

I dedicate this work to:

The memory of my grandmother
My beloved parents, my father Mohammed, and my mother Farida,
My sisters Malika, Karima, Yasmine, and my little one Thanina
My brother Mehdi
All my family and my friends

NAOUAL

This work is dedicated to:

My precious parents, my father Ahcene, and my mother Sadia
My dear sister Linda and her husband Kamel
My lovely brothers Sofiane and Kossaila
My beloved husband Walid and his family
My niece Melissa and my nephew Aylan

SIHAM

Acknowledgments

Great appreciation and deepest gratitude for the help and support of our supervisor, Professor Nadia NAAR GADA, for sharing her knowledge and providing guidance, support, advice, constructive criticism, and endless help throughout the accomplishment of our work. We would also like to thank the panel of examiners namely Dr. Ahcene CHERIFI , and Ms. Hassiba BENSAFI for taking time to read our research work and for their efforts in examining it.

Our gratitude goes also to Professor Bouteldja Riche and to all the teachers of the Department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou for providing us with the necessary academic skills and techniques for the accomplishment of this dissertation.

Abstract

This dissertation is a contribution to the debate on influence and originality in literary texts. It examines through a comparative perspective the interplay between tradition and individual talent in the plays *The Chairs*(1952) by Eugène Ionesco , *Waiting for Godot*(1953) by Samuel Beckett, and *The Caretaker*(1960) by Harold Pinter, through the theoretical lens of T.S. Eliot's essay entitled, "*Tradition and the Individual Talent.*"(1919). Eliot's concept emphasizes the balance between the influence of previous authors while considering the contribution of the individual artist. In *The Chairs*, Ionesco employs absurd elements to challenge traditional narrative structures, creating his own theatrical experience, which reflects both a continuation and a departure from established dramatic conventions. Similarly, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* reminds the reader of Eliot's notion of tradition by blending existential themes. Meanwhile, his use of innovative dialogue and structure, contributes to a creation of a distinct voice akin to the modernist tradition while still engaging with its themes. Pinter's, for his part, inserts in his play, *The Caretaker* realist and absurd features, reflecting the tension between tradition and innovation. His use of language and character provides a fresh perspective on power and identity, aligning with Eliot's idea that new works of art changes the existing order of the artistic tradition. Therefore, these selected plays exemplify how modernist playwrights express through their plays the two-fold demands of tradition and creation, contributing thus to enrich the theatrical landscape with their individual talents while remaining close to the existing literary tradition of the theatre of the absurd.

Key Words: Theatre of the Absurd, Influence, Tradition, Originality, Individual Talent,

Table of Content

Dedication	I
Acknowledgments	II
Abstract	III
Contents.....	IV
I. Introduction	1
1 Review of Literature.....	2
2. Issue and Working Hypothesis	4
II- Methods and Materials	5
a. Methods; T.S.Eliot Tradition and the Individual Talents	5
b. Materials.....	6
b.1-Historical Background of the Three Plays	6
b.2- Playwrights' Biographies	9
b.3-Summary of the Three Plays	10
III- Results	13
IV. Discussion	14
Chapter one: Tradition in Eugene Ionesco's The Chairs (1952), Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1953) and Harold Pinter's The Caretaker (1960)	14
1-Absurd Features in the Selected Plays	18
1-1- Disrupted and ABA Plots.....	18
1-2- Setting.....	21
1-3- Characters	22
1-4- Themes	23
a-Existentialist Themes in the Plays.....	24
b-Broken language	36
Chapter two: Individual Talent in Eugene Ionesco's The Chairs (1952), Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1953) and Harold Pinter's The Caretaker (1960).....	43
1-Eugene Ionesco's Dramatic Style	44
2-Samuel Beckett's Particular Dramatic Playwright Style	47
3-Harold Pinter's Dramatic Style	48
V. Conclusion	56
VI. Selected Biography	59

I. Introduction

The concepts of “Influence” and “Originality” have greatly contributed to shape the evolution of art and literature in general. Both have created tensions between the established conventions of the past and the innovative expressions of the present. While influence focuses on reproducing the existing knowledge, originality deals with the creative techniques, which allow artists to redefine and transform the cultural landscape with their specific styles and voices. The present dissertation analyzes comparatively how Eugene Ionesco’s *The Chairs* (1952), Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1953), and Harold Pinter’s *The Caretaker* (1960), combine both concepts and exemplify Eliot’s “*Tradition and Individual Talent*”. By examining the thematic and structural innovations in the selected works, we shall illustrate how each play contributes to and reshapes the prevailing theatrical landscape, which is relevant to Eliot’s vision of tradition enriched by individual creativity. In other words, through T.S. Eliot’s theoretical framework, the dissertation seeks to illuminate the significance of Eliot’s ideas in understanding the development of modernist theatre by comparing the three selected plays.

The reasons which motivated us to undertake this thematic and comparative study came first from our interest in both Drama Studies as well as in Comparative Literature. Our particular interest in theatre of the absurd aims to explore the complex relationship between tradition and innovation in modernist theatre, as it is apparent in the three selected plays. Second, what caught our attention is the different ways in which the influence of tradition combined with creativity come to sight in the three works together as explained by T.S. Eliot in his famous essay entitled, “*Tradition and individual talent.*” Therefore, though these plays have different storylines and styles, they all show how these modern playwrights balance the inspiration of past literary traditions with their own artistic ideas. The comparison of the three plays helps, therefore, understanding how these writers honour the past while also creating something original.

The main objective is to prove how each playwright while drawing on the tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd, they present their individual talent, their own perspective and style.

1. Review of Literature

Eugène Ionesco's *The Chairs* (1952), Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953), and Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* (1960) are seminal dramatic works widely recognized for their profound influence on modern theater. These plays have attracted critical attention for decades, inspiring numerous interpretations and analyses across various perspectives.

Ionesco's *The Chairs* has garnered extensive critical attention for its unique blending of humor, melancholy, and philosophical inquiry. Michael Billington (2022) praises the play's ingenuity and humor, noting its enduring ability to engage and affect audiences through its unique storytelling techniques and emotional resonance. Despite its age, *The Chairs* continues to provoke and entertain, underscoring Ionesco's contribution to absurdist theatre.

David Fornaciari (2021) provides further insight, emphasizing the play's simplicity in character and scenario while highlighting its success in amplifying absurdity in everyday moments. He notes that the play's power lies not in complex characters or unusual situations, but in how it exposes the contradictions inherent in ordinary human experiences.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is widely regarded as a foundational work of the Theatre of the Absurd. Theodore Adorno (1997) argues that Beckett's plays are absurd not due to a lack of meaning, but because they interrogate the very notion of meaning itself. Beckett's work challenges audiences to rethink the concept of meaning and the assumptions underlying human existence. By "putting meaning on trial," Beckett compels reflection on existential questions, making his plays powerful vehicles for philosophical inquiry (p. 153).

Furthering this analysis, Jeffrey Nealon (1988) approaches *Waiting for Godot* from a postmodern perspective, arguing that the play critiques the grand narratives of modernism. The

characters Vladimir and Estragon's endless wait for Godot who never arrives symbolizes the failure of modernist ideals to provide genuine meaning or validation. Nealon suggests that the play's cyclical structure and unresolved tensions embody postmodern skepticism about progress and certainty, illustrating life's fragmentation (pp. 520–528).

Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* has also received considerable scholarly attention for its exploration of communication, identity, and human vulnerability. Sarika Pridisprao Auradkar (2007) asserts that Pinter's interest lies in the failure of communication between individuals and how this failure shapes human interactions. She explains that the play emphasizes the critical role of communication in maintaining relationships and highlights the consequences when communication falters, which can lead to emotional isolation and interpersonal conflict. According to Auradkar, *The Caretaker* serves as a commentary on the human condition, underlining the pervasive challenges caused by ineffective communication.

Similarly, Clifford Leech (2001) describes *The Caretaker* as the pinnacle of Pinter's work, particularly praising the portrayal of dominance and subservience as key themes. Leech interprets the character Davies as an "Everyman figure" struggling to find warmth and hope in a hostile world, symbolizing the universal human experience of seeking security and belonging. This characterization illustrates how Pinter's work resonates broadly, reflecting the vulnerabilities of everyday life (p. 119).

Together, these critical perspectives underscore the significance of Ionesco, Beckett, and Pinter within absurdist and modern theatre. Their works continue to provoke reflection on meaning, language, and the human condition, demonstrating both their rootedness in literary tradition and their innovative individual styles.

2. Issue and working hypothesis

It follows from the above review of literature that the three selected plays have been studied from different angles and all of them received much critical attention. Since their publication, they have been the centre of interest for many scholars who examined them from different perspectives. However, to our limited knowledge, it seems that these authors have not been studied together. Also, they have not been examined in terms of influence and originality according to Eliot's idea of "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*" (1919). Therefore, to fill in the gap in literary criticism, we shall examine, on the one hand, the three plays according to the Theatre of the Absurd. On the other hand, we shall present the playwright's individual talent, their unique perspective, and original style. In other words, our concern is to investigate how each playwright presents his ideas of the "absurd" in the plays through the analysis of major themes (existentialism, alienation, broken communication as well as the endless searching for purpose and meaning in absurd world), plot, settings, style, and characters.

Moreover, our intention is to reveal the techniques and methods of each writer's questions towards the dominant psychological trauma of post-World War Two. In addition, we shall show how each playwright presents his unique language, structure, and character development demonstrating their individual talent in challenging traditional notions of drama and storytelling.

In doing so, we shall use T. S. Eliot's notion, as mentioned earlier, "*Tradition and Individual Talent*". The main objective is to find out absurd features, which forms the tradition. Moreover, we shall identify aspects of their theatre, which subvert the Absurd conventions, which are apparent in their specific unique styles.

II- Methods and Materials

a. Methods

To conduct and undertake a thorough study, we have selected key theoretical concepts from T.S. Eliot's essay entitled "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*" (1919). The essay provides a comprehensive framework that is essential for exploring our chosen topic in depth, making it particularly suitable for examining both tradition and individual talent of authors. T.S. Eliot is considered as a seminal figure in modernist poetry and literary criticism in the twentieth century. His influential essay "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*", published in 1919, explains the significance of literary tradition and the role of individual creativity. According to him, poets draw from the literary past while also they contribute to art through their innovative perspectives.

Furthermore, T.S. Eliot's theory of tradition and individual talent, as developed and propounded in his essay, explores the concept of influence in literature and suggests that originality is inherently found in the different ways these authors distinguish themselves from their literary predecessors. According to Eliot (1919), writers should have a strong connection to their cultural and historical background because "tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it, you must obtain it by great labor" (p. 12). To become a great poet, one must thoroughly study the works of previous poets to understand and incorporate cultural and intellectual legacy into their own work. Moreover, individual talent is not a natural-born gift, but rather a skill achieved through dedicated study and hard work. The past and present are intertwined with each influencing the other. To clarify, the past guides the present while the present reshapes our understanding of the past. Therefore, a skilled writer understands this dynamic and carries the responsibility of creating by appreciating the background of the past.

Eliot also maintains that: “the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past, and the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities”(p.13). Writers should respect tradition and must be well-versed in the works of past authors and incorporate this knowledge into their own writing.

Eliot adds: “We shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his [the poet’s] work maybe those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously”(p.14). The quote suggests that poets often create their most unique and personal work when they are inspired by the poetry of those who came before them. By drawing from the achievements of past poets, they can create something truly special. Moreover, according to T.S Eliot, artists and poets do not create their work in isolation; instead they are influenced by the ideas, styles and techniques of those who came before them. He asserts: “No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists ”(p.15). The meaning of artists’ work is not solely determined by their individual intentions or interpretations, but is also shaped by the socio-cultural, historical, and artistic context in which they were produced.

b. Materials

b.1-Historical Background of the Three Plays

The late 20th century was a pivotal period in the history of literature, which was marked by the two World Wars and the emergence of two important literary movements, which is Modernism and the Theatre of the Absurd. The movement came as a response to the chaos and disillusionment that followed these two wars, which caused the loss of millions of lives, widespread destruction, and the emergence of nuclear threats, had left people feeling disoriented and disconnected from the world around them. These feelings of despair are

described by writers and playwrights, who used their writings as a means to help people cope and understand the world around them. They believed that their literary works, according to Martin Esslin, could serve as a form of catharsis, allowing individuals to confront and process the trauma and chaos that had been caused by the post-world war, is often described, according to T.S Eliot, as a “wasteland”, a space where writers could experiment with new forms, styles, and themes. The same period urged them to question and look for the meaning of life through Drama, which responded to the absurd, the surreal, and the nonsensical effects of the wars. This led to a period of great creative freedom and experimentation in literature. Authors were liberated from the previous literary traditions to explore their own dreams and imagination. Esslin (1961) explains:

Absurd, originally means ‘out of harmony’, in a musical context. Hence its dictionary definition: ‘out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical’. In common usage, ‘absurd’ may simply mean ‘ridiculous’, but this is not the sense in which Camus uses the word, and in which it is used when we speak of the Theatre of the Absurd. In an essay on Kafka, Ionesco denied his understanding of the term as follows: ‘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’ (p.19).

It was in that context that the theatre of the absurd emerged as a part of the modernist movement, which came as a response to the horrors and the general lack of solace in the world after World War II. The literary and dramatic movement, started in the mid- 20th century, according the critic Martin Esslin, for the works of numbers of playwrights, mostly written in around 1960s (Esslin,1961). The term “theatre of the absurd” derived from the French philosopher Albert Camus in his essay “*Myth of Sisyphus*” (1942). He defines human situation as basically meaningless and absurd. The sense of void felt by the people due to traumas of the post war age and uncertainty of life were depicted by these absurdist plays. Prominent names associated with this genre of The Theatre are Eugene Ionesco, who is one of the most prominent

writers and critics, whom Martin Esslin has mentioned in his theatre of the absurd and puts him equal to Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter in the sense that they share the same exploration of the human condition's inherent meaninglessness, which they express through their unique techniques.

In their works they often employed absurd situations, nonsensical dialogue, and unconventional storytelling methods to convey sense of existential uncertainty and the absurdity of the human existence. Through their unique approaches, they invite audiences to question the meaning and purpose of life (Esslin, 1961.14).

Correspondingly, Eugène Ionesco's *The Chairs*. The play was first staged in 1952. It is associated to the Theatre of the Absurd as it delves into themes of existentialism and the search for meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. Ionesco's work is characterized by its absurdist elements, such as the portrayal of an old couple preparing chairs for invisible guests, symbolizing the futility of human endeavours and the elusiveness of communication. The play reflects the absurdity of the human condition and the struggle to find significance amidst chaos and nothingness, a common theme in Ionesco's oeuvre and the broader absurdist movement. The reception of *Waiting for Godot* at San Quentin, and the wide acclaim given to plays by Ionesco, Pinter, and others, testify that their plays, which are so often superciliously dismissed as nonsense or mystification, have something to say and can be understood (Esslin, p. 18).

Similarly, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is closely linked to the Theatre of the Absurd because critics condemned the play for its lack of plot, development, characterization, suspense, or plain common sense reflecting the existentialist themes of absurdity and the human condition. Written by Samuel Beckett and put on stage in 1953, the play expresses the sense of disillusionment and existential doubt prevalent in the mid-20th century, particularly after the ruin of two world wars. The play's narrative, is characterized by its lack of conventional plot and its repetitive, circular dialogue, which mirrors the absurdity and futility of human existence

as articulated by existentialist philosophers like Albert Camus. Beckett's work is also marked by its exploration of the futility and volatility of life.

Features of the absurd come also to sight in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*, first performed in 1960, is connected to the Theatre of the Absurd because it contains elements, which reflect the post-war British context, which was characterized by social and economic upheaval. Pinter's work also examines the themes such as power dynamics, identity, and communication breakdowns, which are depicted through the interactions of the characters in a confined space. The play's minimalist setting and ambiguous dialogue are reminiscent of Beckett's play. However, Pinter's play focuses more on the specificity of human relationships and existential anxiety rather than the broader philosophical themes seen in Beckett's work.

b.2- Playwrights' Biographies

Eugène Ionesco was born in 1909 in Romania to a Romanian father and a French mother. He spent much of his childhood in France and Romania, which gave him a sense of cultural dislocation that influenced his later work. After moving to France permanently in 1942, he began writing plays like *The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson*, which helped establish the Theatre of the Absurd. His works often dealt with the absurdity of human communication and modern life. Ionesco became a respected playwright and received many awards, including the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969.

Samuel Beckett was an Irish writer born in 1906 in Dublin. He studied literature and languages at Trinity College and moved to Paris in 1928, where he became close to James Joyce. During World War II, Beckett joined the French Resistance and was later awarded the Croix de Guerre for his bravery. He gained international fame in the 1950s with his novels and especially his play *Waiting for Godot*, which became a key work of the Theatre of the Absurd.

In 1969, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Despite his success, he remained a private person and avoided the spotlight.

Harold Pinter, born in 1930 in London, was a major British playwright known for his unique dialogue and themes of memory and power. His experiences during World War II, including being evacuated from London, had a lasting impact on him. He started his career in acting before turning to writing, and his early plays like *The Room* and *The Birthday Party* quickly gained attention. Later works like *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming* confirmed his status in modern theatre. Pinter also worked in film and was politically active. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2005 for his powerful and precise use of language.

b.3-Summary of the Three Plays

Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* is one-act drama, echoes Beckett's play, which features an elderly couple preparing chairs for an invisible audience, waiting for a speaker to deliver a message of great importance. However, the anticipated message never materializes, highlighting the absurdity and emptiness of human endeavours. As Beckett's play, *The Chairs* contains many elements that show the absurdity of human existence and communication. It is an absurdist tragic play, which is set in a remote island with no specific time or place. What appears is only a man married to the old woman, who prepare themselves for the arrival of a series of invisible guests, represented by empty chairs. The playwright conveys the couple's message, which reflects an alienating world by hiring a mysterious orator. The old man hopes he and his wife will die happily and his message will be communicated to the world, and he can make his philosophy known to the universe. The play ends with the two characters committing suicide with the belief that nothing could get any better by jumping out the window while the orator does not change the society because he is deaf mute and cannot rely on the message.

Correspondingly, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is a tragi-comedy play, which is divided into two acts. It was initially published in 1952 in French as *En Attendant Godot* and then produced in English a year later. It was considered as an innovative play because it differs from the existing dramatic works. The play revolves around two main characters, Vladimir and Estragon, who wait for someone named Godot. Throughout the play, they engage in repetitive and meaningless conversations, encountering characters like Pozzo and Lucky, but Godot never comes. The play explores themes of uncertainty, the search for meaning, and the human condition's inherent absurdity and the Theatre of the Absurd it's first theatrical success. The play, ends with the starting point of the play, which is waiting for Godot. Beckett in this play subverts all the traditional dramatic features and subverts all previous theatrical conventions. Every ingredient of the theatre of the absurd has been fulfilled by him regardless of that this play is successful. He wrote it to break the rules of traditional dramatic characteristics. Therefore, *Waiting for Godot* has gained its place in literary history as a masterpiece that changed the face of the twentieth century drama since it changed all the existing dramatic elements and completes every factor of the theatre of the absurd.

Last but not least, Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* is a three-act play, which examines the themes of identity and the fragility of human relationships. It turns around three characters: Aston, his brother Mick, and a homeless man named Davies. The play is set in a disorderly room where Aston offers Davies a place to stay, but tensions arise as Davies tries to manipulate the situation to his advantage. As *The Chairs*, *The Caretaker* explore the ambiguity of human motives, which reminds the reader of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. *The Caretaker* is also a tragic-comedy play with its three main characters: Aston, Mick, and Davies; Aston and Mick as brothers, and Davies; they are all alienated from their environment. The play is set in a messy house. As Time passes, Davies, the destitute man, harbours fantasies of securing a stable life

and manipulating his benefactors, Aston and Mick, to his advantage. His delusions are tied to his sense of self-worth and survival, reflecting the social and psychological tensions within the play. The character's interactions reveal the gap between their desires and reality, stressing themes of mistrust and the fragility of human relationship.

The plays summaries reveal that *The Chairs*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Caretaker* share several common elements, reflecting their roots in the Theatre of the Absurd. These similarities underscore the play's exploration of human existence, lack or the difficulty of communication, and the absurdity of life, which make them significant contributions to modern and absurdist theatre. However, despite their relation to the dramatic tradition of the theatre of the absurd, the three plays diverge in several key aspects, including their thematic focus, the way the playwrights shape their characters, and their narrative style.

III- Results

Comparing *The Chairs* , *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Caretaker* . Through Thomas Stearns Eliot's concepts of "*Tradition and Individual Talent* ", reveals several similarities and divergences at the same time . The comparative study has demonstrated that the three plays , though classified under the Theatre of the Absurd, maintain a profound engagement with dramatic traditions particularly those established by Shakespeare. By applying T.S. Eliot's concept of Tradition and the Individual Talent, it becomes evident that these playwrights do not reject the past; rather, they reinterpret it through new theatrical forms suited to the uncertainties of the modern age.

Despite their apparent disconnection from conventional plot structures and character development, the three plays explored in this chapter reflect timeless existential concerns such as the search for meaning, the inevitability of isolation, and the failure of communication. These themes echo those found in classical drama, suggesting a continuity of artistic inquiry, even amidst radical stylistic shifts.

The analysis has shown that Ionesco, Beckett, and Pinter challenge traditional theatre while remaining deeply rooted in it. Their works exemplify Eliot's idea that true innovation in art comes not from abandoning tradition, but from transforming it through a personal and contemporary vision. Each playwright draws upon the literary and dramatic heritage of the past to explore the absurdities of the present.

Thus, the results affirm that Eliot's theory offers a powerful lens for understanding the originality of absurdist theatre. Far from rejecting the past, Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter reinvent it, proving that innovation in drama is most meaningful when it is rooted in an awareness of the tradition it redefines.

IV. Discussion Part: Chapter one: A Study of the Plays within “Tradition”

This discussion part of our comparative study of *The Chairs*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Caretaker* offers exploration of modern and absurdist theatre, highlighting both their shared characteristics and differences. It is divided into two chapters; the first one deals with the similarities between the three plays by borrowing T.S Eliot concept of “Tradition”. The second chapter is devoted to the playwrights’ particular dramatic style and individual talent. In his essay “*Tradition and the Individual Talent*”, T.S. Eliot suggests, as mentioned earlier, that tradition is a vital part of literature and art. For him, tradition cannot be considered just as old customs or practices, but rather as a living, breathing connection between the past and the present.

In other words, tradition is a way for writers to link their work to the great literature that has come before them. Every new piece of writing is influenced by earlier works. This means that when a poet writes something new, he does not start from nothing; instead, his work is part of a larger conversation that includes all the writers who have come before him. Kermode writes that: “For Eliot, tradition involves not just the inheritance of a fixed past but the continuous recreation of that past within a modern context. Tradition becomes a living, ever-evolving process” (Kermode, 2000, p.39). This statement proves that tradition is something that is alive and always changing, not something that stays the same forever. It’s a process where the old ideas are continually updated and made relevant for modern times.

Moreover, For Eliot, understanding the past is crucial for creating meaningful art. He argues that writers should study and appreciate the works produced by earlier authors. By doing so, they can draw inspiration from their ideas, styles, and themes. This connection to the past helps writers create richer, more layered works that resonate with readers, as Fisher remarks,

Eliot's insistence on the historical sens compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer has a simultaneous existence" (Fisher, 1919, p.38). Eliot's belief is that poets must engage deeply with their literary ancestors to create meaningful work that resonates across time. Furthermore more, he stresses that tradition is not fixed or unchanging because it changes over time. Each new generation of writers adds their voice to the existing ones, reshaping them and keeping them alive. This ongoing process means that tradition is always relevant while the society changes. Writers can reinterpret old ideas and make them fresh and exciting for today's audience.

Eliot's views on tradition were particularly important during the early 20th century, a time of great change and upheaval. Many artists felt disconnected from the past due to rapid social and technological changes. Eliot adds that rather than abandoning tradition, modern writers should embrace it. By doing so, they can find stability and meaning in their work, even in a rapidly changing world. This perspective resonates strongly in the evolution of theater, where playwrights of the absurd drew inspiration from traditional plays while simultaneously subverting their conventions. By using the old and the new drama techniques, playwrights do not only honor the past but also illuminate the complexities of contemporary existence, demonstrating that tradition can serve as a vital springboard for innovation and deeper understanding in art.

In his seminal essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, T.S. Eliot emphasizes the importance of literary heritage, arguing that great writers do not write in isolation but engage consciously with the works of their predecessors. For Eliot, the past is not something to be discarded, but something that lives within the present an ever-evolving tradition that contemporary writers must both inherit and transform. Eliot regarded Shakespeare as central to this tradition, praising him as a timeless and universal artist whose legacy continues to inform

and challenge modern literature and drama. He is considered One of the most influential figures in the Western dramatic tradition , whose plays have shaped the foundations of theatre for centuries. His mastery of structured plots, complex characters, poetic language, and philosophical depth established what would become the core of classical drama. Shakespeare's influence extended far beyond his own time, setting standards in both form and content that continued to dominate Western theatrical conventions well into the modern era.

It is crucial to recognize that traditional drama held a dominant role in Western theatre for centuries. Most plays followed a clear and familiar structure: a beginning that introduces characters and conflict, a rising action that leads to a climax, and a resolution that brings closure. This linear progression was often governed by the classical unities of time, place, and action rules that aimed to maintain logical coherence and emotional engagement. Shakespeare and his contemporaries employed these conventions skillfully, creating plays that resonated with audiences for generations through clear narratives and poetic expression. However, the 20th century, particularly the post-World War II era, marked a turning point in artistic expression. The aftermath of the war left many questioning the value of traditional ideals, the role of religion, and even the purpose of existence. This period, often described as a "wasteland" a term Eliot himself famously used, witnessed a deep cultural and existential crisis. Many writers and artists felt the need to break away from established norms and instead sought new ways to express disillusionment, alienation, and the absurdity of modern life.

Out of this cultural rupture emerged the Theatre of the Absurd, a movement that abandoned conventional plots, logical progression, and coherent dialogue. Instead, it embraced fragmented structure, circular dialogue, nonsensical language, and abstract settings. Plays no longer aimed to explain the world but to reflect its chaos and confusion. The works of Beckett, Pinter, and Ionesco, emblematic of this shift, often contain no clear action, no flowing narrative, no traditional resolution, and no stable notion of time. These dramatists did not simply discard

meaning, they dramatized its absence, portraying a world where language fails, identity crumbles, and certainty dissolves.

From this perspective, the playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd, including Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, and Harold Pinter, though seemingly revolutionary in their approach, are in fact deeply connected to dramatic tradition. Their work, while breaking away from classical structure and realism, can be seen as a modern reimagining of dramatic purpose in a world that no longer holds the metaphysical and moral certainties found in earlier literature. Rather than imitate Shakespeare, these playwrights respond to him, redefining what theatre can express in the aftermath of global catastrophe and existential disillusionment. In this sense, Shakespeare represents the structured and meaningful framework that Absurdist playwrights deconstruct and reconfigure in their search for new modes of expression.

Tradition in *Waiting for Godot*, *The Chairs*, and *The Caretaker*

The plays *The Chairs*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Caretaker* share several important features despite their differences in style. All three explore common themes such as the search for meaning, human isolation, and broken communication. Their characters are often ordinary, broken, or confused individuals who struggle to communicate or understand their place in the world. The settings are minimal and confined, reflecting the emotional or psychological states of the characters rather than realistic environments. Additionally, the use of language is fragmented, repetitive, or filled with pauses and silences, revealing the failure of communication in modern life. Together, these elements reflect a shared vision of post-war uncertainty, placing the plays firmly within the Theatre of the Absurd.

In light of T.S. Eliot's concept of tradition, these similarities demonstrate that the Theatre of the Absurd is not a break from dramatic history but a radical continuation of it.

Although Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter are known for breaking with the traditional rules of drama, they draw deeply on the past, especially the legacy of Shakespearean drama, to construct something new: the Theatre of the Absurd. They are not writing in opposition to tradition, they are writing within and through it, just as T.S. Eliot describes in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. As he argues that the best artists transform tradition by engaging with it critically, not by ignoring or rejecting it. Absurd Features in the Selected Plays.

1-Absurd Features in the Selected Plays

1-1-Disrupted and ABA Plots

One of the shared feature of the three plays is their subversion of traditional plot structure. Eliot believed that great writers renew form by reshaping the old rather than discarding it. In this spirit, the three playwrights abandon the classical narrative arc but preserve the emotional and philosophical depth of traditional drama.

Playwrights often take the kinds of stories that are common in traditional plays and change them in strange ways. In traditional plays, the stories usually make sense and have a clear beginning, middle, and end. But in absurd plays, Absurdist playwrights, like Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, and Harold Pinter draw upon familiar storytelling structures and themes; they subvert them to create a dialogue with the past. For example, they use characters or situations that are similar to classic stories, but then make them act in very strange or confusing ways that don't seem to have any meaning. Moreover, Absurd plays explore big questions about life and what it all mean, just like traditional plays do, but they do it in a more puzzling or illogical way by using things that the audience already recognize from traditional plays. Absurd writers can surprise people and make them think differently about the story. So, while absurd plays are different from traditional ones, they remain connected to them.

As we have mentioned previously, in traditional plays, plots are linear and structured straightforwardly, guiding the audience through a clear narrative divided into three parts. In contrast to a circular plot, *The Chairs* and *Waiting for Godot* have no stories. The two plays have no clear-cut plots; they are built on a series of seemingly random and disconnected events. As an illustration, *The Chairs* follows two central characters, an Old Man and an Old Woman, who engage in a series of absurd and illogical actions and conversations. The play's structure is circular while the characters repeatedly set up and remove chairs, as if they prepare for the arrival of unseen guests. The play builds up an expectation that the old man will deliver an important message to the unseen guests and the audience is left waiting. Both of them expect something significant to happen but ultimately nothing comes by the end. The play ends with no resolution or advancement of the plot as the couple commit suicide and the orator reveals that he is deaf mute. Therefore, he can reveal nothing. The repetitive activity of the two characters mirrors the absurdist view that human existences devoid of meaning and purpose.

More significantly, the two plays are shaped with what is known as "ABA Structure", which means that the story ends as it is started and nothing really happens in the course of the story. One action is repeated in different ways with some specific words and sentences. In *Waiting for Godot*, Esslin mentions that Beckett does not tell a story, it explores a static situation "(Esslin. 46). Unlike traditional drama, Beckett and Enesco do not follow a logical sequence of time, place, or events. They create a fragmented and disorganized narrative with characters, which do not go anywhere. They stand still in front of audience and do nothing except passing the ball. They talk and pass the time. The plays lack action and characters are not related to plot but to themselves.

Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot and audience perceive that perhaps the real story of the play will start after Godot's arrival, but Godot does not appear on stage nor is he introduced to the audience. When characters come on stage they reveal their purpose. They say they are

waiting but Godot does not come and the act ends with waiting. Second act is also the copy of first act with minor differences. The play goes on and eventually ends with the same thing. Hence, there is no proper start of the play nor does it have a proper end. It is a journey from nothingness to nothingness. It is a play in which nothing happens twice: “Nothing happens, nobody comes... nobody goes, it’s awful” (P.34). The audience thinks that the real story begins with the arrival of Godot, but Godot never appears and no one knows who is he.

The same holds true *The Caretaker* by Harold Pinter. His play neither have a plot nor follows a linear narrative; it is rather based on a series of seemingly random, disconnected events and interactions between the three main characters Davies, Aston, and Mick. All of them are trapped in a cycle of futile actions and empty conversations. Their way of acting mirrors the absurdist belief that human existence is absurd and without clear meaning or direction. There is no clear central conflict or goal that drives the characters’ actions, and they engage in circular, repetitive dialogue that fails to advance the plot in any meaningful way. For example, Davies constantly talks about his desire to go to Sidcup to retrieve his identity papers, but he never actually makes the journey. Aston repeatedly mentions his plan to build a shed, but he never achieves it.

This lack of a coherent narrative arc and the characters’ inability to progress or change reflects the absurdist view that life is inherently worthless and devoid of purpose. Finally, the play ends, and the audience sees a return to the starting point, with Davies becoming a tramp, the brothers isolating themselves once again, and Aston retreating to his solitude while Mick maintains his communicative mood with his brother. Consequently, the three plays structure are circular, with the characters finding themselves stuck in an endless cycle of waiting, unable to make any significant progress or change in their situations.

Although *The Chairs*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Caretaker* break the rules of traditional plot structure, they are not disconnected from dramatic tradition. Instead, they continue it in a different way. Just as Eliot believed that the best writers keep tradition alive by changing it. These playwrights keep old ideas alive through new, absurd forms. Their strange and circular structures match the modern world's feelings of confusion, and show how powerful tradition can still be even when it's broken.

1-2- Setting

In traditional drama, especially in Shakespeare's plays, the setting is more than just a place. It often reflects the emotions or the inner life of the characters. T.S. Eliot believed that modern writers should not copy the past, but should understand it and build something new from it. That's exactly what Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter do with the settings in their plays.

Although *The Chairs*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Caretaker* are modern and absurdist, they still use setting in ways that connect them to the long tradition of theatre, just in new and creative ways. Each of the three plays happens in one single place, and that place never changes. This is similar to the classical rules of drama where the story happens in one location called the "unity of place", but these places are strange and abstract, not realistic. In *The Chairs*, the action takes place in a round room on an island. The room fills with empty chairs for invisible guests, showing loneliness and loss. In *Waiting for Godot*, the characters wait on a road near a single tree. There is nothing else, it feels like they are in the middle of nowhere, stuck in time.

In *The Caretaker*, all the action happens in an old, messy attic. The room shows how the characters feel lost, trapped, and disconnected from the world. These closed and simple settings help the audience focus on the characters' thoughts and feelings, just like in traditional drama. Even though the settings are simple, they are full of meaning. They reflect the characters' sadness, confusion, and search for meaning. Beckett's empty road and tree remind us of

a wasteland, a world with no answers. Ionesco's room with too many chairs shows the fear of being alone, even when surrounded by others. Pinter's attic feels like a prison where the characters fight for control and identity. So, the settings are not just backgrounds, they represent the characters' inner struggles, just like in Shakespeare's plays.

T.S. Eliot said that good writers take from the past and give it new life. That's what these three playwrights do. Their simple settings may seem very different from Shakespeare's grand stages, but they are still part of the same tradition, just updated for a modern world full of doubt and confusion.

1-3- Characters

T.S. Eliot believed that every great writer must learn from the past. They should not copy old characters, but understand them deeply and create something new that still feels connected to older works. The three playwrights Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter followed this idea. Their characters are not like traditional heroes or kings, but they still deal with big questions about life, death, identity, and purpose, just like Shakespeare's characters. In Shakespeare's plays, we often meet kings, warriors, or nobles who face major moral choices. In the absurdist plays, the characters are much simpler: old people, tramps, or jobless men, but they face similar questions.

The Old Man and the Old Woman in *The Chairs* also seem simple. They want to share an important message with the world, but no one hears them. Their lives feel empty and forgotten. Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* are two homeless men waiting for someone who never comes. Like Hamlet or Macbeth, they ask deep questions about the meaning of life, but in a quiet, confused way. Davies, Aston, and Mick in *The Caretaker* are ordinary people, but each one struggles with loneliness, identity, and human connection like characters in a Chekov

or Ibsen play, who were also part of the dramatic tradition Eliot admired .

So even though the characters are not powerful or famous, their inner struggles link them to a long history of deep, emotional drama. All of these characters struggle to connect , with each other, with themselves, or with the world. They talk a lot but say very little. They repeat things, forget things, and avoid direct answers. This is very different from Shakespeare's famous speeches and long monologues, but it serves the same purpose : to show the confusion and suffering of human life. These playwrights don't throw away the past. They take the emotional depth of older characters and show it in a new, broken form that fits the modern world , a world where people feel lost, alone, and unsure.

The characters in these three plays are very different from the grand figures of traditional drama, but they still deal with the same human questions. Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter follow T.S. Eliot's idea that tradition must grow. They didn't copy old characters , they reshaped them to fit the modern world. Their characters are confused, weak, and strange , but still part of the long history of dramatic exploration of what it means to be human.

1-4- Themes

One another common feature in *The Chairs*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Caretaker* lies in their engagement with classical themes of existential doubt, human suffering, isolation, and the fragility of identity. These themes have existed since ancient Greek tragedies by Sophocles, through Shakespeare's famous soliloquies, and into the psychological plays of Ibsen and Chekhov. Each of the three plays shows a deep sense of uncertainty about existence. In *The Chairs*, the old couple prepares a big speech for invisible guests, reflecting the emptiness of rituals found in Shakespeare's later works . In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon endlessly wait for someone who never comes, much like tragic heroes searching

hing for meaning. In *The Caretaker*, Davies is stuck in a cycle of rejection and isolation, much like the lonely characters in Chekhov's plays.

a-Existentialist Themes in the Plays

The Theatre of the Absurd, as already mentioned, is a genre that emerged in the mid-20th century. It is shaped by existentialist philosophy, a school of thought that explored the nature of human existence and the absence of inherent meaning or purpose in the universe. Existentialism was promoted by philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, who suggest that individuals are responsible for creating their own meaning in a seemingly indifferent world. It came as a reaction against the backdrop of the devastation and disillusionment following World War II. Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, and Harold Pinter sought to capture the essence of existential angst and the absurdity of human existence through their plays.

They used the stage as a canvas to depict the isolation, anxiety, and sense of meaninglessness that pervaded post-war society. "Existentialists hold that humans have no pre-given purpose or essence laid out for them by God or by nature; it is up to each one of us to decide who and what we are through our own actions." (Guignon, 2013). *The Chairs*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Caretaker* are considered as an important plays, which reflect the world of existentialism. They are highly celebrated as an existential plays because they express their authors' disillusionment and despair.

Existential Dread in *The Chairs*

Existential dread refers to the deep feelings of anxiety, fear, or despair that arise when people confront the fundamental uncertainties and realities of human existence, such as the meaning of life, the inevitability of death, and the limits one's control over the future. In simple words, it refers to the belief that human life which is devoid of purpose and meaning. Ionesco himself states that the main theme of *The Chairs* is "nothingness". He incorporates existential dread by creating a sense of uncertainty and meaninglessness in the characters' lives. The old man is a symbol of absurdity just like the theatre of the absurd. Esslin suggests: "Man is living in this universe with no purpose. He is confused, troubled, and in clear anger (Esslin, 1980 p.19).

We can identify this vision of life in character of the old man with this idea that his life does not seem to have a real purpose, except for that message he wants to convey; he has not really done anything serious or meaningful throughout his life. In the very beginning of the play, the Old Man and the Old Woman have nothing to say to each other. They live in complete emptiness and remain stuck in repetitive existence, telling the same story and doing the same things every day. They are trapped in this cycle and cannot move. At one instance, the Old Woman needs the Old man to speak, so he asks him to repeat a story about some earlier point in their relationship. This story she has heard it so many times but still requests it every single night. The old man becomes nervous and tired of doing that always and always saying:

What again? I'm tired of it ... you always ask me to do the same thing... It's so boring. Every evening, every evening without exception, through seventy- five years of married life, you make me tell the same story, imitate the same people, the same months, always the same. (Pp, 3-4)

This excerpt illustrates how the old man is tired of doing the same things all the time and shows the big void where the couple's lives. In addition, after ninety-five years of failure to achieve meaningful things, the Old Man claims that he has a message to convey to the world just to defend his existence and show that his life has a meaning: "My wife and myself have nothing more to ask of life. Our existence has found its final consummation" (P. 47). This sentence suggests that the old man's life really has no meaning except the message he wants to convey to the world stating: "I've a message...I must fight for it, a mission ...a message for all men, for all mankind" (P.08). He has not really accomplished much in his life, but he still tries to convey the importance of life.

Furthermore, the old man's refusal to deliver his message shows that he is afraid to take charge and face reality. What follows expresses the difficulty of the speaker to communicate and even produce anything except rough sounds: "Umm, mmm, gneu, gou, gu, mmm, mmm, mmm, MMM, mmmm" (P.50). Therefore, the message is seen as a failure considering the orator is a deaf mute as he can say nothing to the guests. It is so sad though, because the play ends up the Old Man taking his own life before he can share his message with the world. By committing suicide, he does not really contribute to change anything in society.

The Theme of Isolation and Alienation

The theatre of the absurd is characterized by its non-realistic and illogical nature; it often depicts characters struggling to connect with others and finding themselves isolated in their own worlds. Eugene Ionesco in most of his plays, concentrates on loneliness and isolation showing the non-control over man's fate and this is deeply revealed in his one act play "*The Chairs*". The playwright stages the characters' profound sense of loneliness and

disconnection through their physical and emotional separation from the world around them. According to Eugene Ionesco, humans are like aliens in this universe, and the character of the old man really embodies that idea. The elderly couple, known as Old Man and Old woman is trapped in a cycle of routine and solitude since they live away on an island; they are isolated from other people. However, their isolation is not just physical but also emotional as they yearn for connection and meaning in their lives. The Old Man's inviting a lot of invisible guests encapsulates the pervasive feeling of loneliness and reflects the characters' struggle to find genuine human connection in a world that seems devoid of it. The chairs they set up for the invisible guests symbolize their desperate attempt to fill the void and escape their isolation.

Though every character communicates with others to overcome his isolation, tragically the others are invisible, which confirm the depressing of isolation when the same room is regarded as an empty space which symbolizes the old man's hope and dream. As the play progresses, it becomes apparent that the chairs remain empty, which represents the characters' ultimate failure to find genuine connection. At one instance, the old man says: "And now, with your Majesty's permission, I should like to speak to you all, ladies and gentlemen, young children, my dear colleagues, and fellow-countrymen all, Mr. Chairman, comrades in arms." (P.45). this quote highlights the sense of isolation that the characters' feel, as they are surrounded by empty chairs and invisible guests, and feel that they are the last remnants of humanity. The theme of isolation is also further reinforced by the character of Orator. He is more isolated than the couple as he must face the guests alone in time he is a deaf-mute which symbolically enhance his isolation as he only can speak in guttural noises and write a nonsensical word. It is obvious that every character tries to communicate with others to overcome his isolation. Especially the couple who lost hopes in life and their isolation makes them feel nothingness and hopelessness that increase their depression in time where they must accept senselessness of their reality. As committing suicide was the only solution to escape

from their isolation saying to his wife: “Let us be united in time and in eternity, if not in space, as we were in trial and tribulation: “Let us die at the same moment.” (P.49). These excerpts reveal that Ionesco describes the painful reality of man who has no choice except death to escape from all their sufferings.

Existential Themes in Waiting for Godot

Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* is a profound exploration of existential themes heavily enriched by literary allusions, particularly to classical works such as Dante’s “*Divine Comedy*”, the Bible, and Shakespeare. These allusions serve not only to deepen the narrative but also to reflect the characters’ struggles with meaning, faith, and the human condition. Beckett’s characters, Vladimir and Estragon, can be likened to Dante’s pilgrims in “Purgatorio”. Both trapped in a state of waiting and uncertainty. Just as Dante’s souls linger in limbo, unable to attain redemption, Vladimir and Estragon find themselves in a barren landscape that mirrors the desolation of Dante’s limbo. Their endless waiting for Godot symbolizes a modern purgatory, where hope for resolution or salvation remains unfulfilled.

This parallel draw attention to the futility of their existence, emphasizing the existential notion that life is a cycle of waiting without purpose. The play is rife with biblical references that add layers to its existential themes. The characters often engage in discussions that echo biblical motifs of faith, doubt, and the quest for meaning amid suffering. For instance, the allusion to the parable of the two thieves on the cross highlights the theme of salvation, yet Beckett subverts these expectations by presenting Godot as a figure who never arrives. This absence questions the very foundations of faith, suggesting a world where divine intervention is either absent or irrelevant. The cyclical structure of the play, where hope is consistently deferred, reinforces the idea that life is characterized by meaningless repetitions, devoid of ultimate resolution or purpose.

Beckett also draws on Shakespearean themes, particularly the exploration of human folly and despair. The characters' dialogues often reflect a tragicomic sensibility reminiscent of Shakespeare's tragic figures, who grapple with existential dilemmas. The absurdity of their situation, combined with moments of profound insight, mirrors the complexity of human experience portrayed in Shakespeare's works. In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett explores existential themes through two characters who wait endlessly for someone who never comes. Their waiting becomes a metaphor for the human condition : hoping for meaning in a meaningless world. This theme directly parallels *Hamlet's* famous soliloquy, "To be or not to be, that is the question," is one of the earliest and clearest expressions of existential doubt. Hamlet questions the value of existence, the fear of death, and the unknown afterlife Like Hamlet, Vladimir and Estragon are caught in inaction and uncertainty, repeatedly making small decisions but never moving forward. Both plays reflect a fear of the unknown, an inability to act, and a profound anxiety about what it means to exist. Beckett takes Shakespeare's existential doubt and strips it of royal context and poetic eloquence, placing it in a bare, timeless world, where questions linger without answers.

There are several other existentialist elements present in the play. One is evident in Estragon's words: "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful" (P. 34). The excerpt illustrates how the characters' existence is shaped as accidental and static. The characters search for meaning and purpose, but it always seems just out of their reach as Vladimir expresses it: "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?" and Vladimir answers: "Yes, yes we're magicians" (P.61). The quotes highlight the characters' constant search for something to validate their existence in a world that may seem devoid of inherent purpose.

In addition, the repeated phrase by Estragon throughout the play: “Nothing to be done” (P.01), expresses clearly the characters’ sense of futility and the idea that life is purposeless. As the play progresses, the characters question why they are waiting for Godot and what it really means. They do different things like changing their shoes, talking about memories, and even considering ending their lives. These actions show how they’re searching for meaning and purpose in their existence. As Vladimir reflects on the purpose of their waiting, he says: “ We wait. We are bored. No, don’t protest, we are bored to death, there’s no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste[...]” (p. 73). The characters’ struggle to find meaning in their waiting and their longing for something more significant to occur. Vladimir and Estragon are faced with the existential dilemma of making choices in a world that lacks clear meaning. Despite having the freedom to leave and stop waiting for that Godot, they choose to stay. This suggests their individual responsibility to make choices and take control of their own lives, even in the face of uncertainty. It is a powerful reflection of the existentialist philosophy that emphasizes the importance of personal freedom and the weight of individual decisions.

The characters’ anticipation of Godot’s arrival represents the human tendency to seek external sources of validation and meaning. It is a powerful representation of the existential quest for significance that many individuals experience. And their endless waiting really brings out the idea of craving approval from others and the deep internal battle to find meaning in a world that often feels devoid of any purpose. “The world is actually absurd, which means that there is no meaning or purpose” (Esslin, 1961,p.5).

Estragon and Vladimir accept the stagnant nature of their situation and have given up hope for any change or improvement. It is like they were trapped in a cycle of waiting for Godot, unable to break free. They rely on each other for support, trying to comfort one another in the face of

the overwhelming despair they feel during their long wait. It is a really powerful depiction of the human condition and the need for connection in the face of hopelessness. Absurdity is like this constant struggle and contradiction.

Vladimir and Estragon, even though they get suffering, feeling bored, and even thinking of suicide. According to Camus, committing suicide means giving into absurdity. It is like agreeing with it instead of facing it head-on. So, accepting the absurd fate and staying here is the way to go. Camus calls in his *Sisyphus Myth* the question of suicide the most fundamental philosophical question. There is but one truly serious philosophical problem. And that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth Living amounts to answering the fundamental question of Philosophy. All the rest whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve Categories come afterwards. These are games ; one Must first answer the questions of suicide (Camus, p, 395).

The desire for suicide is motivated by the two characters' boring life while waiting. It is also caused by nothingness of their activities and purposeless. Their conversation about death as a sort of relief illustrate their state of despair :

Estragon: what about hanging ourselves?

Vladimir: it'd give us an erection.

(highly excited) an erection!

Estragon: Let's hang ourselves immediately! (pg.10)

For Estragon death is the best thing and for Vladimir, it is the end of each man's personal crucifixion. It seems also that they are not just waiting for Godot as if they are waiting for death to escape from their meaningless life.

The Theme of Isolation :

One of the most haunting and central themes in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is isolation, not merely physical, but existential, emotional, and philosophical. The play presents a barren world where characters are caught in a repetitive cycle of waiting, stripped of meaningful relationships, connection, or purpose. This sense of isolation is not accidental but reflects the broader post-war condition of alienation and the modernist crisis of meaning.

Though Vladimir and Estragon are physically together, they are emotionally isolated. Their conversations are repetitive and often meaningless, full of contradictions and forgotten memories. They cannot agree on what happened yesterday or whether they are even waiting in the right place. Their relationship seems more like a survival strategy than genuine companionship. Their loneliness is heightened by the absence of Godot, a mysterious figure they pin their hopes on, but who never arrives. This emotional disconnection mirrors the existential alienation described by philosophers such as Sartre and Camus: the idea that human beings are alone in a meaningless universe. Even when Pozzo and Lucky arrive, their interaction is marked by domination and silence rather than true connection. Pozzo's cruelty and Lucky's dehumanization illustrate a world where power replaces empathy, further deepening the sense of isolation. This theme, while modern in execution, is not far from Shakespeare's portrayal of madness and isolation in characters like Lear or Hamlet, proving that Beckett, though radically different in form, continues to explore the most profound and timeless human concerns.

Identity Crisis and Existentialism in the Caretaker:

The question of identity is clearly raised in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* especially through the character Davies who suffer from identity crisis. He is a jobless, homeless, rootless, Wanderer, Outcast, and vagrant, he admits using a false name and identification papers and

goes through life by constructing his identity based on what people expect him to be. The two brothers Mick and Aston keep asking questions related to his origins and identity. Mick asks a lot of questions to identify who Davies is? He keeps insisting and repeating the same questions, from his first appearance on stage till the end of the play: “What is your name”(p.20). The same question is repeated many times by the two brothers. Davies at one point says: “I changed my name! Years ago. I been going around under an assumed name! That’s not my real name” (P.20). The protagonist is lost and unstable, he changes his name several times because he had no identity and he doesn’t belong to a particular society or family. In addition, we notice that Mick does not believe on what Davies is saying and seems to be curious to know the origins of Davies. At one moment he asks him: “You a foreigner?” (P.33). Then he asks him: “can you give any references?”, “Just to justify my solicitor” (P. 51). Note that Davies has no precise identity, he tries to prove his identity by relying on many invented stories, for example he claims that he left his references with a man in Sidcup and he tells the two brothers that he will bring them: “A man I know has got them. I left them with him you see? They prove who I am. I can’t move without them papers. They tell you who I am. You see! I’m stuck without them” (P.20). After that he complains about not having shoes to go there, and when Aston proposes pairs, he says: “No, they don’t fit” (P.64). Then, when he finds shoes to his feet, he complains about the rain which supposedly prevents him from undertaking of salvation journey: “I have been waiting for the weather to break. He’s got my papers, this man I left them with, it’s got it all down there, I could prove everything” (P.20).

After persevering in looking for the right shoes for Davies, he complains they are not fitful: “I can’t wear them without laces”. (P.64). These are just futile reasons he invents so as to continue profiting from Aston’s hospitality by hiding the truth of his identity. Davies is not the sole character who suffers from an identity crisis. Aston’s identity is also determined by outside elements. His traumatic experience, electroshock therapy and resulting brain damage

made him stuck in the past and unable to live authentically. It is stated that in his youth, he suffered from hallucinations. When he told people about them, his mother sent him against his will to a mental institution, where he received treatment by electroshocks which resulted in permanent brain damage. Aston says that after his treatment his “thoughts had become very slow” Due to this illness, he finds it physically hard to interact with others and his traumatic experience taught him to not trust people in fear of future betrayal and hospitalization, Consequently, society’s stigmatization and miss understanding of mental illness drastically altered Aston’s identity and made him unable to freely exist and express himself. This in turn prevents him from becoming the person he might have become if events have happened differently.

Mick on the other hand tries to avoid stigmatization and hopes to get the approval of the society by pretending to be a business man with large ambitions. “I’ve got my own business to build up, haven’t I? I got to think about expanding...In all directions (P.74). He hopes to renovate and rent his house in order to become a land lord. However, the man achieves nothing and the house stays in abysmal conditions which drive home the idea that Mick is constructing his fake identity with one goal in mind which is to be accepted by society to avoid any undesired stigmatization. The play thus suggests that identity is highly unstable and that outside influences like trauma or stigmatization can empty a person from any authentic and permanent sense of self.

The Theme of Isolation in Pinter’s Play

The characters in the play are profoundly isolated from one another, they orbit their own personal universes and cannot quite maintain a deep meaningful relationship with others. They are not engaged with society and isolated from the world outside. Davies is a tramp and as such he has no sense of belonging and no one cares about him. He experiences loneliness because

he has no identity, he has no connections with his family members, he has no home even no real name. He is always lonely and remains alone till the end of the play. Davies is described as being dirty and stinking, he neglects himself and does not care about his appearances this is why people avoid him and always insults him: “you’re stinking the place out. You’re an old robber, there’s no from it. You’re getting away an old skate. You don’t belong in a nice place like this. You’re an old barian”. (Mick. P.35). From here we can see how Davies is not accepted by members of his society. Even if he works in a café as a caretaker he is still alone, because he is marginalized and mistreated by the others, he is seen as a slave. Davies’s isolation is also caused by his own miss behavior and arrogance and because of this he left from Mick’s house. At the beginning of the first act Davies tells Aston that he left his wife just one week after their marriage simply because she left a pot of unwashed clothes on the stove. This statement shows how Davies cannot even socialize with others which have led to his isolation. Aston too is lonely and the reasons of his alienation are completely different from those of Davies. Aston in the past was sociable with the others yet he ended up hallucinating and is sent by his mother to a mental institution where he remains isolated and ended up with a dysfunctional brain which prevents him from engaging with others, and left in him a strong sense of alienation: “I feel much better now. But I don ‘talk to people now. I steer clear of places like that café. I never go into them now. I don’t talk to anyone” (P.57).

His traumatic experience left him not only unable to make connections with people but also unable to trust other. Mick also is alien somehow. At one point he calls his father his uncle’s brother and the fact that he refers to him in such indirect manner is an illustration of the distant relationship between them. He is also is described as a busy person, “I’m a working man” (P. 49). He wants something biggest and always engages in his own work, so business caused his isolation.

b-Broken language:

Language, too, functions similarly across the three works. Where Shakespeare and the realists used dialogue to explore inner truth or social interaction, the absurdists turn language into a symbol of breakdown. Eliot saw language as the vessel of tradition, yet one that must be made new. In Ionesco's nonsensical repetitions, Beckett's sparse, poetic exchanges, and Pinter's charged silences, we find a collective transformation of theatrical speech. All three dramatists engage with the tradition of dramatic language not by preserving its surface, but by exposing its limits in an age of disillusionment.

Difficulty of Communication and Broken Language in Eugene' The chairs

Eugene Ionesco is often called as Man of Anti-Theatre because of his presentation of language as an impossible means of communication. The inconsistency of language and difficulty of communication is shown in the characters' inability to connect with each other and to the world around them as Esslin suggests:

Hence the need to break down the language of society, which 'is nothing but clichés, empty formulas and slogans. That is why the ideologies with their fossilized language must be continually re-examined and 'here congealed language...relentlessly split apart in order to find the living sap beneath'(Esslin).

The characters use language in a way that is essentially valueless, they do not manage to express or to communicate anything of importance to one another as the following passage illustrates:

OLD MAN: Just coming, the Orator.

OLD WOMAN: Just coming.

OLD MAN: Just coming.

OLD WOMAN: Just coming.

OLD MAN: Just coming (p. 44).

The characters' use of repetition, fragmentation, and disfigured language in the play show the breakdown of communication and their inability to express themselves effectively.

The elderly couple also had a brief conversation with one of the invisible guests, Belle and her husband, discussing their son. The Old Woman mentions that their son had left them many years ago, despite their immense love for him as this excerpt illustrates:

Yes, we've had one son alive, of course. He went away. It's the usual story—a bit strange perhaps—he left his parents had a heart of gold a long time ago. And we loved him so much. He slammed the door. My husband and I struggled with him to try and stop him going—he was seven years old—the age of discretion. We called after him: “My son, my child, and my son, my child and he never looked round” (p. 23).

The passage reveals that Old Man, however, contradicts this by telling Mrs. Lovely that they never had children at all:

“None; I'm sorry to say we never had children. I should have liked a son so would Semiramis. We did what we could. Poor Semiramis, she's such a motherly woman. Perhaps it wasn't meant to be.” (Pp.23-4).

Furthermore, the Old Man tells Belle that he killed his mother but his wife insists that he takes care of his. This lack of communication and the disagreement between the couple illustrates not only the mental decline but also the inability to effectively share their thoughts and experiences with each other. As the play progresses, the Old Woman becomes not able to fully concentrate on her own words and thoughts, so she ends up repeating what the Old Man says:

OLD MAN: All those who dug the foundations
silence, ladies and gentlemen. OLD WOMAN (echo):
Ladies and gentlemen. OLD MAN: I wish to give
particular thanks for I am not forgetting them to the
joiners who made the chairs you are sitting on, to the
skillful craftsmen you (p. 46).

Maybe she is doing it to really highlight her dialogue and give it extra importance. So, to put it in different words, this disconnect between language and thought, and the Old

Woman's echoing of the Old Man's words is the outcome of her lack of focus or her desire to emphasize his dialogue. Communication breaks down entirely at the play's end after the old couples' committing suicide, when the orator tries to reveal the message of the old man and then it is revealed that he is a deaf mute. He communicates only with noises and gestures. The invisible crowd does not understand. After that he tries to communicate through writing, but he can only write a few meaningless and nonsensical words as: "ANGELBREAD", Then "NNA NNM NWNWV" (P.50). Then, he finally leaves and the noise of the invisible audience, which marks the end of the play.

Broken Language in Beckett's waiting for Godot

Waiting for Godot is presented only as meaningless sounds and the characters struggle to understand each other. They mix words and say random phrases that do not convey logical grammatical flow. The failure of communication between the characters indicates that man has no hopes in language. For instance, Estragon and Vladimir remain incapable to produce a full well-organized sentence. For them, words are nothing more than a manner to escape time. Moreover, both of the tramps keep speaking without understanding anything; they want only to pass time and keep themselves busy until Godot arrives as the following quote illustrates:

Vladimir: Where was I ... How's your foot?

Estragon: Swelling visibly.

Vladimir: Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?

Estragon: No.

Vladimir: Shall I tell it to you?

Estragon: No.

Vladimir: It'll pass the time (p. 04).

This conversation reveals that characters talk just to talk; they talk about everything but never about what they really feel. They find no link between their inner pain and the silly

conversation they are exchanging. They keep on creating excuses to continue talking, but there is no hope to understand each other. Estragon asks for meaning all along the play but there is no hope to understand while Vladimir provides no answer except fragmented phrases, and silences which shows the broken communication between them. But they keep talking all the time without reaching any clear point, and they repeat the same words such as “I am happy” (P.51). Estragon and Vladimir speak of the day’s events. The repetitive structure of their words reinforces the absurdity in repeating their declarations of happiness in order to pass the time.

This meaningless behaviour emphasizes the emptiness of language. Lucky’s speech is an illustration: “Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell” (P. 36).

Beckett uses Lucky’s speech to demonstrate the breakdown of coherent communication and the absurdity of attempting to convey meaning through language. Since language is meaningless in the play, neither the audience nor the characters themselves understand what they are saying. Silence remains the only way that Beckett uses to speak on behalf the language. Silences and pauses are revealed through the dialogues: POZZO: [...] (Silence.) Pozzo! (Silence) [...] (P. 15) (Silence) Estragon takes a step forward.) You had something to say to me? (Silence) (P.12), (Long silence). In fact, silence dominates the characters’ lives physically and psychologically.

Broken language and Lack of communication in Pinter’s *The Caretaker*

Lack of communication is also a central theme in Harold Pinter’s *The Caretaker*. Throughout the play, the three characters find difficulties communicating with each other, as

well as the use of language effectively is not something that the characters seem able or capable of doing. Communication between the three characters is inadequate and is not something that comes easily to them. They find it hard to truly listen or to answer direct questions, and they speak slowly or not at all. Their communication styles are influenced by their social class and their treatment by society. Aston in the past was sociable with the others yet he ended up hallucinating, after this tragic event. She is completely changed and becomes not able to communicate with others.

At the beginning of the play, the conversation between Davies and Aston seems to be monologue rather than a dialogue. Davies talks too much whereas Aston answers in very short sentences. Aston's short interventions are due to his longing for human contact or relationship. He is eager to someone's talk. Then when he feels that Davies becomes his friend he starts speaking with him without hesitation and reveals many experiences about his past especially his unfortunate traumatic experience in the mental institution. Another interesting thing to note is the relationship between Aston and Mick. Despite the fact that they live in the same house, they converse properly through the course of the play and almost always do not share the space, creating a serious communication gap. Aston does not ask Mick about bringing Davies into the home. In fact, the two men never discuss with Davies. Each man asks Davies to be a caretaker of the home supposedly without the other's knowledge. From here we understand how the characters find difficulties communicating with each other.

Another important aspect of absurd drama is its distrust of language as a means of communication. The play depends more on dialogue rather than actions. When Aston proposes a cigarette to Davies, the old man says: "What? No, no, I never smoke cigarette" (P.8). Moments later he changes his mind saying: "I will tell you what, though. I'll have a bit of that tobacco there for my pipe, if you like" (p.8). The speech of the characters is incoherent which renders the process of communication fairly difficult. We have another example from the play, when

Davies is asked about his identity, he tries to avoid answering the question, and we notice that he talks hesitatingly with broken sentences, hiding the truth of showing it: “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). Davies uses this technique to have more time to think and find out lies to cover his true identity.

Furthermore, the men fail to listen to each other and often change subjects instead of answering questions, and sometimes shift from one subject to another which is another feature of meaningless use of language. This failure of communication led Harold Pinter to use a lot of pauses and silences where the three characters struggle and find difficulties to finish sentences without taking pauses they do not even have the capacity to complete a mere sentence. When Aston asks Davies to be a caretaker. Davies answers with broken ambiguous sentences, and Aston responds with a similarly incomprehensible language:

Aston : you could be ... caretaker here, if you liked. [...]

Davies : Well, I . . . I never done caretaking before, you know. I mean say... I never. what I mean to say is... I never been a caretaker before.”

Aston : what sort of...

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

Aston : well, I mean ...

Davies : I mean, I’d have to... I’d have to (Pp.42-3).

This ambiguous and broken language demonstrates the characters inability to properly use language as a means of communication.

To finish with, after we have implemented the concept of Tradition, we have come to conclude that T.S. Eliot’s highlights the importance of understanding the past in the creation of new art. He believes that every new work is influenced by what has come before, allowing for a rich dialogue between history and contemporary expression. This idea resonates with the Theatre of the Absurd where playwrights took inspiration from traditional theatrical forms and

adapted them to explore the absurdities of modern life. Eliot said that tradition is about continuing this search and that's exactly what these playwrights do. By reinterpreting established conventions, these writers created a unique genre that reflects the complexities and challenges of their time. In this way, both Eliot's perspective on tradition and the works of the Absurdist demonstrate how engaging with the past is crucial for innovation in literature, showing that the legacy of earlier art continuously informs and shapes new artistic endeavours.

V. Chapter two: The Playwright's Individual Talent

In the previous chapter, we compared the three plays in focusing on their similarities by borrowing TS Eliot concept of Tradition. In this second chapter, we continue this comparative study by examining the three plays in relation to T.S. Eliot's concept of Individual Talent or personal creativity. We aim to discover how and to what extent the three authors' plays are original, as suggested by Eliot in the second part of his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*.

In *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, T.S. Eliot argues that true artistic greatness stems from a poet's ability to balance tradition with innovation. While tradition provides the foundation, originality emerges through the poet's reinterpretation and transformation of inherited forms. Eliot emphasizes that individuality is not found in rejecting the past but in creatively engaging with it, blending historical influences with personal creativity to produce something both new and rooted in literary history. Cleanth Brooks reinforces this idea by suggesting that a poet's originality is indeed a product of their deep engagement with tradition. Brooks 1947 argues:

The poet's engagement with tradition is not an act of passive acceptance but an active reinterpretation, where the poet finds his own voice through the reworking of inherited forms" (p. 21).

This concept also applies to Absurdist playwrights like Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter, who, despite sharing a common rejection of conventional forms, each develop distinct styles that reshape and extend the theatrical tradition in uniquely personal ways

1-Eugene Ionesco's Dramatic Style

According to Eliot: "The best, or most individual parts of a poet's work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."(p.06). The quote means that an artist's most creative work often comes from being strongly connected to past traditions and influences. Instead of ignoring the past, true creativity involves reinterpretation it in a fresh way, allowing the influence of earlier artists to continue through new, personal expressions. This mix of tradition and new ideas is where the artist's individuality truly stands out.

Ionesco hailed from a small French town where he developed his intellect and came to realize the world's grim nature, surrounded by corrupt and purposeless individuals. His plays delve into the futile efforts of people to conform to society, using language to weave together these themes and their consequences. Ionesco draws inspiration from various aspects of life, whether from people around him or the things around which all reflect the deep intellectual and philosophical level in his writing. His use of language in his plays can be compared to other modern writers who also employed absurdity to portray the extreme realities of human existence. However, Ionesco had his own distinctive style in presenting the absurdity in society, particularly through his unique use of language, which granted him the title of "Man of Anti-Theatre". Through Beckett's minimalist silence, Ionesco's surreal absurdity, and Pinter's psychological realism, we see how each dramatist transforms inherited conventions into new, expressive forms of theatre.

Absurd Comedy

Absurd comedy is a form of dramatic humor that arises from situations that are illogical, meaningless, or irrational, often reflecting the confusion and hopelessness of the modern human condition. Unlike traditional comedy, which is based on clever plot twists or social criticism (as in satire), absurd comedy presents characters trapped in repetitive routines speaking fragmented or nonsensical language, and behaving in ways that make no logical sense. This style is not meant to simply entertain but to evoke both laughter and discomfort, exposing the emptiness of communication, the breakdown of logic, and the struggle to find meaning in a chaotic world. Eugène Ionesco uses absurd comedy to express deep existential themes. For instance, in *The Chairs*, He shows an elderly couple preparing for invisible guests, only to end the play with a mute orator who cannot deliver the message they worked so hard to share.

The scene is comical, but also tragic, highlighting the futility of human effort and the absurdity of existence. Absurd comedy allows audiences to laugh, but it is a dark, reflective laughter, grounded in the recognition that life itself may be without answers, and yet we continue to speak, perform, and hope.

Surrealism

Surrealism is an artistic and literary movement that began in the early 20th century. It focuses on the unconscious mind, dreams, and irrational or illogical images. Surrealist works often feel strange, dreamlike, or unreal, as they aim to show deeper truths that exist beyond logic or reality.

In *The Chairs*, Eugène Ionesco uses surrealism to create a strange and dream-like world that reflects the confusion, emptiness, and absurdity of modern life. At first, the situation seems

ordinary : an old man and an old woman are preparing to host an important event. But as the play goes on, nothing follows normal logic. The couple talks to invisible guests people the audience cannot see or hear. They act as if these guests are real, welcoming them, laughing with them, and even getting nervous about the important message that the Old Man is supposed to deliver. This is a clear example of surrealism, where something looks real (a party or event) but is actually impossible or dream-like (the guests don't exist).

As the event continues, the couple keeps bringing in more and more empty chairs, filling the stage until there is almost no space left. The chairs symbolize the presence of absence, they make the room look full, but it's really empty. This exaggeration is another surrealist technique, used to show how humans pretend to have meaning and connection, even when everything around them is empty.

Another surreal moment comes at the end of the play. After all the excitement, the couple brings out the final guest : the orator, who is supposed to deliver a world-changing message to the audience. But when he appears, he is mute he cannot speak. He makes strange sounds and gestures, but no one can understand him. This moment is both bizarre and tragic, and it shows Ionesco's belief that language has failed, and that humans can no longer communicate meaningfully.

The old couple themselves also act in surreal ways. They sometimes act like children, tell stories that don't make sense, and change details about their lives. For example, the Old Woman says she's the Old Man's mother, then wife, then caretaker, confusing their relationship. This shows how memory, identity, and time are unstable another key feature of surrealism.

Through these strange, unrealistic events, Ionesco does not try to reflect real life as it is, but instead shows how life feels when people are lost, confused, and desperate to find meaning.

The Chairs becomes a surreal experience that expresses loneliness, failure, and the human desire to be remembered, even in a meaningless world.

2-Samuel Beckett's Particular Dramatic Playwright Style

T.S. Eliot suggests that “ a poet needs to be aware of and understand past works and traditions and should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.”(p.06). It means that the poet must know and understand previous works and traditions. They should continue to develop this knowledge throughout their career. In other words, an artist's work is improved by learning and relating to the past, and they should keep doing this as they grow and create new work. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is one of the most influential works of the Theatre of the Absurd, and its distinctive style reflects Beckett's exploration of existential themes. Beckett's unique use of minimalism and language in the play highlights the futility of existence and the limitations of communication, making *Waiting for Godot* a meditation on the human condition.

Minimalism

Minimalism, in theatre, refers to a style that uses very few elements such as a simple stage, limited props, small number of characters, and sparse dialogue to focus attention on ideas, emotions, or the essence of the play. Instead of creating a realistic or detailed world on stage, minimalist plays strip everything down to the bare essentials. This makes the audience concentrate on what is said, what is not said, and the symbolism behind simple actions or objects. In *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett uses minimalism to focus the audience's attention on the deeper meaning of existence, communication, and human suffering.

Instead of creating a detailed or realistic world on stage, Beckett strips everything down to the bare essentials. The set includes only a single tree, a road, and two characters,

Vladimir and Estragon, who spend the entire play waiting. There are no background details, no elaborate costumes, and very little physical action. This minimalist approach forces the audience to concentrate not on the surroundings, but on what the characters say, what they don't say, and how they behave. The repeated gestures like taking off a boot, switching hats, or deciding whether to leave seem simple, but they carry emotional and philosophical weight. For example, the act of waiting becomes a symbol for human hope, uncertainty, and helplessness in the face of an unknown future.

In simple terms, Beckett's minimalism follows the idea that "less is more." There are fewer props, but each one like the tree has symbolic meaning (the tree may suggest life, death, or time). The simple set helps us focus on the characters themselves, their conversations, their confusion, and their struggle to understand the world. There is less dramatic action, but this silence and stillness allow for more reflection, as the play becomes a meditation on human existence. Through this minimalist design, *Waiting for Godot* becomes a powerful example of how theatre can express deep truths with very little on the surface, relying on silence, repetition, and symbolic actions to show the absurd condition of modern life.

3-Harold Pinter's Dramatic Style

Eliot argues that "The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all." (p.06). This means that poets need to discover new or unusual feelings. Instead, their skill is demonstrated by transforming regular, everyday emotions into something unique and significant through their writing. Rather than merely reflecting their feelings, poets use their creativity to deepen and enhance these emotions.

While Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco are renowned absurdist playwrights, Harold Pinter has emerged as the prominent figure in the genre in the English language. Pinter's plays do not delve into the reasons behind events or the identities of characters; the mere existence within the play is deemed sufficient. Pinter's work is characterized by a lack of explanation and the intrusion of external forces into a stable setting. What distinguishes him from Beckett and Ionesco is the semblance of realism in the world he creates within the drama.

Realism

Realism in literature and theatre refers to a style that seeks to portray life as it truly is, without exaggeration, fantasy, or artificial structure. It focuses on everyday characters, ordinary settings, and believable dialogue, highlighting the complexity of real-life situations. Rather than presenting idealized heroes or dramatic plots, realism emphasizes natural human behavior, personal relationships, and the subtle tensions that shape people's lives. In theatre, this often means that the action takes place in a familiar environment like a home or room with characters facing internal conflicts rather than external events.

In *The Caretaker*, Harold Pinter applies realism by setting the entire play in a cluttered, run-down room, using simple props and focusing on three characters whose conversations reflect the uncertainty and isolation of modern life. The dialogue is natural but fragmented, full of hesitations, interruptions, and silences, capturing the way people truly speak especially when they are insecure, threatened, or trying to gain control. While nothing major happens in terms of plot, Pinter's realistic language and subtle power dynamics create tension and unease. His characters do not express themselves directly; instead, they speak in incomplete thoughts, change the subject, or use pauses to create emotional distance. This technique brings out the hidden fears, suspicions, and psychological battles beneath the surface of ordinary life. In this

way, Pinter uses realism not just to reflect the world, but to reveal the deeper, often unspoken anxieties that shape human relationships.

The play is realistic in its portrayal of events and characters, with Esslin describing it as a “slice of life” that also explores the deeper human condition of man’s struggle for security and place. He denies the idea of realism in his plays and says that: “if you press me for a definition, I would say that what goes on in my plays is realistic, but what i’m doing is not realism.”(Pinter,11). Traditionally, absurd plays have more unrealistic’ settings. *The Caretaker* is a bit different from the other absurd plays. The characters of the play are very much real, and belong to the world we live in and the setting as well is realistic.

Harold Pinter is a writer whose characters lacking the possibility to express their actions, thoughts or feelings having mixed the real with the surreal. Pinter portrays characters and situations in a realistic and naturalistic manner. He presents the characters as if they are genuine members of society. He also employs stage direction, delay. Silence is another method to better portray the characters in his plays in a naturalistic manner.

In Addition, he explores the problems of the world through the interactions of three estranged men: Davies, a tramp, and the two brothers, Mick and Aston. Each character has heir own motivations and desires, with Davies seeking to possess the room and the brothers trying to assert their ownership over. The focus on the complex relationships between the three main characters, Davies, Mick, and Aston, highlights the power struggles, psychological dynamics, and emotional conflicts that arise from their interactions. The use of concrete and detailed characters, rather than abstract or symbolic ones, further enhances the play’s realism.

Additionally, the play addresses contemporary issues such as the struggle for power, the search for meaning, and the impact of war on society, making it a relatable and engaging work that explores the human condition in a realistic. Furthermore, Pinter’s depiction of life’s

harshness is evident in the character of Davies, who is portrayed as a desperate and struggling individual. The critic Clifford Leech (1969) examines the characters in detail, describing Davies as an “ Everyman figure ” who is selfish and arrogant, yet also cringing and boastful (p.43). Davies is rescued by Aston from a restaurant fight and brought to the unusual room, where he is given the responsibility of caretaker. Despite Aston and Mick’s benevolent nature, Davies is self-focused and egoistic, attempting to form a rift between the brothers to gain control of the room.

The setting of the play is too realistic, taking place in a single room in a house located in Hackney, London. The room is cluttered with incongruous objects, symbolizing the clutter in Aston’s mind. Pinter also employs language as a weapon in this portrayal. As his characters speak in a basic but local language that makes it difficult to understand their conversations. Andrew K. Kennedy (1975) notes that Pinter is a naturalist in terms of his use of language and conversation, as his characters speak in a way that is both realistic and challenging to understand(p.24).

Pinteresque Characteristics in The Caretaker

Not many writers have their own Adjective in the dictionary but Pinter was a writer so prolific and influential that critics have even named a style for him who describes his very Distinctive style. Pinter is known for his unique writing style “pinteresque”. Pinter’s art is compared to Chekhov, Tolstoy, Ibsen even Shakespeare , and he is considered to be the most influential playwright of the twentieth century whose “plays are more lasting and rewarding than Beckett’s precisely because he roots their power struggles in a Superbly drawn social reality.” (Hare,2005). His plays often deeper, unspoken messages based on real-life

experiences. Through his use of subtle techniques such as the comedy of menace, Pinter expresses tragic and cruel incidents in a distinct manner.

This style is characterized by his use of language, conversation structures, and silences, as described by the Oxford English Dictionary as resembling his plays. Pinter's characters indirectly express their emotions, with pauses and silences playing a crucial role in portraying the reality of human speech. These pauses create suspense and add depth to the characters' backgrounds in his works. Pinter believed that contemporary plays failed to accurately depict the complexities of human communication, leading him to emphasize pauses in his dialogue. His rejection of perfection in favor of realism is evident in his works, where characters often struggle to respond to their circumstances through silence during serious exchanges.

Many critics and viewers qualified his plays as resembling: "crossword puzzle where every vertical clue is designed to put you off the horizontal" (Shulman, 1958, as cited in Esslin, 1961, p. 18) . Harold Pinter himself was uncomfortable with the label " Pinteresque " because he felt that it reduced his work to a set of specific techniques or styles rather than acknowledging the complexity and depth of his plays. He believed that his work was more than just a collection of pauses, silences, and ambiguous dialogue, but rather a reflection of the human condition and the power dynamics that exist between people. And the following is a look at some of elements that make his work so Pinteresque. Pinter first used this approach in his 1957 play *The Room*, and it was eventually improved in his subsequent plays, including *The Caretaker* (1960).

Pinter's Use of Silence and Pause

Though not exclusively written in the Pinteresque style, the play incorporates various elements that align with Pinter's techniques. Pinter is known for his use of pauses in dialogue to convey the characters' emotional distress. Characters in his works often utilize different types of pauses, such as ellipses, silence, and intentional breaks, to reflect the complexities of human

communication. These pauses occur as individuals struggle to articulate their thoughts and feelings, potentially due to traumatic events from their past. Harold Pinter uses silence in his play to convey complex emotions and meanings. Silence is not just the absence of sound but a moment so pregnant with meaning that it requires deep contemplation. It is a moment when characters stop talking, and the audience must think deeply about what is left unsaid.

Silence often marks a state of calmness, but it can also give way to chaos and death. Pinter employs silence to create a non-verbal way of communication, which is more powerful than words themselves. Pinter once said: “I think we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place in a continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep our selves to ourselves”. Pinter himself objected to the idea that his use of silence represented a “failure of communication.” The failure of communication led Harold Pinter to use a lot of pauses and silences in all his plays he wrote, instead of words. He uses Silence to express his feelings, it is more powerful than the words themselves that is why long and short pauses can be seen throughout all Pinter’s plays. The characters of the play choose not to communicate instead they keep silent because they fail and loses the ability to communicate with each other and even with themselves.

Three types of pauses as described by Hall can be seen in *The Caretaker*; firstly, the three dots pause in Aston’s speech at the end of the first act where he is describing his experience in the hospital to Davies:

Aston: 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).

Aston here is talking about the most difficult time and the most painful moment of his life, so the uses of the three dots between his words increases as he finds it difficult and harder

to express himself. The second type of pause described by Hall is the pauses Pinter is Pintersque pause. Pinter is famous for his pause, dubbed “the Pinter pause” and there are 149 one in the caretaker, and each is written for specific reason. There are a lot of pauses when he decides to throw out Davies from the room and Davies starts to please him to let him stay:

Davies: But...but...look. Listen.. listen here...I mean..

Aston turns back to the window.

What am going to do?

Pause.

What shall I do?

Pause.

Where am going to go?

Pause.

If you want me to go. I'll go. you just say the word.

Pause.

Pauses are used to reflect that language is a vague and meaningless tool that people use to hide awkwardness and discomfort. Pauses here are used to allow people think about what they are going to say late. The pauses also show that intense thoughts are occurring in the mind of the characters, nothing is said out loud, nobody can know what the other is thinking during those pauses.

The third type is the silence. *The Caretaker* begins with silence, where the audience concentrates more on Mick's movements who is the first character to appear on stage. There is silence again as Davies enters the dark room and tries to light a match while Mick is already there cleaning the room. Finally, there is a long pause of silence as Davies pleads with Aston at

the end of the play : Listen... if I... get down... if I was to... get my papers... would you... would you let... would you... if I got down and my...[Long silence.] (p. 56).

Pinter has been criticized for his use of silence and long pauses, for instance the famous British theater critique Kenneth Tynan. In his review of Pinter's play "*The Caretaker*" in 1960 he wrote: "Mr. Pinter's silences are not pregnant pauses, full of ominous import; they are the gaps that occur when people have nothing to say but are trying to think of something"(Tynan,1960). This means that they were not dramatic pauses but rather moments where the character think of what to say. These elements are an essential part of his artistic approach. They reflect his unique way of perceiving and responding to the world. In Pinter's works, silence and pauses serve a purpose which is indicating intense thought processes and mounting tensions. In working with Pinter on BBC4, pinter said: "These damn silences and pauss are all to do with what's going on... and if they don't make any sense, then I always say out them, I think they've been taken much too far these silences and pauses in my plays"(Pinter,2007). He seemed to regret how the pause took on a life of his own. He believes that these dramatic devices were meant to enhance the meaning of the dialogue, but they had taken on a life of their own and were no longer serving their intended purpose.

To sum up, Eliot calls modern critics to study a literary work separately from its author, he believes that a mature author is he who can create a piece of art as independent from his own personal life experiences. So, accordingly, our three selected authors, are criticized not for what they feel or live, but as what they made the audience feel through their art. Ionesco, Beckett and Pinter used their genius to create new emotions and represent a new situation which could not have been as truly represented without their innovative devices, in this way, through Beckett's minimalist silence, Ionesco's surreal absurdity, and Pinter's psychological realism, we see how

each dramatist transforms inherited conventions into new, expressive forms of theatre. Their originality lies not in total innovation, but in their ability to reinterpret tradition in a way that speaks to the post-war world's loss of meaning, stability, and identity. By analyzing each playwright's personal dramatic style, this chapter affirms that the strength of modern absurdist theatre comes from its ability to blend historical depth with individual creativity, exactly as Eliot envisioned in his theory.

VI. Conclusion

We have attempted throughout our modest work to make a comparative study between three plays, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Chairs*, and *The Caretaker* by following the perspective of T.S Eliot's idea of "*Tradition and Individual Talent*". In the first chapter, we have examined the use of features, which characterize the theatre of the absurd by the three playwrights. The influence of this tradition comes to sight in the three plays in their differences with traditional plays, which typically follow a linear narrative structure with clear beginnings, middles, and ends. They often explore universal themes and present characters who are psychologically coherent and engage in meaningful dialogue. In contrast, the three selected plays subvert these conventions in favor of a more fragmented, illogical, and often darkly humorous approach to storytelling.

The characteristics of the theatre of absurd are also displayed through the use of absurd, meaningless, and often humorous dialogue to explore absurdity the human condition. Through this comparison, we compared how Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter honour the past while creating something new and original. They employed absurd situations, nonsensical dialogue, and unconventional storytelling methods to convey a sense of existential uncertainty and the

absurdity of human existence. By inviting their audiences to question the meaning and purpose of life, these playwrights contribute to the rich tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd while leaving their mark on it through their individual talents and styles. Despite their differences, absurdist plays are still part of the broader literary tradition these features align with Eliot's concept of "historical sense". The idea that new works of art must both draw from and alter the existing literary tradition. Eliot believed that no poet or artist has their meaning alone, but rather that their significance is defined by their relationship to past and present writers. Similarly, absurdist playwrights engage depart from the theatrical tradition, creating works that are both innovative and rooted in the past.

In the second chapter of the Discussion part, by analyzing *The Chairs*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *The Caretaker* through T.S. Eliot's concept of originality, we attempted to study the complex relationship between literary tradition and their individual creativity. In examining the interplay of influence and originality in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*, it becomes evident that both plays, while distinct in their thematic explorations and stylistic approaches, share a profound connection rooted in the Theatre of the Absurd. Beckett's work, characterized by existential themes and the cyclical nature of human experience, presents a stark portrayal of waiting and the search for meaning in a seemingly indifferent universe.

In contrast, Pinter's *The Caretaker* delves into the complexities of human relationships and power dynamics, revealing the often absurd and tragicomic elements of communication and miscommunication among its characters. While Beckett's influence on Pinter is palpable, particularly in their shared exploration of existential despair and the absurdity of life, Pinter's originality lies in his particular use of language and silence to convey the complexity of human existence. The three plays, therefore, not only reflect the existential anxieties of their time but also illustrate how influence can lead to originality, allowing each playwright to create a

distinguished dramatic play within the landscape of modern drama. Consequently, the comparative study of these works reveals the enduring relevance of their themes and the innovative ways in which they address the complexities of existence, making them seminal texts in the canon of contemporary theatre. The reached results are that the selected playwrights have not only been influenced by the past, but they are also actively engaged in transforming it by creating something new. The individual talent of each playwright is revealed in their style of writing, which differs from the others. Eliot argued that a poet must “self-sacrifice”³; their personality to the greater tradition, becoming a “medium” for artistic expression. Similarly, the three playwrights each developed a distinct voice while still participating in the broader absurdist tradition. By engaging with and departing from the past, the three playwrights create works that are both rooted in tradition and profoundly new. Their influence can still be felt today in the works of contemporary artists who continue to challenge audiences and confront the fundamental questions of life.

Studying the relationship between influence and originality in Eugene Ionesco’s *The Chairs*, Harold Pinter’s *The Caretaker* and Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, it is clear that the three plays have a strong connection rooted in the Theatre of the Absurd, despite being very different in their stylistic approaches and thematic explorations. However, it is important to point out that our analysis is not exhaustive because the three selected plays can be further examined and compared in terms of the complexities of human relationships and the struggle for dominance and control, reflecting broader societal structures. They can also be compared from a psychological perspective by focusing on the characters’ minds, the causes of their isolation, insecurity, and their quest for a balanced identity. This perspective helps understanding the internal conflicts and motivations that drive the characters’ actions. By approaching these plays from these new perspectives, students can understand the thematic richness and the ways in which Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter reflect universal, existential, and societal concerns.

Selected Biography

Primary Sources

Beckett, S. (1954). *Waiting for Godot: A tragicomedy in two acts*. Grove Press.

Ionesco, E. (1958). *The Chairs* (D. M. Allen, Trans.). Grove Press.

Pinter, H. (1987). *The Caretaker*. Methuen.

Secondary Sources

Abdelli, F. (2009). *Harold Pinter, Edward Albee and LeRoi Jones: Their ideas of the absurd* (Master's thesis, Université Mouloud Mammeri of Tizi Ouzou).

Adorno, T. W. (1997). Trying to understand *Endgame*. In R. Tiedemann (Ed.), *Notes to literature* (Vol. 1, pp. 119–150). Columbia University Press.

Ali, Z. A., & Ezat, Z. T. (2022). *Language and absurdity in Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett*. University of Diyala, College of Education of Humanities.

Association of Academic Researchers and Faculties. (2017). *The power of language in Pinter's The Caretaker and The Room*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from https://www.academia.edu/98718884/THE_POWER_OF_LANGUAGE_IN_PINTERS_THE_CARETAKER_AND_THE_ROOM

Benguellah, L. (2024). *Analysing the artistic use of silence in Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot* (Master's thesis, Mohamed Khieder University of Biskra).

- Brooks, C. (1947). *The well wrought urn: Studies in the structure of poetry*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- Clurman, H. (2021). A paradigmatic critique of Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. *The Creative Launcher*, 6(1), 167–173.
- Esslin, M. (1961). *The theatre of the absurd*. Anchor Books.
- Gordon, P. (2002). Beckett's tramps: The absurdity of *Waiting for Godot*. In J. Pilling (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Samuel Beckett* (pp. 69–85). Cambridge University Press.
- Hewes, H. (2023). *The Chairs analysis*. eNotes. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from <https://www.enotes.com/topics/chairs>
- Jennifer, L. (2018). Absurdity in Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs*. *ASES Conference Proceedings*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from <http://proceeding.conferenceworld.in/ASES-2018/34.pdf>
- Klaver, E. (2014). The play of language in Ionesco's *The Chairs*. *Comparative Drama*, 48(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2014.0000>
- Leech, C. (2001). A paradigmatic critique of Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. Gale Academic OneFile.
- Murtaza, G. (2016). Use of language by Eugene Ionesco in his works: *The Chairs* and *The Bald Soprano*. ResearchGate. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313701833_Use_of_Language_By_Eugene_Ionesco_In_His_Works_The_Chairs_And_The_Bald_Soprano
- Murtaza, G., Shafiq, Q., & Saleem, A. U. (2020). Identity and speech maxims: A linguistic analysis of communication in Pinter's *The Caretaker*. *Pakistan Social Sciences*

Review, 4(3), 480–492. <https://pssr.org.pk/issues/v4/3/identity-and-speech-maxims-a-linguistic-analysis-of-communication-in-pinter-s-the-caretaker.pdf>

Nealon, J. T. (1988). Samuel Beckett and the postmodern: Language games, play, and Waiting for Godot. *Modern Drama*, 31(4), 520–528. <https://doi.org/10.3138/md.31.4.520>

Pawar, D. P. A. (2017). Existential predicament in Harold Pinter. Retrieved April 22 2025, from https://www.academia.edu/36920503/Existential_Predicament_in_Harold_Pinter_FINAL_1_docx

Pawar, D. P. A. (2017). The theme of allegiance and meaninglessness of life in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. *Epitome Journals*, 3(7), 1–15. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from https://www.epitomejournals.com/VolumeArticles/FullTextPDF/275_Research_Paper.pdf

Saravia Vargas, J. C. (2017). Tacit significance, explicit irrelevance: The use of language and silence in *The Caretaker* and *The Dumb Waiter*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from <https://www.kerwa.ucr.ac.cr/server/api/core/bitstreams/1ea1e9b0-08f7-41dc-aae3-c64802a66d8a/content>

Tahourdin, A. (2012, January 13). *The Chairs*. *The Times Literary Supplement*. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from <https://reader.exacteditions.com/issues/63856/page/30>

Yasini Visti, A. H. (2014). The incommunicability of language in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. GRIN Verlag. <https://www.grin.com/document/384245>

Zeeshan, I. (2016, January). *The Caretaker* by Harold Pinter as a symbolic play. Zeeshan's Blog. Retrieved April 22, 2025, from <https://iamzeeshan.blogspot.com/2016/01/the-caretaker-by-harold-pinter-as.html>