of the intruder that surrounds them and so he maintains their brotherhood.

Besides, Davies trusts Mick's strong personality and intelligence. Indeed, he wants to assist him to get rid of Aston. When Mick grows angry, he proposes another solution. In the third act, he asks Mick to take care of him, while he takes care of the house and together they can help each other to take care of Aston. He confesses to Mick: "I take orders from you, I do my caretaking for you, I mean you look upon me ... you don't treat me like a lump of dirt ... we can both ... we can both see him for what he is." (p. 70)

Finally, what can be said is that Pinter's characters grow with the growing of the play. Although the situation is always the same, that is, the first and the last are identical, we come to discover the three characters' personalities in the three acts. Sometimes, they behave in a strange way and utter odd expressions; their portraits are closer to real life than other characters in other Pinter's plays. Though they are comical, they are put in a rational frame. Every character can

represent any other man in the world. Esslin suggests that the audience identifies himself to one of these characters who are often absurd, but human. Pinter believes that too:

My characters tell me so much and no more, with reference to their experience, aspirations, their motives, their history. Between my lack of biographical data about them and the ambiguity of what they say lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration but which it is compulsory to explore” (Pinter, 1976: 13)

This may be explained in the fact that all the comments of Pinter about his characters or what his characters say about themselves are not satisfactory. Accordingly, the audience can propose his own interpretations about the characters’ words and actions because they are unreliable, elusive, obstructive and unwilling.

V- Language and Style in *The Caretaker*:

Pinter is highly influenced by his contemporaries’ works, but once mature in writing he used his own techniques. Patricia Hern comments on Pinter’s originality quoting Esslin to stress her idea; “The fact that he can quite legitimately be related to Kafka and Beckett on the one hand, and to Oscar Wilde and Noël Coward on the other, is highly characteristic of Pinter’s originality, his ability to work on a multiplicity of different levels” (Hern, 1982: xxix). In fact, Pinter’s style of playwriting is called “Pinteresque”. Pinter’s dialogues are full of clichés and patterns of ordinary speech to express man’s fear, insecurity and aggressiveness or hypocrisy.

Pinter’s world within drama seems realistic; and Realism is joined with the absurd. Patricia Horn’s analysis of *The Caretaker* included Esslin’s view of Pinter’s relationship to Kafka and Beckett. Esslin asserts that “Realism and the absurd are fused in a different way (both in language and structure) where the strictest application of realism produces a feeling of the fantastic and the absurd” (Ibid. xxviii). In fact, the episode when Aston brings Davies home and gives him many objects seems to be realistic and natural. In addition, Mick’s violent attitude towards Davies at the end of first act and while Aston and Mick, each apart, propose the caretaking of the house to Davies is also realistic. What is absurd is the fact Davies refuses to take care of Aston’s room, while he is homeless and without family. Davies’ behaviour is also absurd when he wants to side with Mick

against his brother, Aston. Furthermore, Davies has an imaginary goal, which consists in getting his papers from Sidcup to prove his identity.

The structure of the play is circular. Its opening is identical with its end; Davies is sent out of the house by both brothers, where he was found at the beginning. The beginning and the end of the play demonstrate what Davies deserves because of his malice nature and absurd behaviour.

The lack of explanation is what characterizes Pinter's work. He never finds it necessary to explain why things occur or who anyone is. For him, the existence within a play is his justification. In this sense, Esslin made some remarks on Pinter's "Letter to Peter Wood" admitting:

Yet what must be stressed here is that while the writer himself refuses to become a commentator on his own work, simply because his own intention is as obscure to him as to anyone else, and because everything that the play has to say must be in the play itself ... both Beckett and Pinter stress the openness of their work to interpretation ... Pinter considers the infinite recession of possible meanings as a positive asset of a work like this" (Esslin, 2001: 9)

For example, in *The Caretaker*, the motives of Aston while bringing Davies home are never explained, even if they can be guessed. In addition, the characters' identity is not made clear by the author, that is, the characters present themselves by themselves. But since their language is full of lies, what they say is doubtful. As a result, the play can't have a simple and direct meaning; it is open to different interpretations. It means that the author looks at his work from outside, and the play must explain itself by itself; Pinter is convinced when he tells Peter Wood that "the play exists now apart from me, you or anybody" (Ibid.) Moreover, the clothes of the characters and other elements may suggest different ideas according to the different generations and periods of history.

A- The Pauses, the Three Dots, and Silence in *The Caretaker*

Dialogue has a central importance in Pinter's plays; it is the case with *The Caretaker*. This may be the key to his originality. The characters use colloquial speech, which consists of ambivalent conversation punctuated by pauses and silences. Pinter believes that even silence is a part of our communication, that is to say, people can communicate through silence. In fact, "Pinteresque" style weighs words and silences. Most of Pinter's critics think that there is a lack or failure of communication among his characters. But Pinter denies this idea when he declares:

We have heard many times that tired, grimy phrase: 'Failure of communication' ... and this phrase has been fixed to my work quite consistently. I believe the contrary. I think that we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is a continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming" (Op. Cit., p. 15)

We distinguish three types of pauses in *The Caretaker*: a pause, three dots and a silence, which are fundamental in the understanding of Pinter's work. A pause is a longer interruption to the action and speaking. However, the lack of speech becomes a form of speech itself. The pause may suggest a threat, hesitation of the character, or a moment of thinking to find the right answer. The answer is usually a lie with which he can escape the questions of his interlocutor. Much of Mick's questions are preceded by a pause; this can be explained in the fact that Mick is always suspicious about Davies' identity and character.

Pause

Mick: You know, you remind me of a bloke I bumped into once, just the other side of the Guildford by-pass-

Davies: I was brought here!

Pause

Mick: Pardon?

Davies: I was brought here! I was brought here!

Mick: Brought here? Who brought you here?

Davies: Man who lives here ... he

Pause

Mick: Fibber

Davies: I was brought here, last night ...met him in a caff ... I was working ... I got the bullet ... I was working there ... bloke saved me from a punch up, brought me here, brought me right here.

Pause

Mick: I'm afraid you're a born fibber, en't you? You're speaking to the owner. This is my room. You're standing in my house. (p. 34)

At the end of Act III, Davies is beseeching the two brothers to let him a place among them. His sentences are punctuated by pauses. Davies is looking for words that will stir the feeling of Aston and Mick, for the reason to regain his place in the room.

The pause is also used to demonstrate fear and uncertainty. It is the case of Davies in this passage.

Davies: I was saying, he's ... he's a bit a funny bloke, your brother.

Mick: (*stares at him*) Funny? Why?

Davies: Well ... he's funny ...

Mick: What's funny about him?

Pause

Davies: Not liking work.

Mick: What's funny about that?

Davies: Nothing

Pause

Mick: I don't call it funny.

Davies: Nor me. (p. 49-50)

When Davies uses the word "funny", Mick interprets it in a negative way. Hence, his tone and manner change from friendliness to aggressiveness; Simultaneously, Davies tries to find the right way to respond. Mick's pauses are intentional given that he manipulates the situation; whereas Davies' are unpremeditated, so he is left uncertain of what will happen. Pinter uses pause to create tension in the scene.

The second type of pause employed by Pinter is "the three dots". The three dots may suggest a search for a word, a sign of pressure point and a momentary incoherence. In his long speech at the National Student Drama Festival in Bristol in 1962, Pinter declared that while he used dashes in *The Birthday Party*,

'Look, dash, who, dash, I, dash, dash, dash' the text would read: 'Look, dot, dot, dot, who, dot, dot, dot, I, dot, dot, dot, dot'. So it's impossible to deduce from this that dots are more popular than dashes and that's why *The Caretaker* had a longer run than *The Birthday Party*" (Ibid., p. 9)

In Act II, the conversation is held between Aston and Davies. The former proposes the caretaking uncertainly, and Davies hesitates to reject or accept his offer, but ends by rejecting that when he expresses his fear.

Aston: How do you feel about being one, then?

Davies: Well, I reckon ... well, I'd have to know ... you know ...

Aston: What sort of ...

Davies: Yes, what sort of ... you know ...

Pause

Aston: Well, I mean ...

Davies: I mean, I'd have to ... I'd have to ...

Aston: Well, I could tell you ...

Davies: That's ... that's it ... you see ... you get my meaning? (p. 42-43)

By the end of Act II, Aston reveals to Davies about his bad experience in the hospital. His speech, which is indented by three dots, may explain his mental trouble. He confesses that:

They weren't hallucinations, they ... I used to get the feeling I could see things ... very clearly ... everything ... was so clear ... everything used ... everything used to get very quiet ... everything got very quiet ... all this ... quiet ... and ... this clear sight ... it was ... but maybe I was wrong" (p. 55)

The three dots are used here because Aston is talking of a subject that is both painful and difficult. Moreover, he finds it difficult to express his thoughts, so that the three dots are employed increasingly, the fact that made tension and pressure grow. Finally, Aston comes to conclude that he was unable to express his thoughts and hallucinations. He ends his speech: “but maybe I was wrong”.

The third type of pause is silence. Pinter thinks that there are two types of silence. The first is where nothing is said and the other where a torrent of communication is happening. The second type of silence can be observed in Aston and Mick’s relationship at the end of the play, the narrator says: “*Silence. Mick does not look at him (Davies). A door bangs. Silence. They do not move. Aston comes in. He closes the door, moves into the room and faces Mick. They look at each other. Both are smiling faintly*” (p. 75). What is extraordinary in ***The Caretaker*** is that both words and silences are revealing to the audience. Silence requires an audience to focus on body language: to observe, read and interpret. The character himself is watching and listening.

The Caretaker begins with silence; the audience concentrates more on Mick’s movements, who is the first character to appear on stage. During this moment of silence, the audience will ask different questions: who is Mick? Why was he in the room? What was he doing in the room? Why didn’t he meet Aston or Davies on his entrance? It is through the body language and silences that the audience makes his own conclusions and answers the questions raised by the play. Richard Allen Cave wrote an article entitled “Body language in Pinter’s Plays” in which he emphasises the importance of the body language in Pinter’s writing, mainly ***The Caretaker***. Dealing with this play, he comments particularly on the use of the actors’ hands,

Body language contributed extensively to shape further implications to what was spoken ... (Aston’s hands were) continually held in positions that drew attention to their angularities ... which intimated much about the character’s past in a mental institution before he chose to reveal such facts in a confidence to Davies”; (in contrast Davies’ hands were) “invariably clenched into fists that made short, stabbing” gestures that punctuated his speech, the intention of which was to highlight that Davies’ life was a continual fight for self preservation and protection; finally Mick’s hands were kept close to his body “generally tucked into the side-pockets of his leather jacket; giving him a confident swagger; instead he used his head and shoulders to emphasise his words, project and idea, challenge a listener” (Allan Cave, cited in Clough S., 2006)

Pinter uses the technique of body language to communicate the characters and their situations to his audience.

B- Language in *The Caretaker*

Pinter's language is distinctive, so critics used the term "Pinteresque" to refer to it. In fact, his characters, who are ordinary people, make use of colloquial language as it is really. His language is characterized by inconsequentiality, illogic, unwitting comedy and irrationality. It is distinguished by its repetitiousness, non-sequiturs, and tautologies. These characteristics are generally found in Davies' speeches.

Esslin believes that what renders *The Caretaker* funny is its popular language. Pinter himself admits that his play is a mixture of tragedy and farce. It is a very funny play for its various forms of humour. For instance, in Act I, Davies wants to show that he is clean whereas the blacks stink, but the audience knows that is untrue. The public laughs for that, even if sometimes he feels sympathetic and sad vis-à-vis Davies' situation. Pinter says that what characterizes *The Caretaker* is its absurd side. However, Pinter has written a farce to make people laugh; the play has a tragic side. For Pinter, people prefer the comic over the tragic in order to escape the tragic existence. The reason that urged Pinter to write the play is that the comic side should be transcended.

There is a kind of absurd humour in the characters' speeches and phrases. For example, the monk who says "Piss off" to Davies when he asks him a pair of shoes is so shocking to Davies and to the audience too. However, a monk should be the brother and helper of all people, and he should behave in a good way. The absurd humour sometimes expresses irony; Aston feels disturbed when Davies makes noise at night; he claims: "You woke me up. I thought you might have been dreaming". Davies answers ironically: "I wasn't dreaming. I never had a dream in my life" (p. 23). Another example can be illustrated from Mick's remarks on his brother Aston; being an idle man and afraid of work, we feel that Mick is referring to Aston as well as Davies.

Pinter's characters often speak in broken sentences, utter non-sequiturs, repeat themselves, pause for no apparent reason, or don't listen to what is said to them or appear to understand it. The characters in *The Caretaker* are self repetitious. At first, the repeated phrases seem to be trite, but

they become more telling about the characters' personalities or ambitions with the growing of the play. Sometimes, the characters' use of trivial sentences may reflect the emotional or intellectual deficiency of the speaker. They use repetitions and stock phrases to evade questions from the part of their interlocutor and to gain time and end a conversation without giving any real account on their personalities. Perhaps the best example is the conversation that takes place between Mick and Davies at the beginning of Act II,

Mick: Well?

Davies: Nothing, nothing. Nothing.

Mick: What's your name?

Davies: I don't know you. I don't know who you are.

Pause

Mick: Eh?

Davies: Jenkins

Mick: Jenkins

Davies: Yes.

Mick: Jen ... kins. (p. 30)

Mick asks two other questions, then he repeats,

Mick: What did you say your name was?

Davies: Jenkins.

Mick: I beg your pardon?

Davies: Jenkins

Pause

Mick: Jen ... kins. (p. 30-31)

Later a great deal of conversation is carried on between the two men, and then Mick repeats again,

Mick: What's your name?

Davies: (*shifting, about to rise*). Now look here!

Mick: What?

Davies: Jenkins!

Mick: Jen ... kins (p. 32-33)

It is evident that there is a hidden motive behind Mick's repeated questions. He is doubtful about the real name and identity of Davies. But Davies' repetitions here come necessarily as answers to Mick's questions. Whereas in other passages, we notice that Davies is repetitious because of his state of mind, being disturbed by members of his society, causing him feel inferior;

I said to this monk, here, I said, look here, mister, he opened the door, big door, he opened it, look here, mister, I said, I come all the way down here, look, I said, I showed him these, I said, You haven't got a pair of shoes, have you, a pair of shoes, I said, enough to keep me on my way." (p. 14)

Pinter resorts to ungrammatical language, sometimes incomplete sentences or separated words, especially in Davies' speeches. Indeed at the beginning of the play, the characters speak hesitantly because they don't know each other. But after a great deal of conversation, the three characters have long monologues each. The monologues reflect the characters' thought and present situations, or reveal their experiences in past times.

Mick's speeches are pushed to the limits of improvisation. They are full of imaginative invention and vibrancy, which made Mick a dominant character. For example when Mick speaks of his future plans such as the decoration of the room in a luxurious way; he declares:

Venetian blinds on the window, cork floor, cork tiles. You could have an off-white pile linen rug, a table in ... in afromosia teak veneer, sideboard with matt black drawers, curved chairs with cushioned seats, armchairs in oatmeal tweed, a beech frame settee with a woven sea-grass seat, white topped heat-resistant coffee table, white tile surround. (p. 60)

Mick imposes himself with his diction which is full of violence and menace. He uses language so brilliantly that he dominates and threatens Davies. This can be illustrated from the conversation that takes place between Mick and Davies by the end of Act III; Mick discovers the real personality of Davies and so he becomes more violent, he attacks Davies in the following words:

You're really strange. Ever since you come into this house there's been nothing but trouble ... Most of what you say is lies. You're violent, you're erratic, you're just completely unpredictable. You're nothing but a wild animal, when you come down to it. You're a barbarian. And to put the old tin lid on it, you stink from arse-hole to breakfast time. (p. 73-74)

What can be said is that all Mick's words are revelations about Davies' true character. But they reflect to a certain extent Mick's personality as well.

In contrast to Mick's imaginative inventions and words full of violence, Davies' monologues are emotional. There is an intensity of feeling behind his words because of the seriousness of his case. Davies' speeches seem to revolve around a single object or concept or idea: being clean, his papers in Sidcup, blacks, the clock, the bucket in the café and the room. The episode where he talks about his need to a clock in the room is just an example;

See, what I can need is a clock! I need a clock to tell the time! How can I tell the time without a clock? I can't do it! I said to him, I said, look here, what about getting a clock, so's I can tell what time it is? I mean, if you can't tell

what time you're at you don't know where you are, you understand my meaning? (p. 62)

Aston's monologue is the longest in the play. It is autobiographical; it is a compelling recollection of his treatment in a mental hospital. The speech is so effective because Aston tells his experience with immense feeling and emotion. It is more revealing than Aston's other speeches. At the end of Act II, Aston says:

[...] and suddenly this chief had these pincers on my skull and I knew he wasn't supposed to do it while I was standing up, that's why I Anyway, he did it. So I did get out. I got out of the place ... but I couldn't walk very well. I don't think my spin was damaged. That was perfectly all right. The trouble was ... my thoughts ... had become very slow ... I couldn't think at all ... I couldn't ... get ... my thoughts ... together. (P.56-57)

It is through this long monologue that we come to understand the behaviour of Aston in the last two acts; his kindness, his generosity, sensitiveness and calmness.

We hear sometimes echoed words said by one character in the absence of the other. Most of the time, Mick is repeating words said by Davies in a preceding Act. In Act II, Mick treats Davies as follow: "You're an old skate. You don't belong in a nice place like this" (p 35). These words have been already used by Davies in Act I, when he talks furiously of the man who tried to attack him: "The filthy skate, an old man like me, I've had dinner with the best" (p. 9). When Davies struggles to get back the bag, which is not his, he cries out: "You thieving bastard ... you thieving skate ... let me get my ..." (p. 39). Here Davies retorts Mick who has already called him, "You're an old robber, there's no getting away from it ... I can run you to the police station in five minutes, have you in for trespassing, loitering with intent, daylight robbery, filching, thieving and stinking the place out" (p. 35-36)

Pinter uses language in a variety of ways. It is used as a means of power and dominance over the other, as it is the case of Mick's language. Pinter's language has often a hidden meaning or intention that the characters or the audience try to guess. Through it, we can guess the characters points of view and motives. Furthermore, when the play becomes more telling, language shows the personality and the inner side of each character, especially through their monologues. The use of language emphasises one of the play's central theme-the lack of communication. The play ends

with a long silence which suggests that words are no longer useful, and that there is nothing left to be said. Finally, we can conclude by saying that language in *The Caretaker* is the form and content of the play at the same time. That is, characters, themes, setting and style are revealed through language.

VI- Conclusion

The Caretaker is Pinter's first play which brought him artistic, commercial success as well as national recognition. In this play, Pinter doesn't reject totally the conventional dramatic forms and theatrical devices like Beckett. We can find realistic characters whose actions and motives are not easily understood. Pinter's innovation appears in his use of language. The latter is not so effective; since his characters are often self-repetitious, use clichés, broken sentences, pauses and silences. But his language is used in favour of realism, that is, dialogues are familiar and realistic because of his use of everyday phrases, repetitions and clichés.

Pinter's use of language was revolutionary in its style and content, so that it is coined "Pinteresque". His style and use of language remains unique to Pinter, mainly his resort to vernacular language. Michael Billington, his biographer, points out that Pinter doesn't represent his characters, even if he speaks in their rhythms. Martin Esslin admits that Pinter's success comes from his use of language with nicety. He declares that Pinter's dialogue is more controlled than verse. Besides, what is also worth mentioning is that Pinter's language is marked with repetitiousness, discontinuity, circularity of ordinary vernacular speech.

One can focus his attention on the relationship between language, meaning and psychology. Meaning is not necessarily revealed in the characters' words. So, we feel as if the relationship between language and meaning is severed. As an audience, we don't ask about the meaning of the words but we wonder why the character says what he said; or his motives behind what he says in a particular time.

Pinter believes that the characters in *The Caretaker* are not symbols, but the play is a particular human situation about three particular persons. Furthermore, what describes the characters' thoughts is the breakdown of communication, understatement, cryptic small talk and

silence. In the play, there is a total confusion; either in the minds of the characters and the room of the two brothers. The room reflects the world in which the two characters live, and it symbolizes also the characters' restricted lives.

The Caretaker is a funny play for its language; even though Pinter's intention is not to make people laugh. He declares that his aim is reached when the point of laughing is transcended. The play reaches the universal level when it becomes tragic. In effect, tragedy is one characteristic of the play. Pinter thinks that it is also absurd because of the characters' behaviour and language. All these aspects get *The Caretaker* to universality.

Chapter III: Edward Albee's Absurd in *The Zoo Story*

Edward Albee, the son of Reed Albee, was born in Washington D.C. in 1928. From his early years, he opposed to his mother's will who wanted him to be a member of the Larchmont New York social scene. Edward wanted to be among the artists and intellectuals. At twenty, Albee held a variety of different jobs; he worked as an office boy, record salesman, a messenger for Western Union, before he wrote his first play *The Zoo Story* in 1958. This play shocked profoundly critics and the audiences for many years because of its absurdist tones and moods. However, a few critics, as Martin Esslin, dismissed the play because it fails as an absurdist drama. (Esslin, 1978: 312)

Albee is recognized for his contributions to the American theatre. He received several prizes for his best works *The Three Tall Women* (1994), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1989) and *A Delicate Balance* (1996), which won him the Pulitzer Prize, and *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* (2002), won him the Tony Award for Best Play. Throughout his career, Albee was teaching, directing and writing new plays. He has shaped his works from his ties to the post-World War II European theatre, especially the plays of the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello. In both dramatists' works we find strong correspondences. The critic Anne Paolucci, the dean of American Albee critics, writes that Albee

dismissed the literal message of the political and social realism of the forties, fifties, and sixties as subjects for drama and gave the American theatre new content and form, portraying our postexistential tensions on a stage swept bare of standard conventions"(Paolucci, 2003: 30).

He is well remembered for his brilliant use of language and his fearless search for meaning.

Albee's *The Zoo Story* is closely related to the plays of the European playwrights, not only Pirandello, but also Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. Their writings seem to be realistic, and Albee's first play has a surrealistic nature. What led Albee to write *The Zoo Story* is the severe depression that reigned the American scene in the thirties and the early years of the forties. The play was attacking directly the indifference and sterility of contemporary American life. He wrote it at the age of thirty. To stress this fact, Liu Cecilia quotes Albee:

I wrote *The Zoo Story* on a wobbly table in the kitchen of the apartment I was living at the time at 238 West Fourth Street, I did a draft, made a pencil

revision, and typed a second script, and that's the way I've been doing my plays since. I finished *The Zoo Story* in three weeks. (Cecilia, 2001)

The Zoo Story is too controversial for the American audiences. Indeed, critics thought that Albee was heralding a revitalized New York theatre scene. While many critics had regarded the work as an absurdist condemnation of the artificiality of American values and the failure of communication, which are universal themes; others consider the play as an allegory of Christian redemption to show the importance of meaningful communication. (Ibid.) Rose Zimbardo views *The Zoo Story* as operating not within an absurd Godless universe, but rather a different Christian one. She terms the play a “modern Morality play” which employs traditional Christian symbolism to present the theme of “human isolation and salvation through sacrifice”; whereas Martin Esslin stresses on the play's attack on “the very foundations of American optimism” (Esslin, 1978: 312), which places Albee in the context of the Theatre of the Absurd. Other critics have explored the play's themes of alienation and social polarization, and Robert B. Bennett, as reported by Kim Taehyung, has examined its religious and spiritual content and he believes that *The Zoo Story* is also a tragedy. (Taehyung, 2000)

I- The Summary of the Play:

The Zoo Story is the first play of Edward Albee as an adult. The play is about an impossible encounter of two men who come from different backgrounds: Peter and Jerry. The two men meet in the Central Park of New York one Sunday afternoon. Jerry, the outcast poor and drifter, wants to converse with Peter, the middle-aged and middle-class gentleman. Peter refuses to hear him and he prepares himself to leave. This behaviour shows Peter's admittance that he has his own zoo there on bench of the park, while reading his book. Jerry resorts to violence and provokes Peter into defence of the bench, which is neither his nor Jerry's. At the end of the play, this mock battle leads to a murder-suicide, when Jerry impales himself on the knife which is held by Peter, and so he is stabbed to death.

II- The Main Themes in the Zoo Story:

In the one-act play of Edward Albee, I find some dominant themes such as: absurdity versus reality, alienation and loneliness, cultural clash, wealth and poverty and class differences. In

addition to these major themes, Albee explored other minor themes as: human isolation, the dangers of inaction within American society, and the focus on the need for people to communicate and understand each other.

A- Absurdity versus Reality:

The realism of Albee is depicted in his dialogues and his choice of the subjects. It is clear that the impossibility of Jerry to establish a real relationship with the dog will make it harder with a man. The absurdity of the play and its impersonality may be generalized to all humankind. For Albee, the fact that people choose to live in a destructive spiritual isolation from each other, which is a realistic base, is a proof that the philosophical notions he discusses are true. Lisa M. Siefker Bailey has reported Mary Castiglie Anderson's view about *The Zoo Story* who considers the play as "an example of absurdist and nihilist theatre" (Bailey, 2003: 31). Another critic, who is also quoted by the same author, is Charles Lyons. The latter places the play "within the genre classification of the absurd....because it assumes the absurdity, the chaos, of the human condition and its essential loneliness" (Ibid.). To be more concrete, we will illustrate from the play and try to explore deeply this theme.

Jerry lives in a rooming house, in which many people from different races and cultures live. He doesn't make any approach to know his neighbour tenants, nor them to him. Everybody lives in his own world which marks the human isolation. Peter, the middle class man, prefers to reside alone inside his world (his book) and forgets about the external world. Throughout the play, Jerry tries to intrude into Peter's world, but Peter does not welcome him from the beginning. The play progresses throughout the repetition of a sequence of the main themes: isolation, intrusion and attention. However, later the contact that is set between the two grows to become real, deep and lasting.

The first conversation in which the two men are engaged seems real and natural. Indeed, at the beginning, it was a series of questions from the part of Jerry and answers from Peter's; Peter notices: "...you don't really carry on a conversation; you just ask questions." (p. 1987). Even if he is reticent, he reveals to Jerry a number of facts about himself and his family. What is noteworthy is that in the first part of the play, we know nearly all about Peter but very little about Jerry. The latter

confesses the isolation of his existence, and gradually we get a clear view of his life. His description is realistic particularly when he mentions his small collection of personal belongings: toilet articles, some playing cards, and cutlery, empty picture frames and a box containing rocks. After that, he tells the history of his family: desertion of his mother, alcoholism; his father's fatal accident with a bus, and his aunt who had taken him ill. All these tragic events are at the source of Jerry's loneliness, isolation and despair. Then, he moves to recount his emotional and sexual life; his relationship with women (prostitutes), and once a boy, his homosexual relationship with an older boy reveals real events and feelings. All these sad events and family tragedies make the life of Jerry devoid of meaning, and when he fails to establish any relations with any person; "Jerry inhabits, therefore, a world devoid of any meaningful human relationship. He lives not just alone, but in a state of isolation and alienation not unlike solitary confinement." (Coles Editorial Board, 1981: 2)

Most of Jerry's references to other persons were mostly like animals. For him, people are behaving like animals, and that they are talking, but not communicating. When he mentions the landlady, he says that she is ugly like an animal, whose sexual temptation urged him to hate her and keep himself away from her lust. Even if he is looking for a human contact, to free himself from his isolation, he rejects the landlady's advances. This is another dimension of Jerry's personality and situation. What is noticed in this case is that he becomes like Peter in refusing human interaction and preferring his own isolation and loneliness. This episode in Jerry's life is, in fact, an introduction to his story with the lady's dog.

Hitherto, everything appears to be realistic and somewhat naturalistic. Absurdity is well illustrated in the following episode. When Jerry tries to draw Peter into his own cage, Peter is not against the idea. Nevertheless when Jerry tests Peter's friendship by asking him the possession of the bunch, Peter refuses and he asks for fighting, that's why the play becomes absurd. What is also absurd is the fact that the two men are fighting for an object that belongs to neither Jerry nor Peter. By the end of the play, Jerry's death seems to be a choice; he wants to escape his absurd existence by sacrificing himself,

With a rush he charges PETER and impales himself on the knife (...): For just a moment, complete silence, JERRY impaled on the knife at the end of

PETER'S still firm arm. Then PETER screams, pulls away, leaving the knife in JERRY. JERRY is motionless, on point. Then he, too, screams, and it must be the sound of an infuriated and fatally wounded animal.” (p. 1998).

Jerry's suicide may be a solution to the absurd life because it is not worth living when it is no longer meaningful. The reason is well expressed in one of Camus's essays "Absurd Reasoning", where he explains this idea in the following words: "what is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying" (Camus, 1955: 12). Camus reports that generally people suicide to gain honourable consideration from the part of people. For Maria Elena Ohle, Albee pursues the aim of changing and saving the American society through Jerry's suicide. (Ohle, n. d.), whereas some critics like Robert B. Bennett, view Jerry's death as a sacrifice to save his community. Rose A. Zimbardo interprets with conviction *The Zoo Story* in terms of Christian symbolism: "Seen in this way, Jerry is Jesus offering himself voluntarily on the cross (now a park bench) to save mankind. Peter remains Peter, the disciple who denied Christ ... revitalized gospel" (Mann B. J., 2003: 6). This idea is compared to the one suggested in Samuel Coleridge's poem "the Mariner", where the story tells the saving grace, and the necessity of love. In other words, for Coleridge, the crucifixion is the greatest moment of victory for Christ, and so it is for Jerry.

It is noteworthy to say that Jerry becomes absurd when he is aware of the absurdity of his existence. It is devoid of human contact and true relationship with other people. Subsequently, he tries to make contact with Peter, but he fails. Whereas Peter finds Jerry's intrusion a threat to his peaceful break, which spoils his day of rest. It is possible that Peter considers human contact a useless matter given that people cannot reach mutual understanding. This fact is interpreted differently by Esslin who believes that;

[...] in the flood of mass communications, the growing specialization of life has made the exchange of ideas on an increasing number of subjects impossible between members of different spheres of life which have each developed their own specialized jargons. (Esslin, 1978: 409)

The two characters never understand each other because they represent two different intellectual and social levels. While Peter is a bourgeois and an educated man, Jerry is "a have not" and "a know nothing". The image of the two characters in the zoo trying to converse is a concrete illustration of the absurdity of the human condition.

B- Alienation and Loneliness:

The Zoo Story opens with Peter who stays alone on a park bench in Central Park in New York, reading a book. Suddenly, Jerry comes and tries to converse and establish a relationship with him. Each of the two characters live in isolation: Jerry lives in an imposed seclusion; whereas Peter has chosen his loneliness. Peter prefers Central Park's bench as the best place where he can find peace of mind and where no one can disturb him. He is not only escaping people, but he even wants to be away from his family in Sunday, which is supposed to be the day of rest. Peter's preference to his isolation may be explained, as Camus agrees, in the fact that modern man is always free and involved in choice. His life has been rendered valuable by his aspiration to isolation and indifference. But his rest does not last a long time for the reason that Jerry, a stranger, comes and messes up his rest. In truth, what let Jerry to go closer to Peter is his loneliness because he lives a similar condition. Therefore, he is looking for new friends and new relations.

The first lines of the conversation give us an idea about Peter's reluctance of any acquaintance, and he refuses his peace to be disturbed:

Jerry: I've been to the zoo. (PETER doesn't notice) I said, I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I'VE BEEN TO THE ZOO!

Peter: Hm? ...What? ... I'm sorry, were you talking to me? (P. 1985)

Peter appears to be absent-minded, as if he were away from the actual world and rather he were living in another, or as if he falls deep in sleep and Jerry awakes him to the undesirable real world. When Jerry started the conversation, Peter feels upset and disturbed all together, but only one subject attracted him that of "the zoo". Here a kind of friendship is established between them. But when Jerry tells his story with the landlady's dog, Peter feels disturbed again; "Peter, of course, will not allow himself to appreciate Jerry's position. He wants to hear no more, he wishes to disengage himself from Jerry." (Coles Editorial Board, 1981: 4). Peter thinks of his choice of isolation again, and he wants to get rid of Jerry immediately. But, Jerry imposes his friendship when he tickles Peter. This act is for many critics an evidence of Jerry's homosexuality, which is rejected by Peter. The latter knows that Jerry was once a homosexual; Jerry confesses: "... for a week and a half, when I was fifteen ... and I hang my head in shame that puberty was late ... I was h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-

a-l” (p. 1989). According to Kim Taehyung, one of Albee’s critics, Jerry’s homosexuality has degenerated from his isolation and alienation. (Taehyung, 2000) However, Jerry lives with his neighbours in a rooming house; he does not make contact with any of them, and he even discards the landlady’s approaches. A good evidence of his isolation is his two empty picture frames; he has no friend and no family member and even no parents’ picture to put it in them. For Kim Taehyung, the rooming house is but a miniature which has a strong resemblance with our life style of apartment, where people do not know each other even if they live closely. (Ibid.)

Jerry lives in a friendless world, and the only creature which looks for his affection is the landlady’s dog. Jerry is indifferent and he reacts in a pitiless way vis-à-vis the dog’s friendly attacks. Thus Jerry’s decision to kill the dog is due to his misunderstanding of the dog’s behaviour. Because of the dog’s experience, Jerry becomes aware that “the truth could be not true and the false could be true. Cruelty also could be acted as expression of love as if Jerry’s kindness for the dog is not true love.” (Ibid.)

For Jerry, the dog and his lady are physically similar- the story of the dog is a lesson for Jerry about the nature and importance of human interaction and communication, which was hostile at the beginning. Coles Editorial Board comment on the story of the dog: “Every day when Jerry tries to enter the house, tries to enter the dog’s world, to cross the boundaries of his territory...” (Coles Editorial Board, 1981: 3). With time, Jerry’s attitude towards the dog changes from enmity to friendship, especially when he has nearly killed him with poison. Acquaintance is established gradually; and each of them is seeking the other’s love, however fear prevented the establishment of relationship between them at first. In effect, Jerry expresses this feeling when he says: “we neither love nor hurt because we do not try to reach each other.”(p. 1994). Though this compromise of indifference, the dog attempts to make a real contact and gain Jerry’s satisfaction and love.

Indifference is reflected in Peter towards Jerry, when the latter tickles Peter. At the beginning of the play, when Jerry looks for a new relationship, Peter decides to leave him and go back home. Jerry grows to be angry; he punches Peter on the arm out of the bunch. Now, their relationship turns into antagonism. The two characters fight for the possession of the bench. The

play ends with the death of Jerry, who impales himself in the knife held by Peter. The violence which is resorted to at the end of *The Zoo Story* led some critics to classify the play among the American regeneration through violence, as it is well explained by Richard Slotkin and as reported by Lisa M. S. Bailey. Slotkin is convinced that: “regeneration ultimately became the means of violence, and the myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring metaphor of the American experience.” (Slotkin, 2003: 33). This idea is confirmed by the critic Lisa M. Siefker Bailey when she announces that Albee’s *The Zoo Story* participates in this tradition. Bailey thinks that when Albee allows Jerry to commit suicide, he aims at instilling in his audience the idealistic American call to act in order to change the world. (Ibid. 33-4)

C- Wealth and Poverty; or Culture Clash and Class Differences:

Peter and Jerry are two men different in age, status, educational level and social class. Peter is a “have” and Jerry, an outcast poor and young drifter, is a “have not”. Throughout the play, we notice confrontation and indifference. In fact, Jerry and Peter represent two different social classes and express the social injustice of the period.

Through Peter’s answers to Jerry’s questions, we know that Peter works in a publishing house and that he earns \$ 18.000 per year; whereas according to what Jerry recounts, he is a tramp: jobless, homeless and poor. Jerry is neither happy nor satisfied of his situation and status in his society. Throughout the play, he aims at changing his condition and his community’s. Truly, his story of the dog may be considered as an outburst or a revolt to convince people, like Peter, to try human contact. He wonders why individuals are so reticent and indifferent; every person is living in a kind of a human zoo. Indeed, Jerry views society’s structure as a jail which can surpass through regeneration by virtue its inhabitants’ animalistic capacity. Through his experiments, Jerry discovers that any society can realize this through communication.

Jerry longs for communication and while he meets Peter, he confesses to him: “But every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really *talk*, like to get to know somebody, know all about him” (p. 1986). When Jerry comes to establish a dialogue with Peter, he breaks the obstacle that exists between the two social classes from which the two men are issued. He is reluctant about his

position in the American society and the position of his neighbours. Therefore, he struggles to have a better place in among his fellow men. Like Camus's conqueror, Jerry wants his sacrifice to be historicized, since history is at least certain. He mentions that to Peter at the beginning of the play when he tells to him the story of the zoo; "You'll read about it in the newspapers tomorrow, if you don't see it on your TV tonight" (p.1986)

The American society is divided into three main classes: upper, middle and lower. Further, the middle-class is also divided into lower and upper-middle-class, Jerry wonders: "Say, what's the dividing line between upper-middle-class and lower-upper-middle-class?" (p. 1987). Peter couldn't find an answer to this question perhaps because he is not interested in the other classes, or he doesn't understand the context of the question, when he answers: "My dear fellow, I ..." (1987) Jerry feels as if Peter is patronizing him and indeed Peter confesses that for this reason, he apologizes, "*(unhappily)* Was I patronizing? I believe I was; I'm sorry. But, you see, your question about the classes bewildered me." (p. 1987). But Jerry persists in keeping communication with Peter in order to go out of his isolation and social cage and so make contact with other social classes. To realize his aspiration, Jerry uses all means to attract Peter's attention when he tries to raise pity in Peter when he tells about his bad living conditions. Jerry talks about the rooming-house where he lives with other people of different races. Peter seems surprised and ignorant of such living when he asks Jerry: "Why ... why do you live there?" (p. 1988)

Peter has a good position in society; he lives with his wife and two daughters, in a beautiful and well-furnished house. He has an interesting job with an important salary. When Jerry comes to hear all about Peter's life, he seems to be jealous about him because of his precarious situation. Jerry is a tramp and a poor man who has little possessions. His private property is very limited since he is able to list it off. Indeed, emptiness of the picture frames stands for the emptiness in Jerry's life. Hence, he wants to fill his empty existence with new friends and acquaintances.

Jerry directs the conversation; he seems active whereas Peter is passive. Peter is just a sample of the American society's passivity, and so he presents a threat to it. In an interview with B. J. Mann, Albee argues: "I find the passivity of American society constantly growing, getting more

dangerous” (Mann, 2003: 129). Jerry is aware that social contact is essential to break the cages where the different American social classes live. To achieve his purpose, he resorts to violence, first when he attempts to poison the dog, and then while punching Peter out of the bench. Finally, he participates in the murder-suicide act, which results from the lack of understanding and real contact between him and Peter. Accordingly, misunderstanding and failure of communication between the two characters stand for the different social classes in America. Conversation in *The Zoo Story* mirrors the differences that exist between the upper class and the lower class in the American society.

III- Characterisation

The play is a dialogue between two characters, Jerry, the outcast, and Peter, the conformist bourgeois. Jerry and Peter engage in a skirmish which results, according to Allan Lewis, in self-annihilation of one. Their conversation reveals progressively the character’s personality and private life. The play seems to be a series of questions from the part of Jerry and answers from Peter’s. This dialogue is real and natural, and according to the same critic, the play is not a search for communication since the two characters always communicate. He explains:

The play has been regarded as a search for communication. It is hardly that, for these two men always communicate, always touch one another, first through words and ideas, then with bodily contact, and finally with the knife, the instrument that symbolizes life but brings death.” (Lewis, 1970: 83-4)

A-Peter

Peter is a reticent; yet he reveals to Jerry a number of facts about himself and his family. Accordingly, through his answers to Jerry’s questions, we come to know that Peter is a married man with two daughters. He has two parakeets, two T.V. sets, an apartment and an annual income of \$18.000. He works in a publishing house. He is an intellectual who has conventional literary opinions, and he practices with his wife birth control. At the beginning of the play, Peter reveals many details about his private life. He is a well-mannered man, respectful of others’ rights and he is the representative of the insiders of modern society. In fact, he is a conformist. Jerry thinks that Peter lives a comfortable and a happy life with his family and at work. However, Peter gets away from his family each Sunday to New York’s Central Park to read his book there. Sunday is the day

of rest so instead of staying with his wife and daughters at home, he escapes to go into his cage; that of the Park, or more specifically that of the book. Peter's preference of his isolation, as it is already mentioned before, reveals his absurdity because an absurd man is for all time involved in choice. Real relationship and affection do not interest him; he just lives with self-satisfaction. He does not love from all his heart; he does not loose himself in feelings. Peter's separation in from his family leads Jerry to call Peter's family a little zoo for the reason that everyone lives in his own cage, separated by bars of indifference and loneliness from each other. In fact, Peter's isolation, loneliness, empty existence, and solitary life from his family and his society are described through the image of the zoo.

Peter is said to be the contented vegetable, and the mark of the vegetable is shown through the book, Peter's intellectual escape: "Peter is an ordered and complete existence, and, as he indicates in his conversation, he would very much prefer that Jerry not be included in it, even temporarily." (Coles Editorial Board, 1981: 2). This is the real state of Peter, but there is something that remains attractive in Jerry's conversation; the theme of the zoo. Peter finds this theme interesting because it reflects his own situation. Peter confesses: "Well, I had my own zoo there for a moment with ... hee, hee, the parakeets getting diner ready, and the... ha, ha, whatever it was, the ..." (p. 1996)

Peter lives under protection of his own ordered existence, away from conflicts, danger, upset, physical or emotional untidiness, in isolation avoiding human contact. His refusal to get any relation or contact with anyone is expressed in many passages, and the first sentences of the play are good evidence. In addition, Peter usually repeats some words, expressions and even sentences where he reveals his will to be alone. When Jerry asks him if he minds to talk, Peter answers: "Why ... no, no." (P: 1986), and he is asked if he minds being asked some questions, Peter responds: "Oh, I don't mind at all, really." (P: 1986) Indeed, Peter confesses that he refuses to tell Jerry anything, "I'm ... I'm normally ... uh ...reticent" (p: 1987). To discover the name of Peter, Jerry would carry a great deal of conversation with Peter, and he introduces himself simultaneously. Until now, Peter is conversing with certain reluctance, mainly when Jerry tells Peter about the landlady and her dog,

Peter cries out: "I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE. I don't understand you, or your landlady, or her dog" (P: 1995)

Peter is an absurd man since he does not care for what goes around him. According to Camus, the absurd man sees that all deeds, passion and thoughts are insignificant. It is apparent that though Peter knows that struggle is futile; he fights for the bench. Jerry wonders:

Why? You have everything in the world you want; you've told me about your home, and your family, and your own little zoo. You have everything, and now you want this bench. Are these the things men fight for? Tell me, Peter, is this bench, this iron and this wood, is this your honor? Is this the thing in the world you'd fight for? Can you think of anything more absurd? (p. 1997)

What is more absurd is the fact that he persists in defending the bench. Indeed, Peter is an absurd man given that he is aware of his situation when he admits to Jerry that: "I'm a responsible person, and I'm a GROWN UP" (p. 1998). Struggle without hope is what defines his life because he knows that the bench can never be his. His doggedness causes his own destruction at the end of the play; as he participates in the murder-suicide act. This end may be a solution to Peter's present problem in view of the fact that he always prefers to be alone in his own world without people's disturbance. Hence, the prison or the cage, which symbolizes the zoo, will help him to find his freedom, and simultaneously to get rid of the intruder. The case of Peter can be compared to the clerk or politician, two absurd men according to Camus who are aware of the meaninglessness of their struggle. Still, they maintain to live consistently and with integrity in the present moment. What is shared between the two absurd men and Peter are the three characteristics cited by Camus: revolt, freedom and passion. These characteristics vehicle immediacy; it means that the absurd man focuses his energies on the present moment, on himself and on the people around him.

What Peter looks for in the present time is peace of mind. He wants Jerry to leave him alone inside his confined world; the book. Peter has revolted against Jerry's intrusion and fights for the bench, which is neither his nor Jerry's. Peter expresses alienation and a kind of hate towards Jerry, so he finds himself unable to accede into Jerry's world. In fact, Jerry's stories do not interest him. He feels a certain freedom in finding difficulty in entering Jerry's world, since for him his freedom consists in his alienation.

However, it is likely as if Peter is one character of Jerry's story of the zoo; or it may be its epilogue seeing as Peter's story is the last to be told or rather acted out by Jerry. It is evident that this is part of Jerry's plan that ends in a suicide-murder act, in which Peter is involved unwillingly. Once Jerry dies, Peter will be caught and put inside a real cage for years or maybe for the rest of his life. Peter, in fact, lives all his life inside cages; according to Maria Elena Ohle: "Peter lives isolated in his social class and has made himself a second cage on the bench." (Elena Ohle, n. d.). And possibly he will be caged in a third confined space, which is a real prison.

B- Jerry

Jerry is presented by as being a man in his late thirties, dressed carelessly, once muscular and handsome. He is a weary man, and his weariness may come from his living in a world devoid of meaningful human relationship. In reality, he lives in a state of isolation and alienation; therefore he is desperately looking for a meaningful conversation. In fact, he is the character who starts the dialogue. He pronounces the opening sentences of the zoo. It is clear, from the very beginning, that Jerry is looking for someone to listen to him, an audience. Indeed, he wants to communicate several things, and Peter is the one he meets first after his return from the zoo. Peter, who refuses any communication, is attracted by the story told by Jerry. Even though he seems to disturb Peter; Jerry persists in what he comes for, that is, to tell the story of the zoo. We notice that Jerry plays the role of a narrator, and Peter is his audience. Lisa M. Siefker Bailey stresses this point and insists on the fact that Jerry's stories are planned through his preparation of the path to the story of the dog by telling Peter other short stories; "He then uses a series of shorter stories to prepare his audience for the story of the dog"; and "Carefully, and calculatedly, Jerry focuses on the execution of his plan." (Bailey, 2003:38), Jerry says: "Because after I tell you about the dog, do you know what then? Then ... then I'll tell you about what happened at the zoo" (p. 1991). What is noteworthy is that each time Jerry speaks, he refers to his plan. For example, when he tells the story of the dog to Peter, he says: "I decided: First, I'll kill the dog with kindness, and if that doesn't work ... I'll just kill him." (p. 1992)

It is worth mentioning that Jerry tells and plays out his stories. Accordingly, he can be himself, a narrator and an actor. If we consider Camus's types of absurd man, we can say that when he plays different roles, Jerry becomes absurd. Further, he can be a writer who invents different stories, and in this case Jerry can even be considered as an absurd creator. In fact, most of the play represents his creation. He is so talkative, and Peter confesses that: "You're ... you're full of stories, aren't you?" (p. 1991). Just to mark a point, while Jerry is telling his stories, Peter is listening unwillingly, but when Jerry mentions the zoo, Peter wants to hear it: "Yes, yes, by all means; tell me what happened at the zoo." (p. 1996) Now, Jerry has attracted his audience attention to his plan. Subsequently, he carries on playing his roles till the end of the play.

Before he tells his story, Jerry starts questioning Peter, and once he discovers a great number of facts about Peter's private life; he reveals his own life to his audience, Peter. Jerry is cautious when he tries to know his interlocutor before he confesses personal matters. In fact, the second part of the play is Jerry's confession, in which he tells about his little possessions, his parents, his childhood, and later the story of the landlady and her dog. His personal experiences with his neighbours in the rooming house; the landlady and the dog lead him to look for real human contact. At first, he decides to go to the zoo, and once there, he realizes to what extent man's situation can be paralleled to that of the animals inside the zoo, being surrounded by bars in individual cages. Jerry satirizes Peter's manners, which he compares to those of animals inside a zoo. Peter, without doubt, is not the only American who behaves in such a way. Consequently, the play is a social criticism, which exposes the faults and the weaknesses of the American society.

Being a planner of the story, Jerry wants to apply his theory on humans. In addition, Jerry is fed up of his isolation, so he wants to go and search acquaintances. Bailey puts more stress on this point when she affirms that: "Jerry ... exists on the margins of society." (Ibid. 35). It stipulates that Jerry is marginalized by the members of his community. In fact, no one in the rooming house knows him and he ignores who are his neighbours; Jerry admits: "In the front room, there's somebody living there, but I don't know who it is. I've never seen who it is. Never. Never ever." (p. 1988). He declares again: "I don't know any of the people on the third floor and the second floors"

(p. 1990). Jerry's indifference towards his neighbours may be explained by the fact that Jerry has no friend, no relative, no siblings and no parents, so he is accustomed to loneliness.

What strikes Peter is the fact that Jerry's picture-frames are empty; however Jerry finds that normal and ordinary: "I don't have any pictures of anyone to put in them, and, "... and I have no feeling ... your first name?" (p. 1989). The empty picture frames reflect the emptiness in Jerry's existence. Jerry never gets worried about his past; even if it concerns family matters. For him, his contact with Peter is more important in the present moment. The stress on immediacy, which is a characteristic of the absurd, suggests the absurdity of Jerry.

If we analyze Jerry from another angle, we notice that Jerry is absurd because he plays several roles, the fact which is central to Camus's ideal of the absurd man. For Camus, an actor always tries to express himself and be understood. What is counted for him is the quantity of different experiences he lives instead of the quality and value of a long or an eternal life. Camus believes that the absurd man acts rather than fully lives when he plays out particular emotions. Jerry in *The Zoo Story* behaves as if he cares for Peter just to sustain contact with him, and he creates a certain friendliness that will keep him out of his isolation. Furthermore, Jerry is always prudent and controls himself in order not to be lost in affection. Camus asserts that the absurd man cannot commit himself fully to any activity, but awareness of one's actions is extremely futile. In fact, Jerry shows love and sociability to Peter in order to maintain the contact. First, because he tells many details about his private life (the death of his parents, the little objects he possesses, his homosexual act, his experience with the landlady and her dog and about his last visit to the zoo.) He aims at gaining Peter's affection, yet he knows that Peter will never get his own.

It happens that after he tells the story of the dog; he treats Peter as a friend; "Yes, Peter; friend" (p. 1993). He knows that he has already failed to gain the affection of the dog, so he hopes to gain Peter's. Then, he explains to Peter why he looks for someone's love, and this is his justification: "...it's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS ... don't you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. With a bed, with a cockroach, with a mirror ..." (p. 1994) Jerry starts with the landlady's dog,

which he considers as a friend: “Man is a dog’s best friend, remember” (p. 1994) Jerry thinks that the dog’s love is deliberately sexual because he believes that “it’s an old dog ... it’s certainly a misused one ... almost always has an erection ... of sorts” (p. 1991) It is possible that homosexuality is still existent in Jerry. Some critics argue that when Jerry tickles Peter may be an evidence of homosexuality, or at least it indicates minimal emotional contact made to attract Peter’s attention.

Allan Lewis is one of the critics who believe that Jerry’s death by stabbing symbolizes sexual relations. Lewis argues: “... the knife may represent a macabre love affair of latent homosexual relations” (Lewis, 1970: 83). This kind of love affair is explained by Camus to be animalistic and that absurd men follow their instinctive sexual impulses over which they have little control. To explain this point, we go back to the idea that Jerry is an actor, and according to Camus, the actor has only the tools of his body and voice for elucidating inner states, which is the case of Jerry, playing out his feelings. Really, Jerry confesses: “I think I was very much in love ... maybe just with sex.... And now; oh, oh, do I love the little ladies; really, I love them.” (p. 1990). We notice a contradictory attitude in Jerry’s behaviour; while he confesses that he loves ladies; he rejects the landlady’s advances.

IV- Setting: New York’s Central Park

The play is set on a park bench in Central Park in New York. This place is a free space where people from different social classes could meet. A New-Yorker artist made an exhibition in the ‘The Gates’ of Central Park announces: “There are no official opening events. There are no invitations. There are no tickets ... If anyone tries to sell you a ticket, do not buy it. This will be an act of fraud because no tickets are needed. Central Park is a public space open and free to all people.” (Ohle, n. d.)

Albee has chosen New York’s Central Park on purpose since it is a miniature of the city of New York, or even the United States of America at large. In this city, people know and hear about the others’ existence, but they never try to make any contact with their neighbours, nor with the people in the external world. The rooming-house, in which Jerry lives like many New Yorkers,

symbolizes a human zoo. People are separated from each other by bars of fear and indifference. Being aware of this and once in Central Park, Jerry accuses Peter as being imprisoned in his individual zoo. Albee has been inspired once he visited New York's rooming-houses, where people from different societies and races live together, in very bad conditions. Jerry, one of them, wants to get out of his own cage, and the key is social contact. Contrary to Jerry, Peter lives in a double-caged world: being isolated in his social class, and constructing his own cage through the book, in Central Park.

The Zoo Story is the zoo of both Jerry and Peter. The former is aware of his condition, and so he desires to change it and go out of his cage. He becomes anxious in front of his present situation; especially of the senseless his existence. Once he visits the zoo, Jerry finds much affinity that exists between the life of the animals inside their cages (separated from each other by iron bars) and the life of people living together in the same society, but separated by bars of indifference and isolation. Indeed, Jerry "went to the zoo to find out more about the way people exist with animals, and the way animals exist with each other." (p. 1996) But what is striking is that the zoo represents and duplicates to a certain extent the world in which the two characters live.

To go out of his cage, Jerry tries contact, first with the landlady's dog, then with Peter. What is noticed is that each time Jerry wants to make any contact, he fails, and this is proved when Jerry tells the story of the dog: "We had made many attempts at contact, and we had failed. The dog has returned to garbage, and I to solitary but free passage." (p. 1994). Since Jerry can't get contact with anyone in the rooming-house, he looks for it elsewhere; in New York's Central Park. Unfortunately, in this public space communication fails, since understanding has never been reached by the two characters. In fact, the play ends with a suicide-murder in which Peter and Jerry take part. Coles Editorial Board state that *The Zoo Story* is not only about the violent nature of human life in a large impersonal city but "about mankind in general, about how men build emotional and material barriers between themselves and other men, choosing to live in destructive spiritual isolation from each other." (Coles Editorial Board, 1981: 7); and concerning violence in Central Park, they add: "This remains so even though assaults really do occur in Central Park, even though the West

Seventies do contain apartments for the affluent and the lower East Side is a cauldron of human misery.” (Ibid.) Central Park lies in the heart of Manhattan; from the north it is surrounded by Harlem, which is a district where many blacks and Puerto-Rican families and other poor people live. It is also surrounded by Upper East Side and the Upper West Side, and Central Park may be a good place of meeting of these different populations as it is the case with Peter and Jerry, who represent different social classes and intellectual levels.

Even though there are some references to the past and the future, most of the play recounts the first encounter of Jerry and Peter, then their conversation and finally their physical contact and Jerry’s death. This explains the circular structure of play, which starts and ends with Peter being alone in New York’s Central Park. One of Albee’s critics, Maria-Elena Ohle, argues that there is no reference to time in the play, and that it has a timeless meaning; she reports: “the play could have taken place in former time or even at present; his (Albee’s) play is not bound to time” (Op. Cit.). That is the play deals with no specific time; there is no precision, or it may be explained in the way this play can be transferred and lived out at any time, even in our millennium. Being timeless, the play suggests universality; it can happen at any time and in any society in the world.

However, Jerry aims at creating a memorable story in the present moment and feels like forget about the past. According to Camus, the artist lives for the present, and of all the artists, the actor’s (Jerry’s in *The Zoo Story*) fame has the shortest life-span and his fame dies with his death, Camus states: “But all kinds of fame are ephemeral” (Camus A., 1955: 74). Jerry wants to be the narrator, the actor and even more all at a time. Camus stresses this point when he points out: “In three hours, the actor may be Iago or Alcester, Pedro or Gloucester. In this short-lived passage, he makes them born and die on the four metre square stage” (Ibid.). Indeed this idea is well explained, dealing with Jerry in *The Zoo Story*, by Lisa M. Siefker Bailey argues, “He (Jerry) plays Horatio and Hamlet and Claudius and Gertrude all at the same time” (Bailey, 2003: 37).

Since the present is Jerry’s only interest, and that is well illustrated when he shows that he doesn’t care anymore about the past, especially about his parent’s death, he admits: “But that was a long time ago, and I have no feeling about any of it that I care to admit to myself. Perhaps you can

see, though, why good old Mom and good old Pop are frameless.” (p. 1989). In reality, Jerry wants what he comes for, that is, to get human contact. He asks Peter: “What’s your name? Your first name?” (Ibid). From the one hand, Jerry seeks Peter’s attention and to gain fame and grandeur at that moment. On the other hand, Jerry intends to manipulate the way the story of the zoo becomes historicized. He asks Peter: “Do you think I could sell the story to the *Reader’s Digest* and make a couple of hundred bucks for *The Unforgettable Character I’ve Ever Met? Huh?*” (p. 1994-1995). Jerry is aware of the importance of the media in his country, so he wants to write and sell a newsworthy dramatic story. To make himself an unforgettable character, he enacts the events of the zoo. His awareness is confirmed in the following declaration: “You’ll read about it in the papers tomorrow, if you don’t see it on your T.V. tonight.” (p. 1986)

V- Language and Style in *The Zoo Story*

The Zoo Story is circular in structure. It ends nearly as it begins, but through the intensification of the situation of the two characters. It has a bad and a sad end. At the beginning, Peter sits alone on a bench in Central Park; by the end of the play, he is still alone but he is ready to escape because he has committed a murder. The characters’ situation is intensified by Jerry’s bad management of his plan, by urging Peter to communicate with him, even if he knows that Peter is a reticent man. Briefly, Jerry’s absurd behaviour and Peter’s alienation and absurd struggle for the bench led the play to a tragic end.

While reading *The Zoo Story*, we feel that the play is a story within a story. Albee is the first narrator; he introduces the characters of his play and tells his story. Whereas Jerry is the second narrator, who is telling his audience (Peter) several short stories within Albee’s. Many critics believe that Jerry represents Albee in *The Zoo Story*. In other words, Albee wants to transmit his message to people who live similar situations as that of his two characters, through Jerry. The latter seems prepared to execute Albee’s prepared plan and follow it minutely. What is noticed also is that Albee’s story is the frame story in which Jerry’s story is included. That is, we have two told stories, the frame one (which is Albee’s) and the central one, which is told and acted out by Jerry. Otherwise explained, Albee wrote *The Zoo Story* and Jerry played it out.

The Zoo story seems to be ironical; it is clearly adopted by the play's protagonist, Jerry who pronounces: "I am a *permanent transient*, and my home is the sickening roominghouses on the West Side of New York City, which is the greatest city in the world. Amen" (p. 1995). Most of Jerry's statements are ironical and so the play as a whole has an ironical tone, since it treats the animalistic side of human beings. Indeed, in *The Zoo Story*, people behave like animals; Peter's behaviour by the end of the play is good evidence. Another episode which expresses irony in the play is the death of Jerry. The latter's playing the role of a hero, in the Aristotelian sense of the word, is what leads him to his tragic flaw. In other words, while Jerry plays of the role of a hero is ironically what destroys him.

Moreover, *The Zoo Story* is also satirical; for Jerry lives in a crumbling house in Columbus Avenue, in a rooming house where human contact is nearly absent. In these roominghouses, different American and non-American families live but they ignore each other, here Albee is satirizing the American society and especially the American Dream. What is notable is that Albee seems desperate. He stresses, through Jerry, the need for man to break out his isolation and to stay in contact with people that surround him. Albee calls for the revival of love. Satire is also shown in the conflict or battle that takes place between two different social classes inside the same society; that is between the middle-class American and the outcast of society, so Jerry wonders: "What's the dividing line between upper-middle-middle class and lower-upper-middle class?" (p. 1987)

The clash grows between the two men; it starts with discussion and goes through psychological confession to the physical struggle for the "wood and metal" bench. Throughout the play, we mark the recurrence of such words as: zoo, animal, and dog because Jerry wants to draw similarities that exist between the animals he has seen in the zoo and individuals in society. Truly, the play exposes the animalistic behaviour of man especially Peter's manners. At the beginning, the conversation between the two characters starts with monosyllables, and then it grows to a flow of words, and later with long confessional stories. Jerry speaks without stopping; his speech is delivered when he recounts the passionate story of the dog and the landlady. We feel as if Jerry is going to tell the whole of his life. Lewis expresses it as follow: "the opening encounter, hesitant,

slow-paced, monosyllabic, mounts skilfully with energetic flow of words, the rhythms changing from the curt staccato interplay to long confessional passages, until the final physical shoving for possession of the bench.” (Lewis, 1970: 83). This technique is used to attract little by little the attention of his interlocutor. Since the two characters can not reach mutual understanding, Jerry tries physical contact while tickling Peter, and as that fails again, he decides to end up with his plan by impaling himself on the knife held by Peter.

We notice that before Jerry starts his conversation with Peter, he walks towards the latter slow-paced and hesitant. After verbal contact is set, he tries physical contact when he tickles Peter, and he wants to dispossess him of his bench. Finally, the two characters are in contact with each other with the knife with which Jerry is killed or suicides. Allan Lewis rejects the fact that the play is a search for communication, but: “ It is hardly that, for these two men always communicate, always touch one another, first through words and ideas, then with bodily contact, and finally with the knife ...” (Ibid. 84)

When Jerry’s aim through his conversation is to show to Peter that man’s life is similar to that of an animal inside the zoo, he changes the diction when he treats Peter as, “MISTER”, to “friend”, to “comic person”, to “ridiculous”, to “vegetable”, and finally to “an animal”. He addresses Peter always by following his plan, which is to show to Peter that he is an animal after all. Further, he believes that Peter lives inside his own cage like those animals he has seen in the zoo. Because of Peter’s absurd behaviour; he will be put inside a real cage for some years or maybe for the rest of his life.

Besides, Jerry is the second narrator after the main narrator, Albee, so he builds his language on how he will convince his audience, starting with Peter. Such expressions as: “I’ll tell”, “Let me tell you”, and “what I am going to tell you” are recurrent and Jerry’s stories are punctuated by Peter’s reactions, but the dialogue seems to be senseless. In this sense, Maria-Elena Ohle argues, “Peter and Jerry talk at cross-purpose” (Ohle, n. d.). In other words, the two characters try to discuss effectively, but they never reach mutual understanding. What is also noteworthy is that the play

seems to be more Jerry's monologue than a dialogue between two characters; there where the absurd lies according to Maria Elena Ohle.

Albee is convinced that a play is made the way music is, and he has proved that through our sample here, *The Zoo Story*. The formal cunning is remarkable beneath his use of colloquial language, in his precision and his intricate sense of organization. Albee, in the same interview with B. J. Mann, argues: "One of things I tell my students is that to be a playwright is to be a composer and that you must be able to hear precisely.Now I wanted to be a composer when I was a kid, and I never got that. So, I always think when I'm writing a play, I'm writing a piece of chamber music" (Mann, 2003: 131). What is obvious is that Albee is a friend to many composers who have prepared him to build his work in a strong way.

To fulfil his piece of music, Albee makes use of tautologies which are similar to a refrain in a song. So, a tautology is unnecessary repetition of the same idea in a different way. When Jerry tells the story of the dog to Peter and how they made contact for the first time, he says:

The beast was there ... looking at me. And, you know, he looked better for his scrape with the nevermind. I stopped; I looked at him, he looked at me. I think ... I think we stayed a long time that way ... still, stone-statue ... just looking at one another. I looked more into his face than he looked into mine. I mean, I can concentrate longer at looking into dog's face than a dog can concentrate at looking into mine, or into anybody else's face, for that matter. But during that twenty seconds or two hours that we looked into each other's face, we made contact." (p. 1993)

This long paragraph of repetitions could be summarized into a single sentence. Jerry may well say for instance: "We (Jerry and the dog) have been looking into each other's face for a long time and finally we made contact." But Jerry repeats the word "Look" many times to insist on the importance of their contact, especially that very moment which he considers as an interesting passage in his life. Indeed, we feel the musicality of the passage through the rehearsal of the verb "to look"; it is repeated ten times. It is as if we hear a song which deals with "looking" or "looked". Albee himself believes that: "When I'm writing a play, I hear it and see it as a performed piece on stage. (Ibid.), and he admits that: "Drama is a heard experience much more than a seeing experience" (Ibid. 132)

Even if *The Zoo Story* is said to be a modern morality play, it is also classified among the range of the plays said to be absurd. It is because it conveys to the characteristics exposed by the

critic Martin Esslin, among them: the play's method of expression and the presence of poetic images which are full of symbolism. Through these poetic images, we come to communicate the reality of our world with its ambiguity and its evocation of multiple elements of sense association. The poetic images in *The Zoo Story* will be studied and the significance of each image will be explained.

The poetic images in *The Zoo Story* have simple symbolism, that is, each meaning may be observed easily and these images play an important role to mirror the hidden absurdity in modern life. Kim Taehyung included in his article Christopher Innes's explanation of the poetic images and the way they should be expressed: "Poetic vision can be expressed through mythic images and dream states, subjective explorations or existential universalization, symbolism and ritual." (Taehyung, 2000). The most significant poetic images in *The Zoo Story* are: the zoo, the bench time magazine, the empty picture frames, the rooming house, the dog's act and the death of Jerry. These images are employed to show the absence of real relationship between people and the futility of our existence.

The zoo, the main story which has been told by Jerry, is without doubt the greatest metaphor for life. Peter, the-would-be responsible father of a family, prefers to pass his Sunday afternoons in New York's Central Park alone. He is living in a cage of alienation and indifference. Jerry is aware of Peter's situation which is similar to many others', especially after his visit to the zoo. When he comes to converse with Peter, he aims at telling him to what extent people's life is analogous to that of the animals inside their cages in the zoo. But the greatest reality that is hidden behind the zoo is that the world at large is a zoo.

Another poetic image is well portrayed through the rooming house. However, Jerry is living in a rooming house closely with other people; he doesn't try to make any contact with any of them. What is noticed is that his isolation and alienation led him to homosexuality, which is a similar case to that of the landlady's selfish way of thinking; to satisfy her sexual desires. There is a certain self-centred demand and a selfish way of thinking; although people are connected in their residence.

Indeed, the rooming house resembles strongly to a life style of apartment and densely populated district, where people have no concern with the next door neighbour in spite of living closely.

Jerry's two empty picture frames is a beautiful image which reflects the emptiness in Jerry's life since he has no parents, no friends and relatives to put their pictures in them. Siefker Bailey, one of Albee's critics, believes that: "If he can fill the need, fill the frames, he can make a connection that will overshadow the alienation of his existence" (Bailey, 2003: 35)

Most of Albee's critics focus their attention on Jerry's death, which generally symbolizes a Christ-like sacrifice. Albee thinks that in order to save the American society, it needs somebody's sacrifice and that was Jerry's. His death may be an intentional act of protest against the wrongs of the city, the injustice of the system, the bourgeois values, the isolation of man and the feeling of void in life. Jerry's death is seen as a hero in the Christian tradition. In reality, Jerry's death is but a solution to the absurdity of his existence, and certainly the absurd dies with his death. Briefly, the death of Jerry is an allegory of Christian redemption in which Jerry martyrs himself to demonstrate the value of meaningful communication, to save the American society.

VI- Conclusion

In general, *The Zoo Story* is made to reveal the absurdity in modern life. Esslin thinks that the play belongs to the Theatre of the Absurd because of its attack on the American optimism. In fact, Albee believes that Americans can change their society for the better by abandoning their illusions and breaking their bars of indifference and alienation, and to be able to establish true human relationship. It is unmistakeable that *The Zoo Story*'s message is not meant only for the American society, but it touches all the societies in the world. In other words, in order to overcome the absurdity of life, we must break the walls of selfishness, indifference, reticence and fear, through communication and love. Through Jerry and Peter, Albee incites signs of a sick society and the denial and treason which makes the American Dream suffer. The solution to the characters' situation in *The Zoo Story* is not attained, neither through love, nor escape, nor physical or verbal violence. Finally, we can say that Albee preaches optimism, through the stress on the value, the need and the salvation in human relationships.

Even though Albee has the same message with his contemporaries, his dramatic writing is peculiar and original, especially when he makes use of brilliant language and his fearless search for meaning. It is through language that we can understand what the characters do, say and feel. Albee resorts to metaphorical images, social criticism and visual and verbal invention to reach certain perfection in style.

Chapter IV: LeRoi Jones and his idea of the Absurd

The decade of the sixties witnessed important changes in America; the most important probably was the rise of the black theatre. The latter was one of the phenomena that appeared by the mid-twentieth century; it came with the emergence of the ethnic theatre. This theatre was written by different communities and it was destined for their members. It is not astonishing to say that the blacks were the pioneers. In fact, a great number of playwrights emerged, among them: Willis Richardson, Randolph Edmonds, Langston Hughes and Charles Gilpin.

America in the sixties was the ground for the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement, marked by the manifestations and riots of the blacks in the streets. Accordingly, the black theatre expressed the blacks' struggle for equality. It was inspired by the radical theatre of the thirties, Brecht, Artaud's theatre of cruelty, and the great rituals produced by Genet. The black playwrights converted the theatre to a political weapon. They addressed the white public; their aim was to call out, educate as well as accuse and abuse. Further, they encouraged the blacks and called for awareness and action. Indeed, plays written by Negro playwrights indicate a literary awakening and a source of untapped talent.

Unlike the theatre of the nineteenth century when black's roles were played by white men with blackface comedians, the Negro today has gained his place on stage and represents himself as a black man. The black seeks freedom and equality through theatre. The black theatre shows the Negroes as human beings facing problems as those of the whites. But their problems are more intensified by the pressures of discrimination. The new drama is also inspired from the everyday life of the blacks living in the ghettos; their way of speaking and behaving. One of the playwrights who is regarded as a master of the sixties generation is LeRoi Jones. The latter is the playwright who is part of my interest here in this modest research.

Born in 1934 as Everett LeRoi Jones, Amiri Baraka was a central figure of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s. Throughout his career, Jones was influenced by various social and political movements: the Beats of Greenwich Village in the fifties, the Black Nationalist Movement in the

sixties and Marxism in the seventies. His writing is known for its confrontational methods that highlight the difficulties of the black American experience.

Jones started writing experimental poetry with Allen Ginsberg and Frank O'Hara. He founded Yugen magazine in 1958 and Totem Press to supply an outlet for new verse. But Jones withdrew from the Beat influences with the rise of the civil rights movement and wanted to express his black identity in a direct way. A new awareness of ethnicity and a concern for developing nations was born in him as a result of his visit to Cuba in 1959, where he befriended a great number of artists and writers. In the mid-sixties, Jones began to write fiction, showing his Black Nationalism with *Tales* (1967) and a collection of short stories where he resorts to violent figures as a means for social change. In the 1970s, Jones turned his attention towards Marxism revealing his socialist views.

LeRoi Jones was a member of the studio workshop The Playwrights Unit with the production of his first play *Dutchman* (1964). This play won him the Village Voice Obie Award for its off-Broadway production. Jones wrote also *The Baptism* (1964), *The Toilet* (1964), *The Slave* (1964), *The Death of Malcolm X* (1969), and *The Motion History* (1977). In addition to these plays, Baraka has published several collections of poetry, essay anthologies, studies of black music and a novel. Here in this modest research, the study of the main themes, characters as well as language in *Dutchman* will be dealt with. Before that, here is the summary of the play.

I- The Summary of the Play

Dutchman is possibly the most important play of LeRoi Jones. The one act play is bare and stark for its little means. The play has two main characters: Clay, a twenty-year-old Negro and Lula, a thirty-year-old woman. Clay and Lula engage in a deep and raw conversation on a subway car, which grows increasingly sharp and terse. Lula becomes aggressive and insulting when her advances are politely rejected by Clay. When the latter can no longer resist, he bursts into a long and uncontrollably powerful verbal attack. First, he rejects Lula's abuse and insults, in particular the appellation "middle-class fake white man". Then, he depicts the tortured and conflicted psyche of a black man in America. He wants to kill Lula, but he decides not to do so. Instead, Lula takes out a

switchblade and calmly stabs Clay twice; while other subway riders look on passively. When the corpse of Clay is removed, Lula advances to another Negro who has just entered and sits near him.

II- The Main Themes in *Dutchman*:

The play marks the emergence of Jones's sense of racial awareness. It depicts the way the black man, who speaks out against his oppressors, is teased and destroyed by the white society. Thus, Jones rejects completely the white world, and instead he wants to establish a black community. Simultaneously, he aims at destroying the white culture and building a black one. Furthermore, *Dutchman* is dealing with black manhood and identity, where we find the substitution of aesthetics for action and opposition between language and action. Jones resorts to violence to validate all the previous themes, which he considers as an important factor for changing society. Jones's main themes in *Dutchman* may be summarized into the following: binary categories and racial antagonism, the rejection of the white world, violence, identity, alienation, isolation and the outsider. Other minor themes can be included in these themes.

A- Binary Categories and Racial Antagonism in *Dutchman*:

With *Dutchman*, LeRoi Jones has spouted out his violent and racist statements vis-à-vis the white society. He relies on binary categories such as black versus white, art versus activism, unity versus individualism and self-determination versus domination to explain the racial problem. In effect, we find a direct opposition between language and action and the primacy of action over language and art. Clay wants to counter-attack Lula with his articulate speech; whereas Lula answers with violent actions, especially when she stabs him at the end of the play. What can be said is that through *Dutchman*, Jones aims at reversing the traditional signifiers of black and white. In Western societies, white colour symbolizes purity, goodness, life and light; whereas the black colour signifies impurity, evil, death and darkness. Jones has overturned these significations when he considers that white means sickness, death and absence, while blackness is the aim for which Clay struggles: it is the black identity, his innate being and black culture. Lula, the white woman, is the symbol of death in *Dutchman* when she boldly murders Clay who keeps defending his identity, manhood and culture.

Camus's absurd man lives in contradictions; he rejects any value judgement to maintain life while to live is a value judgement. Clay and Lula are presenting contradictory attitudes; they believe in their goodness and righteousness while they criticize each other negatively and each preaches his own superiority. However, having the feeling of superiority is wrong. Besides, both characters are throwing each other with prejudices and insults, and even vulgarities.

While Clay is trying to build a rhetoric on which he lays his hope to convince the whites, especially Lula, about his difficult condition in the American society, Lula is destroying it. Indeed, Clay's last speech is good evidence; he is preaching Black Nationalism and criticizes Western rationalism. He asks the whites to give the blacks their liberty and stop playing the role of sane people. For Clay, the only way to get rid of the white dominance is to murder them one by one starting with Lula. Clay is relying on violence to defend his position. In Scene II, when he was surrounded by white figures and he is attacked by Lula, he cries out:

[...] you don't have any sense, Lula, nor feelings either. I could murder you now. Such a tiny ugly throat. I could squeeze it flat, and watch you turn blue, on a humble. For dull kicks. And all these weak-faced ofays squatting here, staring over their papers at me. Murder them too. Even if they expected it (p. 1906)

Lula has stopped his oratory and she silenced him once for all when she stabs him at the end of the play. Her purpose is apparent; she aims at destroying what is constructed by Clay.

The two characters wish to attain a goal, to get rid of the outsider. While Lula's desire is reached, Clay's can never be satisfied. He struggles in vain, like Sisyphus, to achieve what is unattainable. Lula resorts to different means in order to fulfil her plan: she provokes Clay once she tries to excite him sexually by touching parts of his body, she offends him with prejudices and insults, and finally she dares murder him while he is delivering his fervent speech. Clay has a plan as well, which consists in demonstrating his manhood and defending his race. Each of the two characters is aware of the other's plan, so both of them aim at obliterating the other's rhetoric. Lula is aware that Clay is looking for change, that is, to change his situation as well as his community's. While Clay endeavours to achieve his scheme, Lula mocks him,

Why're you wearing a jacket and a tie like that? Did your people ever burn witches or start revolutions over the price of tea? Boy, those narrow-shoulder

clothes come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by. A three-button suit. What right do you have to be wearing a three-button suit and striped tie? Your grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard. (p.1901)

Clay is confused in a world that is not familiar to him. He confronts the illusions of the white world, thus he feels a stranger among them because he is free from illusions. In fact, Lula's mockery and vulgarities are so shocking to him. For him, Lula's actions are insignificant. As an absurd man, he is aware that life is but a dream, a brief passage. His revolt at the end of the play suggests his self-overcoming. Consequently, he speaks out his opinion and answers back Lula's provocation, yet he knows that this is futile because victory can never be reached.

However Jones substitutes aesthetics for action; *Dutchman* postulates the primacy of action over language, since the latter is no longer an effective means of communication. At the end of the play, Lula's act triumphs over Clay's speech. Clay resorts to verbal violence to defend his manhood and Lula succeeds to raise Clay's anger and alienation due to her disrespect and rudeness. Both Clay's and Lula's languages are full of hostility, notably Clay's long speech where he calls for murder. This episode is analogous to that of Peter and Jerry in *The Zoo Story*, where Jerry's provocation urged Peter to react aggressively and as a result, he participates in the former's suicide-murder.

Clay falls to achieve black manhood and fails to find his selfhood. Piggford, one of Jones's critics, points out that Jones has no solution to the racial problem once he has explained it in the play. In this sense, the play can be classified among the range of the plays called Absurd because of its exposition of a situation rather than proposing any solution. Clay suggests a resolution to this problem; it is "murder", yet George Piggford, as quoted by Nita N. Kumar, finds Jones's cure in *Dutchman* as a race revolution in opposition to the white dominance. (Kumar, 2003)

What is noteworthy is the binary division between art and action and the primacy of action over language and art. This idea is well illustrated at the end of the second scene, where Clay plays the role of the Black Baudelaire and so he delivers his fanatical speech. With his eloquent language (his only weapon), he addresses Lula and the whites with a satirical tone. Clay thinks that the solution to the neurosis of the black people is this:

A whole people of neurotics struggling to keep from being sane. And the only thing that would cure the neurosis would be your murder. Simple as that. I mean if I murdered you, then other white people would begin to understand me.” (p. 1907).

Clay is an actor whose only tool is his voice with which he reveals his inner state. He can be the artist par excellence; and his creation is meant to manifest his identity. His work (speech) illustrates the divorce of man and the world and the spirit of revolt. After delivering his speech, Clay decides to leave the subway car instead of playing out his plan. Indeed, Clay left the train, but dead. In a few words, what can be said is that what Lula has done is not justified while what Clay has explained can never be realized.

Other binary categories are noticed in the play; they appear by the end of the play, among others: the unity versus individualism and self-determination versus domination. The former binary category is well illustrated in Clay’s reaction to the other passengers in the train; whereas Lula is sustained by the other whites while they conspired with her to get rid of all evidence. The following passage at the end of the play demonstrates this conspiracy;

Clay: (*Bending across the girl to retrieve his belongings*) Sorry, baby, I don’t think we could make it. (*As he is bending over her, the girl brings up a small knife and plunges it into Clay’s chest. Twice. He slumps across her knees, his mouth working stupidly*)

Lula: Sorry is right (*Turning to the others in the car who have already gotten up from their seats*) Sorry is the rightest thing you’ve said. Get this man off me! Hurry, now! (*The others come and drag Clay’s body down the aisle*) Open the door and throw his body out. (*They throw him off*) And all of you get off at the next stop. (... The train apparently stops and all the others get off, leaving her alone in the coach) (p. 1907-1908)

Clay is the hero who is attacked by a white bohemian woman in a train full of silent conspirators. Proceeding through action means that Clay becomes a man; like Camus’s the conqueror, he reacts even though his retaliation is of no use. He confronts a whole community with an eloquent and impressive speech. He tries to show the passengers that he is neither insane nor illogical but rather the whites are. In fact, Lula’s behaviour is good evidence for him. Clay ignores what is behind the silence of the passengers. Certainly, their hush suggests threat and danger. It is until the end of Lula’s plan that Clay comprehends the meaning of their silence. The passengers silence reminds me of that of Aston and Mick in *The Caretaker*, where the two brothers plotted to get rid of Davies.

Clay's situation inside the train is very similar to that of a man in a mysterious universe, which is full of dangers and uncertainties. His reaction suggests his absurdity. Indeed, he keeps his defensive position vis-à-vis his predators till his last moment in life. Clay's words suggest this position as an oppressed in front of Lula and the other passengers, the oppressors. Clay prefers to exploit his poetic genius as a means of defence instead of physical violence. Clay's choice is as a result of his artistic nature "The Black Baudelaire" as Lula admits.

Lula is the only white person who converses with Clay, yet a whole community is behind her. At least, all the passengers in the subway car sustained her in her present situation. In the second scene, Lula and Clay discuss about the people who come into the train. Lula presumes that Clay is afraid of them because they are all whites.

Clay: Wow. All these people, so suddenly. They must all come from the same place.

Lula: Right. That they do.

Clay: Oh? You know about them too?

Lula: Oh yeah. About them more than I know about you. Do they frighten you?

Clay: Frighten me? Why should they frighten me?

Lula: 'Cause you're an escaped nigger. (p. 1904)

It seems that Lula feels more secure and protected after the coming of those white people into the train, mainly when they gather around her. Her last words in Scene II suggest her total confidence in the members of her community. Lula considers Clay as an intruder "an escaped nigger"; nevertheless she spoils Clay's peace with her intrusion. The latter suggests insecurity and threat in Clay's life. Esslin thinks that in modern times, peace is often broken by an intruder. In fact, intrusion which implies uncertainty and insecurity is an essential aspect in the Theatre of the Absurd given that it exposes man's menace and fear.

Clay is different in any way from Lula and his difference is his black colour. It is easier to the whites to get rid of Clay than to get rid of all the passengers by a lonely black man. Therefore, Lula and the passengers think that Clay wants to integrate into the white society because of his clothes and behaviour. As a result they consider him an Uncle Tom. But Clay exploits Uncle Tom's aspect in a revolutionary way, which is a hidden motive for self-protection. His avant-garde conduct is a way to manifest his innermost thoughts. Being an actor, his physical appearance and his voice elucidate his inner state.

In addition, another binary category is observed which consists in Clay's self-determination over Lula's domination. In the first scene, Clay is tempted by Lula's provocation, so that we feel as if Lula has won Clay's love and confidence. However Lula is behaving in a bad way; launching Clay with prejudices and trying to excite him sexually, Clay endures that. Perhaps, Clay's patience suggests Lula's domination. At the opening lines of the play, Lula forces Clay to take part in the conversation against his will. It is clear that Clay is not ready to talk, he confesses: "Well, I'm sorry, lady, but I really wasn't prepared for party talk" (p. 1897), but suddenly Clay changes his mind and decides to converse with Lula, possibly because Lula has excited him;

Lula: No. You're not. What are you prepared for? (*Wrapping the apple core in a Kleenex and dropping it in the floor*)

Clay: (*Takes her conversation as pure sex talk. He turns to confront her squarely with this idea*) I'm prepared for anything. How about you?

Lula: (*Laughing loudly and cutting it off abruptly*) What do you think you're doing?

Clay: What?

Lula: You think I want to pick you up, get you to take me somewhere and screw me, huh? (p. 1897-1898)

Lula attracts Clay to conversation and to participate in playing out her plan. At first, she dominates Clay with her provocative sex talk. Then, she throws him with prejudices which suggest her racist intention; she treats him as a slave like his ancestors were treated by her kinsfolk; "Your grandfather was a slave, he didn't go to Harvard." (p. 1901) Lula mocks Clay and his community as being a people without history; or the black's history is different from that of the whites. She confesses: "And that you are free of your own history. And I am free of my history" (p. 1902) Lula's dominance is shown in her pride of her race and history which are greater from Clay's.

After having a clear idea of Lula's hidden motives, Clay counterattacks Lula's prejudices by defending the black identity and race. He persists in defending them even if that was so difficult in front of the white passengers. His revolt implies awareness of the seriousness of his situation. Now, he is conscious of Lula's pride of her belonging and race, he announces: "Morbidity. Morbidity. You sure you're not an actress? All that self-aggrandizement" (p. 1904). Before delivering his long and obsessive speech, he treats Lula as a senseless woman and he boldly considers her as a woman without feelings. Clay is conscious enough to understand what is the aim of Lula through her sexual

provocation; he spouts out: “You great whore! You fuck some black man, and right away you’re an expert on black people” (p. 1906)

Clay’s self-determination is played out in his final revolutionary outburst. He wants to show to whites as well as to blacks the place that the black American deserves in his society. It means, he aims at convincing the two races. By delivering his delirious speech, Clay tries to call the black men to react against their oppressors, as he has done himself. He preaches violence to shake the blacks’ souls and make them change their situation and be able to sacrifice. For Clay, the only way the blacks should follow to reach emancipation is to exterminate the white race. He cries out; “They’ll murder you [Lula], and have very rational explanations. Very much like your own. They’ll cut your throats, and drag you out to the edge of your cities so the flesh can fall away from your bones, in sanitary isolation” (p. 1907)

B-Ritual Violence as a Means of Change

Being influenced by the Beat Generation, Jones declared that writers should resort to violence in literature. For him, violence will shake out the literary sterility of the 1940 s. The Beat writers were challenging the stagnant literary establishment and the moral code of the country because they perceived themselves as fellow outsiders, so they wanted to look beyond racial barriers. They criticized the political system in America and looked for changing it. In other words, Jones and his fellow writers of the Beat Generation wanted to change the Blacks’ situation through violence. Clay, the representative of Jones, resorts to violence to defend his cause. This technique is explained by Martin Esslin as one aspect of the Theatre of the Absurd. In fact, Clay’s struggle for his manhood suggests his absurdity.

The conversation of the main characters in *Dutchman* is full of prejudices, vulgarity and violence. Lula is incessantly taunting Clay about his repressed identity and oppressed race. She tends to underestimate him. Her violence is expressed verbally, at the beginning, and by the end of the play her violence becomes physical when she stabs Clay with a knife. However, Clay intends to be physically violent, he decides to use words to express his anger and awareness. *Dutchman* expresses Jones’s conception of the ‘Revolutionary Theatre’ whose purpose is not only artistic or

literary, but it also depicts the dark side of the American Dream. The aim of the 'Revolutionary Theatre' is change in view of the fact that it is a theatre of victims, so it aims at emancipating the Black Americans. In his essay 'The Revolutionary Theatre' reported by Abdelhamid Zoubir in his book *The Seamy Side of United States Literature*, Jones declares: "The Revolutionary Theatre should force change, it should be change" (Zoubir, 1993: 120)

Lula resorts to violence to get rid of the outcast, the unknown; she even commits murder. While Lula's aim is to mock Clay and prove the superiority of her race, Clay's purpose is to change his situation as well as his community's. In fact, Lula played out her superiority when she submits Clay to her prejudices and mockery. In the second scene, Clay can no longer resist Lula's insults, so he explodes into a hysteric speech, where he exposes his black skull and he shows his hate for Lula's repugnance. For Clay, to change his present condition, and as a first step he should hate the other race; Lula, the antagonist, admits that when she says: "But you change. (*Blankly*) And things work on till you hate them" (p. 1904) Clay's abhorrence is confirmed while he gushes a series of insults to Lula and her kinsmen. His only hope is to exterminate the white race by murdering them all, starting with Lula whom he treats of being a "whore" and he dismisses her to be a know-nothing, he cries out: "Now you shut the hell up. (*Grabbing her shoulders*) Just shut up. You don't know what you're talking about. You don't know anything. So just keep your stupid mouth closed" (p. 1906)

It is worth mentioning that Clay's violence changes from physical to verbal, the reason may be the fact that physical violence is no longer effective. This alteration resembles to Mick's conduct when he attacks and strikes Davies before he knows him, then he keeps underestimating and insulting him. Once he resorts to physical aggressiveness, he aims at silencing Lula in order to find an opportunity to show up what is in his deep black mind. At first, he grabs her shoulders, and then he "slaps her as hard as he can, across the mouth. Lula's head bangs against the back of the seat. When she raises it again, Clay slaps her again" (p. 1906). This act did not only silence Lula but all the passengers, even the drunk man who was singing. As a result, Clay proceeds to deliver his long passionate speech which is destined to the white race in general.

He rejects Lula's prejudices, being a middle-class fake white man and Uncle Tom, and he announces his freedom to be what he wants and the way he wants it. According to Camus, freedom is one of the characteristics of the absurd man. Clay's freedom, like that of the conqueror, is linked to his political struggle. It teaches him to overcome himself and so be able to speak out his opinion and to face the absurdity and intensity of his life. Therefore, he becomes a man of violent passions; his hatred and anger are expressed. Accordingly, he insults Lula, treating her as a whore, a know-nothing, an irrational woman and an expert of black people. Clay's revolt is focused on the need of his community to their rights and their dignity. When the whites look at the blacks as being insane, Clay answers back by saying that the only cure for black neurosis is to murder all the whites, he confesses: "Crazy niggers turning their backs on sanity when all it needs is that simple act. Murder. Just murder! Would make us all sane" (p. 1907)

Clay is convinced that if the blacks can exterminate the white race; it will be a great change for the better. The aim of Jones through Clay's reaction is to put in plain words what he wants to teach the whites. This idea is well commented in his essay "The Revolutionary Theatre"; "It should stagger through our universe correcting, insulting, preaching, spitting craziness ... but a craziness taught to us in our most rational moments" (Ibid.) In fact, Clay's final outburst is revolutionary. Like Jones, he is advocating violence. By doing so, he is claiming his place in the American society and he also urges his fellow men to react, violently if possible, to change their situation.

C- Alienation, Isolation, and the Outsider in *Dutchman*

Once a student, Jones was perceived as an outsider by his white school mates. It was so touching for him that he created Clay to criticize the whites who regard the black Americans as such. Jones's feeling of alienation and isolation is reflected in Clay, who feels lonely among white passengers in the train. This alienation followed Jones throughout his career; he aligned with the Beat Generation artists, whom he considers as fellow outsiders. Clay is perceived as a stranger by Lula on top of the other passengers. He is different from them in colour, culture and even history, Lula pretends: "And that you are free of your own history. And I am free of my history" (p. 1902)

Lula notices Clay's isolation; she comes to have a discussion with him. It is clear that Lula has a plan to follow. At the beginning, she wants to attract Clay to converse with her. Then, she converses with him in a friendly way; she plays the role of a friend and a lover to Clay. She announces: "If you meet a very close friend who is also with someone like me, we can stand together, sipping our drinks and exchanging codes of lust" (p. 1902). In this sense, we notice that Lula retains self-awareness that keeps her from losing in affection and love. As a seducer, she behaves as if she cares for Clay to keep up her contact with him. Before she comes to conclude her plan, she tends to irritate Clay to justify her final act. To reach her aim, she resorts to insults and prejudices. The latter irritate Clay and he becomes unfriendly. As a result, he counterattacks her with physical violence and then with verbal attack. He becomes self-protective to Lula's primitive attacks. Lula's provocation is similar to that of Jerry in *The Zoo Story*, and Clay's violent reaction is also analogous to that of Peter. Clay's and Peter's acts are justified by the fact that the other raises their anger and alienation with their provocation.

Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, one of Jones's critics, thinks that the typical American outsider is the black educated man, as it is the case of Clay. Ogunyemi believes that Clay is a double outsider: he is an outsider for the blacks because he is separated by his aspirations; and he is an outsider for the whites because of the different nature of his culture. (Ogunyemi, n. d. p. 29) This difference is also exposed in *The Zoo Story*, in which Jerry is considered as an outsider because he is a have not and an illiterate man. Jones stresses this distinction to establish a separate black identity which is dissimilar to that of other Americans. Clay in *Dutchman* wants to preserve these distinguishable aspects by murdering the whites, whom he considers enemies. For Clay, to reach happiness, one must exterminate the white race; his last speech is good evidence. Clay is playing out Jones's ideas which are exposed in his "Revolutionary Theatre". In the same essay Jones confirms: "WHITE BUSINESSMEN OF THE WORLD, DO YOU WANT TO SEE PEOPLE REALLY DANCING AND SINGING??? ALL OF YOU GO UP IN HARLEM AND GET YOURSELF KILLED. THERE WILL BE DANCING AND SINGING, THEN, FOR REAL!!" (Ibid. pp. 121-2)

What can be deduced is that Clay's revolt and alienation is a result of social determinism. That is, Clay's disgust towards Lula is a result of Lula's rudeness, intolerance and disrespect. She treats him as a "middle-class black man", "Uncle Thomas Woolly-Head", "liver-lipped white man" and "black son of a bitch". All these prejudices raise in Clay the feeling of alienation, anger, and courage at the same time. He is courageous to confront Lula's foolishness and the passengers' complicity and open his mind to spit out his opinion about the white people. He thinks that Lula's craziness can be generalized to the whole white race, given that he criticizes Western rationalism. It is worth mentioning that criticism is an important aspect of the Theatre of the Absurd because it satirizes man's discomfort in front of the senselessness of his existence. Clay faces his situation by expressing his racial awareness, analyzing and articulating his condition throughout his outburst of resentment, in spite of his consciousness of the futility of his struggle. Clay's confrontation with the awful reality of his position in society implies his absurdity.

Clay's speech suggests his iconoclasm; he criticizes the whites' set of beliefs and corrupted ideas, especially the ones with which they attack the blacks. Clay feels that he can never integrate into the white society, and specifically into the Western rationalism. For him, Western rationalism is but foolishness. According to C.W.E. Bigsby, Jones's *Dutchman* is a challenge to the question of integration, he points out: "[His] play challenges the whole proposition of integration. The question which he is asking is, 'integration into what?' Western rationalism, 'the great intellectual legacy of the white man'" (Bigsby, n. d.) Clay's will to leave the train by the end of the play is a choice to be alone rather than to be among the irrational whites. That is, he prefers to be an outsider, in isolation than to integrate into Lula's world craziness. Indeed, by the end of the play, he confesses that once the whites view blacks as being insane, he justifies his community's insanity by exterminating the whites. Clay wants to go back to his isolation by showing his alienation and accepting his uniqueness among the white passengers, an outsider to the white society.

III- Characterization

Like *The Zoo Story* and *The Caretaker*, *Dutchman* is economical in its means: a confined space (the subway car) and two characters who are involved in a conversation. The main characters

are Clay, the protagonist and Lula, the antagonist. In addition to the main characters, we find other secondary characters such as: the riders of coach, the conductor, and the young Negro who is introduced at the end of the play. Although they are silent, these characters play a prominent role in showing up the principal characters' thoughts. For instance, the young Negro's entrance exposes the circularity of life while Lula wants to re-play out her plan again with him. The white passengers who entered the sub-car in a great number represent a threat to Clay, being a black man in a train full of whites. They have even changed Clay's plan because he intends to kill Lula at first, yet he changes his mind. The secondary characters are but superficial characters. Thus, what is going to be studied is the two main characters, Clay and Lula, each separately, in order to understand further their actions and motives.

A-Clay: the Black Bourgeois

Clay is perhaps the most representative of all Jones's characters. He expresses principally Jones's ideas of the Black arts Movement, which is the creation of the latter. Clay is a young Negro of twenty-years old. He is a student at the university. He is a middle-class black man. What is noticed is that Clay in *Dutchman* represents Jones's ideas in the sixties. These ideas are diverse and revolutionary. Therefore, Clay can be studied from two sides; first as he is perceived by the whites (Lula), then as a committed poet or still a representative of Baraka because Jones's art is a committed one.

At the beginning, Clay seems to be a naïve young black man. His naivety is shown when Lula comes to convince him that he was really staring at her from the sub-car window. Furthermore, he is not sure what the word 'stare' means, he wonders: "I saw you through the window ... if that's what it means. I don't know if I was staring. Seems to me you were staring through the window at me" (p. 1897) Later, Lula confesses that Clay attracted her through the train window, and that she should take another train than the one in which Clay is;

Lula: I even got into this train, going some other way than mine. Walked down the aisle ... searching you out

Clay: Really? That's pretty funny.

Lula: That's pretty funny ... God, you're dull.

Clay: Well, I'm sorry, lady, lady, but I really wasn't prepared for party talk.

Lula: No. You're not. What are prepared for? (p. 1897)

The inexperienced Clay answers innocently because he does not comprehend what Lula's behaviour and words mean. Subsequently, Lula's goad does not draw his attention. Clay's youthful inexperience is apparent for the reason that he is easily introduced into conversation, in spite of his reticence. Further, he even admits that he is prepared for anything. Through her vocalizations and manners, Lula is provocative that's why she catches Clay into her snare. In fact, Clay believes all that he hears from Lula, although she confesses that she always lies, "I lie a lot" (p. 1898). He is sexually excited by Lula, particularly while she touches parts of his body. Then, he is offered an apple as a first step to get him involved into Lula's plan. The forbidden fruit is accepted without hesitation. Besides, Clay tries to be flippant like Lula once he takes the apple. Clay's reaction may lead us to think that he is not certain of what he does or says. Perhaps, he believes that nothing is definite, and nothing has any real significance. Like Camus's absurd man, he lives out a kind of a demonstration; he lives as if he is totally committed to what he is doing while he is not really certain.

This episode is analogous to the Biblical story of Adam and Eve who were tempted by Satan. Lula offers the apple to Clay and so she attracts him to her immoral plan, as did Eve offer the forbidden fruit to Adam and therefore he sins. At the outset, Lula and Clay are alone in the train, as Adam and Eve were in Eden, yet Lula takes the seat next to Clay. The outcome is similar; Adam is excluded from Eden and Clay from the American society.

According to Esslin, an absurd play does not explain events of a story but rather presents the characters' basic situation. (Esslin, 1978: 403) If we seek this aspect in *Dutchman*, we can say that it is an absurd play for the reason that it exposes Clay's present situation in front of Lula's intrusion. Clay is menaced by the presence of Lula, who created an atmosphere of insecurity. Clay's case is comparable to that of Davies in *The Caretaker*. Both characters find themselves in an incomprehensible world that is full of surprises and uncertainties. Neither the street nor the confined space can provide them any security. When Lula enters the train, she also enters into Clay's peaceful mind and as a result, she spoils it.

Once Clay accepts to converse with Lula, he feels obliged to play the role suggested by her. She dares even to dictate to him how he should carry on the conversation with her. At the end of the first scene, Clay's imposed role is played out as he is asked to.

Lula: Now you say to me, "Lula, Lula, why don't you go to this party with me tonight?" It's your turn, and let those be your lines.

Clay: Lula, why don't you go to this party with me tonight, Huh?

Lula: Say my name twice before you ask, and no huh's.

Clay: Lula, Lula, why don't you go to this party with me tonight?

Lula: I'd like to go, Clay, but how can you ask me to go when you barely know me?

Clay: That's strange, isn't it?

Lula: What kind of reaction is that? You're supposed to say, "Aw, come on, we'll get to know each other better at the party." (p. 1900)

Clay repeats what Lula dictates to him word for word without hesitation; it is clear that he is naïve and lacks experience. In this sense, what can be said is that Clay's words do not really reflect his opinion or aspiration. Consequently, his language is mistrusted because it seems in contradiction to his inner reality. Moreover, he is not accustomed to conversing with foreign people, especially with white women. Being absurd, he achieves self-overcoming by accepting the role of a black young man courting a white woman. Accordingly, Lula feels that she can manipulate Clay as she wishes and she calls him with different undesirable names. What is ridiculed is Clay's traits, his manhood and his black identity. He is treated as a black Baudelaire, an Uncle Tom, a Christ and a Fascist. But, Clay reacts in a passive way to Lula's sexual and racial taunts.

His role changes when he becomes aware of Lula's temptation and bad intention. He is no longer passive; he decides to move into action. Right through the play, Clay grows to become Baraka in his revolt for liberation. His encounter with the white woman marked his personal and philosophical transitions. Further, it marks his awakening; therefore he discovers the real nature of Lula's personality and her hidden motives. The second scene of the play is another phase in Clay's life; we feel a change from innocence to maturity, which is characterized by awareness. He confirms his consciousness when he admits that Lula is truly a liar;

Clay: Morbid. Morbid. You sure you're not an actress? All that self-aggrandizement.

Lula: Well, I told you I wasn't an actress ... but I also told you a lie all the time. Draw your own conclusions.

Clay: Morbid. Morbid. You sure you're not an actress? All scribed? There's no more? (p. 1904)

It is obvious that Clay becomes mindful of Lula's plan when he says 'All scribed'. Now, he is looking for the rest of her story (or stories) to know further about her plan. Hence, he urges her to say more; "They (the stories) sound great. Like movies" (p. 1904) Being intelligent, Lula notices Clay's change in tone, and she knows that Clay is looking for change. As a result, she underestimates him when she mocks his inferior race, his clothes and mainly his manhood. At this point, Clay becomes anxious and so his role changes from a would-be-lover to a political leader who speaks out his fury. He claims his middle-class idealized ethos, as listed by Dorothy Canfield Fischer and quoted by Marty J. and Fontenilles A. in *American Society Today* : "Individual freedom, personal independence, human dignity, community responsibility, social and political democracy, sincerity, restraint in outward conduct, and thrift" (Marty & Fontenilles, 1969: 32) To reach his purpose, Clay resorts to violence to spout out his opinions. At the beginning, he is physically violent as an answer to Lula's strident words and manners. Later, when physical violence is no longer useful, he prefers to attack his enemies verbally with his long zealous speech.

Furthermore, Clay is playing the role of a black Baudelaire, a poet, consequently, his arm is a poem that kills, he cries out; "And I'm the great would-be poet. Yes. That's right! Poet. Some kind of bastard literature ... all it needs is a simple knife thrust. Just let me bleed you, you loud whore, and one poem vanished" (p. 1907) Clay is Jones's spokesman in his Black Nationalist period. In fact, in his poem "Black Art", Jones writes as quoted by Won-gu Kim Daniel in his article "In the Tradition: Amiri Baraka, Black Liberation, and Avant-garde Praxis in the U.S.":

We want a black poem. And a
Black World.
Let the world be a Black Poem
And Let All Black People Speak This
Poem
Silently
Or LOUD
(Daniel, 2003)

Jones thinks that a poem's effectiveness is measured by the change it may bring into the world. Indeed, Clay's last speech is a poem which is pronounced loudly without fear. Through it, he aims at changing the whites' point of view about the blacks when he plays out his race's spokesman. By playing the role of a poet, Clay becomes absurd. In his long speech, he lives in his artistic creation

and mimes his as well as our own world. He is stating his perception of the world which is epitomized by revolt, freedom and passion.

In his autobiography, Jones stresses the fact that what cannot be acted should be spoken out, and that is what Clay has done. Clay, as Jones, fights for the freedom of the mind; he digs for the militant within him even if that would take his own life. His protest and struggle is short-lived because it consists in his outburst and revolt against Lula's provocations. What is noteworthy is that Clay is an actor because he represents himself as well as other persons. He is the lover; or the black man who courts a white woman in their first encounter. In addition, he is a black poet (Baudelaire) who speaks out his anger in front of his oppressors. Finally, like the conqueror, Clay fights in vain in order to defend his manhood and find a value to his life, for the reason that a better life is his only end.

Clay's revolt leads him to death. He knows that he cannot escape from Lula and those white onlookers in the sub-car. His revolt is momentary because he is aware of the futility and meaninglessness of his struggle. In other words, Clay's revolt is meant to change his situation, even though he knows that it is unalterable. By doing so, he is looking for his political freedom as well as his community's, and his passion consists in the fact that he is focusing his energies on the present moment, on his inner self, on Lula and on the other passengers.

The death of Clay is a sacrifice. It is probable that Jones aims at shaking the blacks' soul and urging them to react and change their situation and be able to sacrifice. To be sure, Clay's death is a sacrifice to save the black race and all oppressed people in the world; it may also stand for a Christ-like sacrifice to redeem Lula's sin and to save mankind. It is evident that Clay would be happy and proud to sacrifice to save his race. He expresses his gratitude to Lula, who considers him as the saviour of his people by the end of scene I,

Lula: A union of love and sacrifice that was destined to follow at the birth of the noble Clay Clay Williams. Yea! And most of all yea yea for you, Clay Clay. The Black Baudelaire! Yes (*And with knife like cynicism*) My Christ. My Christ.

Clay: Thank you ma'am.

Lula: may the people accept you as a ghost of the future. And love you, that you might not kill them when you can. (p. 1902)

Lula needs Clay's death for her redemption from her sins. Throughout the play, Clay metamorphoses from a naïve black student, to a black poet or visionary, then to a fighter for black liberation, and finally into the archetype of Christ. What is apparent also is that Clay is the representative of LeRoi Jones; he exposes his political opinion and artistic ideas.

B-Lula: the White Bohemian

Lula is a woman of about thirty years old. According to her physical description, she is a tall woman with a long red hair. She wears bright and skimpy clothes and loud lipstick. She enters the train eating an apple. Through her first description, Lula seems to be a realistic character. We come to know her little by little when she converses with Clay; we discover that she comes with a definite plan in her head. In fact, every word she says and every movement she does have their significance and they are done with certain deliberateness.

After noticing Clay from outside, Lula decides to go into Clay's innermost personality. However, she has in mind to go another destination than the one she follows. Lula is a bohemian woman, a going nowhere; she has no precise direction to follow. Although the train is empty, she chooses the seat near Clay; her selected prey on which she is going to execute her plan. Without doubt, Lula is a temptress and a provocative; she tempts Clay to fall into sin and to think of committing immoral acts. The first scene, which marks Clay's innocence, Lula's speeches are full of provocations. Once she sits next to Clay, she notices, "Oooof! Too much weight"; her aim is to catch the attention of Clay at her body. In fact, Clay looks at her and gives his own point of view. Clay's opinion is not what interest Lula but his attention. She is bold enough to accuse Clay that he was staring at her from the train window; "But only after I'd turned around and saw you staring through that window down the vicinity of my ass and legs" (p. 1897) She is offensive, bold, vulgar and tempting; she is Satan in Eden tempting Eve and Adam.

Lula is looking for a trick with which she will attract Clay into her plan. She wants to invent a story whose heroes are herself and Clay. In the prologue of her story, Lula finds a way to make Clay accept to converse with her by exciting him sexually. Lula's manners bear a resemblance to

those of Don Juan. The latter never collects women he loves, but he leaves one to look for another. It is the same case with Lula, who traps and kills Clay and then she moves to another black man.

While Lula is telling Clay a story where the two are its principal characters, she is acting out another one which is totally different. The first is a love story between a young black man and a white woman. It starts with their encounter; then it develops into a conversation where the two will know or rather discover each other. After that, Lula will invite him into her house where they can dance, play, drink, talk and walk for a long time. Finally, Lula reaches the point Clay desires to hear, and that was the following;

Lula: One of the things we do while we talk. And screw.

Clay: (*Trying to make his smile boarder and less shaky*) We finally got there. (p. 1903)

Being an absurd woman, Lula never loses herself in affection; she is just playing the role of a lover.

Lula's second story is a hidden one; it is performed while she is telling her inventive story to Clay. Though Clay discovers Lula's hidden motives, it was too late. He knows that end of the story is to get rid of him. What is noticed is that the two stories have the same beginning but a different end. Lula refers to the end of her hidden story at the end of the first one, when she says: "And you'll call my rooms black as a grave. You'll say, 'This place is like Juliet's tomb'" (p. 1903) It is known that Juliet shares the same tomb with Romeo, Juliet suicides after seeing her lover dead. Lula does not give death to herself because her absurdity implies another solution. Instead, she looks for another black man with whom she is going to play the same role. It is clear that she will seduce him and later she will murder him, and she will do the same with other blacks after that. As Don Juan is seducing and leaving women, so does Lula seduce and kill young black men.

Lula is playing with words; what she says is totally different from what she thinks or does. Her language is often in contradiction with what she thinks and intends to do. At first, she suggests ideas to discover the real nature of Clay. Indeed, she builds up Clay's persona through suggestions and interpretations; she pretends to know Clay's friend Warren Enright and his sister Georgia. When Lula discovers the inexperienced and sensible character of Clay, she starts executing her plan. She taunts him by prejudices and insults, thus she tortures his hidden psyche. Through Lula's

suggestions and interventions, we come to know a lot about Clay's personality, but a few about Lula. Her motives are revealed and her actions understood after the killing of Clay. Lula reveals to Clay about the tenement in which she lives, and which; "Reminds [her] specifically of [her] novel form of insanity" (p. 1903) Lula confesses her foolishness in order to justify her bad and immoral manners, and especially her last act.

Lula's presence and role in *Dutchman* is to defy Black Nationalism and Black Arts Movement. She raises any black man's alienation and aggressiveness as a consequence of her bad behaviour and irrational manners. What is significant is that what is in Clay's mind is played out by Lula; his rhetoric of murder is acted by Lula. For this reason, we notice the controversy that exists between rage and art, but rage is valued over art.

IV- Setting: the Subway

Dutchman is set in a subway in one summer day evening. One seat is visible in it, on which a black young man sits in isolation. A few moments later, a white woman enters the subway car and takes a seat next to Clay's. This image resembles to that of Adam wondering alone in Eden and then Eve is created from his rib and sits next to him. The train, like Eden, is a place of temptation where the good man sins. I have noticed how the naïve Clay is spouting off vulgarities and crying out murder after being provoked by Lula, who represents Satan in Eden.

The subway may also symbolize life in which we live different moments: happiness, anger, anxiety, grief, cheerfulness and sadness. Clay, who is going to a party, is supposed to be happy. But during his moment of rest, Lula's intrusion spoils it. As a result, his mood changes into anger. His encounter with Lula can happen to any one and at any moment in life. This encounter does not only change Clay's life but it leads to his destruction. It is a moment of awakening and victory to him, although it is short-lived. Clay is a man who lives for his present moment even though he knows that death is his end. As life ends with death, Clay is thrown out of the train after being murdered.

The setting of the play may also refer to the Underground Railroad between the South and the North which was built in the nineteenth century in the United States of America. With the help of the abolitionist, the Blacks escaped from the south where they were enslaved to free states in the

north. The Underground Railroad was the only way to flee slavery and gain their freedom. The presence of Clay in the train and his revolt against Lula's provocation suggests his attempt to reach emancipation. Furthermore, Clay is an oppressed man who looks for his political as well as his social rights, as it was the case of the black fugitives in the nineteenth century.

V- Language and Style in *Dutchman*

Jones's techniques in *Dutchman* are usually compared to those of Antonin Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty", where action is full of violence. Like Artaud, he aims at shocking his audience and raises in them the awareness of the seriousness of his characters' situations. Jones substitutes words for action, by resorting to movements and gestures, to express through theatre what cannot be expressed in words. He thinks that language demonstrates what is happening on stage and explores the poet's or playwright's consciousness. Like Wittgenstein, Jones believes that ethics and aesthetics are one. So his theatre, which is a theatre of reaction, should reflect the spiritual values of the American society. To be more concrete, Jones's techniques and formal aspects in *Dutchman* are going to be studied here in this section.

Esslin thinks that generally an Absurd play should have a circular structure. *Dutchman*, one of them, begins and ends with the same image. Still, it grows with the intensification of the first situation, and so comes to a sad end. At the beginning of the play, Clay sits alone in a subway car, but Lula's incessant provocation raises his aggressiveness and alienation which lead to his death towards the end of the play. The sad end to which the play develops is a result of Lula's bad management of her plan, which is composed of two stories. There is a told story, with which she catches the attention of Clay, and a hidden one that consists in Lula's hidden motives. The circularity of the play appears at its end when Clay's corpse is thrown out of the train and Lula advances towards another black young man who has just come into the subway car. As a result, the plan she has played out with Clay is going to be executed again.

Moreover, the play has two narrators point of view. It is the same case with *The Zoo Story* where Jerry and the author are its principal narrators. *Dutchman*'s first narrator is the author himself and Lula is the third narrator point of view. In general, we have two different plays; Lula's

story which is included in Jones's; Lula tells her story to Clay, who stands for her audience, whereas Jones's audience is larger because he addresses the whites as well as the blacks.

While Esslin exposes the aspects of the Theatre of the Absurd, he stresses social criticism as the aim of any Absurd play. In fact, *Dutchman*'s tone is satirical and what is satirized is the American Dream. Through Clay, his spokesman, Jones criticizes the white men's view and racial intention on black Americans. Lula, the representative of the white opinion, is an obstacle to reach the ideals of the American Dream, among them the dignity of man. Additionally, Jones criticizes the set of principles signed in the Declaration of Independence which stipulates that all men are created equal; they have the right to live in peace, freedom and pursue happiness. All these principles are denied for Clay in *Dutchman*. In addition, he accuses the whites to be an obstacle in the American society to preserve such ideals, and so he answers back this racist intention by Clay's long and passionate speech. Likewise, what is satirized is Western rationalism, and especially Lula's foolishness and bad behaviour, which is shared with the whole white race.

The play is a conversation between the two main characters, Lula and Clay. Their conversation is marked by a change in diction and tone. In fact, it starts with monosyllables, then it develops into long sentences, and finally we are exposed with long speeches. The monosyllables are meant to set contact between the two characters. Once Lula enters the subway, the following conversation takes place,

Lula: Hello.

Clay: Uh, hi're you?

Lula: I'm going to sit down ... O.K.?

Clay: Sure. (p. 1897)

Lula's salutation attracts the attention of Clay, and then she imposes herself by taking the seat next to him. Once Clay agrees, she asks him a series of questions. Her aim is not to know him but rather to test him and discover his real personality. While Lula starts her annoyance, the naïve Clay ignores her intention; as a result, he wonders what she means by her questions,

Lula: ... weren't you staring at me through the window?

Clay: ... What?

Lula: Weren't you staring at me through the window? At the last stop?

Clay: Staring at you? What do you mean?

Lula: Don't you know what staring means? (p. 1897)

At present, contact is not yet set, for the two characters are asking questions without being answered or understood. When Lula discovers the inexperienced nature of Clay, she becomes bolder; so she provokes and tempts him. She throws Clay with a series of prejudices, abusing his racial inferiority and manhood. She even dares to address him and his family as;

You look like you been trying to grow a beard. That's what you look like. You look like you live in New Jersey with your parents and are trying to grow a beard. That's what. You look like you've been reading Chinese poetry and drinking lukewarm sugarless tea. ... You look like death eating a soda cracker." (p. 1898)

What is notable is that Lula is suggesting and interpreting how the real nature of Clay may be in order to find out what is true from what is false. She knows that Clay is going to be involved into her invented story when she offers him the forbidden fruit and he accepts it. Consequently, Lula's words grow to be more provocative and insulting, and her insults become more intensive with the growing of the play. She treats him as: "dull" when Clay is not courting her back, then mocking him by calling him "Mister Man" or "Mister", "Black Baudelaire", "My Christ", "Fascist", "Middle-class black bastard", "Liver-lipped white man", "Uncle Thomas Woolly-Head" and "black son of a bitch".

All these insults raised Clay's anger and so we discover a change in his tone to utter openly his opinion on the white race. The word "murder" is repeated constantly; Clay expresses his revolt by answering back Lula's prejudices. He uses vulgar and violent words as: "great liberated whore", "soft idiots" to treat the whites, and especially "murder" which he finds as a solution to the black neurosis. He wants to exterminate the white society so that the blacks will live in peace. Clay's resort to such words in his last speech is meant to convince as well as to call the blacks to revolt. Besides, the change in Clay's tone is used to address the whites to change their racist intention vis-à-vis the blacks and accept their integration into the American society. Clay is not treated as a man until he dies; Lula calls him "man" when she asks the other passengers to throw him out of the train, "Get this man off me!" (p. 1907). As a matter of fact, the characters' language does not mirror their real personalities, but it shows the racist attitude of both characters vis-à-vis each other.

Since the Theatre of the Absurd proceeds through poetic images, *Dutchman* is a series of poetic images which are full of symbolism. The play itself is a poetic image where the absurdity and circularity of our existence is exposed. The meaning of these images is observable and comprehensible. Among the apparent poetic images, we find: the subway, the apple, Clay's name and his death. These poetic images, as Esslin states, communicate reality of our intuition of the world through a disintegrated language which does not reflect reality. (Esslin, 1961: 405)

The play opens with a beautiful poetic image. Lula enters the subway car, in which Clay is, and consequently she enters into his life and his inner self. That is, the subway symbolizes life. Indeed, life is full of surprises; anything can happen at any moment and change our existence. Lula enters Clay's life; she spoils his rest and then she murders him. The subway is a metaphor for life, where people are struggling in vain for liberty, peace, human dignity and equality. The futile struggle of Clay for his dignity and manhood is what lead to his death. Therefore, he leaves life and the subway at the same time, when he is thrown out of the train by his murderers.

The subway as a metaphor for life may also symbolize a place of temptation, like Eden. Clay is Adam; his name means dust and Adam is created from dust. At first, Clay is alone in the subway car, as was Adam in Eden. Then, Lula comes into the train and wants to tempt Clay into her satanic plan. Lula may represent Satan who convinces Eve to eat from the forbidden fruit and then she offers it to her husband. As a result, man falls in sin. Once he is given the apple, Clay becomes aggressive and alienated. Briefly, the image of Lula holding an apple and then offering it to Clay is analogous to the Biblical episode which led to the fall of man. Satan wants to get rid of the undesirable dusty man out of Eden, and so does Lula to eliminate Clay from the white society.

Another poetic image is Clay's death, which symbolizes Christ-like sacrifice. For Jones, it is the image that can shake the blacks' souls and urge them to react against the white oppression. He thinks that the black should be courageous enough to be able to sacrifice in order to change their situation. Clay sacrifices to redeem Lula's sins, his race's and even all oppressed people in the world. The death of Clay is possibly a solution to his futile struggle for freedom. Although he is aware that his situation can be changed neither through action nor word, he carries on his fight till

his last breath. Thus, his death may be an allegory of Christian redemption to demonstrate to his race the importance of struggle and revolt in order to have a better place in the American society. While Albee believes that the American society needs somebody's sacrifice to show the importance of social contact, communication and love; Jones thinks that the black question necessitates revolt or even a sacrifice to reach emancipation.

VI- Conclusion

The analysis to Jones's *Dutchman* leads me to conclude that it can be classified among the range of the Absurd Drama because it conveys most of its aspects. With the dramatic force of his poetic images, Jones imposes himself on stage. He defies the white world with his iconoclastic insults and violence. His protagonist Clay is his representative absurd character through his revolt to change the American society. However *Dutchman* has a violent tone, it aims at establishing peaceful relationship between blacks and whites. And these relations should be devoid of any prejudices and illusions. Jones wants to establish new myths and urge people, especially the whites, to forget about their archaic false systems. He is without doubt satirizing the American Dream; or simply *Dutchman* is a social criticism.

Through Clay, Jones wants to lead a revolution for change. His aim is also to urge the white people in order to accept the blacks' integration. Clay represents Jones in his aspirations, and spouts out his ideas and opinions against the whites' irrational and immoral manners. In fact, he expresses Jones's awareness and the gravity of the blacks' condition. Clay does not only represent Jones or the Black American but any exploited and oppressed men in the world, who scolds his exploiters and oppressors. Clay's last speech exposes the inner feelings of a black man in a white society. Clay and Lula are but archetypes that represent different ideas of the same society, and this difference leads to a tragic end.

To convey his meaning, Jones resorts to different literary techniques: poetic images that are full of symbolism, allegories as social criticism and a violent tone to demonstrate his protagonist's resentment. The use of violence in language, through verbal attacks, reflects the seriousness of the characters' situations, especially the protagonist's, who is in a defensive position. As a result, his

verbal violence is meant to counterattack the antagonist's vulgar and insulting vocalizations and manners. It means that language is the best instrument to convey his message as a substitution to action.

Through *Dutchman*, LeRoi Jones produces black art which is revolutionary because it seeks change. With black art, Jones aims at celebrating his racial pride, through which he addresses the masses and not the individual. He also condemns the whites for corrupting art which resulted in the domination of the world by the West through their culture, philosophy, politics and manners.

My study of the Theatre of the Absurd in both America and England leads me to the conclusion that *The Caretaker*, *The Zoo Story* and *Dutchman* are written by three different writers from three different communities, yet there are similarities in most of their aspects. The latter consist mainly in the universality of their themes, characters, setting and even techniques. In fact, Pinter, Albee and Baraka have revolutionized the modern theatre and answered some exigencies of a sophisticated public. They go deeper into the human mind and explore its preoccupations; they show up man's consciousness and unconsciousness. They expose human life and its relation to the external world, that is, they show real human relations through concrete images. They show also irrational characters and shocking themes and language through which people cannot reach mutual understanding.

The Theatre of the Absurd grows in time to be more and more shocking because of the new dramatic innovations, especially through realistic situations of its absurd characters and literary techniques. However, Pinter, Albee and Jones have similar methods; they are completely different in purpose because of their different concerns. Despite their different preoccupations, they make use of the same techniques that can be summarized in the following: the total absence of rational characterization, the circular structure of the play, bare settings, startling and provocative themes, and the use of language to conceal rather than reveal the characters' thoughts, which is a central aspect in their plays.

Pinter, Albee, and Jones represent three different minorities in the world. Pinter is an English playwright from a Jewish stock, and the Jews represent a minority in England. While Pinter is excluded from the English society because his religion is different from that of the majority of the English people, his characters are excluded socially because of their different identity and social status. While Pinter belongs to a religious minority, Jones, who is a black American, belongs to a racial minority. His exclusion is due to his belonging to different race and culture. Albee, who is a white American, believes that he belongs to a great number of minorities. For him, the United States of America is itself a minority in the world; being a writer and a creative person is also a minority; and being an agnostic is perhaps another minority to which he belongs.

The three playwrights share a significant technique and that is to express their political consciousness through art. They resort to ritual violence either physical or verbal to show to what extent they wish to reach peace and understanding among people. They are against oppression and exploitation, especially of the minorities whom they represent. Their experience is expressed in a different way but it is common to all of them; Harold Pinter admits: “We will all interpret a common experience quite differently, though we prefer to subscribe to the view that there is a shared common ground, a known ground.” (Pinter, 1976: 12). In this conclusion, some shared techniques and aspects in the three authors’ plays will be cited and similarities that may exist in their themes, characters, settings, and even language will be explored.

The themes that are common to the three playwrights are related to the inner crises that touch the modern man and his relation to his society, such as: alienation, isolation, violence, identity and communication. Alienation is usually the result of a pitiless society where man’s value consists in his concrete production and his participation in the social life. For instance, Jerry’s alienation in *The Zoo Story* is a result of his inferior social status, being a “have not”. It is the same case with Clay in *Dutchman*; he is looked at as an outsider in the American society because of his inferior race and social class. Yet, most of the time, the characters’ alienation is a result of inner conflicts; that is, the problem is psychological. Peter in *The Zoo Story* is good evidence; although he has a good position in society; he behaves in a bad and unfriendly way vis-à-vis Jerry.

What is notable in the three plays is that they begin with the same scene; one character is sitting alone in an isolated place. Then, an intruder comes and spoils the lonely man's rest and isolation. The latter is one of the psychological phenomena of modern times, where people are living in isolation and social contact is ineffective. People prefer to stay alone rather than to interact with others. Like alienation, isolation can be social or psychological. In fact, it may be a result of the lack of communication or understanding among people of the same society. Or it may happen that people cannot confront their present situation; as a result they escape the real undesirable world to enter another of their own choice. Peter prefers to be away of his family even in the day of rest and goes to the Central Park where he can read his book without disturbance. But the case of Clay in *Dutchman* is that society imposes on him his isolation because of the inferiority of his race and culture. Isolation may also lead some people to behave in bad way especially once they feel a danger approaching. As a result, they are always in a defensive position. Clay's and Peter's reaction to the intruders is to defend their manhood and dignity, whereas Davies and Jerry behave in a selfish way to go out of their isolation and find a place among their fellow men in society.

Furthermore, one of the universal themes that are treated by the three playwrights is the question of identity. When the characters doubt the stranger's identity, they grow to be afraid of them. It is because they have no idea of his origins, his intentions and mainly the purpose of his intrusion. Indeed, people look at each other as outsiders although they belong to the same society. Aston and Mick in *The Caretaker* become suspicious about Davies' identity since he is a tramp with two different names. He represents a danger since he spoils the peaceful and harmonious life of the two brothers. Consequently, they decide to send him out of their room to regain security. The same image is revealed in *Dutchman* where the black protagonist's identity is threatened and abused at the same time. In fact, Clay looks at the white passengers as being strangers; in return the whites consider Clay as an outsider who intrudes into their world.

In addition, what the characters fail to achieve through their contact is not communication but understanding. Although the characters are often reticent; they accept to converse with the stranger. They are usually talking at cross-purposes because each character interprets negatively the

other's speech, or maybe he concentrates on his own thoughts to defend his position. What is noticed is that the characters are communicating to hide their feelings and thoughts instead of showing them up. Their hidden motives or thoughts are more dangerous than what they say. For instance, Lula in *Dutchman* is telling a desirable story to Clay while she is planning to play out a hidden one which is dangerous and fatal. It is nearly the same case with Jerry in *The Zoo Story*; who is looking for a real communication, but unfortunately it was the reason that leads to his murder-suicide at the end of the play. Unlike Clay and Jerry, Davies in *The Caretaker* is afraid of communication since that may reveal his real identity which he cannot establish. The critic Martin Esslin thinks that the lack of understanding is a result of the different professions and specialities that the characters may exercise. (Esslin, 1978: 409) It means that the difference in the educational level and speciality may lead to misunderstanding among people in any society.

Through the analysis of the three plays, what is worth mentioning that Absurd Drama departs from realistic situations and characters. The latter are generally archetypes or representatives of ideas in a certain community, but they may be generalized to other societies in the world. Sometimes the protagonists represent the playwrights themselves, and so they expose their thoughts in the play. While Pinter refuses to have any representative among his characters, Jones's and Albee's protagonists are most of the time their spokesmen because they satirize the ideal of the American Dream.

In comparing Pinter's, Albee's, and Jones's characters, we notice that there are universal aspects among them. Like their author, they follow a certain plan that is intended to fulfil their motives; Lula in *Dutchman* succeeds to catch Clay in her laid snare and so she kills him. Jerry in *The Zoo Story* is looking for a cause to suicide since no one needs him in the world; he plays out his plan on Peter and then he realizes his final object. Unlike Lula and Jerry who succeed to fulfil their wishes, Davies in *The Caretaker* fails to find a place among the two brothers because of his selfish intentions and bad behaviour. As a reaction to the other's plans, Clay and Peter defend their manhood and dignity which are abused and so a murder takes place; whereas Mick defends himself as well as his brother from Davies's intrusion, and so he gets rid of him.

Another shared aspect among the plays' protagonists is that they are usually passive rather than active. It means that they defend more than they attack. The attackers are generally the makers of the plan, and the others are defenders whose role is to stop the attackers' plan, but they fail. What is also significant is that some characters dominate the others either by resorting to physical or verbal violence. That is, while they are afraid themselves, they try to frighten the others by behaving in a bad way. The protagonists' heroism is full of anguish and despair, not of bold aggressiveness. Theoretically, we grow to be more individualistic in modern times, yet there is a certain uniformity which grows in parallel, such as: our communication, behaviour, and even clothing. All these aspects are common to the main characters in the three plays. Therefore, what can be said is that uniformity suggests universality.

Besides, the characters are presenting the irrational and absurd side of human beings. Accordingly, each of them represents one or more of the Absurd men suggested by Albert Camus. Davies, the man without a true identity, is an actor who plays out what he is not in order to be accepted among his fellow men in society. It is the same case with Clay and Jerry who play out what they think and feel in order to change things in society, and especially, like all Americans, to realize the ideal of the American Dream. They act and cry out what any American wishes to and maybe any human who shares the same feeling and thought with them. But, since their struggle is futile, they accept death as a solution to their absurd existence, the absurd ends with their death.

In *Dutchman*, Clay is an actor as well as a conqueror. He fights in vain to defend his inferior race, manhood, dignity and culture. He is at the same time a "Black Baudelaire" and a political leader who launches his long speech to shake his followers' souls and urge them to react. Like Camus' conqueror, Clay lives for his present moment and he accepts death as an end to his futile fight. Clay's case can be generalized to several people in the world who are submitted to a colonizer's oppression and exploitation. Thus, he represents those people who cry for independence, peace and especially security.

In addition to themes and characters, the three authors share similar settings which symbolize life or the world. In *The Caretaker*, the room in which Aston and Mick live is small and

disorganized; it suggests the restricted and confused lives of the characters. Davies's exclusion from the room means that he has no place in the world, and that his life is meaningless and purposeless. Davies represents any lost tramp in the world. He has no human relations or someone to care for him. By contrast to the setting of *The Caretaker* which is a private space, setting in both *The Zoo Story* and *Dutchman* is a public space. In the first, it is New York's Central Park which is an open space for everybody. It is also a place of meeting for different people coming from different social classes and different races. In fact, it is in New York's Central Park that the main characters, Jerry and Peter, meet for the first time. Such an encounter can take place in any other public place in the world. Similarly to Jerry's and Peter's meeting, Lula's encounter with Clay takes place in a subway car. The latter and Central Park may also symbolize a world where understanding among different races or social classes is nearly impossible. The two places may reflect America, where people are struggling in vain to realize the common ideal of the American Dream. Or it may be the world itself where different nations are in ceaseless conflicts for a piece of land or political power.

Besides, it is worth mentioning that the three playwrights rely on the supremacy of the characters' actions on language. Indeed, they have created a calculated intensity of a dramatic language. All the plays are circular; the play's circularity reflects the life span of any person. Life begins with birth, life itself, and then death. The audience is presented with circular and repetitive experience of the characters. It is the case with the structure of Pinter's, Albee's and Jones's plays. They begin with the first appearance of the characters, their encounter with life's surprises: momentary happiness, anger, despair. Finally, we observe the disappearance of the character from the stage, either by death or exclusion. What is also noticed is that the plays end nearly as they begin. At the beginning, Peter in *The Zoo Story* stays alone on a park bench and at the end we note that he is still alone, but after a long dialogue with his antagonist he participates in his murder-suicide. After being housed and provided a job as a caretaker, Davies in *The Caretaker* loses the job as well as the shelter at the end of the play because of his bad manners. Whereas in *Dutchman*, the play begins when Lula is approaching the black young man to tempt him; the play ends with the same image; we see Lula is advancing to a black young man who comes to enter the subway car.

Furthermore, we discern the presence of monologue versus duologue in the three plays. Before any conversation takes place, the characters are reticent; they hesitate to reveal any of their feelings or thoughts. As a result, the plays generally begin with a dialogue where the characters pronounce words or small sentences, which are answers to the other's questions. Or they begin with a monologue of the undesirable intruder to show their reticence. In fact, *The Zoo Story* opens with a kind of a monologue, where Jerry asks ceaselessly questions to attract Peter's attention into conversation, who is not answering at first. Then, a dialogue is opened between them. Later, Jerry's longest monologue is his story of the dog, which he tells in details to Peter. A similar case is that of Davies who converses with Aston at the beginning of *The Caretaker*. It seems as if Davies were making a soliloquy about his sad situation. Then, the play grows into a duologue between Davies and Aston and later Davies and Mick. Finally, Aston's speech is the longest monologue in the play, telling about his bad experience in the asylum. Contrarily to *The Zoo Story* and *The Caretaker*, *Dutchman* grows from a dialogue between Clay and Lula to a monologue, which is delivered by Clay at the end of the play. The monologues of the three plays are mainly revelations about the characters' personalities and principally their social or political complaints; Jerry's story of the dog, Aston's bad experience in the asylum, and Clay's outburst against his oppressors.

Moreover, the three playwrights share similar techniques in their works. They resort to violence to show up the characters' thoughts and personalities. Indeed, cruelty is usually expressed in conversation rather than physical confrontation. Consequently, words are harsher than actions; it means that language is generally the character's weapon to confront his interlocutor. We read insults, prejudices and even vulgarities, used to expose one's superiority over the other. Peter, who has a superior social position than Jerry, is treated by the latter as an animal. In *The Caretaker*, Mick's cruelty is a weapon to protect himself as well as his brother from the intruder, Davies. But cruelty in Clay's speech is resorted to in order to defend his dignity, manhood, culture and especially his race. It is an answer to Lula's insults and prejudices.

Another remarkable aspect is the use of repetitions by the characters to emphasize on one specific idea. To illustrate from *The Zoo Story*, the use of the word "animal" frequently is meant to

demonstrate the animalistic side of human beings and to put accent on the fact that their life is analogous to that of animals in the zoo. In other words, while animals are living in cages, separated by bars of iron people are imprisoned in loneliness and isolation, separated by the bars of alienation and indifference. In *The Caretaker*, Mick repeats the same question about Davies's identity which is doubted. The stress is put on the intruder's identity because it is a threat to the life of the two brothers. Whereas in *Dutchman*, the main characters discuss Clay's manhood; as a result, the white woman abuses it and the black young man defends it. Consequently, Clay finds that murder is the only solution to get rid of the oppressors, so the word "murder" is rehearsed recurrently.

To reach their purposes, each the three dramatists expose a collection of poetic images, which are full of symbolism, to convey their meaning. The greatest poetic image in *The Zoo Story* is the zoo itself. The latter is a metaphor for life as it is already expressed; while *Dutchman*'s greatest metaphor is the subway car which symbolizes life as being full of surprises. Life is also symbolized by the room in *The Caretaker*; it reflects the confused universe and the restricted lives of the characters. What is shared in these poetic images is that all of them are related to life, the world, and society and their negative sides. It means that the authors deal with social criticism with which they aim at changing their societies, as well as other societies that live similar problems. As a consequence, their plays have a satirical tone, and their characters are but samples of different communities or minorities. And their actions and motives can be compared to other people in the world.

Finally, we can say that the Theatre of the Absurd, through its social criticism, aims at reaching the universal level. And the three plays studied here in this simple research are but samples of people's real lives in the mentioned societies whose faults can be found elsewhere in other societies in the world. The common aim of Pinter, Albee and Jones is to purify peoples' thinking and re-educate their senses and mentalities. Through the Theatre of the Absurd, the three playwrights raise a kind of revolution to change their communities and the world at large.

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Résumé

Ce travail de recherche a exploré le Théâtre de l’Absurde dans deux communautés différentes : les Etats-Unis et l’Angleterre. Pour réaliser ce but, j’ai sélectionné trois pièces théâtrales notamment *The Caretaker*, *The Zoo Story*, et *Dutchman*, écrites respectivement par Harold Pinter, Edward Albee, et Amiri Baraka. Mon but à travers ce mémoire c’est d’analyser les aspects de l’Absurde dans les pièces déjà mentionnées pour explorer les différentes idées de chaque dramaturge. Mon travail de recherche comprend quatre chapitres. Le premier expose la théorie de l’Absurde, et les trois autres chapitres sont consacrés pour analyser les trois pièces théâtrales sus-citées.

Les quatre chapitres sont précédés par une introduction générale dans laquelle j’ai exposé les différents critiques qui ont écrit sur les trois dramaturges. De plus, j’ai éclaircis ma problématique en faisant référence aux trois dramaturges et leurs œuvres. Le premier chapitre inclut des explications de la théorie de l’Absurde. Ce chapitre contient deux parties. Dans la première partie et pour l’analyse thématique, j’ai recours à la philosophie de l’Absurde d’Albert Camus comme explorée dans son œuvre *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. Par contre dans la deuxième partie, j’ai tracé les traditions et la signification du Théâtre de l’Absurde dans l’ouvrage de Martin Esslin *Le Théâtre de l’Absurde*. Donc, j’ai insisté sur les différents courants et mouvements littéraires et philosophiques qui ont influencé le Théâtre de l’Absurde. Ensuite, j’ai montré les imminents aspects de ce théâtre qui sont nombreux et diverses. Mais j’ai mis l’accent sur les caractéristiques qui sont appropriés aux trois pièces théâtrales.

Cependant, dans la partie pratique, j’ai essayé d’étudier les trois pièces par rapport aux aspects de la philosophie ainsi que ceux du théâtre de l’Absurde. J’ai commencé d’abord par *The Caretaker* d’Harold Pinter, dans laquelle j’ai analysé les thèmes principaux et ses trois personnages. Par la suite, je suis passée à l’étude stylistique où j’ai accentué sur l’innovation du dramaturge sur le plan du langage. A travers ses techniques innovatrices, Pinter est arrivé à transmettre son message, qui consiste en l’exposition des situations de ses personnages qui sont absurdes. Dans le deuxième chapitre, j’ai essayé de suivre la même méthode en étudiant les thèmes,

les personnages principaux ainsi que la langue du *Zoo Story* d'Edward Albee. Le but de ce dernier est de montrer que notre situation est semblable à celle des animaux qui vivent dans des cages, et qu'on peut la changer en se communiquant et en oubliant notre indifférence et aliénation. Pour terminer, je suis passé à l'étude de *Dutchman* d'Amiri Baraka. *Dutchman* expose le côté révolutionnaire de l'être humain qui se trouve devant un oppresseur. Sa révolte contre le monde des blancs démontre son absurdité puisque son protagoniste est conscient que sa victoire ne durera pas longtemps. Par conséquent, il représente tout homme opprimé sur terre qui se combatte en vain pour aboutir son émancipation, et sa mort n'est qu'un sacrifice pour motiver ses semblables.

A la fin, j'ai conclu en disant que malgré que Pinter, Albee, et Baraka soient issus de deux communautés différentes ; mais ils exposent des situations et des personnages réels et identiques dans leurs pièces. De plus, ils ont recours à des thèmes ainsi qu'un langage choquants. En effet, les gens se communiquent mais ils s'entendent rarement ou presque jamais. Ainsi, on peut dire que Pinter, Albee, et Baraka partagent des universels dans leurs œuvres ; c'est-à-dire, leurs personnages sont tout simplement des échantillons qui peuvent vivre dans n'importe quelle société du monde.